

IMPACT OF PREVALENT PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY ON WORKING MOTHERS WITH GEORGIA MAIDEN'S CONFESSIONS OF A ONCE FASHIONABLE MUM

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ABSTRACT:

The social conduct of patriarchy encompasses the lives of women and impacts their roles as professionals and workers. This befuddling institutionalization of imposing restrictions and responsibilities on women without consent stigmatizes society's reputation and shuns a woman's life to restrictions. Georgia Maiden's novel, Confessions of a Once Fashionable Mum (2015) delves into the impacted lives of women due to the patriarchal system and promotes the identity of working mothers as designated with liberation, independence, and equal rights. It focuses on the responsibility of new mothers and the sacrifice of their careers to keep up with society's definition of an ideal mother. The research contends the role of women as working mothers by opposing the setup of patriarchal society and ancient philosophies by speaking for women worldwide. The research analyzes the text by employing the Theory of Work Adjustment by Fitzgerald & Rounds, 1994 and Frug's Postmodern Feminist Theory (1992) forming a stance on feminism and working mothers in the patriarchal society.

Introduction:

Georgia Maiden's *Confessions of a Once Fashionable* (2015) is a formidable work of contemporary literature constructing a platform for new mothers battling the kindred journey in the name of motherhood. This article discusses the struggles of working mothers and their attempt to balance the periods of vulnerability and terrors in the time of pregnancy and postpartum. This article aims to analyze the journey of nurturing a newborn, a mother's own body, and the norms of society. The author of *Confession of a Once Fashionable Mum*, Georgia Madden, provides a backdrop of Western Society and its prevalent notions of lawful mothers, domesticated mothers, and rules for raising a child. According to the 2021 statistics, around 61.7% of women are performing their roles as working mothers while others are forced to conduct their responsibilities as domesticated women. Georgia Madden employs this idea with a satirical and critical approach to the recurring society and the authorities. Ally, Matt, and their daughter Coco display the course of an ideal small family running errands of life. However, the protagonist, Ally, configures consistent battles of resuming her job as a Fashion Editor. This preceding idea in the novel and the author becomes a voice for all the quietened women.

As Virginia Wolff, a postmodernist author says, "A woman must have money and a room of her own." Georgia Madden vocalizes the concerns of 30% of women through her novel in the Western Community. Nonetheless, the topic of working mothers is stated to be recurrent throughout the world and in all continents across the globe. Therefore, studying and measuring statistics across the continent would mean an enormous percentage of women deprived of their

rights, leverage, and potential. Maya Angelou, a black feminist, raises her voice against the colonialist attitude and treatment of whites and talks in favour of colours, race, and region. Similarly, Georgia Madden emphasizes the role of women as working mothers and embraces the identity and its recognition with a humble heart. Twinkle Khanna once said, “God could not be everywhere, so he created mothers. And the devil could not be everywhere, so he created mothers-in-law.” This suits well the current situation in Ally’s life. Despite Ally’s mother-in-law and her rants, Ally begins leading the happy mummies club and professes her entrepreneurial abilities and makes the club a hit. Only at the end do people accept Ally Bloom for her business mastery and passion for the profession, including her detested mother-in-law. Georgia Madden sketches bitter reality so exquisitely that it brings tears of pity to everybody’s eyes except the fragile society makers. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every individual- man or woman, is eligible to work and earn money for a living in all respects; even then, the promising institute of earning is as alien for mothers as a creaking door of dollars for zombies. The Author vividly cuts a piece of cake and, instead of eating it, smashes it on society’s face to prove that the term working women can easily be curved and slanted to relocate alphabets and rename it to working mothers. Dealing with plenty of agonizing remarks, the protagonist tops her idea of work and proves herself to be a great mother and leader.

