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Female Resistance and Empowerment under Patriarchy: Reconsidering Mata Hari in The Spy

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Abstract

The research examines, from a feminist perspective, rebellion and women's empowerment in relation to the main character, Mata Hari. The goal is to justify Mata's rebellious actions throughout the story. The current study investigates hopelessness and deprivation in society. This study aims to examine women's deprivation and hopelessness in Paulo Coelho's 2016 novel *The Spy*. The theoretical foundation for this study is found in Millett's opening section of *Sexual Politics* (1970), which delves deeply into the distribution of unequal power from patriarchal structures that give men more freedom, authority, and power. Gender equality is the ultimate goal of all feminism, including feminist theory and literary criticism, which aim to change the world. It is not feminist to despise men in any manner. Acts of disobedience and empowerment are discussed in the study's results, along with women's challenges with family bankruptcy, financial difficulties, and a desire for chastity and status.

Keywords: Women struggle, Rebellion, Deprivation, hopelessness, Power

Introduction

Merriam-Webster states that the overt, armed, and usually fruitless rejection of an established authority is known as rebellion. This violent event has been planned by a group of people who want to change their country's governmental structure. It is an activity done against the law, those in positions of authority, and established societal mores. A revolt begins with a sense of indignation and distaste for a particular scenario and manifests itself as a reluctance to submit to or obey the ruling class. Individual or group revolt can be violent (terrorism, sabotage, and guerrilla warfare) or non-violent (civil disobedience, civil resistance, and non-violent resistance). Simply put, a boycott or act of civil disobedience is a financial break from the system that is being rebelled against. Nonviolent civil resistance, which avoids the use of force or paramilitary activity, is civil disobedience. In the 1940s, sociologist Robert Merton claimed that rebellion is a kind of social deviation in which an individual goes against accepted behavior. [Simon \(2025\)](#) argues that the fundamental components of rule-conformity that explain why people adhere to laws and social norms even in the absence of external incentives and social preferences are respect for rules and social expectations. Feminist agency is defined as the capacity to exercise autonomy and negotiate patriarchal structures, whereas rebellion is classically defined as defiance of dominant social and gender norms. In light of gender, power, sexuality, and historical prejudices, Mata Hari's image is analyzed as a literary reconstruction of her identity. The study's conceptual and scholarly framework has been reinforced by the incorporation of pertinent feminist literature on The Spy.

The topical issues of [Weede \(1998\)](#) are revolution, violence, and rebellion. This is a wise choice because there are many uprisings, few successful uprisings, and very few social revolutions. It is suggested that through ruler discouragement and rebel support, a rational choice approach is compatible with the relationship between interstate rivalry and huge

revolutions. Women's empowerment aims to enable women to be powerful and capable of making their own decisions. "Women are not the inactive addressee of dazzling modifications in laws and human nature." ([Bilal, 2020](#)). Men have harmed women a great deal over the years. In earlier times, they were thought to be nearly nonexistent. As if men were the only ones entitled to vote, a fundamental right, and all other rights. "Women's empowerment" is the process of giving women more influence over the important decisions in life that impact them and greater access to opportunities that let them reach their greatest potential. "Girls and adolescents are the most prone segments of society in conflict-affected areas; girls proceed to be discriminated against in the place of work in many Western countries; and violence against girls continues to be an important concern all over the world." ([Bilal, 2020](#))

It is founded on the notions that women and men differ from one another in their social positions and that those disparities consist of asymmetric, unequal power interactions between the genders. There must be equal access to and completion of educational requirements if more women are to be change agents. Enhancing family health, nutrition, and education, as well as empowering women to participate in societal decision-making, depend heavily on women's literacy. "Patriarchy structured both the personal and social worlds, with men holding most of the positions to manipulate them" ([Bilal, 2024](#)).

