T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

POSTMODERN FEMALE AUTHORS AS "MAD" IN FOWLES' *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN* AND DRABBLE'S *THE MILLSTONE*

MASTER'S THESIS

Derin ÖZDEMİR

Department of English Language and Literature
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MARCH, 2024

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study "Postmodern Female Authors as 'Mad' in Fowles' *The French* Lieutenant's *Woman* and Drabble's *The Millstone*", which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the References.

(19/03/2024) Derin ÖZDEMİR

FOREWORD

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Dr Arya Aryan for his guidance and support during my writing period. It would have been quite difficult without his guidance and support.

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ABSTRACT

Historically, women are associated with inferiority, weakness, passivity, and emotionality, while men are linked with superiority, power, activeness, and rationality. These binary oppositions between the two genders are reflected in the social hierarchy. Women who have tried to reclaim authorship, feminine freedom, and control over their own lives have been labelled as hysteric or mad. Nonetheless, from the second part of the twentieth century, postmodern feminists set out to deconstruct these false man-made conceptualizations and definitions imposed on women by embracing hysteria and madness. Ironically, they celebrate madness and turn it against itself as a way to agency and liberation.

This thesis will argue that the heroines in John Fowles's The French Lieutenant's Woman and Margaret Drabble's The Millstone represent the postmodern female authors who deconstruct the conventional man-made myth of the eternal feminine, construct a new feminine self and authorial control over their life stories.

Keywords: Postmodern Feminism, Hysteria, Female Authorship, Agency, Deconstruction, The French Lieutenant's Woman, John Fowles, The Millstone, Margaret Drabble

FOWLES'IN *FRANSIZ TEĞMENİN KADINI* VE DRABBLE'IN *DEĞİRMENTAŞI* ESERLERİNDE "DELİ" POSTMODERN KADIN YAZARLAR

ÖZET

Tarihsel olarak kadınlar değersizlik, zayıflık, pasiflik ve duygusallıkla ilişkilendirilirken, erkekler üstünlük, güç, aktiflik, rasyonellikle ilişkilendirilmişlerdir. İki cinsiyet arasındaki bu ikili karşıtlıklar sosyal hiyerarşiye de yansımıştır. Yazarlık hakkını, özgürlüğünü ve kendi yaşamların üzerindeki kontrolü ele almaya çalışan kadınlar histerik ya da deli olarak nitelendirildiler. Buna karşın, yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren postmodern feministler, histeri ve deliliği benimseyerek kadınlara dayatılan bu sahte, eril yapımı kavramsallaştırmaları ve tanımları yapıbozuma uğratmaya giriştiler. İronik bir şekilde, özgürlüğe ve eylemliğe ulaşmak için, histeri ve deliliği kutlayıp onlara karşı çevirdiler.

Bu tez, John Fowles'ın Fransız Teğmenin Kadını ve Margaret Drabble'ın Değirmentaşı eserlerindeki kadın kahramanların ataerkilin geleneksel "ebedi kadın" mitini yapıbozuma uğratan, yeni bir kadın kimliği inşa eden ve yazar otoritesiyle kendi hayat hikâyelerinin kontrolünü ele geçiren postmodern kadın yazarları temsil ettiği tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postmodern Feminizm, Histeri, Kadın Yazarlık, Değersizlik, Yapbozum, Fransız Teğmenin Kadını, John Fowles, Değirmentaşı, Margaret Drabble.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Historically, women have been associated with inferiority, weakness, passivity, and emotionality, while men are linked with superiority, power, activeness and rationality. These binary oppositions between the two genders are reflected in the social hierarchy. Throughout history, women who have tried to reclaim authorship, feminine freedom, and control over their own lives, have been likely labelled as hysteric or mad. Nonetheless, from the second part of the twentieth century, postmodern feminists set out to deconstruct these false man-made conceptualizations and definitions imposed on women by embracing hysteria and madness. Ironically, they celebrate madness and strategically turn it against itself as a way to agency and liberation. This thesis attempts to outline the context of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and *The Millstone* (1965) focusing on postmodern feminism in the 20th century specifically by highlighting the female characters Sarah Woodruff and Rosamund Stacey. The thesis concerns feminism's relationship with postmodernism, deconstruction in particular, and shows how women writers of the 1960s deconstruct metanarratives of femininity and construct their own feminine selves. It reveals that Sarah Woodruff and Rosamund Stacey intentionally become "mad", and "hysteric" authors, and creators of their own life stories, fighting against and rejecting any imposed conceptions of femininity. Sarah and Rosamund deconstruct the imposed myth of the eternal feminine and construct a new self and identity by subverting the stigmatization of women as hysteric and mad. Accordingly, the thesis argues that they represent the mad female author who rewrites her life story in a patriarchal society as a way of liberating the self from its patriarchal associations. The novels deconstruct the myth of the eternal feminine through embracing and exercising madness and storytelling. Moreover, the heroines create and construct their feminine identity and show their authorial control over their life stories. As Sarah puts it, "I do not want to share my life. I wish to be what I am" (Fowles, 1970: 418).

John Fowles was an English novelist who is mostly associated with postmodernism. His works explore individuality, existentialism, and freedom. For instance, *The Aristos* (1964) expresses his philosophical views on life and art. In his short story collection *The Ebony Tower* (1974), he focuses on the morality and complexities of human relationships as well as art. His works are preoccupied with criticism of human nature, societal norms, traditions, conventions, authorship, and creativity. For instance, *The Magus* (1966), Fowles's second novel, triggered his reputation as a talented and innovative author due to its unconventional plot and psychological themes. Likewise, *Mantissa* (1982) explores the relationship between the author and his fictional creation. One of his well-known novels, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), exemplifies postmodern metafiction and is set in the Victorian era in Lyme Regis. This provides grounds for the exploration of some of the metanarratives surrounding femininity and patriarchy. The book received critical acclaim for its historical setting, narrative experimentation, and exploration of Victorian societal norms.

Margaret Drabble, born in 1939, was a British novelist. Her academic experience at Cambridge University influenced her works. Her first novels *A Summer Bird Cage* (1963) and *The Millstone* (1965) shined her literary success and brought her the John Llewellyn Phys Prize. Her works often focus on themes related to women's roles, family issues, and societal landscape. She also pays attention to political and societal historical events. *The Waterfall* (1969) examines the political and social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s. Additionally, she has written biographies, essays, and literary criticism such as *A Writer's Britain: Landscape in Literature* (1979) and *The Genius of Thomas Hardy* (2012). Drabble's *The Millstone* showcases the struggle of a postmodern female individual. It reflects on the influence of the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s. The novel serves as an illustration of postmodern feminist themes, addressing the challenges and anxieties faced by a female individual within societal constraints and pressures.

Fowles' novel has been studied from different perspectives including feminism, individualism, bildungsroman, existentialism, postmodernism, realism, and essentialism. For example, in "The French Lieutenant's Woman: A Discussion," the writers study the novel in light of experimentalism and sexuality in the Victorian

period. As they argue, Fowles' "story and his main theme spin on the one axis of sexual repression" (1972: 4). They believe that the sexuality of female individuals was oppressed in the Victorian period.

In "The French Lieutenant's Woman and Individualization," Susanna Barber and Richard Messer compare the novel with the 1981 film adaptation. As they articulate, Fowles "focuses his inquiry on a crucial problem of the Victorian era with which our own age still struggles: the tragically narrow and rigid definitions of femininity and masculinity" (1984: 2). Similarly, in "The Novel, Illusion and Reality: The Paradox of Omniscience in 'The French Lieutenant's Woman," Frederick M. Holmes points out the perception of genders in the Victorian period as presented in the novel. As he puts it, Fowles "is questioning by imitating the Victorians morally sensitive omniscience" (1981: 3). He adds that "Fowles' narrator, on the other hand, juxtaposes nineteenth and twentieth-century modes of thought, feeling, and behaviour, enabling each to comment upon and qualify the other (1981: 4). In "Freedoms in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*," Richard P. Lynch argues that the writer emphasizes types of freedom in the novel by claiming that "Fowles is dealing in particular here with three different kinds of freedom: social, existential, and narrative" (2002: 2). Yet, in "*The French Lieutenant's Woman* and the Evolution of Narrative," Katherine Tarbox explores the narrative in light of individualist and feminist determination. She argues that Sarah is decisive about her choices: she wants to locate her own reality that exists outside of "the appalling ennui of reality" (1996: 9). Furthermore, in "The French Lieutenant's Woman: A Discussion" another critic points out that "John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is both an experimental novel and a historical novel" (Brantlinger et al., 1972: 339). The writer pays attention to the references and footnotes in the novel that encompass a range of subjects like evangelicalism, evolution, imperialism, and Marxism. In "The 'Unplumb'd, Salt Estranging' Tragedy of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*" (1985), the writer contends that Fowles identifies Sarah's behaviours with "mental illness of the hysteric kind" and criticizes Sarah for being hysteric by relating to the Freudian Oedipal Conflict: "Hysterical individuals have never overcome their object choice," "Sarah's mother's death occurred before the Oedipal relationship with her parents was resolved" (1985: 9-10). Sarah's hysteria is associated with patriarchy: melancholic mental illness of the hysteric kind of Freudian explanation, which is related to the Oedipal conflict,

according to which hysterical individuals either fail to overcome their early object choice or become so fixated on it that, after later disappointments in life, they revert to it. In contrast, this study argues that Sarah deliberately embraces hysteria as a gateway to her agency and authorship. Examining madness and hysteria and its relation to creativity and agency from a postmodern feminist perspective has remained unexplored.

Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone* has been explored from different perspectives including female individuality and sexuality. For instance, in "Body, Corporality and Maternity in Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone*" (2020), Ana Belén Pérez García emphasizes Rosamund's strong posture of maternity, personal choices, and corporeality. By referring to corporality, she divides the female body into three parts: physical, social, and cultural. She argues that her evolution, that is the process of being a mother, is related to corporality. Additionally, the writer contends that "Rosamund is an example of the premise that women can be more than simply mothers and wives and that maternity does not necessarily imply losing your independence and having your entire life changed for your baby's sake" (2020: 9). According to Susan Spitzer, in "Fantasy and Femaleness in Margaret Drabble's The Millstone," the narrator and implied author both view the character as destiny, likening the character to a burdensome millstone, whose weight consistently serves as a reminder of an absence of freedom:

> Character, thus unequivocally regarded as destiny by the narrator as well, we may assume, as by the implied author, is not unlike a millstone, the very weight of which serves as a constant reminder of an existential lack of freedom. The novel's manifest "message" does indeed seem to be precisely this. (Spitzer, 1978: 228)

Similarly, in "Fate and Feminism in the Novels of Margaret Drabble," Marion Vlastos Libby argues the novel in relation to fate: "The Millstone raises more serious and subtle questions about the relationship between will and character, character and fate" (1975: 180). As the writer puts it, the novel delves into more profound concerns about will and character, as well as the connection between character and destiny. Furthermore, in "From Wordsworth to Bennett: The Development of Margaret Drabble's Fiction," the critic points out that Drabble "was expecting the birth of her third child. Drabble portrays Wordsworth as a psychological poet who explores the

impressions of nature on the subjective self" (1988: 131). Drabble's pregnancy is linked to Rosamund's. Drabble reflects on the psychological process of pregnancy emphasizing solidarity between women as mothers. In "Margaret Drabble's Female 'Bildungsroman': Theory, Genre and Gender", Ian Wojcik-Andrews discusses Drabble's novel from a Marxist perspective. As he points out, "there is more to interest a Marxist-feminist critic than has been supposed. Equally well done is the description of the capitalistic entrepreneurship of the two fathers" (1995: 107). Nonetheless, Rosamund Stacey's process of pregnancy, post-partum and motherhood, hysteria and agency have not been analyzed from a postmodern feminist perspective and still.

Although a lot has been written on these novels, the ways the heroines deconstruct the myth of the eternal feminine and create and construct their own identity through storytelling have remained underexamined. For this reason, this study draws on feminist and postmodern feminist theories in analyzing the novels. It reveals that the novels exemplify the postmodern feminist preoccupations and concerns. It argues that Sarah and Rosamund as female anti-conservatist individuals claim their true self/identity, agency, and authorship in a patriarchal atmosphere by deconstructing the myth of eternal femininity. Therefore, they are viewed as hysteric and mad as they attempt to claim their autonomy and agency. In contrast, they embrace hysteria to achieve their agency. Therefore, this thesis will try to answer the following questions: How do Rosamund and Sarah embrace and use hysteria/madness as a gateway to agency and authorship? How do the novels deconstruct the myth of the eternal feminine? How does writing help the protagonists, as well as the authors, construct feminine selves?

