



STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S CAT'S EYE AND THE EDIBLE WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Several studies and researches have been done on the characters Elaine and Marian, however looking deep into them and finding why they have struggled a lot to find their inner self remains to be accomplished. Here these women protagonist and their many personal factors are taken and studied in a deep manner. Cat's Eye is a 1989 novel by Margaret Atwood. From the perspective of artist Elaine Risley, this dark yet deeply critical novel works on many levels. A study of changing feminist conventions and post-liberal ideology in the 1980s; It explains the development of female artists and the process of transforming life experiences into art. As a portrait the changing panorama of 40 years of Canadian life, both socially and artistically. Reminiscing about her work gives Elaine the opportunity to explore the events that have inspired her work. On the other hand, in the novel The Edible Women focuses on cannibalism, oppression, having to act a certain way, and wanting to find herself in the life of the main character, Marian. Although the novel was written in the 1960s, not much has changed, but it still reflects the face of us as women. Atwood talks about her concerns about feminist and women's issues, such as women's limited career opportunities, their expectations about marriage and pregnancy, as well as stereotypes and other social responses.

KEYWORDS

Feminism, Identity crisis, Womanism, Oppression

INTRODUCTION

The trend nowadays is towards women writing and one of the most celebrated Canadian writers in the west to date is Margaret Eleanor Atwood. Throughout her writing, she voices strong feminist themes; in most of her novels the female characters are a representation of “every woman” who is victimized and minimized by politics and gender. Atwood's major concern is the issue of gender in which she portrays the suffering of her female character confined to their feminine roles. Atwood's protagonists are forced to undergo a varying degree of victimization. Besides, they set out on a journey to rediscover lost part of their self and restore their independent identity. In fact, the woman is a victim of patriarchal forces that suppress and enslave her, thus causing a recurrent threat to her identity.

In the novel *Cat's Eye*, Elaine goes through character crises in her relationship with her life partner as he suppressed her creative imaginativeness as well as deceitful. As needs be, she isolates from Jon and goes to Vancouver with her young lady, Sarah. Elaine goes against the direction-based disposition of her better half and rejects to acclimate to the socially upheld occupation of mother and mate. Elaine decided to continue with a free presence with her young lady. She absolutely subscribes to painting and partakes in a couple of women get-togethers and artistry shows. Appropriately, Elaine embraces painting as a full-time calling and draws a movement of painting including, “Falling Women,” “Life Drawing,” “Cat's Eye” as well as a movement of imaginative manifestations about her mother. In her fine art “Falling Woman,” Elaine shows the authentic individual of Jon and Josef who are compelled for her abuse.

The story of Marian in *The Edible Women*, plays out her therapeutic excursion towards the recuperation of her female personality. The significance of the food in the book is displayed in a few perspectives. For instance, the reality that the clever beginnings with breakfast (and Marian feeling much better, even ravenous) and that is only the beginning. Significantly with Marian dealing with her flat mate Ainsley's headache by cooking her breakfast underscores the mending force of food. It could be contended that food is a pertinent topic in its relationship to ladies in some of Atwood's work. It goes about as a method of upset against laid out standards and society norms. On the excursion that the protagonist of this novel goes through to recover her genuine female self, which had been superseded by a socially acknowledged self because of her responsibility and the social situation that left hardly any decisions open for Canadian women by then.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to understand and analyze how the women protagonists face identity crisis in their life in a very different lifestyle. Elaine in *Cat's Eye* goes through bullying and childhood traumas from her childhood friends, which eventually makes her quest her past experiences and her life. While in the novel *The Edible Women*, Marian's beginnings with a voracious hunger and consistently drops to dietary problem, which

demonstrates an emergency in her character. Losing her appetite is one of the main incidents in this novel which makes her life miserable. Both these characters are finally coming out of that crisis and accepting many things in their life which helps them to view life in a very positive way.