The Cambridge Dictionary defines empower as "to give someone official authority or freedom to do something." As a result, an empowered woman is someone who is in control of her own life, has the freedom to make decisions and take action, and may one day lead a happy and successful life. [Jane \(1978\)](#), in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote: "I do not wish for women to have power over men, but over themselves." Mata Hari's independence, sexuality, resistance, and marginalization within patriarchal society have been highlighted in feminist readings of Paulo

Coelho's *The Spy*; an important analytical question remains unanswered: does Mata Hari's rebellion necessarily constitute feminist empowerment, or does it also function as a strategy for economic survival and personal autonomy? Her disobedience of traditional gender norms has been linked in the past to female empowerment without adequately analyzing the various reasons and outcomes that underlie her behavior. The difference between expressing agency under constrictive social and economic contexts and opposing patriarchal power. In order to close this gap, the current study examines rebellion as a complicated kind of action influenced by patriarchal control, economic necessity, sexuality, and the desire for self-determination rather than as a clear sign of empowerment. The study further explores how Coelho's reconstruction of Mata Hari both challenges and reproduces patriarchal notions about female sexuality, independence, and power, using Kate Millett's concept of sexual politics as its main theoretical framework. Therefore, by going beyond the generic identification of feminist motifs and providing a more nuanced analysis of the link and tension between rebellion, survival, and feminist agency in *The Spy*, the study adds to the body of current knowledge.

Theory of Feminist Literary Criticism

Feminism is the idea that men and women should be treated equally in social, political, and economic spheres. Feminist activism aims to achieve that equality. Feminism is an interdisciplinary approach to issues of equality and equity based on gender, gender expression, gender identity, sex, and sexuality as understood via social theory and political involvement. Feminism has evolved from a critical analysis of gender inequality to a more nuanced examination of the social and performative construction of gender and sexuality.

Many significant authors and theorists have contributed to the development of feminist theory and feminist literary criticism. With *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf made a significant early contribution by examining

women's access to education, economic independence, and literary creativity.

Modern feminist literary critique first appeared as a separate critical movement in the late 1960s and gained prominence in the 1970s in connection with second-wave feminism, despite the fact that feminist philosophy has a considerably older history. This evolution was greatly aided by Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970). In his analysis of the connections between patriarchy, sexuality, power, and literary representation, Millett made the case that male dominance regimes can be reflected in and strengthened by literature. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to say that feminist literary criticism has earlier conceptual roots in authors like Woolf and de Beauvoir, and that its methodical growth as a contemporary literary-critical approach became especially prominent in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The training of both men and women into culturally defined sex roles is one way that patriarchal societies uphold gender hierarchy, according to Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970). Family, friends, schools, the media, and other cultural influences all teach and reinforce these roles. According to Millett (1970), society creates stereotyped notions of what it means to be a man or a woman. It associates masculinity with knowledge, force, aggression, and efficacy, whereas femininity is associated with passivity, docility, virtue, and ineffectuality. As a result, people may intentionally or unintentionally replicate socially constructed gender norms.

The women's resistance to patriarchal society and their need for independence are also explained by this theory. The women have been offered as examples of economic and political behavior. The civil rights, equality, and justice movements from the second wave of feminism are also highlighted by this ideology. Gender and sexuality originate from the patriarchy, not from God. It is actually a response to patriarchal culture. "Others" alludes to the social marginalization of women. In literature, women are frequently portrayed as objects from a masculine viewpoint.

Research Objective

1. To examine the justification of rebellious acts and women's struggle in Paulo Coelho's *The Spy*.

Research Question

1. How are Mata Hari's rebellious acts and women's struggle justified in Paulo Coelho's *The Spy*?

Problem Statement

The current study looks at how gender crises are related to women's struggles and rebellious deeds in the book. Feminism is an interdisciplinary approach to issues of equality and equity based on gender, gender expression, gender identity, sex, and sexuality, as understood via social theories and political involvement. Even in modern times, the male-dominated society has repressed, suppressed, and denied women their rights, leaving them in a terrible situation.

