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The 'Women' in Atwood's Writings: The Imperativeness of Transformation.

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ABSTRACT

This paper throws focus on the rotating point of the Atwood "Let the work speak for itself": It goes well with the acclaimed writer and novelist Margaret Atwood, whose oeuvre diagrams the female protagonists physical and psychological journeys which takes them into complex situations and land them in stifling environments. They get victimized and targeted either consciously or unconsciously. Through travelling in this stifling circumstances then encounter their own point of epiphany and in a moment of realization start to break the shackles they are bound with and come of their self-made sympathetic cocoons. Ultimately, realize that tormenting the torments is the way out of their psychological disturbances, but, not for long as this temporary refuge doesn't provide them the soul drenching comfort. This then, takes them to the dawn of acceptation and forgiving which leaves them transformed, renewed and rehabilitated. This process of converting into an assimilated individual has been the core point of discovery in the present paper, which charts the development of the heroines to a championed individual ready to take the society head on. The novels Surfacing, Lady Oracle and Cat's Eye have been selected to bring home the point.

Key Words: Physical, intellectual and emotional transformation; imperativeness of denial; reformation and restoration, yes- beginning again.

Atwood's fictional oeuvre provides voice to the voiceless. While raising humanitarian and environmental concerns, it discusses some raging issues which are of immediate concern. The panorama of her fiction takes the readers from the common households to luxurious settings. Her themes range from issues confronting contemporary society to the visualization of a futuristic world. Her issues span from domestic affairs to global contentions. Her works give pictures of pristine natural wonders and destructive technological feats. Her motto it appears from her works has always been to instruct through 'art' – the art of her pen.

Like Charles Dickens, the ideas of Atwood are the concerns which emerge from a conscientious writer to fulfill her duty as a true echo of the society around her, as she opines that being a writer is a "socially acknowledged role" (Atwood, 2002, p.4). The role which demands an audacious attention to the peculiarities and nuances of the society and it overall carries an 'impressive significance'. Hence, Atwood has been viewed as "one of the most important literary chroniclers of our time" (qtd. In Wilson, 2006, p.176).

The writer has been widely recognized for echoing her strong views on women's position in the society. Her works highlight the disturbances that women have been undergoing in their personal and professional sphere. These turbulences in the lives of her protagonists are shown as a resultant of partly their misunderstanding of the environment around them and partly on account of the people in their lives. These protagonists fluctuate from present to the past. They brood upon the problems encountered and analyze their relationships. By committing mistakes, they take refuge into a new environment. Thereby, Atwood, then leaves them to struggle with their conscience in order to come to terms with their surroundings, which in turn develops signs of madness. Their efforts to strike a balance in satisfying their needs and demands of the society at the same time leave them "starved, transformed, beaten, abused and incarcerated". These heroines which "litter" in Atwood's works are the writer's efforts to "draw attention to women's position within a culture that plays numerous dirty tricks on them." (Davies,2006, p.62). Finally, in some moment of epiphany they understand and learn from their mistakes. Thereby emerge and face the world freshly with a spirited verve and enthusiasm. The heroines' of *Surfacing*, *Cat's Eye* and *Lady Oracle* undergo this cyclic phenomenon. The tricks of the society fail to devour them. Instead the protagonists emerge successful in their battle. They learn lessons from their environs which lay hidden until they have made an attempt to unearth them. Finally, the protagonists "move from ignorance to self-knowledge from projection to creative interaction with other characters"

(Onley,1973, p.42 as cited in Bryfonski,1980). In reviving their lives, the writer sends a message that humans should be flexible to transformations. These changes, if understood and worked upon carefully can help one to lead a fulfilling life.

In the words of Patricia F.Goldblatt, the stories of the writer deal with the transformation of women from "ingénues" to "insightful" (1999, p.275) ones. These transitions of the unnamed narrator, Elaine Risley and Joan of *Surfacing, Cat's Eye* and *Lady Oracle* respectively have been the products of writer's sustained attention to the women's search for the physical, emotional and psychological comfort. This search compels them to escape from unmanageable circumstances and entangled relationships. They defy the unwelcome social obligations and deny being part of restrictive environments. They fly from one place to other like a 'Picaro' and use subterfuge, creating temporary comfort zones around them but in vain, ultimately realizing that "escape is no longer possible" they transform themselves to determined individuals bold enough to overcome the future obstacles. Thus the writer: creates female protagonists who are forced to remake themselves, to achieve a courage and self- resilience in their attitudes and relationship with others and the world around them. (Sinha, 2008)

The protagonists of Atwood are one among us. Their disturbances and emergence from their conflicting conscious zones are the concerns of every human in his or her life.