Despite the ongoing gender and social discrimination during the 1960s and 70s, women sought alternative means to assert their rights, individuality and femininity, liberated from patriarchally-imposed construction of gender roles. As Betty Friedan articulates, "[t]he power of woman is her dependence, flowing from the consciousness of that weakness which God has given her for her protection" (2001: 115). The patriarchal social order continued to count women as inferior, incapable of creativity, and assigned to passive roles such as housework and childcare. Attempts by women to have autonomy and control in their lives were responded to with labels such as mad and hysteric, reinforcing the patriarchal notion that women were incapable and weak,

needy for protection and control. Hysteria is thought of as a psychological disorder stemming from repressed emotions related to childhood, family, and societal experiences. As Freud puts it:

> The disproportion between the many years' duration of the hysterical symptom and the single occurrence which provoked it is what we are accustomed invariably to find in traumatic neuroses. Quite frequently it is some event in childhood that sets up a more or less severe symptom which persists during the years that follow. (1995: 5)

Freud attributes hysteria primarily to individuals' traumatic past. In contrast, feminists challenge this perspective, asserting that psychology has misinterpreted and misused the term, often negatively targeting women. Elaine Showalter contends that hysteria is a feminist concern because historical medical views portrayed it as a female disease. Second-wave feminists reject this portrayal, implying that hysteria functions as an alternative means of communication for women, redefining hysteria as a non-verbal communicative way, a language for interacting with patriarchy. As Showalter explicates, "[a]s hysteria has moved from the clinic to the library, from the case study to the novel, from bodies to books, from page to stage and screen, it has developed its own prototypes, archetypes, and plots. The second wave of feminism emerged in rejection of these false societal perceptions of women" (1997: 6). By focusing on the oppressed and deconstructing false feminine identities, many women writers of the 196s and 70s resorted to hysteria and madness to challenge societal norms and promote a more inclusive understanding of femininity. They aimed to challenge false definitions of femininity based on perceived inferiority and women's oppression due to biological differences. Influential feminist writers, including Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer, and Kate Millet, contributed to shaping theories of second-wave feminism. They helped examine power dynamics in gender relationships.

Accompanied by postmodernism, second-wave feminism forms a collaborative movement, giving rise to postmodern feminism. To dismantle the false image of femininity, postmodern feminism proposes an alternative to deconstruct the concept of the unified self. That is why the relationship between feminism and poststructuralism's deconstruction method is significant. The deconstructive process centres on binary oppositions, revealing them as constructed in a discourse rather than being inherent. These binary oppositions consist of contrasting concepts. As Derrida

puts it, "[o]ne is but the other different and deferred, one differing and deferring the other. One is the other in différance, one is the différance of the other" (1978: 18). Derrida demonstrates the dual sense of difference and deferral inherent in language and the processes of meaning. Emphasizing the interplay between similarity and differentiation, presence and absence, Derrida attempts to deconstruct binary oppositions, revealing their inherent instability. For this reason, Derrida's poststructuralism is "a way of reading all kinds of texts so as to reveal and subvert the tacit metaphysical presuppositions of Western thought" (Abrams, 1999: 59). Western ideology is based on binary oppositions which enable patriarchy to construct women as inferior. Thus, it is necessary to deconstruct and subvert this ideology.

Postmodern feminism opposes binary oppositions which create false hierarchies by praising one side over the other. Binary oppositions such as women and men reflect patriarchal norms by pulling women to an inferior place. Certain writers in the 1960s utilized poststructuralist techniques to deconstruct the patriarchal humanist idea of a unified and independent self that is falsely and forcedly imposed on women. In *The Harvest of the Sixties: English Literature and its Background 1960 to 1990*, Patricia Waugh argues:

> In the eighties academic feminism had taken a post-modern turn, beginning with the development of a self-conscious awareness of the contradiction at the heart of its attempt to define a new epistemology: that women were on the one hand seeking equality for and recognition of their existing gendered identities while at the same time arguing that this femininity had been socially constructed and must be dismantled along with the patriarchal institutions shaping it. (1995: 187)

During the 1960s, women sought to reclaim and reconstruct their female identity, authority, and agency through dismantling and questioning patriarchal foundations, including authorship, identity, self, and gender. In essence, deconstruction provided women in the 1960s with a means to regain and redefine their female selves. As Sharon Sieber argues, "these are women who write themselves from the perspective of crisis and counterpoint, constructing their own power base from a physical, representational, ideational, and objectified level" (1999: 42). This feminist approach aimed to dismantle the patriarchal concept of the self through deconstruction, enabling women to construct a new and authentic female identity. This creates a

paradox addressed in the selected novels, where women simultaneously embrace poststructuralism to challenge patriarchal imposed concepts, while also pursuing the discovery or construction of their authentic female identity.

In line with these theories, this thesis argues that in the 1960s and 70s, many writers incorporated postmodernism and second-wave feminism to deconstruct patriarchal concepts such as authorship, identity, self, and gender. The selected novels, John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone* (1965) represent heroines who deliberately employ the notion of "mad" women to challenge patriarchal constructions of femininity and liberate madness as a female disease. These heroines appreciate madness as a means to assert creativity, authority and agency by defying societal norms, illustrating their self-authored life stories. Through storytelling, they challenge and reconstruct their identities independently of the male-dominated narratives imposed upon them.

The French Lieutenant's Woman and *The Millstone* artistically mirror the ongoing socially problematic approaches to femininity. They present two heroines who write their autobiographical novels by overthrowing the male-made female self to recreate their own selves. In line with this argument, this thesis will draw on a wide range of works such as Wilhelm Reich's *The Sexual Revolution* (1936) to take a look at the sexual revolution in 20th century, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) to understand women's place in a conservative society, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) to reveal what society impose on women, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) to encourage women to be aware of their rights, Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970) to show women that they have control over their own bodies, Ronald Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1967) to understand the interpretation of authorship by male-dominated mindset, Linda Hutcheon's *Narcissistic Narrative* (1980) to emphasize Sarah's authorship, Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) to take a look at the postmodern aspects on authorship, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) to address to the idea that gender is formative, Patricia Waugh's *The Harvest of the Sixties: English Literature and its Background 1960-1990* (1995), *The Woman Writer and the Continuities of Feminism* (2006), *The Post-war Woman Writer and the Continuities of Feminism* (2006), and *The Myth of the Artist and the Woman Writer* (2006) to point out the historical background of 20th century and female

authorship, Elaine Showalter's *Hystories Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media* (1997) to discuss about hysteria and its history, Cecily Devereux's "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender Revisited: The Case of the Second Wave" (2014), and Arya Aryan's *The Postmodern Representation of Reality in Peter Ackroyd's Chatterton* (2022) and *The Postwar Novel and the Death of the Author* (2020) to argue about female authorship.

II. POSTMODERN FEMINISM: A PARADOX

A new set of literary and social theories emerges in the 1960s and 1970s: postmodern feminism. As women are still oppressed and controlled by society in these periods, they look for different strategies to gain their rights. They are still exposed to gender, social and racial discrimination. For instance, they are not seen as equal to males. They are viewed as the inferior sex incapable of creativity as they are associated with the body, rather than the mind. The patriarchy views them as passive and weak in need of protection and control by men. Therefore, the role assigned to them is that of a housewife or a caring mother. Their duty is to fulfil the demands of their husband and look after their children. Second-wave feminism refuses such conceptualizations and seeks to destroy the false image of women. Coinciding with postmodernism, second-wave feminism has a mutual interest that claims individuals' freedom right which makes a new feminist approach emerge: postmodern feminism. Postmodern feminism aims to subvert the patriarchal image of self via post-structuralism's deconstruction technique so that women can create a new self for themselves. This thesis argues that many writers in the 1960s and 70s, as represented by Drabble and Fowles, collaborated with postmodernism and second-wave feminism. These writers resort to poststructuralist techniques to deconstruct the patriarchal humanist concept of a unified, autonomous self which has been falsely imposed on them while creating or finding an authentic female self by drawing on second-wave feminism.

In other words, this research argues that while poststructuralist theories dismantled and questioned some of the patriarchal foundations such as the notion of the author, identity, self and gender, second-wave feminism enabled women to regain and reconstruct their female self, authority and agency. These writers celebrate poststructuralism as it helps them challenge patriarchy and its imposed concepts such as the self, on the other hand, they are after the discovery or construction of their genuine female self. The thesis will analyse John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone* (1965) since they present two

heroines who, as postmodern feminist characters, deliberately choose to be mad in order to deconstruct the patriarchal conception and construction of femininity. For instance, Sarah does not conform to society's expectations; in contrast, she walks through forbidden woods, waits for the French lieutenant for a long time no matter what others say and think, rejects getting married to Charles, hides the fact that he is her child's father and is happy to be called the French lieutenant's "whore."

Similarly, Rosamund rejects marrying the father of her child in addition to hiding her child from its father. These actions are perceived as mad in society since they resist patriarchal norms; nonetheless, the heroines embrace madness to assert their authority and agency over their lives. Through storytelling, they choose to become the author of their own life stories. In *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction* (2006), Waugh emphasizes the way Drabble highlights the postmodern feminist way of thinking that supports individuality and female authorship. She states that "[f]rom the late sixties onwards, writers such as Drabble, Lessing, Murdoch, and Spark would begin to use their fictions specifically to raise formal and existential questions about voice and authorship" (Waugh, 2006: 199). Drabble presents Rosamund as a brave intellectual writer who has a good career, questions the social order of society, and refuses to be the inferior gender of a male-controlling world. Likewise, Fowles' heroine shows up as a female fighter against the oppressive and despot society in a "mad woman" disguise. Both novels enable the reader to face female warriors who fight against and deconstruct the patriarch and its construction and imposition of a false, unified self. This chapter will examine the social and literary contexts of the 1960s and 1970s wherein second-wave feminism and postmodernism emerged.

A. Second Wave Feminism

To understand postmodern feminism, it is necessary to look at second-wave feminism in detail as it appears in the second half of the 20th century. Since women are misinterpreted and misrepresented as the inferior gender who has emotions overriding their mental power, making them the weaker sex associated with negative connotations, second-wave feminism questions, rejects and subverts these false representations of femininity and claims that women are oppressed because of their

biological differences. Beginning in the early 1960s, second-wave feminism aims to fight mostly racial and social discrimination. It is about women's demand for their natural, inherent rights and gender equality in different social spheres. It argues that society has viewed women as inferior by relying on biological differences. The movement is invigorated by feminist writers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer, and Kate Millet. de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) discusses how patriarchal society constructs and positions women as the Other, that is the second and inferior sex. As she argues, "[s]he is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (de Beauvoir, 2011: 27). She contends that men describe women as passive objects whereas they are the dominant sex as the subject. Women become the shadow of men. However, for de Beauvoir, the concept of femininity is not essentialist but constructivist, that is, femininity is not a biological given phenomenon but is constructed. As she puts it "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes woman" (2001: 14). In other words, a woman is not born as a female individual who is inferior, vulnerable and weak but a being that has different phases determined by inner and outer factors that shape her identity/self. Unfortunately, this right of shaping a self is taken away from her by patriarchal society and she is thus shrunk to passivity and dependency as an object. de Beauvoir explicates that throughout the history of mankind, women's duties and roles have been determined by sexist discrimination which is described as the "great historical defeat of the female sex" (2011: 88). She argues:

> Private property appears: master of slaves and land, man also becomes the proprietor of the woman. This is the "great historical defeat of the female sex." It is explained by the disruption of the division of labor brought about by the invention of new tools. The same cause that had assured woman her previous authority in the home, her restriction to housework, this same cause now assured the domination of the man; domestic work thence faded in importance next to man's productive work; the latter was everything, the former an insignificant addition. (de Beauvoir, 2011: 88)

As she points out, the minute the sense of private property emerged, men started to possess women as goods for control. Accordingly, individual and social duties and roles are determined according to the gender difference. For instance, women are charged with tasks of domesticity while men are given the responsibility and privilege

of thinking, deciding, ruling, controlling, and creating. At his point, de Beauvoir encourages women to realize their power and manage to meet their strong identity cleansed from patriarchy's impositions. She believes that women are equal to men and can refuse limitations and oppression.

