

# From Destabilisation to Reparative Connection: A Derridean Reading of Sally Rooney's *Normal People*

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**Abstract**—This research paper analyses Sally Rooney's *Normal People* through the lens of Derridean deconstruction, focusing on how the novel destabilises meaning, critiques binary oppositions, and subverts traditional narrative closure. The study explores how Rooney's portrayal of vulnerability and emotional openness offers a progressive relational ethic, aligning with Derrida's concept of *différance*. It argues that the text not only destabilises but also offers a reparative model of human connection, embracing ambiguity in an uncertain cultural landscape. The paper contributes to the literary discourse by demonstrating how deconstruction reveals not only fragmentation but also the potential for healing and relational openness.

**Index Terms**—deconstruction, destabilisation, progression, ambiguity, modern

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Normal People* (2018) by Sally Rooney is a millennial coming-of-age novel in contemporary literary studies. Moreover, it has a brightening effect and is widely acclaimed. Essentially, it is a delicate, cautious, and close examination of the relationships, power and identity formation in the modern era. It has also been referred to as the 'voice of a generation' and is a landmark modern novel. The novel tells the coming-of-age story of two youngsters. Their names are Connell Waldron and Marianne Sheridan. The fiction depicts the life of the changers, particularly the people on the margins of Ireland, that is, their life during the period of transition of Ireland. It is worth noting that this represents social anxieties relating to the collective symbolic selfhood, the wish to belongness and heal a ravaged self in a world that dislocates and alienates. This paper aims to highlight the narrative of emotion as well as the interpersonal relations encountered in the social world brought out in the novel and their complexity in contemporary life. Jacques Derrida's theoretical framework in post-structuralist philosophy primarily transformed the study of language, meaning, identity and ethics in literary theory and criticism. He challenges the structuralist belief in the stability of language and meaning, proposing instead a dynamic system where meaning is perpetually deferred through an endless play of signifiers. Such are the ideas of difference, binary oppositions and the undermining of narrative teleology, which are full of modern literary criticism. It is founded on the assumption, which combines the concept of differing and deferring, meaning the continuous deferment of ultimate meaning in language. This means it is therefore contextual, variable and contingent. In the paper, *Normal People* is placed within the tradition of performative deconstructive texts, which means that the structure of the narrative, not only the inner struggles of its characters, but also thematic concerns, can be seen as the co-performance of the Derridean destabilisation of the language, identity, and binarity of opposites. Structuralist theorists largely maintained that language functioned as a stable system capable of reflecting coherent structures of meaning. Derrida's post-structuralist intervention

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disrupts this assumption by revealing how linguistic systems undermine their own claims to stability, coherence, and origin, thereby exposing meaning as contingent, relational, and perpetually unsettled (Derrida, 1978; Reynolds, n.d.) such an analysis, we can find that the chosen novel is not only a critical text but also a deconstructive text. Besides, the study examines how the novel subverts the traditional male-female gender roles that accentuate a lead over a follower by investing Marianne with conventional masculine traits, such as intelligence and remoteness, traditionally associated with a partner's control in a relationship. Derrida's critique of teleology extends to narrative structures that presume coherence, resolution, and final meaning as necessary outcomes of storytelling. From a deconstructive perspective, narratives do not move toward an inevitable or authoritative conclusion; rather, they remain open to reinterpretation, disruption, and deferral. Meaning is therefore not completed at the end of a text but continues to circulate beyond it, resisting closure and totalisation (Derrida, 1978; Turner, 2016; Royle, 2003) by disrupting narrative closure, problematising language exchange and disassembling hierarchized binaries. It is, however, that it provides progressive ethics of relational openness in that human connecting exists not by affording its differentiation but by its moral commitment to ambivalence. Therefore, the novel addresses the contemporary longing for meaningful attachment with conditions of instability, providing a literary model of relational healing that does not demand resolution but accepts *différance* as an existential given. This research makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how literature seeks to expose and articulate the transition of human connection in the complex social world. In addition, it contributes to literary criticism by analysing the performative aspects of deconstruction in the selected novel. This study also emphasises its deconstructive operations and ethical implications.