Atwood's writing has been upheld for its social message. It highlights the concept of imperativeness of denial. Providing strength to the weak, her works convey the idea that saying "no" is necessary under certain circumstances. These in general showcase that, the realization of victimization and identifying suppression combined with the necessary counter action would bring an individual out of suffering. This counter action can be breaking away from the precincts of relationships, denying to oblige, or ceasing to please others. These measures of her females, in general, have brought them respect, recognition and mental peace. Thus, as Goldblatt opines the writer in her novels develops circumstances in which the protagonists "burdened by the rules and inequalities of their societies, discover that they must reconstruct braver, self-reliant personae in order to survive" (1999, p.275).

The novelist charts the development of her heroines. They rise from innocence to knowledgeable. She makes them go through physical and mental turmoil, which act as a file in shaping their career. For this reason, her novels have been interpreted as female Bildungsroman, which uplift them from victimhood and diagram their development process. They show the "female narrators process of growth into awareness of personal moral responsibility which is repeatedly figured in all Atwood's novels" (Howells, 1996, p.10).

The goal of Atwood's writing has been to bring about a revival in women's fate. As a majority of her works reflects the correlation between "women and achievement" (York,2006, p.28). The heroines appear to be after achieving either a respectable position or a fulfilling life. They also are showcased to be struggling for mere recognition and existence. This drive of the writer has been successful in diverting the attention of male society towards their co-being. Her fiction and poetry provided insights into the deeper understanding of the biological, emotional and psychological aspects of women. Her works played the role of an eye opener to the materialistic society whose target has always been the female sex. Hence, her heroines have been the center of attraction and have gripped serious critical acclaim. A majority of critics opine that her male characters are only "stereotypical," whose function is limited to the negative (Stine 1983, p.61). But the male characters play a major role in shaping their female counterparts. Their absence and positive portrayal would not have left the lasting impact, which their negative characterization does. Overall, these criticisms have always been dispelled by the production of more and more evocative works which silenced the apprehensions of many critics. This overall signifies Atwood's "uncompromising honesty about women's achievements including her own" (York, 2006, p.30).

The women of the writer have been instrumental in bringing about a change in the understanding of her readers. Her works incorporate life - like characters of the modern era. A modern woman's struggle to satisfy her personal life and concentrate equally on her career has been highlighted in the three novels: *Lady Oracle*, *Cat's Eye* and *Surfacing*. As usually happens, the balance of professional and personal life is hardly maintained and the characters find struggling to satisfy both. The novels in discussion show the women protagonists giving much importance to their professional careers and at the same time wishing their co-partner to share in their developmental endeavors. But, we see their counter parts hardly showing any willingness to cooperate. The male chauvinism, egoistic tendencies play their role and stop the males in lending a supportive hand. This leads to psychic disturbances in the heroines, who try to win in both spheres, but fail. The neurotic tendencies occupying the mind space of the present society have been noticed in both the female and male characters. But, Atwood's center of attention in this case is the female. These tendencies make the heroine's take extreme steps. They step in these disturbances and harm themselves physically and emotionally. The narrator of *Surfacing* in her state of metamorphosis, giggles unnecessarily behaves strangely, answers absentmindedly much to the surprise of her friends and at the end she discards human food and clothes. Things take quiet similar turn for Joan of *Lady Oracle,* the frustration here is being transferred from a parent to a child. The mother of Joan could not lead a successful married life, the stress of which she transfers to her only child Joan. Joan often goes into fits of depression and emits her misery by eating vigorously and growing enormously.