Similar to de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan discusses women's place in the family and society. Her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is a groundbreaking work for the second-wave feminism movement. She indicates that women are generally not happy since in since their femininity requires independence, free will and sexuality. Friedan notices that women suffer from what she calls "the problem that had no name" although they are not able to describe it (2001: 16). By these terms, Friedan addresses women's unhappiness and the way they are told to seek fulfilment as wives and mothers. She argues that "[f]or over fifteen years there was no word of this yearning in the millions of words written about women, for women, in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfilment as wives and mothers" (2001: 44). Women are taught to seek fulfilment through the roles given by the patriarchy. Therefore, women's place in society is limited to bearing children, being wives and doing housework. Friedan adds that "[t]hey learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights—the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for" (2001: 44). She tries to subvert these definitions and approaches to women as she finds them problematic: "We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says, 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my home" (2001: 60). She asserts that everything is arranged to make women think that they belong to domesticity, which satisfies men's position within society. Moreover, Friedan criticizes Freud's explanations about women's psyche and nature. She criticizes the way Freud connects women's will of having a profession to their sense of lacking a penis. As she summarises Freud's point:

> They [women] were neurotic victims of penis envy who wanted to be men, it is said now. In battling for women's freedom to participate in the major work and decisions of society as the equals of men, they denied their very nature as women, which fulfils itself only through sexual passivity, acceptance of male domination, and nurturing motherhood (Friedan, 2001: 104).

This idea of penis envy holds that as female individuals realize that they do not have a male sexual organ, they feel deficient and jealous and try to be like men through profession and authority in society. This makes them forget about their nature. In a sense, they try to compensate for their lack of penis. However, Friedan finds this interpretation problematic and sexist. As she puts it, "Freud, it is generally agreed, was a most perceptive and accurate observer of important problems of the human personality. But in describing and interpreting those problems, he was a prisoner of his own culture. As he was creating a new framework for our culture, he could not escape the framework of his own" (2001: 128). At this point, Friedan warns the reader to consider the fact that Freud wrote under the influence of the patriarchal culture and mindset of the 19th century.

Moreover, as another influential feminist Germaine, Greer helps shape second-wave feminism as she deconstructs patriarchal images of femininity as the first step towards women's liberation. Her *The Female Eunuch* (1970) succeeds in being one of the bestsellers and groundbreaking works of the 1970s since it highlights the problematic approach to female individuals within society. The 1970s is a period when women still suffer from the patriarchal mindset which denies women their sexuality. However, sexuality as a natural and biological fact and right of existence becomes a topic of discussion in Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch.* In the book, Greer argues that women are represented as castrated by oppressing their sexuality. As she puts it:

> The acts of sex are themselves forms of inquiry, as the old euphemism 'carnal knowledge' makes clear: it is exactly the element of quest in her sexuality which the female is taught to deny. She is not only taught to deny it in her sexual contacts but (for in some subliminal way the connection is understood) in all her contacts, from infancy onward. (Greer, 2006: 79)

By "carnal knowledge," she means sexual intercourse in which women stay passive. She defines this condition as a "female eunuch" (2006: 79). She emphasizes the way the patriarchal mindset makes women think that women's sexuality is morally shameful. Accordingly, women would feel disgusted with their own bodies and sexuality which is castrated (2006: 291). Women become members of a family without the knowledge of their feminine rights, and incapable of asserting their sexuality. They only seek peace in their marriage and the happiness of their husband; therefore, women

are literally castrated since their cradle (2006: 80). Therefore, they lose their sexual desire. In this sense, women start to ignore such rights as a natural part of female individuality. In return, they are awarded with security and work at home. Additionally, Greer criticizes obedient women: They sacrifice what they never had: a self". To her, women are not even aware of the existence of a self and therefore, they give up something they have never possessed. She adds that "[t]he housewife is an unpaid worker in her husband's house in return for the security of being a permanent employee" (2006: 272). As Greer expresses, women are turned into workers at home in return for protection and primitive needs. They are seen as the inferior members of the family. Although Greer highlights these ongoing problematic facts about women, she encourages them to refuse these designated roles in society and rebel for their sexual freedom. She encourages women to think, build up, and reconstruct whatever is taken from them since she believes in women's power and courage.

Similarly, Kate Millet contributed significantly to shaping second-wave feminism with *Sexual Politics* (1970) which calls attention to female sexuality as well as other gender problems such as job discrimination. Originating from her PhD dissertation, her book is about power imbalance in relationships and the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s. Millet argues that gender relationships are a sort of politics: one dominates the other one, the female one. By "politics," she means "power-structured relationships" in which a group of people is controlled by another (2000: 23). Moreover, she criticises Freud's idea of "penis envy" and the passivity of women. As she puts it, "the Freudian understanding of female personality is based upon the idea of penis envy" (2000: 179). She implies that Freud misinterprets female personality as being jealous of men due to the "lack" of penis. In other words, Freud views women in relation to men, rather than as autonomous agents. Millet criticizes Freud and his followers for solidifying designated traditional gender roles in society. As she points out:

> Although generally accepted as a prototype of the liberal urge toward sexual freedom, and a signal contributor toward softening traditional puritanical inhibitions upon sexuality, the effect of Freud's work, that of his followers, and still more of his popularisers, was to rationalise the invidious relationships between sexes, ratifies traditional roles, and validates the temperamental differences. (2000: 178)

Therefore, mirroring the background of second-wave feminism, writers such as de Beauvoir, Friedan, Greer and Millet brought about some advancement for women's rights and a new gateway to redefine gender roles and identity.

B. Postmodern Feminism and Deconstruction

Emerging in the 1970s, postmodern feminism is an advancement of second-wave feminism. Theoretically, drawing on poststructuralist ideas, it problematizes as the way society defines genders according to biological differences. It emphasizes the sociopolitical factors regarding gender discrimination rather than shrinking genders into biological phenomena. In *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (1989), Patricia Waugh argues that "[a]n adequate psychoanalytic account of subjectivity will view gender as largely a social product rather than a biological fact, and the product of a society in which the division of labour is neither mutually beneficial nor equal, and which denies full humanity to both sexes" (1989: 44). Therefore, gender differences are shaped by social, cultural, and political factors. Due to these factors, women are not treated equally in family and society. Postmodern feminism aims to highlight that social and political factors have led to the construction of false selves and identities for women. In *The Post-war Novel and the Death of the Author* (2020), Arya Aryan argues that:

> Laing describes a further problem in Hegelian terms: these false selves are acknowledged by the outside world and other people, so a paradox that arises here is that the existence of the true self is still profoundly under threat since it is not recognised or confirmed by the outside world that instead affirms the false or performing selves. (2020: 98)

Women are forced to adapt to false and artificial selves so that they can be shaped according to social norms. Postmodern feminism believes that female individuals can deny these false selves and construct identities out of their social status.

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999), Judith Butler, subverts the essentialist approach to gender and identity. The notions of gender and sex are artificial constructs defined by society and imposed on individuals. By this imposition, individuals have no choice except to disguise themselves as male or female

in order not to be excluded from society. Butler criticizes the way the identity of lesbians, gays, and women is rejected in society. She states that:

> Wittig understands "sex" to be discursively produced and circulated by a system of significations oppressive to women, gays, and lesbians. She refuses to take part in this signifying system or to believe in the viability of taking up a reformist or subversive position within the system; to invoke a part of it is to invoke and confirm the entirety of it. (1999: 144)

As she articulates, individuals are forced to fit into artificial identities constructed in society. Since society needs to construct the Other as opposed to masculinity, it does not accept gender variety. Butler highlights society's understanding of marriage. She points out that women are seen as gifts and goods for men in marriage. As she puts it, "the bride functions as a relational term between groups of men; she does not have an identity, and neither does she exchange one identity for another" (1999: 50). In other words, women serve men's interests and power. Butler's book is groundbreaking for the rights of women as well as gays and lesbians.

The relationship between feminism and poststructuralism's deconstruction method is crucial for postmodern feminists. Postmodern feminist critics draw upon Jacques Derrida's poststructuralism to deconstruct the conventional perception of femininity. In *Harvest of the Sixties: English Literature and its Background 1960 to 1990*, Waugh contends that: "women were on the hand seeking equality for recognition of their existing gendered identities while at the same time arguing this femininity had been socially constructed and must be dismantled along with the patriarchal institutions shaping it" (1995: 187). It follows that female identity is socially constructed by the patriarchal conventional way of thinking; therefore, women ought to destroy and dismantle the discriminative approach to femininity. As a leading theorist in shaping theories of poststructuralism, Derrida focuses on the contradictory nature of language. In his words "language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique" (1978: 254). Derrida shows how language is inherently unreliable. Moreover, as Aryan stipulates, "Derrida holds that the whole Western philosophy has been founded and functioned upon binary oppositions implying a hierarchy; that is, in each binary opposition one takes the centre and is superior or privileged (e.g. man/woman, good/evil, day/night, white/black and so on)" (2022: 13).

Post-structuralism is based on the criticism of structuralism which focuses only on the structures of the language as a linguistic system ignoring its historical, cultural and political factors while analysing a text. It claims that language is phallocentric (masculine) which means that the history and structure of language date back to the construction of the patriarchy. It also argues that language is based on binary oppositions such as reason/emotion and woman/man. In "Deconstruction and Feminist Literary Theory" (1984), Bernard Duyfhuizen argues that:

> The process of deconstructive reading, with its rigorous attention to unsettling metaphysical oppositions (speech/writing, presence/absence, serious/nonserious) which grant privilege to the first term, provides feminist readers with a means for examining the metaphysical opposition of male/female which has been clearly hierarchized within the tradition of western thought. (1984: 163)

As Duyfhuizen indicates, in Western tradition and thought, female identity is inferior in the social hierarchy. Since it is based on hierarchized binary oppositions, Western thought praises reason, power, and man while marginalizing the other.

Language functions as a tool to construct binary oppositions and social norms, as well as concepts such as gender. Postmodern feminism relies on deconstruction to reveal that the patriarchal concept of femininity is not natural; rather it is constructed through language and discourse. For this reason, Derrida's reading strategy to deconstruct language and concepts is crucial. However, it is not adequate for women's liberation to only deconstruct the patriarchal construction of femininity although feminists celebrate and use it.

Postmodern feminism aims to deconstruct the imposed patriarchal image of femininity that represents women as a matter and flesh and men as mind, intellect and creativity. As Aryan explicates:

> In de Beauvoir's terms, historically, women are immanent, looked upon as inferior, passive, static and as bodies, objects to which things happen, whereas men are transcendent, identified with mind, being active, creative, productive; throughout history, women have been deprived of transcendence by men treating them as objects: "it is consciousness, will, transcendence, it is the spirit; and it is matter, passivity, immanence, it is the flesh." (2020: 74-75)

To challenge what Simon de Beauvoir calls the “myth of the eternal feminine,” postmodern women writers attempt to subvert the angelic/mad construction of femininity. For instance, a woman, as a representation of domesticity, is expected to have virtue and apply society’s understanding of morality. She must play the role of the obedient and decent figure who serves her husband and bears and takes care of children, fulfils her duties such as cooking and cleaning, takes care of her virtue and modesty and be submissive to her husband to be loved and accepted. She is expected neither to work nor have an education and profession. As de Beauvoir puts it:

> So she is given other little girls as friends, she is entrusted to female teachers, she lives among matrons as in the days of the gynaeceum, books and games are chosen for her that introduce her to her destiny, her ears are filled with the treasures of feminine wisdom, feminine virtues are presented to her, she is taught cooking, sewing, and housework as well as how to dress, how to take care of her personal appearance, charm, and modesty; she is dressed in uncomfortable and fancy clothes that she has to take care of, her hair is done in complicated styles, posture is imposed on her: stand up straight, don’t walk like a duck; to be graceful, she has to repress spontaneous movements, she is told not to look like a tomboy, strenuous exercise is banned, she is forbidden to fight; in short, she is committed to becoming, like her elders, a servant and an idol. (2011: 343)

Postmodern feminism rejects these primitive gender expectations. In contrast, it encourages women to subvert these impositions through writing.