HYPOTHESIS

Both novels focus on the identity development of the female protagonists, in different manner. Viewed as her most self-portraying work, *Cat's Eye* focuses on how personalities structure in young adult relationships and how Elaine as a kid, meets serious harassing on account of her dearest companions, which scars her and influences the work she later delivers as an artist. Similarly, in the novel *The Edible Women*, Marian MacAlpen reviews and contrasts her life and the environment and ladies around her and try to foster a reasonable insight about herself. Her commitment to Peter, a laid-out attorney, turns into the fundamental obstruction to her actual identity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the concept of feminism and womanism, a qualitative approach is employed to examine the identity crises of the female protagonists in these works. Elaine Risley, the primary hero in Margaret Atwood's novel *Cat's Eye*, is an artist who lived from the Second World War to the late 1980s and was a participant in the modern art movement. Elaine's adult life is different from others because of childhood bullying and being victimized by girls her age. Elaine discovers her identity in *Cat's Eye* by willingly travelling back in time and accepting the past, as well as the people, to appreciate the woman, she was and is.

Women's liberation is the conviction and support of equivalent privileges for lady. This conviction is appeared through Margaret Atwood's works, even though she does not accept so "Every time you compose according to the perspective of a lady, individuals say it's women's activist. " Critics all the world cannot help contradicting her and say that Atwood's books are glaringly feministic. Margaret Atwood uses time, male chauvinism, and desire to show her conviction that ladies are not dealt with decently, yet they should be. Atwood's quiet female jobs make the setting for her In Atwood's works, time is essential is showing that her women's activist convictions set the diagram in which she shows that conviction. Although starting in the West, women's liberation is showed overall and is addressed by different organizations focused on movement for ladies' freedoms and interests. Feminism integrates the place that social orders focus on the male perspective, and those ladies are dealt with unfairly inside those societies. Efforts to change that incorporate battling against orientation generalizations and laying out instructive, proficient, and relational open doors and results for ladies that are equivalent to those for men.

Womanism is a type of woman's rights centered particularly around the encounters, conditions, and worries of ladies of variety, particularly Black ladies. Womanism perceives the intrinsic excellence and strength of Black womanhood and looks for associations and fortitude with Black men. Womanism recognizes and censures

sexism in the Black American people group and prejudice in the women's activist local area. It further holds that Black ladies' identity relies similarly upon both their womanliness and culture.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Much research has been done on Atwood and her famous female characters such as Elaine and Marian. These characters and themes have been recognized, paving the way for people to explore these themes. In the New York Times, Atwood made it clear to Judy Clemenrud that my women endure because most of the women I talk to seem to endure. Since then, Atwood has been called and considered a female dissident. Atwood's interest in women and their encounters is reflected in many of her works, including "This Picture of Me" and the sonnet "Song of Anxiety", a reinterpretation of Homer's awe-inspiring "The Odyssey." Atwood's single point of view makes her an astonishing female activist writer.

In an article by Duaa Hussein Hamood and Dr. Azhar Noori Fejer named Identity and Performance in Margaret Atwood novel Cat's Eye they examine that to get a handle on the development and progression of Elaine's Risley endlessly character in Atwood's Cat's Eye, it is key to consider the effect of social factors, talk and power structures on Elaine's personality. In this paper she discusses how Atwood, illustrates the instability of orientation and how the sexes of the two genders are counterfeit and socially developed. Thus, by giving Butler's thought in "Impersonation and Gender Insubordination" orientation is an impersonation for which there is no original. Consequently, Elaine proves how playing with young ladies was not normal for her it was something she needed to figure out how to do. That is what Elaine states "playing with girls is different and at first, I feel strange as I do it, self-conscious, as if I am doing an imitation of a girl. But soon I get more used to it." Elaine illustrates now that orientation is a performative and a mimicking act thus, Butler's theory on performativity. One defense to this point is given by Osborne that is what who contends "the traditions and ceremonies of young ladies appear to be abnormal to her since she has grown up playing with and unreservedly imitating her dearest friend, her sibling, without agonizing over society's orientation limitations." The protagonist of Cat's Eye Elaine Risley went through identity crisis in her youth she lost herself because of the moderate worth of a male-ruled society. It is simply by tolerating her earlier recollections and defying her old youth injuries, Elaine tracks down her personality. Atwood proves likewise here that a lady can effectively assume the parts of a spouse, mother, and craftsman. She shows that by turning into an effective craftsman, Elaine disturbs the cliché pictures of ladies by separating the limits of a male centric culture. They conclude this paper by saying that focusing on the cultural differences between boys and girls, she showed that gender identity was not innate, but that it was the essence of Butler's theory. Elaine is not constrained by social and cultural factors, and by acting in this way, gender identity is not born, but is built by the patriarchal society, proving that this is the essence of the theory.