As time passes, after the death of her mother she sees her visions and feels as if she is still following her. Sometimes she is seen taking candle in her hands and speaking to herself in the mirror: "I couldn't get out again. I was going along the corridor, with the candle in my hand as usual, and the candle went out. I think the candle really did go out and that was why I was struck there, in the mist of darkness, unable to move. I'd lost all sense of direction; I was afraid to turn around even, in case I ended up going farther in. I felt as though I was suffocating." (Lady Oracle,1976, p. 223)

As regards the protagonist of *Cat's Eye* the writer chooses the neurotic childhood and showcased a different perspective of a stressed contemporary life. Elaine develops a meek personality under the pressure of the bullying of her friends. Unable to vent her aggravation out, she inflicts the torture by wounding herself: "I peeled the skin off my feet. I did it at night, when I was supposed to be sleeping […] I would pull the skin in narrow strips […] I chewed the ends of my hair […] I gnawed the cuticles off from around my finger nails, leaving welts of exposed, oozing flesh which would harden into rings and scale off" (Cat's Eye,1988, p.120). This stress reaches to extreme proportions when under an imbalanced marital life, she hears some voice and attempts suicide: "This is when I hear the voice, not inside my head at all but in the room, clearly: *Do it. Come on. Do it*" (*Cat's Eye,1988, p. 393*). The damaging aspects of the human personality which can wreak havocs in the lives of the victim as well as on the people around, is ascertained particularly in the above mentioned novels and in her works in general. Not going by the convention of positivity and the first rate portrayal of the main protagonists', Atwood's heroines are filled with flaws. The three novels exhibit their meek personalities and their struggle to overcome them. The writer here can be paralleled with Charlotte Bronte who went contrary to the popular convention of her period: the positive and attractive portrayal of the main characters and in her novel *Jane Eyre*, she fashioned an unattractive heroine whose was valued for her strong intellectual personality.

The best of the narrative in is, when the events in the lives of these three protagonists take a renovated turn. The characters are not shown as being ignorant of the disturbances, but are well equipped with adequate understanding of their surroundings. As Sharon R. Wilson writes Atwood's characters and readers possess heightened awareness of the multicultural, colonized, racist, classist, patriarchal, sexist, and hypocritical aspects of their respective worlds. (Wilson, 2013). It does not take them long to comprehend their mistakes, drawbacks and failures. After which, they take the road of renovating their life which ultimately is achieved in a chronology of: realization, correction, stabilizing, and settling. Thus, the writer sensitizes the modern society with the struggles of the contemporary women.

The protagonists of *Surfacing, Lady Oracle* and *Cat's Eye* undergo either physical or mental transformation except Joan of *Lady Oracle* who undergoes both. This change and understanding necessitates a revival of their fates, which is brought by none other than the protagonists themselves. But before undergoing the personality change and a mental metamorphosis the circumstances in the heroines' lives necessitates escape from situations and relationships. The heroines take flight by using a craft of subterfuge, which is a trick, a ploy or an artifice. This strategy gives them the chance to escape the unmanaged and ambiguous situations which in turn gives them time to brood upon their past and accept their present. Thus, the novels exhibit the central characters' "potential for wholeness and escape from the "dominant scopic economy" (Bromberg 1988, p.14).

The stories of these three protagonists have been woven around strict environs which test them at every step of their life. These narratives present the vulnerable heroines falling into the trap of the persecutors. They have been made clever to comprehend and detect the society's designs and expectations. They give a try with every thought of plan and fail, only to win at last. They try to negate those, who do not fit in their societal milieu. They contradict the individuals, who go against their ideas. They cancel out the ones, who try to reshape their personalities for their own benefit. In these "societies tailored to the submission of females Atwood's protagonists refuse to be pinned down to the measurements of the perfect women. Instead they reconstruct their lives, imprinting their own designs in the worlds of patterned fabric" (Goldblatt, 1999, p.281-82). Thus, these heroines have been treated with valor, in which they chart their own path of recovery and design their career successfully.

Transformation is the essence of all life. Either it is physical or psychological. Metamorphosis in humans is correlated to their environmental and societal positioning. It makes them either virtuous or villainous. It can be constructive or destructive. The characters of Atwood are no exception. Time and social conditioning bring forth a profound change in their personalities. Almost all her characters undergo a positive, constructive change through experiences ranging from tragic to traumatic. Atwood's fascination for the folk and fairy tales served instrumental in designing characters enthused with "intelligence and magical powers". She explains her use of the motifs of transformation and positive images of women as an outcome of the similar fascination (Baer,1988, p.24,25).