Literature Review:

Women grow to discard their dependence and reliance on men and construct ways to build a living for themselves and independence in relation to ecology and nature. The research on Twinkle Khanna’s *The Legend of Lakshmi Prasad* encompasses four short stories empowered by women protagonists and philogynists. She presents the idea of independent women, ageless love, divorced women, and a husband helping his wife with her menstrual hygiene.

Melina J refers to the ongoing situation of women and appreciates their progress in society after the pre-feminist movement drawn by a woman author. She says, “The time period and her privileged position in society also provided her (Khanna) with the space to explore the unexplored realms of feminism in Indian culture, which was not previously accessed by other women writers.” (Melina J, 2021, pp. 138-139). The research analyzes the idea of age constraining humans from feelings of love, and appreciates the rejection of labels like widowed and divorcee. It projects a pleasant living for women of all ages. She opposes sexism in a broader prospect the way Greta Gerwig writes, “Men hate women, and women hate women. It’s the one thing we have in common.” (Barbie, 2023)

Feminism movement is a form of celebration in the name of women to help them disguise their value from an oppressed, miserable and dependent insect to an independent, equal and fortified human being. There is a variety of women living under various circumstances which have come to establish a feminist movement (Fakih, 2008). This movement is developed in form of traditions like liberal feminism, radical, socialist, Marxist, postmodern and ecofeminism. All of these traditions reincarnate and rejuvenate the significance of women in society and revitalize their self-esteem (Tong, 2010). It focuses on the fact that not all opposing genders express hatred toward women, and not every man should be labeled as a misogynist; instead, some individuals embrace the core of women, including their biology (reproductive system, menstrual system) and psychology (emotional system). She refers to problems from general to specific with absolute freedom, including role reversals, new norms and introduction of women from all cultures, religions, ethnicities, races, and colors. (Melina J, 2021)

Hannam (2007) displays his point of view on what conditions the present position of women has been formed. These conditions include the patriarchal idea of power imbalance or the equation of controller and victim where men tend to remain the controllers and women are made the victim. However, this idea can be shunned since it has only been formed by the society and the citizens have only been *taught* to continue living with this notion. Therefore, there needs to be an incredible stress on females and their position as an equal in the world.

Women are formed as equals not only to gain equal respect and equal position in society but also to emphasize on their gain as a powerful, independent individual and explore themselves as a strong individual in everyday life (Mills, 2001). There are certain concepts emitted using gender concepts by feminist literary critics. They define these roles in proposition to terms like; gender differences that include the difference in social conduct, behaviour, dress-up, performances, roles, and characteristics that had been the premise of their home education. The second concept is of gender gaps that includes the difference in voting, political point of view, and their conduction between men and women. Genderization pronounces the concept of firm beliefs, values, morals, and intellect for oneself and others and conduct a strong sense of self-identity. Next is gender identity that clarifies the human identity from their difference in behaviors due to biological systems and finally, gender roles that define a role of a woman or a man in the present society (Sugihastuti, 2005). The role of a woman can be presented in two great fields. She is primarily known to have a homemaker career and a work-central career. It is solely upon the individual how she establishes her career and governs multitasking skills. However, if a woman with a narrow educational background confides in only a homemaker career, she can be rebelled against economic crisis and find low wages compared to a highly educated woman who can regulate high wages and a perfect familial bond simultaneously. (Hakim, 1991) Surrounded by an exhilarating and harsh environment, the roles of a homemaker and a bread maker can also be ideally swapped without decreasing their value due to the typical ideologies. Since women are typically put forth to perform their roles in a familial and domestic character, and a man is proudly consoled for his job as a breadmaker, these roles can be swapped otherwise and still be a great deal for both spouses. (Pleck, 1993; Theunissen, van Vuuren & Visser, 2003).