The study aims to explore the following aspects using these research questions:

1. How does *Normal People* by Sally Rooney represent the performative characteristics of Derridean deconstruction through language, binary oppositions and character identity?
2. How did Rooney subvert conventional narrative closure, definitive moral positioning, and stable character identity in the select narrative?
3. How are contemporary anxieties and relational healing represented through vulnerability and emotional openness in Rooney's selected novel?

Much like *Normal People*, *Conversations with Friends* involves the relational vulnerability and ambiguity of millennials. What is even better, the novels do not use a clear ending. This invokes the Derrida differential where meaning is deferred, always delayed in the writing and genealogy of text. Essentially, this shows that there is a millennial fiction, in the general sense, that deconstruction resonates with. Deconstruction attempts to dislodge judgment and binaries and the notion that the self is substantial.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The strengths of identity negotiation in narrative, healing, and relationships between people, as referred to in modern literature, have been given significant consideration in contemporary literary criticism. The chosen novel is a critical document in this discussion, as it has attracted academic criticism due to its portrayal of intimacy, emotional attachment, and social power. This literature review examines some of the top critical theories of thinking that explore these dimensions, providing a contextual framework for the current study. The article by Ferdinal et al. (2025) examines the entangled interaction between mental health, human rights, and capitalism in the select novel. The work of Angelo (2024) is of particular interest because it focuses on two vastly different family backgrounds that influence the lives of the story's protagonists, highlighting how they cope with social anxiety. Connell has a caring family background that stands in contrast with Marianne's abusive and neglectful family background, and this plays a significant role in the cause of her social anxiety and her strife. The secretive love affair is an essential healing ground between them. The paper claims that their relationship serves as a sufficient facilitating condition, enabling them to develop their identities and seek emotional support. In this way, the study highlights the most significant topics in recovery and self-improvement within the context of literary criticism.

Carregal-Romero (2023) assumes that neoliberal culture has influenced the Rooney protagonists, characterised by a background of individualism, self-reliance, and competitiveness. In the selected works, this research employs care ethics and the theory of vulnerability to examine Irish millennials. In the article, the author highlights the development of silence as a form of refusal, where the protagonists shun societal norms to form a proper, close liaison. To make decisions on how to deal with their emotional intricacies, they turn to silence because neoliberal norms strictly restrain them in uncensored communication. Despite neoliberal ethics, the main characters find consolation and meaning in authentic interpersonal relationships. Such a relationship gives opportunities to be vulnerable and admit it to another person, which breaks the paradigm of independent life. The author examines the concept of abnormality dynamics, which reveals the Reality behind social construction, with references to interpersonal relationships and identities. Barros-del Río (2022) reviews *Normal People* as a millennial bildungsroman that exists in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland. It also discusses the role played by neoliberal ideologies, including the commodification of the body, neoliberal consumerism, and materialist success, in the construction of the identity of these crucial players during the economic crisis. It highlights class differences, guilt, remorse, self-harm, inner conflicts and self-hate as a result of individualism and materialism. The research sets the selected novel as a cultural critique of neoliberal values affecting Ireland's millennial people.

Gunkel (2022) proposes a two-step procedure in deconstruction, intentionally designed to subvert Hegelian dialectics,

thereby highlighting its unique approach to critical analysis. The simultaneous existence of challenges and opportunities of deconstruction provides avenues for rich insights and vulnerabilities. It also views deconstruction as a crucial strategy for the challenges of the twenty-first century, while also acknowledging its vulnerabilities and troubles.

Studies done so far have been based on sociological, feminism and contemporary theoretical approaches. The absence of analyses concerning the application of Derridean performative deconstruction to the fiction and theorisation concerning the performance of fiction instead of representation of the instability of language, among other Derridean concepts, clearly shows a gap on the part of the researcher. The study reveals how the development of relations in the narrative, far from mere destabilisation, opens up novel ethical relations, namely the relations of an ethical nature. The study recenters the deconstruction (of totalities) as a critical tool and a framework with which to imagine new relational ethics in a time of uncertainty.

