

Intellectual Women: The Continuing Struggle between Marriage and Personal Dreams in Margaret Drabble's *a Summer Bird-Cage* and *The Millstone*

Authors : Ashwag Abdul-Hakeem Al-Thubaiti

Abstract : This study aims at analysing women's hesitant attitudes towards marriage in Margaret Drabble's novels, *A Summer-Bird-Cage* (1964) and *The Millstone* (1965), to prove that these ambivalent feelings are due to their search for autonomy. The heroines' radical outlook on independence is only meant to hide their conflict regarding sex-experience and fear of intimacy, a fear that has been enhanced by their rejection of the expression of faith that considers marriage a sacred bond and instead focus on their own identity and dissolve any bond that may affect their independence. To achieve their autonomy, they have to depend on themselves financially and focus on their aspirational goals. This sharp division between the two worlds, the family life and the personal success attributes negatively to their lives and leads to a self-identity crisis. Drabble tends to solve this struggle by awakening their maternal instinct. Once they respect their physical needs and appreciate their role as it is assigned to them by nature and society, they reach a balanced identity.

Keywords : autonomy, marriage, maternity, women

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