Postmodern feminists connect gender problems with the absence and displacement of women in literature. Aryan discusses female authorship in the 1960s and points out that the literary canon has not assigned the role of an author to women: “all ignored the existence of women as authors and women’s writing specifically as a critique of patriarchal conceptions of the author” (2020: 4). In other words, women’s voice as an authority is absent in the literary canon up to the 1960s. he explicates that writing and creativity have not been associated with femininity, but masculinity. For this reason, women’s voice is absent in the canon with a few exceptions, and they have been written and represented by men, not occupying the position of the agent author. Therefore, postmodern feminists tend to focus on the absence of a female self, agency, creativity, and authorship in cultural productions, literature in particular. A postmodern feminist thinker, Helene Cixous, addresses the literary world in which women are not

included. In her famous article "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976), Cixous reveals this problem and proposes women to write. As she puts it:

> Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history through her own movement. (1976: 2)

She urges women to write so that they can have a voice in history as well as in future. She mentions the fact that women do have not a voice over their bodies since it is identified and defined according to the norms of a masculine-based society. She adds:

> Why so few texts? Because so few women have as yet won back their bodies. Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetoric's, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word "silence", "the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word "impossible" and writes it as "the end." (1976: 13)

She laments the insufficient number of literary texts by female writers. She believes that women need a language to subvert any social, or political discrimination against them. Women need to be authors who can create and direct something that can spread worldwide to give a voice to feminine freedom. Aryan argues that some writers find a way to find their own voice by turning madness against the patriarchal image of women in their writings. As he puts it:

> These writers [Sylvia Plath, Muriel Spark, and Doris Lessing] resort to hysteria and madness in their fiction to liberate it from its traditional, patriarchal association—biologically a "female disease". They turn madness against itself and make it a gateway (thanks to its creative power) to agency and authorship and take the position of the Creator. (2020: 12)

Aryan's argument reveals that these feminist writers liberate, redefine, and utilize "madness" as a weapon against itself in the battle of gender discrimination.

Likewise, Waugh points to the problem of the absence of female authorship, the fact that women writers are excluded from the literary canon. She argues that women are disassociated with the literary world, unlike men since "male writers are

able to occupy a secure, well-established authorial position" (2006: 176). Waugh addresses the patriarchal tactic of displacing women from the literary world since women's attempts at writing are not welcomed by the patriarchy.

While men are celebrated and praised for their literary creativity, women are criticized and described as hysteric for it. This becomes very important as we notice how writing and creativity could be empowering. Patriarchy rejects that women can be creative without getting mentally ill. Therefore, creativity and professional success have been considered dangerous for their mental health. Yet, postmodern feminists try to deconstruct this mentality by ironically embracing madness such as hysteria.

In *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (1997), Elaine Showalter argues that "[i]t's a term that particularly enrages some feminists because for centuries it has been used to ridicule and trivialize women's medical and political complaints" (1997: 7). She adds that "in a surprising reversal, hysteria has been adopted since 1970 by several feminist intellectuals, psychoanalysts, writers, and literary critics as a rallying cry for feminism itself. Some of these women have claimed hysteria as the first step on the road to feminism, the sign of women's protest patriarchy" (1997: 10). As Showalter points out, women, including writers, critics, and intellectuals, start to turn hysteria's definition and function upside down. They begin to reclaim hysteria and madness rather than escape from it. Cecily Devereux contends that this reclamation is called "hysterical engagement" in "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender Revisited: The Case of the Second Wave" (2014: 28-29). Women reclaim hysteria as a weapon against patriarchy. They embrace it and change it. As she puts it, "[h]ysterical engagement" as feminist critical practice works to 'reclaim' hysteria, but it does so in order to draw attention to the ways in which a 'discourse of mastery' operates by undertaking to control the term itself" (2014: 30).

Freud describes hysteria as a psychological disorder as a result of oppressed feelings of traumatic experiences, mostly sexual abuse, from childhood, family, society, etc. Showalter argues, "[h]ysteria is inevitably a feminist issue because for centuries doctors regarded it as a female reproductive disease" (1997: 9). For Showalter, hysteria is women's communicative reaction. In other words, it is a language of communicating with patriarchy. As Showalter explicates, "hysteria has served as a form of expression, a body language for people who otherwise might not

be able to speak or even to admit what they feel (Showalter, 1997: 7). As the female voice is cut off in society, women look for a solution to create a new language for their expression and communication. She adds that, according to Robert M. Woolsey, "hysteria is a 'protolanguage,' and its symptoms are a code used by a patient to communicate a message which, for various reasons, cannot be verbalized" (1997: 7). Therefore, for women, hysteria functions as an alternative way of communication. It is a way to respond to patriarchy and make their voices heard. These new definitions of hysteria are made and embraced by feminist critics. Showalter states that:

> Mark Micale, who teaches at Yale and the University of Manchester, writes that hysteria is "not a disease; rather, it is an alternative physical, verbal, and gestural language, an iconic social communication. It appears in the young as well as the old, in men as well as women, in blacks as well as whites. It happens to the powerful as well as the obscure. (1997: 7)

For women writers, hysteria becomes a way of communication. Feminists associate it with gender revolution since it represents the mindset, culture, and society of the time. These feminists, deal with hysteria in line with gender issues. Through hysteria and madness, feminists are able to overcome the false definition of femininity.

Postmodern feminism deconstructs the patriarchal construction of femininity. Writers in the 1960s and 70s drew on both poststructuralist strategies and feminist theories to deconstruct the false feminine self which has been constructed and imposed on them by patriarchy. In addition, they attempt to construct or find a new female self for themselves. This is possible through writing. In the same fashion, Sarah and Rosamund deconstruct the patriarchal image of femininity as angelic through writing their life stories. Consequently, they gain power and control over their own life story as their authors.

III. THE MYTH OF THE ETERNAL FEMININE

John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) exemplifies many of the postmodern feminist preoccupations and concerns such as patriarchy, creativity, madness, feminine self, and agency. This chapter demonstrates how patriarchal society imposes its sexist norms on female characters like Sarah and Ernestine and how they react to the imposed norms. It argues that Sarah represents the disobedient woman who breaks the masculine order of society by refusing to get married, raising her child by herself and behaving improperly to social codes in the Victorian Era while Ernestina represents the ideal obedient Victorian woman who tries to be a decent candidate for marriage.

According to the Victorian mindset, women are assigned different roles and duties which are domestic and inferior. As Anne Digby puts it, "[t]he family wage, women's work and women's rage were conditioned by values that placed women's responsibilities primarily in the home, in the private sphere" (2005: 207). In contrast, men are given more significant tasks such as working and earning money. She adds:

> Victorian values as they were publicly depicted were basically masculinist and bourgeois. Their gendered and class view of the separation of functions and spaces was encapsulated in Charlotte Bronte's rueful reflection that men were supposed to do and women to be. Stereotyped Victorian values emphasised a peaceful patriarchy with complementary male and female worlds. One important function of the gender borderlands, I would argue, was to defuse gender tensions, ambiguities and antagonisms. Gender was, and remains, a dynamic category so that changing or competing social constructions of femininities and masculinities could find a space here. (2005: 210)

Gender roles are assigned to men and women in society. Yet, Sarah Woodruff rejects this role assignment and reveals as a rebellious female individual who is criticized harshly by society. She subverts the male-imposed conception of madness through

storytelling. In other words, this thesis argues that she stands for the female author who liberates her "self" from the patriarchal construction of femininity through storytelling.

The novel is set in Lyme Regis, southwestern England in the Victorian period in the 19th Century. The novel mainly turns around the rebellious and anti-Victorian heroine Sarah Woodruff. Sarah is an impoverished governess with a bad reputation in the society. She is known as the French lieutenant's woman due to her ambiguous relationship with a French sailor who leaves her after she takes care of him and makes her wait for him with the hope of his return. She is then hired by Mrs Poulteney, an old, faithful woman, who wants to save her virtue for the sake of the morality and safety of the town. Sarah is a mysterious woman who has self-interest and beliefs different from the typical Victorian women who act and react according to social norms. She experiences her first sexual intercourse with Charles, the fiancée of Ernestina Freeman. Despite his confusion about her personality and purposes, Charles falls in love with her and ends his engagement with Ernestina so that he can be with Sarah. The novel proposes various endings. According to one ending, Charles cannot find Sarah in the hotel as he expects and he loses her; therefore, he marries Ernestina after returning to Lyme. They have children and are an unhappy Victorian family. This represents the traditional closure of the time. The other ending shows that Charles ends his engagement with Ernestina and proposes to Sarah; consequently, they reunite and learn that they have a child from their first sexual intercourse. The third ending shows that they meet yet Sarah is not interested in being with Charles again. She chooses to be a single woman instead of fulfilling societal expectations. Being rejected, Charles goes to the USA with a confused mind about her personality. Through multiple endings, Fowles enables the readers to choose. As Fowles puts it, [i]n other words, to be free myself, I must give him [Charles], and Tina, and Sarah, even the abominable Mrs. Poulteney, their freedom as well" (1970: 83). The ending of the novel is left to the imagination of the reader since Fowles gives freedom to his readers as well as his characters to avoid enslavement. He adds:

> We know a world is an organism, not a machine. We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world. It is only when our characters and events begin to disobey us that they begin to live. When Charles left Sarah on her cliff edge, I

> ordered him to walk straight back to Lyme Regis. But he did not; he gratuitously turned and went down to the Dairy. (1970: 88)

For Fowles, rejecting the freedom of the characters and the reader enslaves them. This might not sound natural for creativity. Therefore, he appreciates their freedom, especially Sarah's freedom since she represents the female author.

The novel specifically points out creativity and female authorship from a postmodern feminist perspective by exemplifying Sarah who recounts her life story as a female author in a restrictive Victorian atmosphere. She represents the female author figure by storytelling her life and opinions to Charles. Linda Hutcheon calls her a "free woman and fiction-maker" (1978: 62). Her freedom allows her to demonstrate her identity, creativity and authorship.

Sarah is a proto-feminist who resists the masculine social order wherein women are mainly restricted to domesticity. She represents the anti-Victorian female individual since she does not follow the social norms and instead creates her narrative to influence male characters such as Charles. For instance, as opposed to society's trite definition, she insists on waiting on the seashore and does not pay attention to the harsh criticism of others. Therefore, she is considered as a burden of morality for the society. She is seen as a sinful fallen woman who needs to be pulled out. This duty is dealt with by Mrs Poulteney. Mrs Poulteney is a representation of the Victorian mindset. As the narrator puts it, "[b]ut there was her only too visible sorrow, which showed she was a sinner, and Mrs Poulteney wanted nothing to do with anyone who did not look very clearly to be in that category" (Fowles, 1970: 32-33). Sarah is hired by this old lady as a governess so that society does not need to worry about their morality as the dangerous single woman is kept by a faithful woman. Mrs. Poulteney, as a conservative Victorian guard, forbids Sarah to go to the Cobb, the coast way, as it is a reminder of Sarah's relationship with the French lieutenant. Moreover, Mrs. Poulteney does not want her to go to the woods, the wild Ware Commons: a place out of Victorian society: "But what is the sin in walking on Ware Commons?' Mrs. Poulteney puts it, 'The sin! You, a young woman, alone, in such a place!'. She adds, 'I know very well what it is. And what goes on there. And the sort of person who frequents it'" (1970: 84). Ware Commons is a place with a bad reputation since it stands for the young couples' meeting which is not welcomed by the society. It represents Sarah's disobedience and

freedom. Therefore, she is not approved to go there. Instead, she is expected to change her attitudes which do not fit society's norms and have virtue like a typical Victorian woman. When she does not perform and fulfil conventional feminine duties, she is viewed as mad.