In the present moment of the digital era, the characters are unable to communicate with each other, speak the truth and show any kind of emotion. This helps to elaborate further on the ideological viewpoint of present-day diversity. It provides a careful and sophisticated account of what can be an extremely difficult thing to do in terms of communication for anyone, but we with youth. Expressing yourself is the ability to convey what is going on inside, whether it is “I love you” or telling somebody you are upset. In reference to the aspect of hypermediacy, the novel showcases an institutional reflection of the lives we lead. Our identities on social networks are disjointed and digitised.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The method adopted is qualitative and interpretive. It is based on the use of theory and detailed textual analysis. The examination has a predominantly literary-critical character. Derrida's deconstructionism is the theoretical tool; it employs to apply close textual analysis to selected scenes from the text. The study conducts a close reading of selected excerpts of the text. Connell's confession of love (p. 49) and Marianne's emotional isolation (p. 142) are selected as imbued with representational power pertaining to the ambiguity of meaning and emotional response. In the same vein, the two main characters' refusal to identify their relationship, as well as the confusion surrounding the event of connubbing, further demonstrates Derrida's *différance*. These pivotal scenes show how the characters are never able to express themselves clearly. They indicate the instability of meaning and its essential slipperiness. Also, they highlight how language fails in producing tensions between relations. Theoretical mapping emerges from the concepts of Derrida. Above all, they expose of binary oppositions and *différance*. Close textual analysis involves a detailed analysis of chosen words, passages, dialogues and the narrative architecture that appears in the text. The notion of ambivalence (the individual not having a fixed 'place' or 'role') as a site of connection and strength is emphasized. It also shows how the healing and ethical becoming of the protagonist can be replicated through relational vulnerability and openness. The findings of the paper are situated within present-day anxieties. This enables us to read the novel both as a culturally responsive text and as a performative deconstructive text. This analysis mainly uses primary fictional works as data. It also draws on secondary critical literary readings on Derridean deconstruction. The struggles of the protagonists of the novel being so ambiguous on several emotional levels, readers can perceive them differently. An individual's life experience or cultural context would determine this. Connell and Marianne's relationship may be interpreted in different ways since this book does not provide closure. Derrida suggests that there is no single, stable, comprehensive meaning or reference in the text, as meaning is always deferred. It focuses on critiquing the structuralist faith in meaning, closure, the end of the text, and binary opposites. The potent structuralist belief in language as capable of reflecting a coherent, objective reality was undermined primarily by Jacques Derrida, a major representative of post-structuralist thought.

He asserts that language's meaning is not fixed or present but is perpetually deferred through a chain of signifiers. This provokes the structuralist presumption that signs function within a closed, internally constant system. Derrida challenges the structuralist assumption that meaning is stable or transparently accessible through language. Instead, he proposes that meaning is continuously produced through differences between signs and is endlessly postponed within a relational system of signifiers, rather than anchored in any external or transcendental reality (Derrida, 1967, 2016). His well-known assertion that there is “nothing outside the text” should therefore be understood not as a denial of reality, but as an insistence that meaning emerges through textual and linguistic relations rather than through direct reference to an objective presence (Royle, 2003; Turner, 2016). Derrida introduces the concept of *différance* to explain how meaning is generated not through fixed correspondence between signifier and signified, but through an ongoing process of differentiation and postponement within language itself. Meaning, in this framework, is never fully present but is continuously shaped by what it is not and by what is yet to come, rendering interpretation provisional and open-ended (Derrida, 1967, 2016; Mambrol, 2024; Vasanthan, 2023), not through a stable correspondence between signifier and signified, but through differences from other signs and the perpetual deferral of definitive meaning. The nature of perpetual deferral destabilises the relationship between signifier and signified, offering language an inherent ambiguity. The signifier is considered the physical form of the sign, such as a word, image, etc. The signified is the conceptual idea that represents the signifier. Instead, meaning emerges from a complex interplay of differences and is always subject to change. It explores that interpretation is always provisional and incomplete. The pursuit of meaning is an ongoing and never-ending process (Vasanthan, 2023). It challenges the structuralist view that meaning can be stable by analysing fixed relationships between signifiers and signifieds. Deconstruction interrogates the hierarchical binary structures that have traditionally organised Western philosophical and cultural thought, including oppositions such as male/female, self/other,

and public/private. Derrida demonstrates that these oppositions are not natural or self-evident but are culturally produced systems in which one term is routinely privileged over the other. Crucially, each term depends on its counterpart for meaning, revealing the instability and mutual contamination of binary categories (Derrida, 1978; Kavula Sikirivwa, 2020; Rahim, 2021).