Atwood instilled her characters with the societal awareness and intense sensibility. They are all "seeking something whether for answers, equilibrium, freedom, revenge, understanding and fulfillment" (Sinha,2008, p.88). They put their lives on experiment, struggle with their past and present, and fit ultimately in the societal milieu. But before becoming a satisfactory participant in the worldly affairs they take recourse to subterfuge and take up escapades. The narrator of *Surfacing* is a typical creation of Atwood's art. She undertakes a journey to explore the true meaning and essence of her trouble ridden life. This journey undertaken in search of the lost father proves to be an inward journey exploring her

true self (Devi,2007, p.113). It's voyage of understanding and fulfillment. The novel as such showcases an "awakening from a personal, sexual and national alienation to an integrated sense of identity" (Sinha,2008, p.91).

The unnamed narrator has enjoyed carefree childhood in the lap of Quebec landscape. Her artistic interests' take her to the city, and she gets engaged to a man. Thinking that he would prove to be a perfect life partner marries him, much to the resentment of her parents. As time progresses the narrator is able to uncover the disguised personality of her husband. He undermines her artistic interests dictating terms and conditions in her paintings. Added to it, he stifles her domestic personality as well. He pushes her into forced motherhood, since he wanted a "replica of himself". The narrator becomes an unvoiced victim to his smothered dominion. Not until she was obligated for an abortion, she realizes her victimization. The mentally disturbed protagonist is now physically wounded as she feels her "flesh cut off". She ceases to have an identity of herself. This develops in the narrator abhorrence for the relationships and revulsion for the hypo critic society. Frustrated, decides to divorce her husband and leave the child.

The novel initiates at this point, with the protagonist journey back to her roots, "I am on this road again twisting along the past" (Atwood,1972 ,p.7). It begins with the desperate narrator's quest for a fulfilling life. Having, learned that her widowed father has gone missing, she goes to her hometown. This journey of double-entendre initiates with her moving to Quebec with her friends David and Anna– a couple and her future partner Joe. This camouflaged search for her father is marked as an inward journey of discovering her eroded individuality. She subterfuges her search, keeping her friends in dark and sneaks out at every caught opportunity to continue with uncovering her persona. Journeying through the turmoil of conscience, the protagonist analyzes the inherent meaning of her father's and mother's message of the essence of existence. This makes her to take the road to transformation.

The narrator reminiscences her past in the present. Atwood brings together the broken pieces of her past and combines with her present in order to make her a multi-dimensional whole. The journey of the narrator "is indeed a journey into her interior which leads her towards acceptance and realization" (Vijayalakshmi,2004, p.100). A search for the absence of meaning in life compels the protagonist to undertake it. Her journey to the home town and the message her parents provide a new turn to her life.

In a chronological order Atwood develops the narrator's personality. The narrator builds up in phases and her transition from one phase to other indicate that as Rubenstein reports, "truth she seeks is already within herself" (as cited in Brynfonski & Mendelson, 1978, p.32). At every step an image has been used to uncover her positive attributes. Each image peels the layer off her deliberately covered persona.

The metamorphosis comes in her, but, after escaping from unmanageable circumstances and through the abstract message of her parents at the Quebec landscape. It's a message of life and fulfillment. A feeling of motherhood combined with the discovery of her father's dead body gives her a new ray of hope. She truly understands the essence of her mother's message given to her as a child: "At first I ran away, but after that my mother said I had to go. I had to learn to be polite; "Civilized," she called it. So she watched from behind the door. When I finally joined in a game of Musical Chairs I was welcomed with triumph, like a religious convertor or a political defector." (Atwood,1972, p. 80)

The novelist promises a fulfilling life, but not before the protagonist understanding the relevance of "life" and "fulfillment". She is provided with clues throughout her search. These clues though intriguing are successful in hinting at possibilities of survival to the narrator. This vision of survival initiates in her, the process of reproduction which, she acquires through the decision of giving birth to a new life with Joe. Hence, following the footsteps and message of her parents. In fact, Sharon R. Wilson's opinion that the narrator's search for father and mother coincides with the quest of self and past thus ultimately finding satisfaction in a message of survival of "human survival" emphasizes our observation (2006, p.180).

