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### RECONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE EMBODIMENT: ANALYZING THE ROLE OF TRAJECTORY FROM BODY TO REASON IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S THE EDIBLE WOMAN

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#### ABSTRACT

The current research deals with the topic reconstruction of female embodiment: Analyzing the role of trajectory from body to reason in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*. The student focuses on the construction of the female from both objective and subjective position, preliminary presented as bodily figure as she is limited to bear the burden of domestication, children and more importantly she is child bearing machine. She is not granted permission to think logically but to remain premised to the orders of the patriarchal society. Therefore, she is a marginalized entity. However, she is also holding a subjective position when she is given agency and reaches to a subjective position; a logical entity and she is not affiliated more with the body but an entity based on reason and decide what she can do at her best. Intaking the same stance from feminist school of thought Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* has been selected to analyze the role of woman as presented a bodily figure but the writer also incorporated her an intellectual entity. The findings of the research shows that Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Women* is full of women's suffering and exploitation, primary based on objective position and she is presented as bodily figure but later on she is given agentic position and her activities are based on reasons and she is no more a marginalized and oppressed entity.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

This research explores, and focuses on scholarly discussion about female embodiment, and her increasing currency in the postmodern scholarly academia with reference to fictional work of the prolific Canadian writer Margaret Atwood. Her novel *The Edible Woman* (1969) explicitly deals with the intricacies of female body as envisaged, and presented by the patriarchal social code for women. More specifically, however, this novel is replete with examples of female struggle and search for real self and identity. She is seen to attempt reconstructing the female body and its form, by demystification and by dismantling the traditional patriarchal stereotypical roles and images, assigned to her. This research focuses on how Margaret Atwood deconstructs the reductionist presentation of female body by enabling her protagonist to transform and transcend character, leading to survival against strictly patriarchal social order. The woman is as historically presented with the reproduction system, she is only a child bearing entity and no more annexed with any social status. Therefore, she is functionally disabled to be called a logically oriented entity but a body that is only used for reproduction. (Morgan & Scott, 1993: 11). The inferiority of women has been asserted by associating her with the carnal flesh-body, whereas, superiority of man has been confirmed by linking him with the elevated mind. The body to which the elevated mind is bound –then woman beyond doubt is inferior to men. This resulted to call the man logical being while the woman “body”.

For a long time body has been ignored by different subjects and disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, and relegated to the realm of biological representation as both man and woman have biological existences in a society; envisaging the female inferior because of her physical position. Nevertheless, it has been a frequently debated issue, particularly in feminism and cultural studies while there have been many explanations as Kathy Davis (1997) used the term ‘body craze’. This is basically a feminist coinage as Kathy (1997) further expedites feminism, as it is having the discussion, responsible for putting the body into the intellectual map of academia (1). Body being an ‘absent presence’ has mostly been disparaged by privileging of ‘the mind’ though lurking in the background of social science. The dichotomy of mind/body has occupied and brought the attention of philosophers and thinkers since long to overview the the presence of woman in the intellectual discourses.

Descartes (1596–1650) establishes his distinct philosophy of dualism in his famous dictum, ‘Cogito ergo sum’ (Noted in Sanchez-Grant, 2008); however, the tradition of the philosophical thought can be traced back to the roots of Christian theology, whereas, in the Cartesian philosophy of dualism, human experience can be divided into two categories; the spiritual existence that can be linked with mind, and the second one is body which has no logical approach. This school of thought reduces the body to a mere external vessel for the rational objective mind. This struggle between the body /mind dichotomy is well described by Susan Bordo in her *Unbearable Weight* (2003); as long as the body is viewed as a separate entity from the true self (whether conceived as freedom, will, spirit, intellect, and soul), it remains a continuous aspect. Non-bodies are the best, the most noblest, and the nearest to God; bodies are the albatross that stifles self-expression (5).

On the other hand this self/other dualism is obvious in the socially constructed oppositions between culture and nature, and reason and emotion. In this way when the mind is associated with culture and reason, the leftover is the body only which is allied with all those factors, those can be opposed to body, and becomes the 'other'. Throughout history, women have been associated with body due to their natural weakness and biologically determined as reproductive system is associated with them. Therefore, this is a particular kind of sexist construction of gender which triggers feminist debate, and female body is being central to the debate. According to Margaret Sanger (1988) that no woman is free from the clutches of men until and unless she does not emancipate her body, and having control on it. This body is basically a key to surface freedom and liberty (533). Therefore, the female body has always been a site of oppression, and an easy source for patriarchy to exert control and command over women.