Research Methodology

The nature of the current study is qualitative textual analysis rather than purely exploratory. The present study has adopted Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) as its theoretical framework. The theory employed as the theoretical foundation for this study explains the presence of socially dominant groups by delving deeply into the distribution of unequal power from patriarchal structures that give men more freedom, authority, and power.

Significance of the Study

The study's primary goal is to identify the novel's theoretical feminist literary critique component. The fact that this research ends up being instructive for literature students studying literary criticism makes it significant. The readers are expected to be able to recognize and understand several aspects of feminist literary criticism theory in the novel. Readers can compare the dismal lives of women in that era's patriarchal European civilization to those of now by reading this research.

Literature Review

Ayni (2018) focuses on *Rebellion: A Feminist Analysis in Paulo Coelho's Mata Hari: The Spy* (2016). This study describes the rebellious

behavior in the novel *The Spy*. A few aspects of this novel are discovered by the researcher. The status of women, their roles, their rights, and their participation. It concludes by explaining the significance of women's roles in this situation. Margaretha Zelle does all that ladies should do. Despite her husband's constant abuse, she managed her household. It implies that the rights of women and men are equal. She is a spy as well. Women have the same rights as men to live their lives, pursue their education, and express their opinions.

Davidson (2023) investigates the connection between feminist history, literary utopia, and modern feminist ideology. The study contends that through a conflict between nostalgia and advancement, modern feminist utopian fiction revisits the feminist movements of the 1970s. Davidson focuses on feminist separatism in particular, demonstrating how Hall's portrayal of a women-centered society both recognizes the liberating promise of second-wave feminism and highlights its drawbacks, such as its flawed presumptions about gender, race, and social difference.

According to Mandell (1995), women participate less in society since they are not suitable for positions of leadership in businesses or for managing any kind of task. This statement examines the stereotype that women should be more emotional than intellectual while managing a business. Participation of women outside of the workplace. Women in homes taking care of their homes. She handles her husband and kids. Women can work in government or as teachers in today's world. In the end, Margaretha Zelle, the protagonist of *The Spy*, was a self-reliant woman. It is suitable for women to participate here given Margaretha Zelle's life story. Although she works in espionage, she fell victim to a government-made trap.

Drapeau-Bisson (2023) investigates how Canadian feminist speculative literature is seen critically in relation to masculine authority. According to the study, feminist texts are frequently assessed using male-centered critical viewpoints that diminish or cast doubt on their

literary and feminist relevance. The study illustrates how patriarchal authority functions not just inside literary works but also in their interpretation and assessment by identifying discriminatory reading practices. This piece emphasizes how crucial it is for feminist literary criticism to look at gender, authority, and power.

[Nisa \(2021\)](#) conducted a study on women's empowerment as represented in the novel *The Spy* by Paulo Coelho. The researcher examines the oppressions that the main character of *The Spy* experiences and her efforts to overcome them as they are portrayed in the novel. According to the author, Mata Hari is a true picture of the lives of women in the 19th century. Oppression is the reason behind her husband's persecution, abuse, and limitations on her freedom of movement. Her husband also treated her like a sexual object. Ultimately, Mata Hari was able to free herself from oppression and patriarchal systems to become an independent woman.

[Ayni \(2018\)](#) focuses on the four fundamental tenets of the feminist perspective—women's position, women's rights, women's role, and women's participation—to illustrate how women are oppressed in the novel. Secondly, the novel identifies five signs of women's oppression: being sexually abused, enduring domestic abuse, being helpless, being sexually harassed, and being slandered during a time of war. Thirdly, the author tackled the topic of women's oppression because he had personally experienced oppression. Additionally, he wishes to illustrate to the readers one instance of injustice and persecution experienced by innocent individuals during the World War, such as Mata Hari.