He exposes that these binaries are not natural but constructed, with one term often privileged over the other. He points out that the hierarchy of dual oppositions always assumes the subordination of one term to the other. Binary oppositions are not merely contrasting pairs, but form evaluative social hierarchies where one term is considered more significant than the other. To deconstruct these hierarchies, one must dismantle them and reveal their mutual interdependence (Kavula Sikirivwa, 2020). Binary oppositions emphasise how meaning in texts is developed through differences and that a single word can carry multiple, sometimes contradictory, interpretations. Moreover, actual deconstruction is exploring outside the oppositional structure to seek new meanings (Turner, 2016). The select binary oppositions in the novel reveal the inherent instability and fluidity of an individual's social identity. Furthermore, the study examines the narrative teleological expectations of narrative structures, which traditionally feature resolution and narrative closure, characterised by stable meaning and character development. According to Derrida, Supplementarity can be seen as a notion that the meaning is produced in the absence, deferral and internal difference. The protagonists of the chosen novel are constantly caught in a cycle of emotional swings and delayed choices, resulting in a convoluted narrative conclusion. Identity and relational meaning are not a destination but a flowing situation, which is created in what is left out. This is highlighted by the open ending of the narrative, which neither offers a reunion nor a separation, but rather a point of interpretative incongruity. This shows us that Derrida claims that the meaning or so-called 'Origin' is divided into the presence of absence and the presence of difference. In this way, it undermines the concept of specific relational meaning. Nonetheless, in the chosen novel, a non-standard storyline and character journey, along with a lack of narrative resolution, are introduced. It does not endeavour to rectify interpersonal differences between the protagonists, thereby undermining the integrity of the closure as an indicator of narrative consistency and semiosis. Therefore, *Normal People* (2018) by Sally Rooney turned out to be a fertile field of research. It is narrative disintegration, ambivalence of character communication, and theme obsession with miscommunication and unresolved relationships place it in a theatre that is comfortable with Derridean deconstruction performance.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### A. *The Destabilisation of Meaning and Language in Intimate Communication*

Rooney's minimalist style, which lacks quotation marks and punctuation, erects a wall between discourse and narration. The conceptualization to read this type of writing can be made through the use of an analytic approach, injected with deconstructionist Derrida, who says that the metaphysics of presence. Rooney calls into question the idea that language transparently conveys meaning. Marianne's incapacity to articulate her psycho-affective state – "I do not know what is wrong with me," says Marianne – challenges the idea that language has unimpeded access to meaning, says Rooney. I do not understand why I cannot be like normal people" (Rooney, 2018, p. 142). Rooney indicates, in other words, that presence can not be accessed through language at the point when Marianne cannot express her psycho-affective state in words. Besides, the lack of meaning encapsulated in language is represented by the characters' incapacity for self-knowledge and socialrudiness, toward utopian self-knowledge as articulated in the assertion "Life is the element you bring with your inner head" (Rooney, 2018, p. 142). Connell's line strongly conveys how personal our experience of the world becomes, and how difficult it is to translate that into shared language. Rooney portrays Connell's obsession with language and experience as being provided in minimalistic language: "It feels strength to him to put an experience down in verbal aspect like he is trapping it in a jar and it can never fully leave him" (Rooney, 2018, p. 112). The language writing is considered both empowering and limited, and the metaphor is downplayed to maintain its minimalistic language choice.