The novel *Lady Oracle* showcases the chronological events in the life of Joan Foster. The narrative becomes autobiographical as Joan recalls her past life in Italy, which is the destination of her final escapade. As the account unravels the readers learn that Joan's mind gives spontaneous signals to escape from unfavorable people and un adjustable situations. "I was hoping for magic transformations" (Atwood,1976, p.46). This desire of Joan leaves her perplexed and drives her to take leaps in relationships. The inconsistencies in her decision making propel her to take the extremes. Joan being an obese child is neglected and scorned at by her mother. Lack of the homely warmth and parental neglect necessitates her to leave home and search for comfort in Paul. Having discovered that he is up to stifling her personality, she takes refuge from him. Secondly, her married life with Arthur fails to provide her the desired independence. She makes attempts to make her marital life smoother but in vain. Her disturbed psyche unconsciously takes her to Royal Porcupine, who, after a period of time proposes her. She wasn't prepared to manage people by keeping her married life at stake. Afraid of the unanticipated turn of events, she rejects the proposal and runs away from him. She feels perplexed in her entangled relationships and her haunting obese past. A home maker, she struggles with her personality twin: the writer, trying to maintain a balance and satisfy the demands of both.

Her celebrity status, of a writer brings Fraser Buchanan, alias Chuck Brewer, to her. He tries to saw her money off by threatening to expose her multiple identities. But Joan cleverly tricks him by stealing his dairy and blackmailing him instead. These efforts fail to relieve her from psychic disturbances and emotional trauma. Life becomes a snarl for Joan by the often haunted memories of obese childhood and nightmares of being exposed of multiple identities. By taking up escapades and employing subterfuge, she makes "feeble attempts to control it" (Atwood,1976, p.7), set it in order and bring normalcy. The desire for a serene life without the traces of dark past prompts her to think of a final escapade. She then stages a fake drowning suicide and reaches Italy. Her escape appears fruitless as her past comes before her with the discovery of her true identity by the land lord in Italy. This combined with her friend's arrest, who helped her in managing an escape necessitates her resolve a journey back to her husband, to encounter her past and untie the knotted relations. Consequently, the protagonist takes the road to transformation.

Understands that, crying over the spilled milk is squanderous and frankness and honesty is more fetching, "I must be calm, I must be collected, I must collect myself" (Atwood 1976, p.339). With this learned ideologue, the protagonist is a transformed person and takes her first step in this direction. She senses that Marlene and Sam can be rescued only when she goes back to her present. She then heads for Toronto and "rejects her former craft of subterfuge" (Goldblatt,1999, p.281). Thereby resolves to see Arthur, encounter the past, and untie the knotted relations. Hence, Joan gains genuine knowledge and a feeling of valour pervades through her mind. Thus, the heroines of Atwood in the process of finding out their own guilt begin to acquire a "new strength" (McMillan, 1988, p,60), which leads them to the process of recovery and transformation.

Commenting on the protagonist's transformation McMillan asserts that similar to Joan Forster the protagonists of Joan "begin their awakening to maturity by rejecting the notion that their passivity is innocence" (1988, p.49). Joan Forster's awareness of the need to go back to the needy and face the society she has left behind speaks volumes of the intellectual transformation she has undergone. Therefore, the novel covers the journey of a protagonist yearning for emotional satisfaction. Her first change at nineteen, the physical transformation, relieves Joan from the physic torment of her mother. Thus, partially playing a role in her overall transformation, this again is accomplished in toto with the protagonist's intellectual satisfaction. Hence, the transformation of the protagonist is an amalgam of corporal and cerebral.

Thus, the protagonist has been finally brought out of the "maze", the maze which she erected for her gothic heroines was not successful in entrapping her. Though the realization has come too late, but for taking a positive step there's no concept of delay as such. Therefore, the spread through communication in Atwood's works' is "yes-beginning again" (McPherson,1976, as cited in Bryfonski,1978, p.30).