[Millett \(2016\)](#), according to *Sexual Politics*, argues that both men and women (both consciously and unconsciously) conform to the cultural norms that society has set for them. A few media that portray cultural standards and expectations are television, films, music, and literature. Boys must be strong and self-assured. Girls have to be meek and obedient. She begins by looking at the relationship between gender, sexuality, and power relationships. The takeaway

is that strong, independent women ought to spearhead the opposition that females present to the patriarchal culture. Women have been used to demonstrate economic and political behavior.

In the Patriarchy ideology, hammer at "destroy women's consciousness about her potential power" [Eisenstein \(1984\)](#). The significance of reproduction for society is examined in this statement. An alternative term for the patriarchal mentality is manipulative. These literary pieces generally feature female characters portrayed by male writers who tend to downplay their personal characteristics in favor of stereotypically masculine attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. As a result, female readers consistently adopt an outsider or foreigner persona. In conclusion, regardless of a woman's status within the family or society, men are always in charge and superior to them.

[Merton \(1938\)](#) developed his Theory of Deviance. According to the Strain Theory, crime happens because people lack sufficient opportunities to pursue the conventional success aims of a society. Some people turn to crime in order to succeed when there is a "strain" between the desired results and the available means to achieve them. To articulate this difference between institutionalized means and cultural goals, Merton coined the term "anomie." In his opinion, anomie arises from a strain or tension between means and ends, which leads to unmet aspirations in such an unbalanced society. Sociologist Robert Merton came to the conclusion that rebellion is a form of social deviance in which an individual rejects societal norms.

The Indication of Rebellious Acts in The Spy

When people are subjected to oppression, social marginalization, or circumstances that go against their beliefs and goals, rebellion may result. People may revolt when their societal conditions conflict with their sense of self, according to [Ardhiana \(2018\)](#). In a similar strain, [Merton \(1938\)](#) views rebellion as a type of social deviation in which people reject accepted social norms and goals and look for other ways to

behave. This paradigm can be used to interpret Mata Hari's life and execution in Paulo Coelho's *The Spy* because her defiance of social norms and traditional gender roles mirrors her fight for independence in a patriarchal society. The novel's account of her last moments is especially noteworthy:

For a fraction of a second, Mata Hari remained upright. She did not die the way you see in moving pictures after people are shot... collapse onto herself, her head still up, her eyes still open. One of the soldiers fainted. (Coelho, 2016, p. 7)

Mata Hari's death is symbolically transformed into an act of resistance by the depiction of her standing upright and confronting her execution without showing signs of submission. Her physical poise subverts the authority of those who denounce her and portrays rebellion as a refusal to give up one's dignity in the face of persecution, as well as an active struggle with authority. However, feminist empowerment should not be immediately associated with her resistance. The question of whether Mata Hari's resistance stems from her fight for survival, autonomy, and social recognition or from her ideological opposition to patriarchy is also raised by Coelho's portrayal. The conflict between rebellion as an individual tactic for overcoming constrictive social conditions and rebellion as resistance to oppressive structures can thus be critically understood as being revealed in the scenario.

The crime I did commit, I escaped the greatest of which was being an emancipated and independent woman in a world ruled by men. I was convicted of espionage even though the only thing concrete I traded was the gossip from high society salons. (Coelho, 2016, p. 12)

The novel depicts Mata Hari's actions of rebellion against the patriarchal society. She commits a crime and works as a secret agent against the government. She disobeys societal conventions and morals to achieve her goals of power and wealth. The validity of Michel Foucault's (2017) 1980–1981 "truth" depends on who is in charge of the propositional utterance,

and there is reason to think that men's authority over women is a trap designed to make them fall for men's "truth." Therefore, female authors should passively and negatively withdraw into a harbor for female discourse rather than submit to men's hegemony over discourse. Therefore, it is acceptable in this case since it clarifies how Mata Hari's rebellion functions against the power structures that define, categorize, and govern her identity in addition to patriarchal conduct and social norms. Reclaiming her right to tell her own story is part of her resistance.