For centuries discourses on biological determinism have played a vital role in the construction of the female body as she is being presented naturally unstable, deficient, and disorderly (Davis, 1997: 6). Medical researches of the nineteenth century propagated the idea that women are nothing, except, to have uterus and ovaries, and they were regarded as semi-permanent invalids whose health related issues were oddly attributed to their reproductive disorder (King, 2005: 17). An appropriate example of this statement can also be found in William and Bendelow (1998)'s explanation of how it was feared that the over-exertion of women's brains would 'atrophy the uterus' and inhibit women's reproductive destiny (115). With the advent of oral contraceptives in the early 1960's, a breakthrough has been resulted for women in the struggle to reclaim their bodies. This reclamation was not only linked with their bodies, but, more importantly women have logical and rational approaches towards life.

The attribution of femininity as the 'natural' essence of womanhood, itself leading to the notion that to be feminine is to be a woman, whereas, Conboy et al (2002) argue that femininity is just another social construction, and a social mechanism that enumerating from male desires and works as an instrument to curtail the freedom of women, however, in this regard the female body is crucial to the feminist debate due to the manner in which female bodies are unjustly and negatively projected. This misrepresentation has motivated many of feminist authors to re-inscribe the female body, and while critiquing on it they are also attempting at liberating it from the shackles of traditional, patriarchal regulations as Maggie Humm (1997) asserts that it is in feminist fiction. That the new accounts of the female body, and its potential cultural representations, amount to a feminist rewriting of culture has been appeared (124)

In view of the above discussion Canadian novelist and poet Margaret Atwood is one of such writers who deals with the complexities of body representation in her novels, particularly, *The Edible Woman* (1969). Her novel is clear example of her attempt at demystification of the female body. Atwood's treatment of the mind/body dualism is exemplified in her novels and the ways in which she responds to, and resists its destructive effects, she can be seen successfully who accomplish this construction by enabling her protagonists to survive, and resist against victimization. In this novel Atwood dismantles the

culturally-encoded concept of femininity, and proposes a re-reading of the female body; women must re-embody themselves and consequently re-embody culturally, and considers herself a logical entity, equal to man.

### **RESEARCH STATEMENT**

That female body is crucial to the feminist debate due to the manner in which female bodies are unjustly and negatively projected. This misrepresentation has motivated many of the feminist authors to re-inscribe the female body, and while critiquing they are also attempting at liberating body from the shackles of traditional, patriarchal regulations. Female in that new account has been presented with body and has been deviated from mind; means to have no thinking and logical capacity. The body is the only metaphor for reproduction, and no logical approaches are annexed. In this regard Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* is about bodily representation of woman, but also the work seems to emancipate and reconstruct women's embodiment from bodily representation to subjective position that is based on mind and logical approaches.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To explore women's representation in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Women*.
2. To analyze the role of women's representation with reference to bodily depiction in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Women*.
3. To highlight the representation of women's body in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Women*, either marginalizing them or reconstruct their embodiment from body to reason.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How women are represented in Margaret Atwood's *Edible Women*?
2. How the role of women is annexed with bodily depiction in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Women*?
3. How women are represented with bodily depiction either to marginalize or reconstruct their embodiment from body to reason?

### ***Women's representation in Literature***

In the work *The Mill on the floss* (1860) the author has portrayed the unfavourable emotions of society for a woman and towards her rights. In this story Maggie which is a female character, was not treated nicely from her childhood. Her brother always treated properly and superior as compared to her. In the tale 'Water Chuyia' is likewise not treated nicely by her parents. Because her parents says that girls cannot give any benefit. They merely have to go into another's residence. Bhagya queries to herself; why did she not lavish her devotion and attention she bestowed on her sons? Was it because her heart knew that a daughter was only a guest and never belonged to the house into which she was born. More over Bapsi Sidwa writes in the same way in her novel *Water*

(2006) that Bhagya was not given to looking at her daughter so intently. She often stared upon her sons as the slept.