Similar to Mrs Poulteney, another representative of the myth of eternal femininity is Ernestina Freeman, Charles's fiancée. As opposed to Sarah, Ernestina represents the ideal Victorian marriage candidate since she fulfils the social necessities of the Victorian Lyme Regis. Ernestina, the daughter of a rich family, has no other concerns except completing her social tasks such as marriage. As the novel reads, "Ernestina wanted a husband, wanted Charles to be that husband, wanted children; but the payment she vaguely divined she would have to make for them seemed excessive" (1970: 27). In her understanding, to be a woman is to be someone's possession. A Victorian woman is not expected to go free but only to depart from her father's domesticity and become a part of a man's possession. As Waugh puts it:

> This is simply a restatement of the Victorian concept of the domestic world of interiority as the haven, the place of moral virtue outside the public realm. However, clearly to assign all rationality, intellectual capacity, and urge towards autonomy to the male, and emotionality, intuition, and urge towards connection to the female, is to validate both traditional stereotypes and the dominant social order (1989: 42)

Ernestina is a character who surrenders, unlike Sarah. She is a young lady who is not aware of her natural feminine rights, identity and sexuality. As the narrator has it, "she had evolved a kind of private commandment - those inaudible words were simply 'I must not' - whenever the physical female implications of her body, sexual, menstrual, parturitional, tried to force an entry into her consciousness" (Fowles, 1970: 27). She is taught to deny her sexuality. Her lack of sexual information and experience is interpreted as her innocence in Victorian society. Therefore, she tries to be the perfect angelic image of femininity. Her duties are to be the innocent wife of her husband, bear children, dress well and become the woman of her house avoiding her natural needs and rights. As the narrator states: "[a]fter all, she was only a woman. There were so many things she must never understand: the richness of male life, the enormous difficulty of being one to whom the world was rather more than dress and home and

children" (1970: 119). Therefore, Ernestina ignores any possible sexual fantasy when she sees her nude body in the mirror even though she admires it:

> For a few moments she became lost in a highly narcissistic self-contemplation. Her neck and shoulders did her face justice; she was really very pretty, one of the prettiest girls she knew. And as if to prove it she raised her arms and unloosed her hair, a thing she knew to be vaguely sinful, yet necessary, like a hot bath or a warm bed on a winter's night. (1970: 27)

Yet, she admires her physical features in the mirror only when she is alone. To be accepted in this society, unlike Sarah, she obeys and applies patriarchal strict rules and expectations. Thus, her submission to external impositions makes her an ideal Victorian woman. For de Beauvoir, "[s]ociety codified by men decrees that woman is inferior: she can only abolish this inferiority by destroying male superiority" (2011: 849). In the same fashion, Sarah deconstructs the false myth of the eternal feminine by embracing society's stigmatization of her as a whore.

The myth of eternal femininity defines femininity as the other, passive, emotional, devoted, sensitive, etc. As de Beauvoir puts it, "[t]o identify woman with Altruism is to guarantee man absolute rights to her devotion; it is to impose on women a categorical must-be" (2011: 317). She adds:

> Man vainly forgets that his anatomy also includes hormones and testicles. He grasps his body as a direct and normal link with the world that he believes he apprehends in all objectivity, whereas he considers woman's body an obstacle, a prison, burdened by everything that particularizes it. "The female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities," Aristotle said. "We should regard women's nature as suffering from natural defectiveness." And Saint Thomas in his turn decreed that woman was an "incomplete man," an "incidental" being. This is what the Genesis story symbolizes, where Eve appears as if drawn from Adam's "supernumerary" bone, in Bossuet's words. (2011: 25)

Therefore, according to the myth, women are the weak and secondary sex, dependent on men. This man-made eternal femininity "represents in reality the everydayness of life; she is foolishness, prudence, mediocrity, and ennui," as de Beauvoir puts it (2011: 241). Postmodern feminists deconstruct this myth.

A. Deconstruction of the Myth of the Eternal Feminine

Sarah Woodruff is an independent single woman in a society that defines women according to the myth of the eternal feminine and harshly labels them negatively when they do not conform to Lyme Regis morality. Charles attempts to possess her, but as Linda Hutcheon puts it, "she is no one's woman" (1980: 65). As a female character whom postmodern feminists would appreciate, Sarah is decisive about destroying the eternal feminine image constructed by society. As Aryan argues, "Fowles' heroine, Sarah, refuses the doll's house and resists the discourses of heredity and environment that circumscribe her behaviour as a woman and an artist" (2020: 137). She rejects being an object in the domestic sphere of the house. As a man of Victorian society, Charles says to Sarah, "you cannot reject the purpose for which woman was brought into creation" (1970: 419). What he implies is that women are created for marriage. When women avoid, and accordingly disobey, they are excluded from society. Yet, this cannot discourage Sarah from being herself. Throughout the novel, she appears as a resistant woman who deconstructs the social codes by escaping from marriage, being a man's inferior and breaking society's restrictions and duties by losing her virginity without marriage. Instead, she embraces her bad reputation as "the French Lieutenant's Whore" (1970: 161) which is also an act of deconstruction. She does not want to be included in marital enslavement; she does not want to give away her "self" as much as her surname no matter what kind of life is proposed to her. As Sarah puts it:

> I do not wish to marry. I do not wish to marry because ... first, because of my past, which habituated me to loneliness. I had always thought that I hated it. I now live in a world where loneliness is most easy to avoid. And I have found that I treasure it. I do not want to share my life I wish to be what I am, not what a husband, however kind, however indulgent, must expect me to become in marriage. (1970: 418)

She celebrates her loneliness. and rebels against the conservative mindset that enslaves female identity.

Sarah's other act of rebellion is to break her virginity. According to conventional societies, a woman is responsible for her virginity since it is associated with purity, virtue, innocence and morality. As de Beauvoir puts it, "[t]he patriarchs are polygamous and can renounce their wives almost at whim; at the risk of harsh punishment, the young bride has to be delivered to her spouse as a virgin; in cases of

adultery, she is stoned; she is confined to domestic labor, as the image of virtuous women demonstrates" (2011: 119-120). Women are burdened with virginity until marriage. Not adhering to it will lead to condemnation or punishment. Sarah destroys this conservative restrictive approach to female sexuality to free herself by breaking her virginity, yet the Victorian mindset cannot understand it: "[W]hat can her purpose have been? To give herself to me-and then to dismiss me as if I were nothing to her?" questions Charles (1970: 387). As Aryan puts it: "Charles interprets Sarah's behaviour as an attempt to gain love and security" (1970: 138). Being freed from any restriction, she asserts her freedom and strength: "I am far stronger than any man may easily imagine," says Sarah (1970: 329). Sarah functions as a rule breaker of the conservative mindset.

In a conservative society, women are expected to stay home as married women and bear children; otherwise, they are subjected to madness since childlessness is historically associated with hysteria. Yet, Sarah does not care for these social impositions even if she is labelled as hysteric. Rather, she subverts such conceptualizations of women. For instance, she becomes pregnant without marrying, bears and raises her child without a husband and the child's father (1970: 425) and works as an independent woman with Mr Rossetti (1970: 412). Her challenge is interpreted as madness and hysteria. Showalter points out Freud's definition of hysteria as a result of the lack of a penis: "marrying and having babies and in this way regaining the 'lost' phallus" (Devereux, 2014: 25). As Freud puts it, "[w]e call this wish envy for a penis and include it in the castration complex" (1917: 1506). He adds:

> In other women we find no evidence of this wish for a penis; it is replaced by the wish for a baby, the frustration of which in real life can lead to the outbreak of a neurosis. It looks as if such women had understood (although this could not possibly have acted as a motive) that nature has given babies to women as a substitute for the penis that has been denied them. (1917: 1506)

Since women lack male sexual organs and, accordingly power, they attempt to be child bearers. Devereux argues that:

> The "invention" of psychoanalysis through hysteria as it can be traced in Freud's work is thus also the articulation and establishment of a system of understanding identity and subjectivity in which women are always constituted as the negated obverse of

> men—the castrated other left behind in the man's completion of the Oedipal process, the woman whose lack of a penis condemns her to spend her life desiring its replacement or substitution, first, and "normally," through children. (2014: 25)

The Oedipal process is a stage where women are left behind due to their lack of sexual organs in contrast to men. In this sense, due to lacking the organ, women desire a substitution as a replacement: bearing children. In this way, they can compensate for their lack and be accepted by society and have an identity. As de Beauvoir puts it, "psychoanalysts, in particular, define man as a human being and woman as a female: every time she acts like a human being, the woman is said to be imitating the male" (2011: 85).

Therefore, Fowles's proto-postmodern feminist heroine, Sarah challenges the patriarchal construction of femininity in Victorian society. She has a child, yet as a way of subverting the social expectations she remains a single mother. This is not acceptable in Victorian society where both the child and the mother are seen as the property of the man: "human beings that she creates are not her own property but her family's, that is, man's, as he is the head" (de Beauvoir, 2011: 142). Opposing this conventional thought, Sarah has her first sexual intercourse with Charles and gets pregnant and does not inform Charles about their child; yet she raises the child by herself, without a husband. By rejecting to marry, and raising her child on her own, she challenges the patriarchal understanding of femininity. Knowing that she will be exposed to a husband because of her pregnancy, she chooses to hide it from the child's father until it is revealed (Fowles, 1970: 426-427). She decides to raise the kid by herself. As she puts it, "[s]ometimes I almost pity them [other women]. I think I have a freedom they cannot understand" (1970: 161). In a sense, she dies in society as a woman in order to survive as a free female individual. If she gives up and follows society's obligations, she cannot be visible, resurrect and tell her victory as a free woman.

Sarah resists sexist social understandings which determine women's identity and freedom. She rejects playing the angel in the house in the Victorian era by rejecting a man's marriage proposal. As she puts it, "I wish to be what I am, not what a husband, however kind, however indulgent, must expect me to become in marriage" (1970: 418). Marriage is a significant social institution in the Victorian era. As de Beauvoir

argues, a woman "has almost no direct relations with public authorities or autonomous relations with anyone outside her family. She looks more like a servant in work and motherhood than an associate: objects, values" (2011: 142). Marriage aims to create the family core which has a hierarchy within itself. By rejecting the marriage proposal, Sarah destroys that hierarchy. She decides not to be the inferior in the family institution where she cannot claim any feminine rights; instead, she chooses to be in control of her own identity and life: "What has kept me alive is my shame, my knowing that I am truly not like other women. I shall never have children, a husband, and those innocent happinesses they have. And they will never understand the reason for my crime," says Sarah (1970: 161).

B. Construction of a Female Identity

Sarah is a storyteller who creates an alternative story world and subverts masculine authority. She stands for a female author who guides her life story as well as a decision-maker of her identity and self. She is the creator of her own self and the author of her own life story. First, she dismantles the myth of eternal femininity and then constructs an independent feminine self. As stated previously, hysteria is historically associated with femininity. Elaine Showalter argues that "[i]t's a term that particularly enrages some feminists because for centuries it has been used to ridicule and trivialize women's medical and political complaints" (1997: 8). Similarly, Sarah is viewed as hysteric and mad. Dr Grogan claims that, due to anti-societal behaviours, women like Sarah use madness as a strategy to gain a man's sympathy, mercy, and love. As he states:

> They fell into a clear monthly or menstrual pattern. After analysing the evidence brought before the court, the Herr Doctor proceeds, in a somewhat moralistic tone, to explain the mental illness we today call hysteria--the assumption, that is, of symptoms of disease or disability in order to gain the attention and sympathy of others. (Fowles, 1970: 215)

Dr Grogan is a representative of the Victorian medical authority which misinterprets feminine reactions. He interprets Sarah's behaviours as malicious schemes to deceive Charles for attention and security. He represents the Victorian understanding of madness and femininity. However, Sarah's behaviours function as an escape from conventional patriarchy to gain feminine freedom. Dr Grogan's diagnosis and his

opinions about Sarah make Charles and others come to understand that the gender normative of hysteria refers to limiting the freedom of women who rebel against social pressure.

To create her own identity, Sarah uses madness against itself. As she states, "[a] madness was in me at that time. I did not see it clearly till that day in Exeter. The worst you thought of me then was nothing but the truth" (Fowles, 1970: 415). She also explains why she lied about her virginity: to show that she is the master and author of her body and identity as well as her life. She puts: "I did it so that people should point at me, should say, there walks the French Lieutenant's Whore - oh yes, let the word be said" (1970: 162). Therefore, madness is a kind of strategy for her to free it from the patriarchal definition of femininity. Feminists connect madness with authorship and power. This is what Sarah does: "No insult, no blame, can touch me" (1970: 161).