I don't know if the future will remember me, but if it does, may it never see me as a victim, but as someone who moved forward with courage, fearlessly paying the price she had to pay. (Coelho, 2016, p.15)

The words above elucidate Mata Hari's sentiments and emotions. She reflects on her nostalgia, and her heart brims with ardor, desire, loneliness, pride, and treachery. Sometimes, because she was a lady born in the wrong era, she would cry silently to console herself. She does, however, still have optimism for the present. Although Mata Hari is, as we all know, opposed to society, in actuality she is opposed to its bad elements. Men manipulate women by using their words and conversation to get them to give in to their demands, which supports the aforementioned assertion by Michel Foucault. This demonstrates the actions of rebellion throughout the book. Mandell (2003) asserts that the rise of feminism can be attributed to the push for gender parity in the law, which treats women as less capable of taking risks and making decisions in life.

I try to see now where mine went wrong, but I cannot blame my family. Adam and Antje Zelle gave me everything money could buy... When people started to accuse me of being a "woman of easy virtue," my father wrote a book in my defense... (Coelho, 2016, p.17)

I cannot hold my parents responsible for anything, other than maybe bringing me into the world in the incorrect town. The rebellious attitude that society is characterized by is exemplified by these lines from Mata Hari. The

right to be a daughter belongs to Mata Hari. She has a right to gender equality. It was difficult to be a modern lady at that time. Mata Hari is permitted to study dance, ride horses, and attend private schools. But Mata Hari always gets the best from her parents before they declare bankruptcy. According to [Suzuki \(2010\)](#), *Female Identity in Marriage, Pregnancy and Motherhood*, it explores the subjectivity of the female character as it relates to her body and sense of autonomy. The issues women encounter, particularly those related to their bodies, include pregnancy, blood, worries, suffering, poverty, and abuse.

Yes, I was a prostitute—if by that you mean someone who receives favors and jewelry in exchange for affection and pleasure. Yes, I was a liar, one so compulsive and out of control that I often forgot what I'd said and had to expend great mental energy to cover my blunders. ([Coelho, 2016, p. 17](#))

These phrases describe the acts of societal disobedience committed by Mata Hari. Due to her lack of resources, she works as a dancer in a club. She also works as a prostitute in such a culture. She wants independence in such a civilization, as was previously mentioned. In actuality, Mata Hari resides in a patriarchal society where men enjoy abusing women's bodies and rape them for small payments. In that culture, women have no rights, and men play with the bodies of women. Thus, the article specified above is fulfilled. According to Mallet's *Sexual Politics (1970)*, males shall dominate females, and older males shall subjugate younger ones; if patriarchal government is understood as the system in which the female half of the population is ruled by the male half, then the principles of patriarchy seem to be twofold.

I couldn't cry. The stones disappeared into the water, sinking alongside one another... about life yet unable to silence the voice in your heart that says: you could try something else. ([Coelho, 2016, p. 81](#))

Mata Hari's aforementioned statement demonstrates her resolve not to repeat her past. She remembers that Andreas' wife used a gun to

shoot herself in the head during a party. Mata Hari remembers the talk Andreas's wife had with him. She became aware of the pressures on her life when she wed Rudolf Macleod. Mata Hari is opposed to her life turning into a jail. She rebels against herself by leaving for Paris. She makes changes in her life since she feels that her past was painful. This confirms the previous theory that she regularly uses nostalgia as an excuse to rebel against her own life. Her rights are likewise violated by the patriarchal society, because in that civilization, the male oppresses and controls the female.