In another research paper by Orela Vokes titled *REVELLING IN FOOD: An Ecofeminist Reading of Margaret Atwood's The Edible Woman* they take the topic Food and the Body and examines food symbolism as it relates to the human body in ways other than eating habits, in order to add to the novel's already plentiful layers. In spite of her insubordinate activities, Marian is frantic to be typical, which incorporates sticking to the orientation standards of the overall setting. The uncertain completion leaves the story open; and keeping in mind that it is conceivable that Marian has gained and created from her encounters it appears to be almost certain that she has rather gotten back to the individual she was in the start of the book. All things considered, her insubordination is by all accounts an individual one, against wedding Peter, instead of against what he represents, which is male strength. The dietary patterns of Marian and different characters have been investigated, her dismissal of food has been analyzed to an ecofeminist viewpoint, and the representative connection among food and the human body has been investigated. Obviously, the presence of food in the original lets us more than exactly what the characters eat, and the way that. Critics interpret this in various ways add to the conversation.

ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

CAT'S EYE AND THE EDIBLE WOMEN

Although 'Cat's Eye' is a novel full of feminist discourse, the narrator himself raises controversy about feminism and ideology in general, but in 'Cat's Eye', the feminist movement appears as a separate topic. The feminist theme emerged with the rise of sustainable development in the 19th century, but it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that a broader feminist movement took. It motivates and becomes an integral part of Western culture. Much of the novel is devoted to the way identities are formed in adolescent relationships. Elaine was bullied by her friends even during her childhood. It left her scars and influenced the work that she would later produce as an artist. Be that as it may, Elaine doesn't simply assume the job of a casualty she additionally sees how she begins to mingle with her bullies, especially Cordelia, and adopt some of their traits and behaviors. She notes both how these childhood atrocities affected her self-image and how her ability to identify with those who perpetrated that cruelty shaped her increasingly. Atwood's coming of age story ultimately depicts the intertwining of love and aggression, revealing the role conflict played in shaping his identity. Atwood's work shows how much smarter it is to get a handle on and apply exertion at a confirmed relationship than to make and speak with others through shallow means or shallow means or shallow organizing. Given that Elaine and First's characters are very unique, this superficial connection can be problematic and dangerous.

The search for personality is the main topic running all through the works of Margaret Atwood's. And Cat's Eye is no special case. Upsetting, humorous and empathetic, Cat's Eye is an amazing novel of a lady wrestling with the tangled bunch of her life. The novel elevates a woman's capacity to investigate her personality separate from a man and the significance and weighty effect of the longing for association with different ladies. Cat's Eye chronicles Elaine Risley's life from her childhood until her adulthood. Throughout the novel, it is seen that

Elaine's character develops. She begins as a bullied little girl in her childhood, a mean but passionate girl in her adolescence, and a free young lady in her initial adulthood, to at long last turn into a lady who battles to relinquish her past in her adulthood. The character development of Elaine Risley is affected by several things which include Toronto as her environment, her experiences with bullying in the hand of Cordelia, the men and women in the society around her, her paintings, and the cat's eye marble, and the Virgin Mary. Cat's Eye presents Elaine's development in rich complexities. Elaine Risley is fostering a person that is impacted by outer and inner elements. Therefore, she gives different answers, so she is a round character. Her way of overcoming life's obstacles is inspiring as it turns out that her problems are rooted in trauma and suicidal intentions. Elaine's character improvement is an illustration of how a singular's advancement obliges an assortment of natural variables.