In the narrative, the protagonist's language fails to convey true meaning in key dialogues. When Connell and Marianne have a conversation about their future life, they admit,

Then we would both be in Dublin, he says. I bet you would pretend you did not know me if we bumped into each other. Marianne says nothing at first. The longer she stays silent, the more nervous he feels, like maybe she really would pretend not to know him. The purpose of being beneath her notice gives him a panicked feeling, not only about Marianne personally but about his future, about what is possible for him. She says: I would never pretend not to know you, Connel. (Rooney, 2018, p. 32)

This scene depicts how boastful silence and self-comforting declaration highlight the tension between speech and utterance. It portrays how neither of them is capable of speaking properly, on top of their emotions. The constant misunderstandings that take place in the relationship damage the love that the couple shares. It shows that Derrida's idea of reality is always mediated by something beyond itself. This analysis destabilises traditional notions of truth and representation. It opens up space for alternative readings and interpretations. Thus, the instability of language becomes a source of creative possibility. In addition, in the early stage of a relationship, when Marianne has a sense of low self-worth about herself, Connell says,

I do love you. I am not just saying that. Her eyes fill up with tears again, and she closes them. Even in her mind, she will find this moment intolerably deep, and she is aware of this now, while it is happening. (Rooney, 2018,

p. 49)

Despite his sincere verbal dialogue, her response is non-verbal, with tears in her eyes, and she closes them in silence. Derrida contends that linguistic systems are inherently self-subverting, as the same structures that enable meaning also expose the limits and contradictions of that meaning. Discourse, in this sense, simultaneously depends upon inherited conceptual frameworks and destabilises them from within, making critique an internal rather than external operation of language (Derrida, 1967, 2016).

TABLE 1  
KEY INSTANCES OF LANGUAGE'S FAILURE IN DIALOGUES

Sl. No	Key Scene	Failure of Language	Emotional Outcome
1.	Connell fears social neglect from Marianne in Dublin (p. 32)	Marianne's silence delays meaning and words' inadequacy for reassurance	Emotional Tension; Mutual Insecurity
2.	Connell's confession of love (p. 49)	Verbal confession met with tears	The intensity of emotion surpasses verbal expression
3.	Marianne's inability to articulate her emotional state (p. 142)	Failure of verbal expression, when she admits, "I do not know what is wrong with me."	Emotional alienation and inability to self-expression
4.	Connell's reflection on language's power (p. 112)	Language 'traps' experience but never fully captures it.	Awareness of language's limitation

### B. Class, Gender, and the Subversion of Traditional Social Roles

The contrasting social backgrounds have a significant impact on the bond between Marianne and Connell. Connell is the son of a single mother, who is a housemaid from a lower-class background. On the other hand, Marianne is from a wealthy family, but is socially ostracised at school. The upper-class identity has never helped her in social belonging. Despite being rich, she has a sense of detachment,

Marianne had the sense that her life was happening somewhere very far away, unfolding without her, and she did not know if she would ever discover where it was and become part of it. She often has that feeling in school, but it is not accompanied by any specific images of what life might look like. (Rooney, 2018, p. 16)

Rooney uses various ways to achieve the above statement through the defiance of the characters against gender constructions. Marianne, the main character, is depicted as masculine. Through the characterization of the protagonist, a woman of intellectual dominance, emotional detachment and sexual autonomy, subversive femininity is shown. According to the author, men want to control women's mutiny rather than exercising their own bands (Rooney, 2018, p. 104). This also positions her as an overriding presence. Connell's expression of vulnerability and sensitivity, which are typically feminine traits, positively portrays him with a subversive masculinity in contrast to this. He confesses, "He had a sense of being two people, and one would have to emerge as a full-time choice" (Rooney, 2018, p. 174). The depiction of fluidity demonstrates how identities do not always conform to expectations of gender. The emotional conflicts depicted in the films illustrate how binary oppositions are unstable and can be subverted. In addition, while Marianne's fantasies often revolve around something surprisingly submissive, Connell is very careful and considerate in their intimacy. This questions the powerful and powerless binaries. This proves that gender identity does exist. Connell's plea for secrecy reveals a social pressure and a set of preconceived illusions that they carry into their relationship. Their relationship creates a blurring of the social and private. Their heart-to-heart talks often say more than words. Often, knowing what is not said is just as important as what is. Marianne will ask 'What?' if he quietly makes a decision not to say something as they talk (Rooney, 2018, p. 30). This indicates intact, which does not orient around the utterance. Instead, the meaning is generated from what is not said. At school, Connell mostly feels the urge to be his public self, who wants to please his peers. The public spaces are considered a regulatory element for behaviour and relationships through internal codes, and characters are free to act upon private emotions without consequences. Similarly, the so-called private spaces are considered an illusion, where Marianne's home is the space for emotional and physical abuse. Moreover, their relationship breaks stereotypical labels. Their bond defies categorisation and existing external traditional norms of platonic or romantic relationships, thereby deconstructing societal norms surrounding intimacy. This reveals Derrida's assertion that the oppositions cannot exist independently but are mostly contaminated by their counterpart.