Female authorship is a significant issue for feminists since writing has a power that can support women in their struggle for the construction of the female self and identity. From a feminist perspective, one can notice that Roland Barthes's concept of the death of the author implies only a masculine concept of authorship. This shows that women are not included in the discussion of authorship. Barthes contends that "the Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child" (1977: 5). As seen, the author is gendered as a male, a father. Furthermore, as Barthes proposes, with the death of the author occurs the birth of the reader-critic. Consequently, there has been "an increase in the role of the critic in the creation of meaning" (Aryan, 2023: 338).

Fowles' heroine, Sarah's attempt to embrace hysteria is to practice her authorship. As opposed to the imposed femininity by society, Fowles' heroine attempts to rebel as a female author. Accordingly, Sarah is ready to risk everything for her authority as the creator of her life story. She distorts the social expectation of morality. She says, "I could not marry that man. So, I married shame" (Fowles, 1970: 161). By "marrying shame," in fact, she marries freedom. Sarah deconstructs even the comprehension and understanding of the concept of shame. She creates an alternative language and universe for her freedom through redefining concepts. Richard P. Lynch argues that "Sarah, then, has found an alternative symbolic universe, a social frame of

reference within which she is able to choose an identity" (2002: 57). Sarah represents a creative author who can sacrifice everything for her agency.

Fowles' heroine represents not only the deconstruction of the myth of eternal femininity but also the construction and creation of an independent feminine self. What is introduced to the reader is the creative process of a female heroine as an authorial voice of her story. In the beginning, Sarah is portrayed as a mysterious and outcast woman at the seashore, an unknown woman with a gloomy, unusual outfit and sorrowful face, as a "dark shape" (1970: 8). She is questioned and criticized by Charles and Ernestina since she is different from the typical Victorian woman. As Ernestina puts it, "[s]he is ... a little mad. Let us turn" (1970: 9). From Ernestina's viewpoint which represents Victorian society, Sarah is a fallen angel. She is given names like "tragedy": "A nickname. One of her nicknames" (1970: 8). These labels imply stories imposed on her. Each holds a narrative that constructs Sarah as a certain Victorian woman: a tragic fallen woman or the lieutenant's whore. Each constructs and frames a meta-narrative around her. These labels and nicknames represent the Victorian-dominant meta-narrative towards women. However, Sarah subverts these meta-narratives. In fact, she embraces the nicknames and labels as part of her identity and self since she redefines and uses them against themselves. As Linda Hutcheon argues, "it is Sarah who demands that 'Whore' be used, for she is free of the frivolity, the prudery, and even most of the feminine vanity of Ernestina, who is presented as a Victorian cliché" (1980: 10). By telling her own life story and framing her narrative, she facilitates a change in Charles's perspective towards her and women. Sarah, as the author of her story, fictionalizes her narration. She fictionalizes her story and identity to gain authorship. Sarah's storytelling indicates creativity and agency.

All in all, Fowles's novel represents a rebellious female character, Sarah Woodruff, who subverts the conservative expectations and normative understanding of femininity in the Victorian era. As women are defined in terms of the myth of eternal femininity, the postmodern feminist understanding of freedom becomes a matter of struggle for them in the 1960s and 70s As seen in the novel, Sarah is exposed to negative labels such as whore, tragedy and hysteric since she does not conform to society's expectations of femininity. Rather she uses such labels against themselves. Ultimately, she deconstructs the myth of the eternal feminine and creates her feminine

self and identity through storytelling, hence, exercising her authorial control over her own life story. Her narrative is liberating not only for other women but also for Charles.

IV. MADNESS AND AGENCY IN *THE MILLSTONE*

Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone* (1965) exemplifies postmodern feminism. As a post-war novel, it engages with postmodern feminist preoccupations and concerns about female agency in a patriarchal society. This chapter argues that the novel's heroine and narrator, Rosamund Stacey, exemplifies an independent female individual who rebels against society's gender discriminations which deny women independence and individual freedom in late 20th-century, London, England. Rosamund, as a postmodern storyteller, subverts the patriarchal understanding of femininity which identifies women as inferior, weak, dependent, and passive. Her actions which put the patriarchal conceptualization of femininity into question include rejecting to marry, choosing to live alone, working, raising her child on her own, and studying as a PhD student. Rosamund declares her financial and educational freedom to gain self-dependence as a single woman. Yet, as she attempts to live alone as a woman, she is being viewed as hysteric. This chapter argues that similar to Sarah Woodruff, Rosamund welcomes her "hysteric" label and uses it to deconstruct the patriarchal essentialist construction of women as inherently and biologically prone to madness. More importantly, it contends that Rosamund represents the so-called "mad" female author, the one who narrates her own life story and self into being and accordingly gains agency in her life story.

As is *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *The Millstone* is set in the 1960s in London too. The novel narrates the life and decisions of Rosamund Stacey, a young, educated, clever, sophisticated woman who lives alone in the flat of her parents who are in Africa for a philanthropic mission. As a PhD student, she writes her thesis on Elizabethan sonnets and earns money via tutorship. After her first sexual experience with George whom she thinks is gay, she gets pregnant. Overcoming a mental conflict, she decides to give birth to her baby without telling its father. She shows up as a single parent who deals with her birth process as she does not inform anybody about the child's biological father; consequently, she lives her whole life with her beloved

daughter. Drabble portrays a woman whose actions bring about her individual agency and freedom. The novel is empowering for women as it fictionalizes a woman who educates and becomes an intellectual, lives alone, bears and raises a child without a father at a time when the dominant view of femininity is still that of the myth of the eternal feminine.

Like Sarah Woodruff, Rosamund faces harsh criticism from society due to the choices she makes. She is given various degrading nicknames and labels just because she educates herself and lives as an independent female individual. For instance, as she does not marry, she is called a "spinster" (1968: 63), a patriarchal derogatory label implying the danger of a single woman, and "a woman with sexual problems" (1968: 93) as it is expected of women to satisfy their sexual drive via marriage early in life or they would have sexual problems leading to hysteria. In other words, a long-held patriarchal belief holds that a young woman should get married early, or she might get hysteric as the sexual desires would disrupt her womb which is a source of follies and evil. As Devereux puts it, "while hysteria was reframed with reference to new laws and was new in principle, its recommended treatment in psychoanalysis would remain what Bernheimer observes it had been for centuries: marrying and having babies and in this way regaining the 'lost' phallus" (2014: 25). This patriarchal perception of hysteria indicates that unmarried women are more likely to become hysteric due to the lack of a phallus. As a substitute for this lack, they should get married and bear children. Referring to the conventional definition of hysteria, Devereux adds, "the woman whose lack of a penis condemns her to spend her life desiring its replacement or substitution, first, and 'normally' through children" (2014: 25). She continues that "[t]he basis of psychoanalysis, the 'invention' of modern hysteria (by Freud and Breuer, after Charcot) is thus also the 'invention' of modern femininity and the affirmation in modern medical discourse of women's necessary function as bearers of children" (2014: 25). Therefore, hysteria is historically associated with unmarried women, whose implication forces them to get married and bear children early.

However, the idea that unmarried women are more likely to get hysterical is an old myth. Its aim has been to maintain and sustain control over women through marriage and bearing children. For instance, when Rosamund and Hamish stay in a hotel, the receptionist realises that Rosamund writes her maiden name and hesitates to

register their name due to their unmarried situation. The receptionist reacts: “Oh well, I’ll have to go and ask” (Drabble, 1968: 6). She has to ask the authorities who decide whether this unmarried woman is allowed to stay with Hamish. This clearly indicates de Beauvoir’s argument that women have been viewed as the second sex, secondary to men, always defined and viewed in relation to men.

Single motherhood is not yet welcomed in the 1960s still due to its presumed connection to hysteria and madness and its social stigmatization as a shame. As Thane & Evans explicate, “[t]he conventional narrative about unmarried motherhood is that it was always shameful. Mothers and their ‘illegitimate’ children were disgraced, abandoned, cast out by society, even by their own families, except possibly among the poorest classes, until the 1960s” (2012: 1). Therefore, unmarried women and their “illegitimate” children were not respected or accepted. Dr Vesna Leskošek argues that “[h]istorically, the life of mothers with ‘illegitimate’ children reflects the social and cultural position of women that was framed and bound by prevailing ideologies about the place of women in the society” (2011: 209-210). Thus, unmarried women were targeted and labelled in the hospital, as well as other public institutions. For instance, their bed was marked with “U” signifying the word “unmarried” to indicate that it was birth out of wedlock. As exemplified in the novel, due to her unmarried situation, Rosamund’s bed is marked with “U” as well (Drabble, 1968: 104). Rosamund’s bed mark is discriminating, putting her in a different and inferior category among mothers. This discriminative tactic as a way of condemnation is to discourage them from disobeying social rules. The “U” in the novel, as well as in the 1960s society, functions similar to “A” in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, both implying adultery with an illegitimate child. Her sister Beatrice’s anxiety about Rosamund’s illegitimate child represents the concerns and fear of the unmarried woman’s motherhood. Furthermore, Beatrice’s worry about her brother’s possible reaction reveals that they are under the shadow of a conservative mindset. As Beatrice puts it, “[w]hat if you were to run into him or something, or if any of his friends were to see you in the street It would be awful if they through heard him because he wouldn’t think twice” (1968: 78). The way she reminds her of her brother Andrew shows that she confirms the conventional mindset as opposed to Rosamund’s non-conservative decisions.

However, Drabble's novel demonstrates the transition from a patriarchal conventional society to a modern one wherein women experience sexual freedom empowered by the Sexual Revolution. As Jamila Abdul Amir Taher argues, "Drabble naturally reflects this change of the state of affairs of that time and enables her heroine to have higher education, as the career structure predetermines one's position within the society" (2019: 1189). The novel is set in that transition period and is exemplary of the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s when people faced some radical changes regarding marriage, premarital sex and birth and challenged authorities. As Marwick puts it, "[s]ocieties in the 1960s were characterised by a tapestry of interweaving movements challenging the existing authorities and conventions" (2005: 782). Societies experienced a different understanding of female freedom and sexuality. According to Millet, "[t]his, in particular, meant the attainment of a measure of sexual freedom for women, the group who in general had never been allowed much, if any, such freedom without a devastating loss of social standing, or the dangers of pregnancy in a society with strong sanctions against illegitimate birth" (2000: 63). The Sexual Revolution, as a social and cultural movement, emerged in the 1960s, questioning conventional views of sexuality, marriage, heterosexuality, and childbearing. In *The Sexual Revolution: Toward a Self-Regulating Character Structure*, psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich argues that individuals can achieve psychological relief if they can release their subconsciously repressed sexuality. As he articulates, "[t]he existence of strict moral principles has invariably signified that the biological, and specifically sexual needs of man were not being satisfied. Every moral regulation is in itself sex-negating, and all compulsory morality is life-negating" (1974: 25). Triggered by his explanations, this movement played a role in the normalisation of premarital sex, homosexuality, abortion, childbirth control and female agency. In 1965, contraceptive pills became available just to married women and abortion became legalized in some countries. It was a period when women became more aware of their feminine rights. However, the patriarchal perception of genders still functions and does not fully disappear in the period.

Overall, the novel, coinciding with the revolution, demonstrates women's demand for their rights such as feminine sexuality and childbirth. However, it is a time when pre-marital sex is still criticized as Lydia, Rosamund's best friend, does: "I agree that ordinary babies aren't much of a status symbol, but illegitimate ones are just about

the last word" (1968: 75). On the other hand, to prevent Rosamund from having an illegitimate child, her sister Beatrice, who expresses the patriarchal ideals of femininity and has three children, tries to persuade her not to give birth to the child: "I think this is the most dreadful mistake and would be frightful for both you and the child" (1968: 78).

A. Deconstruction of the Male-constructed Metarranative of Femininity

Drabble visits poststructuralism's deconstruction technique to deconstruct and subvert the patriarchal fabricated concept of the female self. Deconstruction challenges fixed meanings, stable identities, and hierarchical structures. It subverts and questions gender roles in line with postmodern scepticism toward established societal narratives. Deconstruction helped women writers to deconstruct male-controlled family structures and the myth of the eternal feminine rendering women as emotional, passive, and lacking creativity and consequently authorship. This part will reveal that the novel deconstructs the metanarrative of the eternal feminine by using hysteria against patriarchy. It will demonstrate that just like Sarah Woodruff, Rosamund Stacey exercizes female authorship and agency through hysteria.