The period from maternity leaves to joining back includes huge fluctuations, not only emotionally (post-partum depression), physiologically, and psychologically but also because of the added responsibilities and change in disciplines, including a career, leading to a difficult transition for women. (Maushart, 1999). The word women had supposedly been decided to start with the alphabet W to emphasize two Vs, thus, two victories. These victories comprise of nurturing mothers and working mothers. Shilpa Nain compares two mothers from Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children* and Ruta Sepety's *Between Shades of Grey* and identifies their responsibility and credibility in the earning world and in the nurturing world. The contrast between the protagonists lies with the importance of priorities laid ahead, for instance Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children* emphasizes on a mother who puts her children's life at risk to benefit out of the war supplies, however, Ruta Sepety's protagonist prioritizes her children and their safety above all. The researchers talk about the deviation and selfishness for Brecht's protagonist. Therefore, the priorities might deviate at some point, they should be reminded to oneself from time to time (Shilpa Nain, 2020). In the modern era, there are two images of women; self-image and social image. Self-image is the portrayal of the outer self or the physical appearance of a woman, including the psychological forms in women. While the second image highlights a woman's role in families as

guided by the tradition and culture (Cabanac, 2002). This progression resulted in the era of modernization where the basic or the traditional beliefs are swapped with modern ideologies to understand the role of women and their representation in our societies as equal and aesthetic human beings (Muthe, 2007). Modernization appreciates and idealizes the notion of a working woman, contributing to the business of household economics and developing her own and overall economic bank. (Wibowo, 2011)

Women spend hours polishing their skills, working and raising their morales not only for economic needs and development but to shine as powerful career women and be recognized as the shining armours of the society. (Ramadani, 2016)

Another researcher, Lestari (2016) divides the role of a woman into three categories: a child, a wife, and a mother. A woman's role as a child signifies her role of an obedient child of her parents. The second role carries her role as a wife to make her husband happy and support him in all respects. Lastly, her role as a mother requires her to nurture and build the character of her own child into a respectful and sensible human being. But it can be concluded after the above construction that a woman primarily has two roles, one of a family woman; as a child, wife and mother, and second of a career woman to fulfill and satisfy her own needs and build self-existence. The entire analysis has been constructed on one social construction that is the patriarchal ideology. This ideology discusses the intended differences between men and women and their status and gender in the society. It persists on matters like men have full power and dominance over women, formed by the culture and society. Patriarchal ideology categorizes roles to be performed by men and women, giving men the primary power and importance and women to be secondary creatures, working under men (Buberwa, 2016; Kotthoff, 2000; Dittmar et al., 1996; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015).

Methodology:

This research paper relies on the Theory of Work Adjustment (arguably the most empirically powerful of such models currently available) and Frug's Postmodern Feminist Theory. "The theory of work adjustment focuses primarily upon individual characteristics as determinative of an individual's working life, going so far as to conceive environment solely in terms of its relation to a set of individualistic psychological variables—again ignoring contextual variables, structural factors, and cultural constraints theorized to be important to women" (Fitzgerald & Rounds, 1994). The ideas that commonly determine a woman's life constricting their interests and aims in life are all forced together by the structure of society. The theory implies on ignoring these structural, cultural and contextual restrictions by putting forth the individual ideas, beliefs and aims. It emphasizes on the individualistic psychological variables which means that an individual's working life can be started or continued under any circumstance, and cannot be constrained by social, cultural or contextual variables, keeping the work environment functional and fulfilling the concerned tasks as a professional. Frug's Postmodern Feminist theory criticizes "the law often reinforces gender roles such as women being expected to be wives and mothers rather than workers or professions" (Frug, M. J., 1992). He proposed this theory under the light of women encouragement and independence from a particular branch of ownership. He enforces the possession and ownership of women in employment along their standard recognition as wives and mothers. This research article supports the theories by taking a dig at the current situation of women in the society and talking about women who under all respect are eligible for embarking a

professional journey according to the human rights institution. It qualifies to open a professional and domestic grounds for success which both give ownership to women in becoming successful individuals. The ignorance on contextual, cultural and social concepts are encouraged with professional acknowledgement under all sorts of work environments that the protagonist of the novel, Ally proves with her excellent will power and breaks patriarchal ideologies. This affects not only the character of a woman on a personal level but also on a professional level by criticizing her abilities. The article further explains the dominance of patriarchal institutions and the demeaning role of working mothers. In this paper qualitative method is used to search the part of working mothers in the contemporary era and rectify its existence.