### C. Deconstructive Performativity Using Narrative Ambiguity, Character Fluidity, Open-Ended Character Arcs

The research examines the author's defiance of conventional narrative closure by refusing to provide definitive character arcs, instead opting for a more nuanced approach that avoids precise closure or a complete transformation of the protagonists. The fantastical aspect of the fiction renders their future and their identity both unfixed and open-ended. The text incorporates a performative rejection of narrative closure. The fact that the fictions do not end the characters' trajectories speaks to the fictionality of narrative closure itself and so suggests that real intimacy could be thought through existing negotiate, not narrative closure. Marianne has ascertained that both of them have been the two plants growing in the same pot of soil, contorting and taking unlikely positions to make room for the other (Rooney, 2018, p. 280). The idea expresses a continuous increase of living beings, in continuity, over time, without any intention or predetermined end. The character's refusal of closure is an instance of *différance* for Derrida, where an identity is not presence or absence,

presence to itself or absence from itself, but something always-beyond-itself. As such, the protagonists exhibit this *différance*. The English study does not seem to offer final answers and is more ambivalent about narrative teleology. Essentially, the fiction's very ending had a denial of authorial closure. At the end of the novel, Connell gets ready to leave for New York for his occupational advancement, and the relationship between the two is one of honesty: "You should go, she says. I will always be here. You already have this knowledge. 281 Although it has an unclear fate, the enduring love of these two characters remains open to multiple interpretations. This is also given as "She closes her eyes. She thinks that he will probably not return. "Or, he will, wondrously, have what they have now, then it is something they can never have back again" (Rooney, 208, p. 281). It offers an ambiguous ending instead of the traditional "happily ever after." That said, it sows doubt. Furthermore, Derrida's absence of presence of meaning in texts is also in tune with: "The signified concept is never present in and of itself." According to the select theorist, nothing is inscribed in a term. He has contended that stories are always open-ended in some way – that stories always defer meaning; that a text's end is never fully achieved. The subversion of teleology interrupts the end of a text's resolution or finality. Then it emphasizes that storytelling is often a work in progress. The story itself becomes a site of interpretation and resignification. The denial of conclusive closure creates endless def. of conclusive closure.

The examination focuses on the narrative framework of the book. The novel disrupts linear and teleological narratives. The narrative structure undergoes a disruption due to a timeline and less use of quotation marks. Through it, we uncover the story structure of the novel. Derrida doubts the existence of a fixed structure and meaning. The structure of a signified is the same thing as the signified. Nothing exists beyond the text. Also, we see that the narrative framework of autobiographies such as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* remains inside the text—the Story Community Structure of the Novel. An author writes a novel with a fixed structure at first, usually with a beginning, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. However, the chosen novel does not have that. It includes the life events of Connell and Marianne, but these are not connected. This gives us disjointed and episodic glimpses of it. The events do have consequences. So, they are episodic in nature, but not per se. By doing so, it fragments the text in a certain way. Therefore, the illustration of deconstruction allows for the endless possibilities of derailing the meaning. Fragmentation helps to disseminate messages of impossibility in the text during the reading. The transformation of individual characters without finality is revealed in the novel as a performative deconstructive text. It is suspended in a place where closure is infinitely deferred, representing a textually deconstructive aestheticism.