Cat's Eye reflects on the retrospective protagonist Elaine Risley, a middle aged artist who comes to Toronto for an exhibition of her paintings. This retrospective exhibition of art takes her back to her past life. Like the unnamed narrator of *Surfacing* and Joan of *Lady Oracle* Elaine is a skilled escape artist, who escapes from her friends and her husband. The events take the course of an autobiography as Elaine confides her past events with the readers. We learn that the heroine has been enjoying an idyllic countryside childhood akin to the Forest of Arden. Her father's job brings her to the city. Her new home in Toronto ends her carefree life and the life free of societal hypocrisy. She becomes the silent victim of the bullying and torment of her friends: Carol Campbell, Cordelia, and Grace Smith. She tries to escape from the suffering through silence and feigning fainting. The secrets of a hypo critic society torns her as she learns that the elders of her friends are well aware of the torture she has been undergoing. The turning point of the realization of victimization comes when she was forced to descend into the ravine. The ordeal she underwent makes her realize that she herself has to overcome from her pathetic predicament. Instead of running away she torments her tormentors by ignoring them. Progressing through high school, she dons the role of victimizer on Cordelia and shows hostility to her repeated requests of help. The next stage of her life is her decision to become a painter which links her up to her art teacher Mr. Joseph. He himself being an unstable person cannot provide her the desired comfort and dictates terms and conditions to her. Consequently, she takes flight from him. The search for a stable life and emotional fulfillment takes her to her co mate John. Having married to him, she realizes that he likes her domestic image and not her artistic abilities. The stifling domestic atmosphere, with a pressure to complete her homely chores and focus on career at the same time, strains her physically and emotionally. Added to it her indifferent attitude to Cordelia and her resentment to her sincere endeavors of amity prick her conscience. Hence, tries to escape from her predicament by joining the women's groups and planning a suicide. Since, these minor escapades couldn't satisfy her urge to complete freedom and relieve her from psychological torment, she leaves her husband and flies to Vancouver. She meets Jon, who works like a supporting block to her disintegrating personality. Accordingly, she marries again and gets settled as an artist. Her art brings her back to Toronto which is the initiation point of the novel. She meets her first husband there and her conscience forgives him. This place often haunts her with Cordelia's vision and depression quivers through her regretful persona. This time instead of running away, she tries to search for Cordelia. Her conscience makes her realize that she is ready to help her, take her, accommodate her. This realization along with her satisfactory portrayal of various characters in her life through portraits brings her ultimate comfort and satisfaction.

If you "could move faster than light you could travel backward in time and exist in two places at once" (Atwood,1988, p. 3). This learned notion of Elaine Risley in *Cat's Eye* is the outcome of the several of her attempts of reconciliation with the past. The novel charts the course of a protagonist, who laden with the guilt of being an unhelpful friend and an unsuccessful wife flies to Vancouver for a neat second life. She successfully acquires one but the threads of past dangles around her conscience. Thus Elaine exists in "two places", Toronto and Vancouver at the same time. The connecting link being her friend Cordelia: her childhood tormentor and a desperate help seeker. The novel demonstrates "great moments of beauty but also real encounters with evil, apathy and terror." It highlights the intellectual and emotive intricacies that confront individuals in disagreement with society (Sinha,2008, 95).

Middle aged Elaine, initiates her autobiographical narrative on her arrival to Toronto for the exhibition of her paintings. This journey back to the past, brings alive the wounds inflicted on her premature psyche. The presence of the narcissistic wounds overshadows the bright part of her career and the protagonist doesn't feel excited enough for the art exhibition. In a trance, she recollects the horrifying childhood experiences, which makes her to "descend" despite of the steep ascent in her successful career: "But since coming back here I don't feel weightier. I feel lighter, […]. With all this lightness I do not rise, I descend. Or rather, I am dragged downward, into the layers of this place as into liquefied mud" (Atwood,1988, p.14).

Missing the flight to Vancouver and getting up late the next day, Elaine leaves to explore the places of her childhood and searches for her friend: "That's where I fell into the water, there is the bank where I scrambled up. That's where I stood, with the snow falling on me. Unable to summon the will to move. That's where I heard the voice" (Atwood,1988, p.442).

She happens to see the vision of Cordelia, standing "half way up the hill.", and gazing Elaine. It's the strength of Elaine's "creative consciousness" which "calls up an apparition of Cordelia" (Ingersoll,1991, as cited in James, 1995, p.88). On seeing her, Elaine is invaded with shame, a "sick feeling" of body, the realization of unfairness, "awkwardness, weakness; the same wish to be loved; the same loneliness; the same fear". But, out of the blue, she announces that these feelings are not her own anymore as she thinks: 'I am the older one now, I am the stronger" (Atwood,1988, p.443). She senses that they are of Cordelia's. As she had been through them, she understands the ordeal of going through them. Hence, Elaine lends a helping hand: "I reach out my arms to her, bend down, hands open to show. I have no weapon. *It's all right*, I say to her. *You can go home now"* (Atwood,1988, p.443). Accordingly, Elaine defeats her desire of revenge. It becomes meaningless in light of her enlightened conscience. Thus by "projecting her rage outside of herself, she confronts her demons and exalts herself as a divine redeemer (Goldblatt,1999, p.281).