Content Analysis

The chain follows as modernism was the reaction to the theories of the nineteenth century and postmodernism is the reaction to the theories of modernism. With continuous evolution of human minds and the society, new ideas and beliefs are formed allowing the historical theories to subdue and perform the ritual of critical thinking. Using critical thinking, persuading minds to derive meanings and distinguish between right and wrong, postmodernism forms.

Postmodernism is a movement that reflects the idea of self-reflection and rejecting ancient philosophies by replacing them with individual criticism. It challenges the theories and beliefs of modernism and nineteenth century generated out of rational scientific experiments and historical aspects. This movement allows individuals to cope with societal norms with personal beliefs. It eliminates ancient concepts of reputation of genders and their responsibilities. For instance, the role of women as caretakers and nurturers in domestic set ups. This function has been prevalent in both western and eastern societies, stigmatizing the independence and freedom of women and discriminating them from other genders. Challenging this stereotype, postmodernism constructs a wall against these societal norms and standards by redeeming independence, instinct and freedom in women. This postmodern approach introduces the restrained concepts of equality and working mothers. It allow individuals to reject old notions and reincarnate the idea of self-reflex and beliefs by enlightening their critical thinking. Georgia Maiden's Confessions of a Once Fashionable Mum (2015) has been a vocalization for women who believe in constructing their lives on their own terms and reevaluating the ancient theories performed on the basis of history and science.

As the novel focuses on women and their role in society, progressive gender roles was an immediate response formed by the evolution of society. It broke the stereotypical responsibilities of women restricted to the roles of caretakers, housemakers, child-bearers, and the functions of a wife and provided the freedom to functionalize themselves with equal opportunities and independence as a man. To go back a lane and see the women of Victorian era, they were made to be efficient in facilitating household chores, to remain desirable for men, and to have sensible conduct for the sake of being called a 'woman.' For example, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), presents feminine traits of women portraying them as housemakers, child-bearers and appealing for marriage. As Austen (1813) describes, "[H]er mother was talking to that one person (Lady Lucas) freely, openly, and of nothing else but of her expectation that Jane would be soon married to Mr. Bingley", (Austen, 1813, p. 87). This dialogue shows the rooted ideology of how women and their roles are perceived prevalent since the nineteenth century.

However, with the emergence of Postmodernism, literature refocused on the marginalized individuals, sensitive topics, and inferior communities; extending to feminism and signifying

humanity and individuality. With this celestial occurrence, women became courageous, educated, and independent and formed their respective theories and beliefs. This movement destructed the notion of gender roles by collapsing the identity of women with only being co-related to domestic chores, mothering, and functions of a wife and instead, also gave them the right and freedom to perform professional responsibilities as per their willingness. The topic of working mothers originated from the development of Postmodernism and focused on its modified evolution of women, their rights, beliefs, theories, and reflexes. It believes in the idea of subjectivity, where ancient notions can be true or false based on one's opinion. It authenticates the theory of totality, which says that everything has been finalized in terms of acts, performance, conduct, and sensibility according to the philosophers, and nothing new can be added to the structure. The Postmodernist movement authenticated new prospects in relation to equality and freedom. Postmodernist author Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own*, talks about the naivety of Victorian women and criticizes the fantasizing stories of Victorian authors only restricted to the four walls and evitable of exploring the outside world. She vocalizes her point of view on the Victorian Era, where male authors like Charles Dickens, primarily wrote books on excruciating circumstances of society and ongoing situations like the French revolution in *The Tale of Two Cities* (Dickens, 1859), whereas female authors are found living in the fantasies of red collars, town men, and fancy balls. She satisfies the postmodern theories by being responsible for criticizing viewpoints that were incorrect and unacceptable to her.