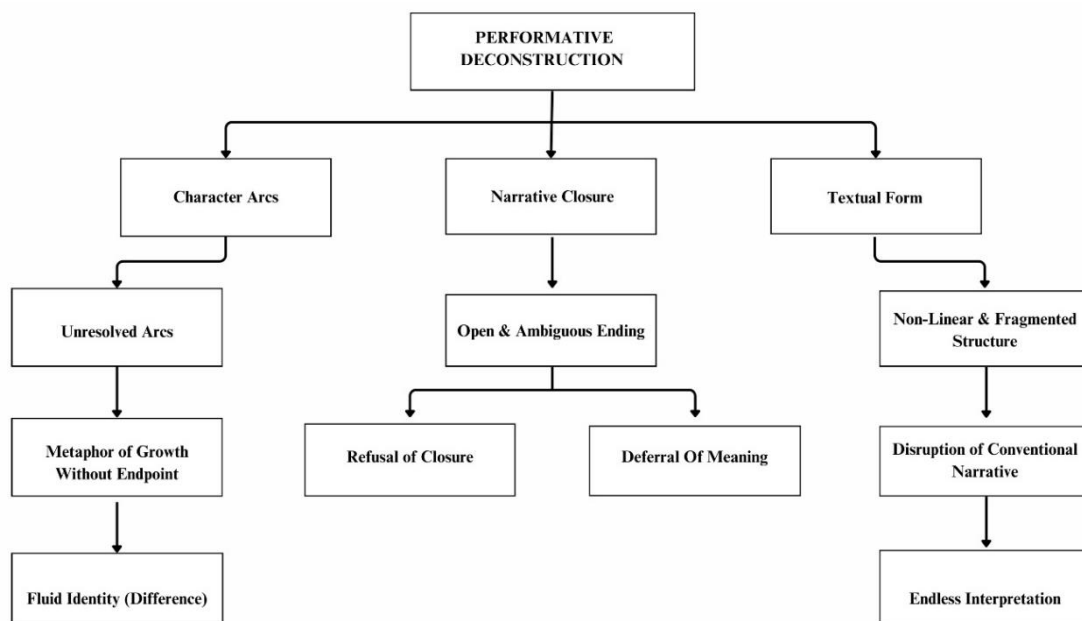


Figure 1. Performative Deconstruction in Sally Rooney's *Normal People*

#### D. Embracing Vulnerability, Healing and Narrative Ethics Beyond Deconstruction

Connell and Marianne's relationship is marked by moments of profound vulnerability. There is a disconnection that focuses on his internal struggle. However, as their bond intensifies, Connell finds solace in Marianne's love,

Being with her is like opening a door from everyday life and then closing it behind you. He is not afraid of her, actually; she is a pretty relaxed person. However, he fears being with her because of the confusing way he finds himself behaving, the things she says that he would never say. (Rooney, 2018, p. 12)

The conversation seems to have therapeutic qualities where elements of the self that no longer get scripted overtly by one's own personal script under social conditioning begin to emerge. The phrase "opening a door away from normal life" refers to taking the subject away from the normal social plays. It also implies taking him to a liminal space where this openness can "make something clear or possible, perhaps a form of recognition" (O'Douthwaite, 2011, p. 26). Connell

admits he can tell her anything about himself, and she will never repeat it; he knows that (Rooney, 2018, p. 12). Mutual trust and relative openness to vulnerability make the claim of Derrida concerning the impossibility to open up without being hurt or hurting others resonate. “I will never hurt you, okay?” He consoles her. He stated. “Never” (Rooney, 2018, p. 273). The emotional exchange shows that healing comes from connection when people open and engage in vulnerability. Above all, the novel evokes contemporary fears concerning how fluid identity may be. The main characters are pressured by themselves and society to self-define within strict parameters. The phrase aptly captures Marianne’s discomforts” He had that feeling at school many times. However, there was no particular picture which accompanied it of what life might look” (Rooney, 2018). Perhaps it also evokes the dislocation of a person, someone misjudging the position of another person within a social field, which he or she is terribly unsure about. The in-between life interactions that the key characters have with each other support their development, and later, all heal from their internalised trauma. According to Marianne, she has never felt that “People are a lot more knowable than they think they are” (Rooney, 2018, p. 271). Through Connell, she realizes this, and there is no denying that he knows too. He mentions,

I am not sure why I struggle to make people like me. I think there was something wrong with me when I was born. Lots of people love you, Marianne. Okay? Your family and friends love you. (Rooney, 2018, p. 194)

