

Identity crisis in the novels of Margaret Atwood

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Abstract

Margaret Atwood is an international poet, critic and cultural activist. She depicts identity crisis through her novels. She explores the miserable condition of women in the patriarchal society. Male domination, manipulation and exploitation of female is a commonly found phenomenon in her novels like *Surfacing*, *Edible Women*, and *Lady Oracle*. All these novels deal with the identity crises of women. In all these novels there is a longing for freedom and rights which a women demand from last decades.

Keywords: identity crises, male domination, patriarchal society, exploitation

Introduction

Atwood is an analyst of human mind. The narrative technic which she employed in her works depict her creativeness and art. She became successful in presenting the crises that are prevailing in the society through her female protagonist. She presents the real picture how women are suppressed in male dominated society and how they fight with the crises. They fight against the male dominated society and try to find their own independent society. She raises the issue of women's search of identity from a feministic point of view. The concept of identity is explored at different levels by the author.

Objectives

1. To analyze the theme of identity in the novels of Margaret Atwood.
2. To know how the novels depict the real condition of male dominated society.

Identity crises in The Edible woman

The *Edible Woman* is the first Canadian novel that anticipates the trend of feminism. In *The Edible Woman* Atwood depict woman as an edible product. The protagonist remains in the search of identity. Margaret Atwood describes *The Edible Woman* as a "protofeminist novel" as it was written before Women's Liberation Movement. The novel gives a description that how it took a long time from an economically independent woman to overthrow her weakness and marginalization. The main protagonist of the novel is Marian Ac Alphin Throughout her life she is exploited and humiliated by male society. She opposes male domination and refuses to be edible woman, she wants to get human identity. The novel exposes the hollowness of patriarchal structure of domination.

Wayne Fraser rightly states: The *Edible Woman* "narrated by Marian, a recently university graduate who is working for a market research firm, demonstrates the difficulties, for a woman of 1960s of living within the conventional norms. It depicts the growing threat to a Woman's identity by a male controlled and increasingly consumer oriented society".

The novel always portrays how Marian's other colleagues like Clara, Lucy, Emmie too are exploited in male dominated society. Here woman is treated like a lifeless object, who is used to please and attract males. She is

feeling that she is not having her own identity. Finally, Marian refuses to be *The Edible Woman*. So, *The Edible Woman* is an attack on male Power structure and male authority. *The Edible Woman* not only shows exploitation of woman in male dominated society but it is also a script of the exploitation and oppression and also it shows woman's rebelliousness against this patriarchal society.

"*Surfacing*" aptly suggests the identity of an unnamed woman protagonist who suffers a lot and is about her painful journey into her own psyche. It reveals the attitude of society towards the female protagonist. It too deals with the issues like exploitation of female artists and the traumatic impact of abortion on woman's psyche *Surfacing* is a feminist novel about a nameless woman protagonist, who locates her distinct identity by ignoring the male instinct to exploit and dominate. *Surfacing* is a psychological issues, it is about the psyche of a woman, who is in search of her roots and in turn is in search of herself.

The protagonist projects herself innocent and powerless and a victim of her husband's cruelties. The male female relationship is just like of victim and victimizer. Anna the female protagonist never feels a home like environment even in her own home. She never feels comfortable. In the process of self-realization, the protagonist destroys everything associated with her past, as these things appear to her as misguided tricks for the apprelision of truth. The protagonist refuses to be a victim. She rejects her passive innocence, rediscovers her consciousness and regains her distinct identity as a woman. She refuses to accept the reality of past and proves herself as an independent woman. Thus in *surfacing* the protagonist's quest for an explicit identity is fulfilled in the end of the novel. She gives up passivism and revolts against the unequal and unjust distribution of power. The protagonist search for a discrete identity.

"*Lady Oracle*" also deals with the protagonist's search of identity. The novelist describes how the individuality and identity. The novel describes how the individuality and identity of a woman writer is crushed in the patriarchal society and her writing is categorized on the basis of sex. *Lady Oracle* depicts the obstacles faced by a woman writer to get an equal place in the of literature.

The 'protagonist' has multiple identities a beloved, a writer and a wife. yet she is searching for her true identity which must be lost somewhere. The protagonist itself reveals her

deep desire to be free from the shackles of patriarchy. *Lady Oracle* is an attack on the male dominant society. She wants to attain independent state from her childhood. Through this novel Margaret Atwood gives a clear message that men and woman should be treated equally. They should not be treated as servants of men. They need their identity and must be recognized with their own status.

Conclusion

Margaret Atwood's novels deal with the issue of identity. They depict the real picture of male dominated society and the crises that are prevailing. Her novels are feministic. Atwood pleads the human rights of woman and gives a warning to the patriarchal social to demolish the male dominant society.

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