In another book, *To The Lighthouse*, she is found speaking extensively in favor of women and the associated grace, management, and art of multitasking with motherhood and a role of wife. Mrs. Ramsay's character has a powerful aura that everyone felt the need of before and after war. She remains the charm of the summerhouse, all the guests, and her husband, who despite all his studious demeanor, often felt the need of Mrs. Ramsay and her sweet delight. She encourages women and criticizes society and their built standards regarding men by saying, "Pitying him too, Lily supposed; for that was true of Mrs. Ramsay-she pitied men always as if they lacked something- women never, as if they had something." (Woolf, 1927, p. 115) It can be seen that her husband's emotional unavailability influences her conduct to a great extent as we see her thinking for her husband, "Please say something, I beg you!". She criticizes the lack of support, availability, and love from men and signifies the idea that feminism is still prevalent in spite of such attitudes, conduct, and standards. Virginia Woolf refers to various ongoing issues of the society. She vocalizes her points on feminism, carrying Mrs. Ramsay as the epitome of graciousness, charm and pillar of the guests and families in the summerhouse. She represents the idea that a home is home with the presence of woman, the stability, art, and support of a woman, needed by every single human.

As Lily Briscoe often says, "Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!" she cried, feeling the old horror come back- to want and want and not to have.' Bellowing the need for a woman and the stand of feminism. The postmodernist era offers a myriad of issues to talk about, including Georgia Madden's plot of working mothers and their professional and home-making concerns. As the protagonist, Ally Bloom, has given birth to a seven-month-old baby girl named Coco and is dealing with multiple responsibilities together. These include post-partum depression, motherhood, lack of emotional availability from her husband, and the restriction of joining back her job, a fashion PR. The novel starts with, "Nine forty-five, Tuesday morning. In normal life I'd be: a. knocking back my second grande soy latte of the day, courtesy of the work-experience girl who's now sulking in the samples cupboard because coffee runs really aren't part of her job description. b. busy

convincing some puffed-up fashion editor that fluoro-print parachute pants really are about to make a comeback, even though in truth none of us would be caught dead in them. c. sending out a press release that would literally change the face of fashion as we know it”, (Maiden, 2015, p. 1). Furthermore, Maiden (2015) is found criticising the stereotypical concept of restricting professional life because of motherly responsibilities through Ally’s dialogues, “So this is what you want to swap your fancy job and your gorgeous clothes and your monthly magazine allowance for? Really? Is it?” (Maiden, 2015, p. 2). In this respective dialogue, the desperation and passion for ambitions is a target that the author has conveyed ironically. It emphasizes on the idea that subduing interests and recreational activities is not the ultimate path to successful motherhood, instead the battle of dealing with motherhood and establishing interests simultaneously.

Through Frug’s Theory of Adjustment we can see how Maiden (2015) is criticizing the ongoing mindset of society that subjects a woman to the role of a mother and argues with the idea of dealing with a professional life simultaneously. Following the circumstances and arguments of society, Ally Bloom says, “I’m not depressed, I’m just fat and bored, and the thought that I’ve got to do this for, like, forever makes me want to slit my wrists”, (Maiden, 2015, p. 5). Through the dialogues of exhaustion, and exasperation, Maiden manages to form a mindset in her readers of juggling responsibilities of a mother and a homemaker with respect to a habit, or an activity that consumes her happiness and productivity as well. This idea for her identity as a well-defined woman and a nurturing mother and a homemaker as well. Georgia Maiden creates an audible platform for women who fail to voice their struggles and volubly marks that women who are embracing new motherhood are bound to deal with a sudden prompt of postpartum depression, a human being they are supposed to take care of, their husbands and the normal domestic duties and understand their own bodies and feelings. With a myriad of these situations and conditions, Maiden manifests the newfound and miserable problems that women deal with but are unsaid and confounded in their minds.