Naseem (2019) explains in an article Q & A that in *A Woman Is No Man*, Etaf Rum confronts the sensitive and heartbreaking topic of domestic abuse and women's subjugation in Palestinian culture. This is a topic that Rum confesses that she was frightened to explore because it would offend her community, an issue she feels female Arab writers regularly confront. In this amazing work, Rum draws from her personal experiences and weaves an incisive multi-generational drama that addresses the realities of the female experience inside a patriarchal culture that is simultaneously reeling from the ignored and repressed tragedy of Al Nakba. Rum's novel is also the story of one young woman's struggle of opposing the constrained route provided for her by striving towards claiming agency for herself. It is also clear from Rum's letter to readers in which she confesses about her power and how gender is playing a stereotypical role as she says; "I began to see the ways the women around me were unique from men, in their ability to juggle the demand of culture, family, relationships, and parenting." (Rum, 2019: 201).

Tehmina Durrani (1994), the Pakistani author of the autobiography, *My Feudal Lord*, was likewise the victim of "cultural, social, religious, patriarchal, gender and sexual" oppressions, despite the fact that she belonged to an affluent family with significant political background (Nadaf) (Nadaf). She also encountered discrimination when she was a child, and that was from her mother's side. She had a "difficult childhood relationship" with her mother (Durrani, 1994: 129). (Durrani 129). Her mother, Samina, had Anglicized family as she "came from the Hayat family of Khattar tribe" (1994: 35). Hence, she has fair complexion. However, her daughter, Tehmina, has dark complexion. Her relatives ridiculed her for her dark skin; notably her mother never used to adore her. About this Tehmina writes, "Only over time would I come to comprehend what a shock I was to my mother. She was light-skinned beauty – and proud of it; her family was fair-skinned and felt itself to be superior by that feature. A dark youngster was condemned to neglect. And yet there I was, entering in the world in 1953, with a dark skin. It appeared clear from my mother's attitude that she saw me as ugly and was embarrassed to display me to friends and relatives. Even as a baby I felt my insufficiency. My surroundings appeared unfriendly to the way I looked, and very early I withdrew into an isolated, 'condemned-by-nature' cell. I never remember my mother embracing or kissing me when I was little" (1994: 23).

Fredrich Engels talks about the subjugation of women in his book, "the origin of the family, private property and the state" (1884). He brings the discussion about Marxism that does not talk about the women oppression individually but women are the part of oppressed class who will be liberated if the capitalist system is toppled. This research analyses to strive to address the questions of how can we understand the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. Fredrick Engels wrote a book in 1884, "the origin of the family, private property and the state" he believes that the women oppression arose with the creation of private property. Economic and social inequality in a capitalist society intensifies when women are isolated into domestic sphere and males into outer

realm of paid job. He ties the gender oppression to class oppression and defines the interaction between men and women, similar to the relation between proletariat and bourgeoisie.

Calera Zarkin, a German feminist, she made a speech in 1896 at the party of social democratic party of Germany, talks about the proletarian lady. And believes that she equally participates with man against a capitalist society. And feels socialism is possible only with the union of woman. Further, Vladimir Lenin pushed men to embrace women's engagement in politics. Anne Koedt is an American radical feminist; she believes that the purpose of Marxist feminism is to eradicate the class distinction by establishing women as powerful and equal to men. Drislane while talking about Marxist feminism believes it's a more fundamental form of oppression. Margaret Benston was a Marxist feminist; she has authored "the political economy of women's liberation" in 1969, she believes that the quantity of unpaid labour done by women is very profitable for others. But the women labour power in family is unpaid and therefore they are considered as the secondary breadwinners of the family.

In 1983, "Marxism and the oppression of women" (reprinted, 2-13) by Lise Vogel released, the writer studied what contemporary north American feminist authors claimed about women oppression. She argues in support of social reproduction method and believes in the significance of releasing women from "domestic slavery" so they can participate in reforming the society.