In an interview to Vevaina C, S., before the publication of *Cat's Eye*, Atwood asserts that self-realization is not difficult in this "increasingly threatened world". She feels that we put ourselves at one side and look at the things, but the perspective is different if gone to the other side (2006, p.151). Thereby, Elaine takes the side of Cordelia and offers a reconciliatory path.

Atwood's narrator becomes compassionate, and is truly renovated. Her enlightenment makes her to forgive her tormentors. She understands the futility of flights from home, Joseph, Cordelia and Jon. Like the narrators of *Surfacing* and *Lady Oracle*, she exhibits exemplary courage in admitting her fault. At last, she has learned to make over, understand, acknowledge, and win. Hence, *Cat's Eye* is "Atwood's most developed version of life-writing in the feminine" (Howells, 1996, p.149).

The novel ends in a plane scene with the narrator travelling back to her family in Vancouver. Elaine, a transformed individual, with a renewed conscience, is understood to have lead a fulfilling life. This has been asserted by Atwood in a talk to Earl G. Ingersoll: "She will of course land, get out of the plane, and carry on with the next part of her life" (1990, p.237)

Atwood's fictional world coincides with the universal aspects that humanity in general embodies. The common human inherited emotions and weaknesses and the way they have been shaped and changed in this contemporary context has been the gravitational point of her works. The weakness which are common place in a human - envy, chaos, chauvinism, possessiveness, revenge, hypocrisy, deception, escapism to name a few are found in her characters. But these weaknesses which the characters carry and which even her major characters embody do not serve to diminish their personalities or morally degrade them. Though they ostracize them from their loved ones or from their revered surroundings, but at the end, they play a major role in overcoming their personality drawbacks and lift them in the eyes of the people associated with them, in the eyes of themselves and readers equally.

The heroines of Atwood are the life-like characters of the modern era. They are the modern singled women in fight with the large society – it's the 'man and superman struggle' which pervades her works in general and the three novels in particular. The modern lifestyle is characterized as complex and obscure. The simple life loving heroines often land themselves in trouble and are caught in duality. To find a solution and to come out with an appropriate plan their intellect demands space and time. This demand is fulfilled with the weakness of their personality.

Thus, they take recourse to flight and subterfuge.

These characters go through a series of trials and tribulations. They give a test at every step of their life and transform themselves. The three protagonists of Atwood are intriguing, entangle themselves in webs, struggle in them and ultimately come out with a refreshing new life. As Goldblatt aptly points out that "After enduring, accepting, regurgitating, denying, and attempting to please and cope, Atwood's protagonists begin to take action and change their lives" (1999, p.279).

The three novels use a spiral structure of present – past – present. The protagonists of these novels travel back or reminiscence their past and correct their creaky present. The journey taken up literally or figuratively is in turn an inward quest to have an exact perception of their personalities. They build multiple personalities. These multilayered personas are in fact the outcome of excessive use of their personality drawbacks flight and subterfuge. The journey inward helps them in peeling the layers of their deliberately cocooned bodies, which at the end leads in the emergence of the true and reformed self. As a diarist Anais Nin writes "we are all engaged in the task of peeling off selves, the programmed selves. The selves created by our families, our culture and religions"(*The Journey Inward,1987*). The journey back to the home town or their childhood place has been used as a decisive tool in bringing about a transformation: A transformation mostly intellectual is almost achieved in the three novels with the heroines ultimately realizing their mistakes, overcoming their inhibitions and ceasing to allow their weaknesses to dominate them.

Thus the three novels display the intricacies and nuances of the society which try their best to devour the individuality of the assertive protagonists. The heroines initially exhibited as weak caricatures of the modern society are successful in comprehending the entrapping designs. They save themselves and emerge fresh. They make resolutions and show an optimistic vision to the society. Thus, the spread through message the writer conveys through her works, is: The other name of human is weakness. As man is mortal so is true is that he is born with one or the weakness. But the first past the post is the one who wages a war and wins with his flaws and finally learns a lesson.

The art of her "good writing" has achieved the goal, for which it is used by the writer- Atwood. The writer feels that their fraternity has a great role to play in the society and they are the major components in bringing an intellectual change. A change - through writing- in this era carries a lot of relevance and has been a major tool in bringing reformations and revolutions. Thus the "giant of the literary world" instructs through her art.

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