Marriage functioned as an important social institution and a way of dominating women. As de Beauvoir argues, "[m]an succeeded in enslaving woman, but in doing so, he robbed her of what made possession desirable. Integrated into the family and society, woman's magic fades rather than transfigures itself; reduced to a servant's condition, she is no longer the wild prey incarnating all of nature's treasures" (2011: 241). As de Beauvoir indicates, women's independence and identity are endangered by men. After they get married, they lose their social status and identity. Similarly, Millet argues that:

> By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband. But though our law in general considers man and wife as one person, yet there are some instances in which she is separately considered; as inferior to him, and acting by his compulsion. (2000: 68)

Therefore, marriage is based on patriarchal control and functions in favour of patriarchy. Women are bound to men via marriage, causing a loss of their agency. That

is why Rosamund rejects marriage as she does not want to be defined in terms of the other sex. In doing so, she rejects the male control which would make her an object in the domestic atmosphere of the house. The patriarchal perception of marriage enslaves women as well as withholding their identity and agency. When Rosamund is in the hospital, she is called “Mrs.” as a married woman. She replies, “but I’m not Mrs. Stacey, I’m Miss.” and the nurse replies that “but we call everyone Mrs. here” (1968: 58-59). The nurse’s response represents how women’s self and identity are defined in relation to men via marriage. In this context “Mrs” implies possession of the woman: now you are not single but possessed by a man.

Just like Sarah Woodruff, Rosamund is in a society that defines women according to the myth of the eternal feminine. She is subjected to harsh criticism due to her non-conservative behaviours. Her friends, affairs, and sister expect her to abort her child as it is a birth out of wedlock. Nonetheless, throughout the novel, she appears as a postmodern resistant female individual who deconstructs the conservative society’s conventional codes by practising pre-marital sex, having a baby as a single mother, living alone as an independent woman, and not getting married or belonging to any man; instead, having an affair with two men (George and Joe) at the same time without hiding from anyone is a revolutionary challenge to the social morality. As she puts it, “I’m one of those Bernard Shaw women who want children but no husband” (Drabble, 1968: 106). She is referring to Shaw’s work, *Man and Superman* (1903), which depicts a female character, Ann Whitefield, who is an unmarried mother.

Similarly, when Rosamund goes to a hotel, she puts a ring for Hamish, not for herself (1968, p. 53). This shows that she does not care about the social codes of femininity. She is both different from her society and indifferent to their understanding of morality. As she puts it, “I was born with the notion that one ought to do something, preferably something unpleasant, for others.” (1968: 50). She does not care about the rumours and criticism about her sexual practice. On the contrary, she utilizes her affairs with two men as an opportunity to conceal that the child’s father is George. Similarly, when she is at the hospital for registration as a pregnant woman, she faces particularly toxic reactions from the hospital staff. As the narrator states, “he said how long had I been married, and I said that I was not married. It was quite simple. He shook his head, more in sorrow than in anger, and said did my parents know? I said

yes, thinking it would be easier to say yes, and not wishing to embark on explaining about their being in Africa" (1968: 38).

Additionally, similar to Sarah Woodruff who is happy with the title of the French lieutenant's whore, Rosamund embraces any label or criticism about her. Caro defines her as a "sexless female don" which means that as a successful academic, "she starts her sexual life with a college boyfriend, Hamish, with whom she doesn't have real sex although she appears to be having an affair. Later on, she dates with two men simultaneously" (2018: 17-18). When Lydia, her best friend regards Rosamund's actions as sexually problematic, she feels flattered and welcomes criticism by others: "I flattered myself that I emerged rather well independent, strong-willed, and very worldly and *au fait* with sexual problems. An attractive girl, I thought" (1968: 93). Being in between the conservative and permissive mindsets, she struggles for her independence.

The 1960s is a transition period in which the Sexual Revolution occupies individuals' minds while the conventional norms still retain their existence in many parts of the social life of the family institution. As Millet puts it, "a sexual revolution would bring the institution of patriarchy to an end, abolishing both the ideology of male supremacy and the traditional socialization by which it is upheld in matters of status, role, and temperament" (2000: 63). As she argues, this movement threatens the conservative myth of the eternal feminine in the family institution. It awakens women against the patriarchal social norms which manipulate and control women under the male-dominated social construction and creates a ground for more postmodern feminists. This triggers feminist critics and writers to struggle for their autonomy, by reclaiming hysteria and utilizing it against the patriarchy. Drabble's *The Milestone* is an exemplary work to reflect the period's women in such a societal atmosphere. Rosamund uses hysteria and plays the role of a hysteric woman to deconstruct the man-made concept of the eternal feminine self and redefine both hysteria and femininity. As she puts it, "I had to have hysterics . . . And it worked, did it?" (1968: 137). Rosamund uses hysteria as a weapon against patriarchal oppression. As she articulates, "I think I know myself better than anyone can know me" (1968: 97). The awareness of her feminine "self" triggers Rosamund's demand for liberation as a female

individual. She can afford any price for her independence: “All I had to sacrifice was interest and love. I could do without these things” (1968: 19).

To better understand how hysteria is associated with femininity, it is necessary to look at the 1960s sociocultural events such as the anti-psychiatry movement. The movement was led by David Cooper, Thomas Szasz, and R. D. Laing in the 1960s. It challenged traditional psychiatry and its treatment of mental illness. Laing’s ideas in particular influenced women writers of the 1960s. He argued that individuals experience a split between their authentic self and a false, socially constructed self, leading to the disintegration of a unified self. As he puts it, “one must bear in mind that deterioration and disintegration are only one outcome of the initial schizoid organization. Quite clearly, authentic versions of freedom, power, and creativity can be achieved and lived out” (1965: 89). Similar to the schizoid condition, which is understood as a fragmented sense of self/identity, in the 1960s many women began to portray female characters who strategically reveal their self is fragmented on the brink of disintegration.

Inspired by Ling’s ideas, postmodern feminists try to get rid of the false self which is imposed on them by patriarchy and construct or find their true female self. To regain their own identity, autonomy, and control, women attempt to practise hysteria and madness as it allows them to go through a disintegration of the self, splitting it into multiple selves and then finding the true female selves among the false ones. Indeed, Rosamund deconstructs the male conception of female identity and place within society by practising the role of a hysteric, mad woman storyteller. She undergoes significant personal and identity transformations as she navigates through single motherhood. Firstly, she is an academic, single woman who lives alone in her parents’ flat as an independent woman. Secondly, through experiencing an unexpected pregnancy during which she finds herself an emotional, sensitive pregnant Rosamund who needs love and affection. In an attempt to discover who she truly is, she experiences all of these selves and identities. Rosamund challenges these to subvert the conventional impositions. She is concerned with discovering her true feminine self among the imposed ones.

B. Construction of a Self: Writing the Self into Life

Rosamund experiences and observes herself in different periods such as pregnancy and motherhood. She is ready to risk everything for her autonomy. As she puts it, it "seemed so have this small living extension of myself, so dangerous, so vulnerable, for whose injuries and crimes" (1968: 147). During her quest for her true self, she expresses concerns and doubts: "Had it belonged to the realm of mere accident I would have surely got rid of [the baby], for though I am coward about operations and hospitals" she says (1968: 64). She tries to find the reason for being a mother and the baby's existence. Consequently, she decides to keep the baby: "I visited the doctor the next day. That visit was a revelation. It was an initiation into a new way of life a way that was thenceforth to be mine forever" (1968: 36). Giving birth functions as an act of rebirth for her to construct a new authentic female self, free from patriarchal impositions. She deliberately pushes herself into these extreme positions, with the purpose of revealing and breaking down the false self and constructing a new one: "The more I thought about it, the more convinced I that my state must have some meaning, that it must, however haphazard and unexpected and unasked, be connected to some sequence, to some significant development of my life" (1968: 66-67). This process is seen as a way to dissolve the constructed identities and selves and allow her authentic self to emerge. She adds:

> I could see that I was letting myself I for more hospitals and more unpleasantness by continuing than I would have done by termination. But it did not seem the kind of thing one could have removed, like a wart or a corn. It seemed to have meaning. It seemed to be the kind of event to which, however accidental its cause, one could not say No. (1968: 66)

Although she is not familiar with pregnant Rosamund, she dares experience her. Her pregnancy is also expected to be an obstacle to her independence career and independence; however, she reconciles motherhood and career. She continues:

> My state was curious; it was as though I were waiting for some link to be revealed to me that would make sense of disconnexions, though I had no evidence at all that it existed. At times I had a vague and complicated sense that this pregnancy had been sent to me in order to reveal to me a scheme of things totally different from the scheme

> which I inhabited, totally removed from academic enthusiasms, social consciousness, etiolated undefined emotional connexions, and the exercise of free will. (1968: 67)

In order not to be defeated and swallowed by the patriarchal-constructed self, she struggles as a single woman during her pregnancy and motherhood and overcomes that period through her resistance and survives this conflict and skips to motherhood. Also, in the motherhood stage like in the pregnancy stage, she experiences some ebb and flow as she is not familiar with it. She feels confused, fragmented, and worried about the rest of her career as well as her life realising that it has already started changing. As she expresses:

> With a baby, though, I could not afford such scruples. Also, I would have to go to the library to work, and one cannot take babies to libraries. Something would have to be done, plans would have to be made. I could feel that my own personal morality was threatened: I was going to have to do things that I couldn't do. Not things that were wrong, nothing as dramatic as that, but things that were against the grain of my nature. (1968: 72)

She used to be free and planned, but now she feels stuck. When the other women's husbands come to the hospital, she feels emotional and lonely: "I thought that I would not mind, but when the visiting time came and the shuffling, silent husbands arrived I drew my flimsy curtain and turned my head into the pillow and wept" (1968: 110). She struggles with being in between her true feminine self and the imposed false ones as weak, needy, and emotional. Consequently, she overcomes this confusion: "Actually, surprisingly enough, my stay in the hospital was one of the more cheerful and sociable patches of my life. Except for the last evening, I did not for a moment feel lost or abandoned; nor, owing perhaps to my delight in the baby, did I feel that I was the receiving end of pity and sympathy" (1968: 111). Finally, she reconciles with motherhood as part of her femininity. Motherhood "self" is adapted, so she has no more confusion.

As concepts of authorship did not include female authorship until the 1960s, women writers struggled to have a voice as authors. Waugh defines female authorship as an "escape from the gender-specific myth of the 'Angel in the House'" (2006: 184). In the 1960s, women writers and feminists tried to assert their agency by subverting the angel in the house first and then constructing a new feminine self through writing.

Consequently, they could achieve female authorship and write their own stories as exemplified by Drabble's heroine.

Rosamund stands for the female author, storyteller, who writes her own life into existence and thereby becomes the agent, and in control, of her life. She represents the challenging woman who creates her own world and defines its rules. In a period when sex and illegitimacy are still taboos, she embarks on becoming the author of her own life story. Her pregnancy pushes her even closer to authorship. Waugh argues that "[i]n both Drabble's and Brookner's novels, romance, marriage, and motherhood (as socially institutionalised) offer an irreconcilable loss and discovery of possible identity for women" (1989: 151). Like her decision to give birth to her baby, she decides to name her Octavia: "In the end, I said I would call her Octavia" (Drabble, 1968: 105). Her choice of name showcases her feminist resistance. As Alpakın Martınez Caro explains, "[t]he choice of the name of the baby is also very significant as Octavia Hill (1838-1912) was a prominent literary woman born in England. Housing reporter, philanthropist" (2018: 21). The name symbolizes her ideal feminine identity, which is defined in terms of self-reliance and control. Her daughter is part of her femininity, a reminder of her existence. Octavia stands for the continuity of her independence and career. Having a baby makes her spend more time alone at home, studying, and completing her final paper before the deadline. Her academic performance and authorship are not negatively but positively affected by motherhood. As George realizes, now Rosamund writes more than before: "You seem to do quite a lot of writing these days. I see things with your name on quite often" (1968: 166). Thus, she has decided to become an active agent, writing her own life story into existence.