As Ally continues with confessing her frustration of being a housewife after a scheduled routine of being a fashion PR, “It being 11:45 on a Tuesday - anyone else I could have called would be busy doing things of actual consequence”, as she calls working of ‘actual consequence’ as to her carrying out the duty of sitting at home and looking after an infant. She follows with, “At the very least, they’d be en route to a champagne lunch at some divine little restaurant overlooking the harbour” (Maiden, 2015, p. 7). Maiden constructs these dialogues to help women profess their power through their individual way of carrying out the responsibility of motherhood. Arguing with the ancient philosophies and theories of motherhood, Maiden criticizes the societal definition of motherhood, particularly forced by patriarchy, and empowers the idea of dealing with motherhood as a respective and independent woman wants to. Conveying through the dialogue, “I would be the type of yummy mummy *real* mothers could relate to, and had even coined the perfect hashtag for my Instagram feed - #FashMum” (Maiden, 2015, p. 9). Catering to the authentic face of motherhood and how it actually is than the fake reality of instagram and the sparkling duality of it, Maiden makes it as real as it can be through her protagonist. Ally makes an ironic comment by featuring all the elite mothers with their well-put and suited infants and a nanny to take over all the hectic duties. While in this fancy picture, the mother leisurely enjoys her life, infant and her profession. However, in transparency, middle-class mothers deal with the duty of either and entertains herself with her ambitions, interests and recreational activities as well. Through all these duties and tasks, the idea of being able to perform all these activities with leisure, freedom and love tops up the role of a mother, nurturer, homemaker and an independent working woman.

As the Theory of Work Adjustment justifies the story of the novel, Maiden forms the message of a woman free of all restrictions, whether it is societal, theoretical, cultural, structural and psychological, eliminating all the ancient constraints shunning women to embrace independence and freedom to all terms. In addition to this, the novel proceeds with Ally's frequent visits with her baby, Coco, to the Happy Mummies's baby club. As the club arranges various activities and contributes to different festivities for their children and mummy friends, they become a team and perform their roles as per the event requires. In this respective league, Ally formulates in the hierarchy of leading the club, taking impactful decisions and helping the events become a hit for the club. Through these events, Maiden exceeds with women and shows their capacities that extend beyond domestic activities and find duties as friend, mummies and workers. The Happy Mummies club becomes a major hit and gets promoted for more events under the supervision of entrepreneurial leader, Ally Bloom. In Ally's journey of rejoining work and moving for professional success, she finds a way to prove her entrepreneurial abilities through her baby club. As Maiden justified a woman's role and abilities through the dialogue, "And this morning we have Ally Bloom, Yummy Mummy and mumpreneur extraordinaire" (Maiden, 2015, p. 240)

The postmodernist era helps Georgia Maiden's motive of empowering and motivating mothers as they want to be. She mentions the term mompreneur, coined in 1994, and appreciates women who prove themselves against the roars of the patriarchal society with the shelter of working mothers. Georgia Maiden targets the patriarchal society that forces mothers to restrict themselves from their passions and professional drive and perform their roles designated as homemakers, mothers and wives. Maiden encourages women to conduct themselves and proceed their lives with absolute liberty and independence as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights gives us i.e, a woman is able to become a leader and work together without falling prey to any condition or circumstance. As Frug says that women can perform domestic and professional roles both, with as much brilliance and expertise as any equal human. By Maiden's novel *Confessions of a Once Fashionable Mum*, women are not only able to find their own set of rules and freedom but also the innate liberty to be as real, authentic and free as they want to be.

Therefore, it can be seen that the patriarchal society and the ancient theories constructed the apparent norms and standards and unrecognized women under one single term of domesticity. Through their ideologies they imposed restrictions upon women and bound them to restricted roles and responsibilities. By opposing these ideologies, Georgia Maiden helped women to recognize and rediscover themselves with her narrative and empowered them to an edible and professable extent.

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