In the other novel *The Edible Women*, Marian, the protagonist in numerous ways represents the mind of most of ladies in Canada. Being exposed to expansionism and oppression by outsiders, Canada as an entire experienced a profound character emergency and it is this excursion from exploitation to acknowledgment and further, from conflict to completion that has forever been the extraordinary Canadian excursion. Since her books, particularly her prior ones tiptoe the line among women's liberation and existentialism; the paper considers both of these thoughts and searches for them. Atwood portrays her character very well. This often indicates a sense of moral circumstance and deception in their decisions and choices. In the novel, Marian tries to convince herself that she looks like an impulsive, docile and tolerant wife and is okay with that. One of such instances is dressing and doing her hair when she asks him to do it without her. Another time is when she's getting her ready in her living room and all she can feel is self-loathing for not being brave enough for who she really is. This inner voice is an essential element in finding one's identity in one's life. Individuals cannot learn without this pain and trauma that initiates the change from a victim to a protester. Of course, the complex topic of personality development cannot be addressed without further reflection on the features of language strongly associated with it. Atwood's numerous books focus on the relationship between language and subjectivity and contain a variety of articles alluding to language, supporting the postmodern women's activist idea that language is a vehicle for shaping oblivion and internalizing symbolic demands. Marian's absence of focused self and her other-directedness is a consequence of her failure to delimit herself from others. At the end of the day, the penetrability of her self-image limits doesn't permit her to separate between me and different subjects and items. This separation, be that as it may, is a precondition for personality improvement and subjectivity, an absence of which causes wretchedness.

Marian starts with an insatiable appetite and steadily drops to eating disorder, which indicates a crisis in her personality. On the first day of her trip, she eats tomato juice, cereal, bread and pudding, dine with her office maidens, and dine with her friend Clara. In fact, not a single chapter has passed without mentioning Marian or

eating her food until the day Peter proposes to her. Then she starts refusing foods until she stops eating her. Marian suffers from similar difficulties while eating. She begins to recognize meat and vegetables as living things, and she can no longer eat these foods. She can feel the spongy surface of cakes and puddings, and she will nearly upchuck simply contemplating them. Also, in the story his mother offered a dead chicken in place of eggs in is that the Red Queen prevents her from eating eggs. So, Marian starts eating disorder. But for her impending marriage marks the loss of her personal freedom, accelerating her development of this disorder. Due to Marian's eating disorder and the struggle for identity among multiple options, Harkness's interpretation of the similarities between these scenes may be subject to revision. For example, he viewed Marian's hesitation about where to sit as a matter of territory, since each chair belonged to one of his housemates and was still littered with paperwork. This is equivalent to Duncan's idea of a college education, the three housemates continuing to move abstractly on to another person, encountered, as Marian, in the translations of other groups of people. for meeting the world face to face. Harkness also chose Fish as Dormouse due to his narration and half-closed eyes. The fish looks more like a March rabbit and is named after the animal. Of course, as Alice does at the tea party, Marian leaves the stage where the food turns into a food fight, which is another devastating setback. his existential journey.

CONCLUSION

The theme of survival is the main theme of Margaret Atwood's novels and she preoccupies with it in all her writing. The main character tries to exist in every possible form and expression. Moreover, they continue to strive, overcoming all obstacles to survive. Their efforts end in failure or marginal success, but they keep trying. Each of Atwood's characters is now aware of their concerns and demands their removal by seeking insight and working to understand their personalities. Atwood is, both thematically and technically, created by injecting a sense of survival into her novels. Thematically, Atwood introduces the connection between women and nature from an ecological point of view. With great skill, she randomly combines visual patterns and infinite ecological themes to attract attention. The subjugation of women in a patriarchal society and the exploitation of nature in a capitalist society are themes that Atwood addresses quite often in his writings. Technically, although some stories, the theme can be viewed from a different angle, or it can be treated from other angles, such as a glimpse into the character's inner life., which is evident in both *Cats Eye* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Atwood's main characters struggle to understand why they lead unhappy lives and the world around them. They do not easily adapt to the society in which they live. Some go beyond the full awareness of the victim, trying to deny it, some fail, however, most evade it. They all use a common element: creativity, each very creative in his sense of survival. They are all female victims of typical circumstances, who refuse to make sacrifices and do their best to fight the situation. Atwood seeks happy endings for the suffering female characters in his novels. Thus, with the help of a vital sense, survival, whether psychological or spiritual, is achieved and thus leads to happiness through a new outlook on life.

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