Rosamund represents the female author as she narrates the story too. With the first-person narration, Rosamund's internal thoughts and reflections provide insight into her evolving sense of self and her attempts to construct a personal narrative that aligns with her experiences and aspirations. She also stands for Drabble's alter-ego, as a fictionalized projection of Drabble's own psyche and concerns. Aryan argues that "[c]haracters are projections and concretisation of voices or selves – voices which are first disembodied and detached from the author and then are given new attires by being embodied in imaginary bodies, as autonomous agents" (2020: 110). Rosamund's life story constructs and projects her authority and feminine identity. Narrating the story,

Rosamund reminds the reader that they are reading her life story, that she is the one in control, the author: “When, some years after the Hamish episode” (1968: 7). Indicating the novel’s episode, she emphasizes her authorship self-reflexively to indicate that she is the creator and ruler of her story. She informs the reader that she has the control of the narrative. As the heroine and narrator of the novel, she constructs her female self/identity and gains her freedom by storytelling: the way she puts things (in her mind and writing) together, the way she is writing her own self, and her life story. In doing so, she takes the place of a subjective agent in control of the characters and events rather than a passive object to which things happen. For instance, she intentionally gives Octavia’s age wrong upon George’s question: “I returned. Quickly, surprisingly quickly for one so bad at dates, I realized that it would be better and less committing to give a wrong age, so I lied and said that she was eleven months old, although she was still a long way off this ripe age” (1968: 164). She thinks that lying about the age is better for the flow of the narration. This makes her to be in control, leading the story as she intends.

Additionally, she mentions Lydia’s novel and discovers that it is about her life story. Rosamund actually writes and narrates another story, Lydias’, within her own story. As she puts it, “[b]ut then, as the chapters wore on, I began to have my doubts. Like myself, the character was engaged in academic research, an activity which Lydia appeared to regard with thorough contempt” (1968: 93). Rosamund exercizes her authorship and agency. Through Lydia, she writes her story within a story to establish her creativity. Sometimes, she attempts to try different tactics. She excludes herself from the fiction she writes within the story: “It was as though I had opened my eyes on a whole narrative caught in a single picture, a narrative in which I myself had taken no part; it had been played out between the Sister and the others” (1968: 135). She tells her story and identity which reveals her authorial power. Her self-storytelling indicates her creativity as well as her agency.

All in all, Margaret Drabble’s major concern in *The Millstone* is what postmodern feminism takes as its focal point, that is, female authorship. The novel also reflects some of the preoccupations of the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s, depicting concerns about the female individual amidst social constraints and individualistic issues. The novel’s heroine and narrator, Rosamund Stacey, exemplifies an independent woman who rebels against society’s discriminatory approach to gender in

late 20th-century England which ignores women's independence and freedom, classifying them as inferior, weak, dependent, passive and secondary. By not approaching the idea of marriage, and not informing her child's father about the fact that he is its father, she subverts the social construction and understanding of the concept of femininity. Furthermore, she declares her financial and academic freedom by living alone, working, raising her children alone, and studying as a graduate student. This way she exercizes her authorship and agency. As she tries to live alone as a woman, she faces society's label of hysteria; however, she uses hysteria against the patriarch by subverting the imposed norms. She, like Sarah, is a so-called "mad" woman who brings her life story and self into existence and thereby has control on her life.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined how Sarah and Rosamund, as female anti-conservative individuals, attempt to construct and preserve their true self/identity, agency, and authorship in a patriarchal atmosphere. It revealed that these heroines deconstruct the myth of eternal femininity, which is the patriarchal ideal image of femininity. They do so by not conforming to societal conservative norms, rejecting marriage, deciding about their pregnancy and child, ignoring harsh criticism and blackening labels like hysteric, whore and spinster, and through storytelling. Eventually, these two female protagonists create a new sense of female self by taking over the authorship of their life stories.

Chapter one provided a brief introduction to this thesis. It introduced Fowles and Drabble, unfolding their biographical information and specifying their literary success. As Pamela S. Bromberg puts it:

> The nine novels produced by Margaret Drabble over the last two decades have provided rich ground for critical analysis. Her artistic development has been rapid and remarkable, eliciting numerous explorations of thematic issues ranging from Drabble's feminism to the psychological development of her protagonists to more theological issues of salvation and grace or, lately, to the social realism of her more recent work. (1986: 179)

The chapter then included a review of the literature to delineate the gap in the study of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Millstone*. As it demonstrated, the intricate relationship between hysteria, female authorship, agency and creativity in the novels has remained unexplored. The first chapter attempted to compare the two novels to reveal their heroines' similarities in terms of female experience, struggle, and success in patriarchal societies. It introduced the reader to its main mythology which draws on feminists and postmodernists such as de Beauvoir, Friedan, Millet, Greer, Waugh, and Derrida.

Chapter two provided the reader with a detailed historical background and its relationship with the theoretical discussions of postmodern feminism. As explained, according to postmodern feminism, individuality and femininity have been a victim of the oppressive and restrictive society. The patriarchal society has rendered and viewed women as secondary, and inferior to men, and subjected them to different forms of discrimination, denying their agency and autonomy. The patriarchal society has maintained its dominance and control over women as the Other who lack creativity and intellect. Instead, women are expected to fulfil the demands of men, husbands, and children. When women begin to exercise their autonomy and authority, they are likely to be labelled as mad and hysteric. Thus, postmodern feminists such as Betty Friedan Germaine Greer, and Kate Millet encouraged women to liberate themselves from the myth of the eternal feminine and construct their own feminine self.

Postmodern feminism helped deconstruct the essentialist long-held belief that women are prone to hysteria. It drew on deconstruction to subvert false associations with and perceptions of the feminine identity such as viewing them in terms of biology. It emphasized patriarchy dictates women's roles in society based on their biological differences. It focused on social and political factors when addressing gender discrimination. For instance, it deconstructed the masculine/feminine binary opposition as discriminating in nature and having its roots in language.

Similarly, postmodern feminism challenged and deconstructed the patriarchal representation of women as angelic and obedient. This challenge is what Simon de Beauvoir calls the myth of "the eternal feminine" (2011: 258). As explained in the second chapter, this myth is a construct rather than a natural fact and has denied women the faculty of intellect and creativity. Also, Helene Cixous openly addressed the absence of women in the literary canon and encouraged them to enter the field and express their voices. Similarly, Waugh pointed out the problem of the absence of female authorship in the history of literature. Patriarchy has maintained that if women practice creativity and rationality, they would likely end up as mad and hysteric. For instance, Freud described hysteria as a psychological disorder as a result of repressed outcomes of childhood traumas. Yet, feminists interpreted hysteria as a protolanguage, an alternative way of communication for women. For this reason, many writers in the 1960s began to write female characters who were hysterical.

Chapter three presented a detailed analysis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* to exemplify a postmodern text which deconstructs the concept of a unified self as well as the myth of the eternal feminine. Sarah represents a rebellious proto-postmodern woman storyteller in Victorian society in which women are oppressed and controlled. During the period, women were assigned different roles and duties which kept them inferior to men. In the novel, Charles represents the patriarchal mindset about women: "But you cannot reject the purpose for which woman was brought into creation" (1970: 429).

The novel specifically points out creativity and female authorship from a postmodern feminist perspective. Sarah is an ideal feminist heroine who resists the masculine social order. As she expresses, "I refuse, as I refused the other gentleman, because you [Charles] cannot understand that to me it is not an absurdity" (1970: 419). As she does conform to societal norms and conventions, she is called a hysteric. In fact, Sarah employs hysteria deliberately as a means to deconstruct the patriarchally-imposed self. She challenges conventional codes by rejecting marriage and practising storytelling to assert her authorship and autonomy. In doing so, she takes the lead in the deconstruction of the myth of eternal femininity. She becomes pregnant without marrying, bears and raises her child without a husband and the child's father makes her an independent woman.

Sarah is the writer of her own life story and creates an alternative universe to liberate Charles from patriarchal perceptions of femininity. In addition, Barthes' debate on the death of the author primarily excludes female authorship, implying an absence of such canon. For this reason, the matter of authorship holds considerable importance for postmodern feminists. Similarly, Sarah practices female authorship, deconstructs the myth of eternal femininity and forms an autonomous female author who is in charge of her life story.

Chapter four argued that similar to Sarah, Rosamund Stacey represents the autonomous female individual and storyteller. Drabble's heroine is set in a society where women are still oppressed. The social background of *The Millstone* demonstrates the preoccupations of the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s. Rosamund challenges and deconstructs societal norms and gains authorial control over her life through her narrative. She decides to remain a single mother in an era when unmarried

motherhood is yet not acceptable and is faced with shame and stigmatization. As she does not want to get married, she is referred to as a spinster. The marriage institution is patriarchal as it reinforces masculine authority and denies women freedom. Accordingly, women had to marry early to make up for what Freud called the lack of a penis. As Butler puts it:

> But this "being" the Phallus is necessarily dissatisfying to the extent that women can never fully reflect that law; some feminists argue that it requires a renunciation of women's own desire (a double renunciation, in fact, corresponding to the "double wave" of repression that Freud claimed founds femininity), which is the expropriation of that desire as the desire to be nothing other than a reflection, a guarantor of the pervasive necessity of the Phallus. (1999: 59)

According to this patriarchal view, unmarried women were believed to be prone to hysteria. The novel reveals that the association of hysteria with unmarried and childless women is a patriarchal construct.

According to this patriarchal view, unmarried women were believed to be prone to hysteria. The novel reveals that the association of hysteria with unmarried and childless women is a patriarchal construct.

The novel expresses some of the preoccupations of the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s regarding premarital sex, marriage and childbirth. As Rosamund puts it, "I said that I was not married. It was quite simple. He [the doctor] shook his head, more in sorrow than in anger, and said did my parents know" (Drabble, 1968: 38). The doctor's reaction is condemning and reinstating the belief that the child of an unmarried mother is illegitimate. Similarly, Beatrice expresses concern about Rosamund's child as illegitimate. Accordingly, Rosamund attempts to deconstruct this male-constructed conception of femininity. She challenges it by engaging in pre-marital relationships, remaining a single mother, and living independently.

Rosamund experiences self-discovery in various life stages such as pregnancy and motherhood, facing the potential risk of losing herself. She risks her autonomy, choosing between failing in front of patriarchy or challenging the notion that a woman's identity relies on masculine presence during singlehood, pregnancy, post-partum, and motherhood. She grapples with doubts about motherhood and the

existence of the baby. She deliberately dismantles societal expectations and reveals her true self. Despite the societal expectations, pregnant Rosamund overcomes the assumption that her pregnancy could be an obstacle to her career and independence. Motherhood becomes a catalyst for Rosamund's academic and authorial success, contrary to societal expectations. She embraces single motherhood as an integral aspect of her femininity, dispelling societal misconceptions about it. She becomes the female author in control of her life story thanks to her financial capability as a self-reliant, independent woman. She strategically embraces her isolation and single motherhood and uses hysteria as a tool to dismantle the patriarchal construction of femininity.

The fourth chapter's last part revolved around Rosamund's authorship. The narrative extends beyond her quest for the self to include female authorship. Before the 1960s, women hardly appeared in the literary canon. Thus, women writers began to affirm their authorship. Drabble, through her character Rosamund, demonstrates women's ability to control their narratives and lives. As the first-person narrator, she constructs her female identity through storytelling. She exercises authorship by intentionally manipulating details within the narrative. She even narrates Lydia's story within her own, showcasing her creative agency and control as opposed to passivity. Consequently, Rosamund emerges as a powerful force in control of her identity and narrative.

To conclude, John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone* exemplify postmodern feminism's preoccupations since they address female identity, agency, and authorship within a patriarchal society. The novels represent rebellious female characters, Sarah Woodruff and Rosamund Stacey, who subvert the patriarchal understanding of femininity. Sarah and Rosamund face negative labels such as tragedy, hysteria, and mad since they do not conform to society's expectations of women such as getting married. Instead, they use these labels as a tool against patriarchy. Ultimately, they create their own feminine identity and exercise authorial control over their own life stories via storytelling. They stand for the female author who deconstructs the myth of the eternal feminine and constructs the female self, authorship and agency.

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