Empowerment under Patriarchy

"Violence is the use of force to harm or destroy human beings or non-human objects, for the purpose of preserving or altering political institutions, systems, governments, or policies." [Fanon \(1963\)](#). The deliberate or accidental use of weapons, including guns, bayonets, whips, fists, and other instruments, to inflict or threaten serious injury is known as violence. Undermining the victim's sense of self, worth, and dignity is the aim of violence. Mata Hari fights against the patriarchal culture in the book. As Mata Hari was being treated like an animal in prison, the truth is that she wanted her freedom and her rights as a woman. The army took her to a shooting range so they could execute her. "Everyone departed the Saint-Lazare prison cell and headed toward the automobile that waited, its engine running, to take them to the firing squad. ([Coelho, 2016, p. 5](#))

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex (2011)*, claims to support the Mata Hari movement as an empowerment movement for women and a pure woman, because the guys in that particular society physically abuse her and turn her into a slave. They taunt her for rejecting their principles of empowerment. "The second sex", the "other" of men: "She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject; he is the Absolute—she is the Other." ([Marcus, 2020](#))

These seeds will always be tulips, even if at the moment you cannot tell them apart from

other flowers. They will never turn into roses or sunflowers, no matter how much they might desire to. And if they try to deny their own existence, they will live life bitter and die. (Coelho, 2016, p. 18)

This highlights the difficulties Mata Hari faces in a patriarchal society. She works hard to establish herself as a powerful woman, but the guys won't let her live on her own. In that culture, she has a cruel and difficult life. "In feminist issues, women were subordinated by a special form of life called patriarchy through which man has all superior social roles and maintains women subordinated and exploited position." Mandell (1995) notes that because her principal had sexually assaulted her in their office, Mata Hari was having trouble in the novel. The person used her for his own purposes, actually destroying her purity. While Mata Hari did her best, she was unable to escape her principal's erratic behavior.

He called me into his office, locked the door, then placed his hand between my legs and began to masturbate. At first I tried to escape, saying, gently, that this wasn't the time or place. But he said nothing. He pushed aside some papers on his desk, laid me on my stomach, and penetrated me all in one go, as if he were scared that someone might enter the room and see us. (Coelho, 2016, p. 20)

The strict roles that patriarchal society imposes are explained in these lines. Mata Hari fought for the emancipation of women as equals as well. Kate acknowledged the shared understanding of others in her seminal essay, *Sexual Politics* (1970). She announced, "patriarchy has already been established, and the male has already set themselves as the human form, the subject and referent to which is the female is 'other' or alien" Millett, 1970. Similar to how Mata Hari has been stripped of both their status and freedom rights in the book. In addition to spending time with Mata, Rudolf was also married to other women. In reality, he dismissed her and referred to others.

No European woman could compete with an Asian woman, for whom sex was like a dance. He

told me this without any shame, perhaps because he was drunk, or perhaps because he deliberately wanted to humiliate me. (Coelho, 2016, p. 25)

As demonstrated by the verses above, Mata Hari fought for empowerment in society as a virtuous woman, because their ideals, freedom of expression, and rights were disregarded by the male-dominated society. Kate acknowledged the shared understanding of others in her seminal essay, *Sexual Politics*. She announced, "patriarchy has already been established, and the male has already set themselves as the human form, the subject and referent to which is the female is 'other' or alien" Millett, 1970. In the novel, Mata Hari claims that loving a man is bad since it suppresses women and labels them as (aliens). Your heart and head are not in harmony when you fall in love, according to her. Everything you owned was destroyed by this love, and you were left feeling empty.

My first piece of advice is the hardest, and it has nothing to do with your performance. Never fall in love. Love is a poison. Once you fall in love, you lose control over your life—your heart and mind belong to someone else. Your existence is threatened. You start to do everything to hold on to your loved one and lose all sense of danger. Love, that inexplicable and dangerous thing, sweeps everything you are from the face of the earth and, in its place, leaves only what your beloved wants you to be. (Coelho, 2016, p. 63)

The passages above support Mata Hari's fight for women's emancipation. In terms of love, she perceives herself as foreign. Their freedom, prestige, and attractiveness are destroyed by men. Her life is wasted, and she is abandoned by sensual love. Actions promoting feminism are sparked by the encouragement to grant men and women the same rights, which implies that women's ability to take risks and make decisions in life is not valued (Mandell, 1995). Mata Hari battles for women's equality in the book. She danced and was a woman. During World War 1, she was employed as a covert operative. She fearlessly entered a military circle to obtain information, much like a man would. She is like a

man bravely entering a military circle to get any information. She wants equality in life, because there was no respect for women in that society.