The relationship disrupts the main characters’ usual state of self-ignorance. In other words, this relationship creates a space, an interstitial space where things can happen. In such a space, repressed feelings, original and foreign desires, and suppressed memories surface—this connection, which may appear to cause dread, aids in healing. The self encounters and is shaped by itself, achieving real-time presence. The genuine healing of the soul entails an opening that raises questions about itself. Moreover, it entails an ethical exposure, which connects with human relations. Findings in the paper indicate that deconstruction creates uncertainties of meaning, and the understanding implies that the moral growth of the character can be reached by accepting rather than denying this uncertainty. In a similar vein, Connell highlights the importance of emotional honesty: “He wants to die, but he has never genuinely wanted Marianne to forget about his life” (Rooney, 2018, p. 173). As the narrative unfolds, we find that the protagonists serve as a scaffold for Derrida (1992), since deconstruction always posits ethical responsibility as an undecidable affair. Initially, he failed to acknowledge her publicly in school, revealing a neglect of ethical responsibility. Connell starts to seek therapy after the death of his friend Rob and pursues writing as his career as a reflection of his commitment to mental health and honesty, significant features of ethical responsibility in personal progress. Similarly, Marianne’s openness to love without dependence and acceptance of Connell’s life decision mirror her ethical responsibility towards her relationship and selfhood. In the modern world of digital technologies, where social identities are formed and staged, the story of Sally Rooney can be discussed as a quest for authentic contact. The readiness in the main leads to a weak confrontation of the conventions of emotional distance. Therefore, their engagement is a testament to a strong relationship, revealing the power of unity in an era characterised by disunity and isolation.

## V. CONCLUSION

There are many factors to refer to when exemplifying and performing the performativity components of Derridean deconstruction in *Normal People*, and these include language, binary oppositions, and selfhood. The analysis of the artificial and unsteady character of social binary opposition makes them appear contingent, unreliable, and subject to change, rather than being a slice of life or an essential aspect. The study explores the refusal of the novels to be concluded into a narrative, moral and fixed identity of characters, the select theorist proposes, since meaning is never finished and identity is never complete. This literary device renders the major fiction extremely pertinent to current cultural circumstances, particularly in its depiction of 21st-century social concerns, including intimacy, identity, and inter-human relationships within a hypermediated world. This paper draws attention to the progressive ethics of distinctiveness and openness in the fiction characterised by its subtlety and gradualism. In addition to this, the protagonists Connell and Marianne opt for gentleness and care, rather than security and socially sanctioned behaviours; they invest in a vision of intimacy that subverts indecision and undecidability. Derrida argues that we are responsible for making ethical decisions when an event is undecidable and in those moments where something or someone is undecided and undecidable. However, we must not refrain from taking notice and from responding. As a result, the deconstructive strategy is always at hand, or so the research work maintains—the deconstructive strategy. The scholarly article illustrates ways in which deconstruction can furnish valuable conceptual tools to make sense of the causes of contemporary social anxieties and to formulate new ethical relations. The reason is that in a culture where discursive authority is in constant contestation with one another, where social identities are in a constant state of crisis, and in a world where no one truly feels at home. The study concludes that while meaning remains uncertain, ambiguous, and never fixed, human relationships manage to endure. It provides a meticulous Derridean deconstructive reading of Sally Rooney’s *Normal People*. Despite the application of the study, it nonetheless reveals certain limitations. This study will focus on one primary text only. The selected fiction, while rich and deconstructive, does not easily allow for generalization of the results to all of Rooney’s other works or contemporary fiction broadly. The methodology of the research is quite qualitative and interpretive. The emphasis is on detailed reading and theoretical mapping. While this highlights critical reading of language and narrative structure, it lacks empirical validation. For the future scope of the present study, a comparative analysis with other millennial novels may reveal whether Rooney’s approach to relational ethics and narrative ambiguity in the performative aspects of deconstruction signals a broader literary trend. Moreover, in methodology, by integrating deconstruction, interdisciplinary fields such as

psychology, sociology, or digital humanities can highlight the narrative indeterminacy and fluid identities that intersect with mental health and digital communication in the contemporary world. Thus, this research establishes a significant foundation for existing discussions between literary theory, ethics, and cultural studies.

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