Unfortunately, I have no one else in whom to confide. We all know I won't be killed because of this stupid allegation of espionage, but because I decided to be who I always dreamed of being. And the price of a dream is always high. (Coelho, 2016, p. 73)

The aforementioned claim demonstrated Mata Hari's independence of employment as a man in society. She was employed by society as an espionage agent. The individual has the ability and expertise to protect himself with a gun. In that culture, Mata aspires to freedom and a job like a man. A colonist might transform the colonized into a symbol of pure evil. A destructive force that consumes everything in its path, a corrupting force that warps and distorts everything. Because the male-dominated culture views Mata Hari as a healing spirit, she lives her life like a bird in a cage. She was psychologically and physically wrecked by the man. She wants to get out of that trap, but nobody can understand her; thus, no one is willing to assist her.

The caged bird may sing of freedom, but it will still live in prison. Thea agreed to live in the cage, then wanted to escape, but no one helped because no one understood. (Coelho, 2016, p.117)

This study contributes by analyzing the intricate relationship between rebellion, survival, and female agency rather than merely recognizing rebellion or empowerment in Paulo Coelho's *The Spy*, as these aspects have already garnered scholarly attention. Because Mata Hari's decisions are concurrently influenced by patriarchal constraints, economic necessity, personal liberty, and the desire for self-determination, her rebellious acts cannot be solely interpreted as feminist resistance. She has forms of autonomy through her dance, sexuality, espionage, and quest for financial independence, yet patriarchal society views these same behaviors as sinful, abnormal, or dangerous. Her empowerment is intrinsically challenged because of this tension.

According to this viewpoint, Mata Hari uses rebellion as a tactic to deal with the social and economic circumstances that are placed upon her, rather than just as a form of resistance against patriarchy. As a result, her agency is neither totally liberated nor totally subservient. Rather, it functions within the confines of patriarchal authority. As a result, the book casts doubt on the idea that Mata Hari is either a hapless victim or a strong, independent woman.

Her resistance results in both autonomy and vulnerability: although her unorthodox decisions allow her to take charge of parts of her identity and way of life, they also put her at risk of institutional punishment and social censure. Therefore, the study's uniqueness resides in showing that female rebellion in *The Spy* is a contested type of agency in which empowerment, resistance, and survival overlap but are not interchangeable.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, rebellion is a key manifestation of women's resistance to institutional, social, and patriarchal constraints in Paulo Coelho's novel *The Spy*. The book illustrates how women question traditional gender norms, reject forced identities, and strive for control over their bodies, choices, sexuality, and financial life through the character of Mata Hari. Her independence, defiance of male authority, atypical professional choices, and rejection of socially mandated femininity all demonstrate her rebellion. These actions, however, go beyond simple feminist empowerment. They are also influenced by the need for self-determination, economic need, and survival.

The investigation also shows that Mata Hari's acts generate a conflict between social criticism and empowerment. She has agency through activities like dance, sexuality, espionage, and economic independence, yet these same activities are often portrayed as immoral, abnormal, or illegal in patriarchal and institutional discourses. Therefore, *The Spy* shows female agency as complicated, contested, and negotiated within systems of power rather

than depicting Mata Hari as either a victim or a strong woman. Her fight shows that rebellion can serve as a means of female autonomy, resistance, and survival. As a result, the study demonstrates how Coelho's portrayal of Mata Hari subverts preconceived notions about women's resistance by illuminating the complex interrelationships between patriarchal tyranny, individual autonomy, survival, and empowerment.

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