### ***Embodiment of Women from Body to Reason***

In the novel *The Edible Woman* by Margaret Atwood, the main character, a woman named Marian MacAlpin, strives to make herself more likeable or "appetising" to the people in her life. When she is successful in her endeavor, she is referred to as "respectable" and "sensible." Even her best friend, Clara, has admitted to her that she is "abnormally normal" (21 1). Marian is comforted by the comment despite the fact that she is experiencing physical illness and feels disconnected from her own body despite having obtained the ideal of female normalcy that she was seeking. Marian, as a willing member of a mechanized, consumer-oriented society, has allowed herself to absorb the social mythologies that are destructive to her, thereby rendering herself a consumable object, that is, a "edible woman." The intentions of Atwood are clear: Marian, as a willing member of a mechanized, consumer-oriented society, has allowed herself to absorb the social mythologies that are destructive to her. This bolsters the primary concept that Atwood explores in her book *Power Politics*, which is as follows: "You refuse to own/yourself, you permit/others to do it for you..." (30). The more that Marian lives up to the expectations of other people, the more that she is considered "normal," the more that she feels as if she is being suffocated. Her body starts to reject the items she consumes, specifically food—first the meat, then the eggs, and lastly the vegetables—despite the fact that she is determined to keep acting in the same manner as she always has. The only way to stop this gradual loss of identity is to participate in aggressive consuming, which is a type of consumption typically associated with men and one that they use to symbolically demonstrate their masculinity.

Recent feminist research has shifted away from the age-old belief that biology defines what men and women are like in their fundamental characteristics (Peach 3). It is now common practise to have non-essentialist beliefs that hold that gender is the product of social construction. Even though some of the characters in Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman* hold onto essentialist beliefs, the overarching purpose of the book is to demonstrate how culture is a significant and transformative force that shapes social roles, in particular gender and gender identity. This objective exists despite the fact that some of the characters in the book hold onto essentialist beliefs. If we accept Simone de Beauvoir's theory that culture is male and nature is feminine, then we put the power of transformation in the hands of males, and women are relegated to the role of being perhaps even 'hysterical.' Feminism of more recent times has put forward the idea that we should give up on the objective, immanent body (Weiss 49) for a percent ascendant subjectivity could in fact further a woman's objectivity, in that she is opening herself up once again to external social definitions. This could be seen as a positive development for a woman's objectivity.

This conundrum is explored in Atwood's work; her characters are embroiled in a power dynamics in which women's liberation can ironically lead to a new sort of impotence. The ability for women to survive may be interpreted as a demonstration of 'masculine' aggression, in which they become 'consumers' of either themselves or of others. Transformed. Sheny Ortner, an anthropologist, is known for making arguments that support the culture versus nature dichotomy "create and symbolize culture, while women, who are more connected to nature than men, are objects of social control, by means of men's or culture (Ortner From Pennee 1). This stance completely satisfies the requirements of "tuned very precisely veneen" (Onley 24) of both the male and female characters created by Atwood in her novel *The Edible Woman*. In addition, the novel's internal logic, as well as, within the context of the analysis of the novel and sexual roles, the basic and the contrast between men and women will unavoidably lead to concepts such as self-other, consumer/consumed, active/passive, hunter-hunted, transcendent, aggressor-victim, and other such dichotomies are the core examples. Having said that, it would also like to provide an example of how such oppositions, despite being essential, helpful, and frequently correct, can be manipulated and used against themselves. The work by Atwood demonstrates that even in the role of a victim, a woman can take action and becomes the one who preys on others. To put it another way, both men and women are, by definition, transformers, consumers of one another's products. According to Daniel A. Heller, indeed, Atwood "sees all individuals, men, women, and children." Women, whether powerful or helpless, in their capacity as human beings, sharing the common traits, both good and bad. Both good and evil, of the species human" (90). In her book *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir argues that human beings should participate in activities related to preference for transcendence over immanence, so, as to avoid being subjected to animal, or more specifically, biological nature. This transcendence poses a danger for the main character, who is created by Atwood, because she runs the possibility of being labelled "weird".

The protagonist of *The Edible Woman* is the main focus of the research who has presented with bodily depiction in the novel, and later on she is given an emancipated position, leading to subjective stance. Marian MacAlpin from *The Edible Woman* is unquestionably victimized in unlimited ways and her victimization runs as a common thread throughout Margaret Atwood's novel. Margaret Atwood asserts in her other novel *Survival*, "Stick a pin in Canadian Literature at random, and nine out of ten times you'll hit a victim" (39). It means her novels are largely dealing with the representation of women, though, she holds a strong position to emancipate woman either from the clutches of man, or to give her a solid and isolated position where she will be free from all societal pressures. Although, her heroines survive but the many ways they are victimized make them individual unique beings. In women's struggle, to maintain a true individual self the character has to stay connected with the past and other people around her, so that she is less divided whole self. The protagonist of the novel starts a journey into the past by searching for her lost past. She has lost her capability to feel pleasure or pain. This is because of a past event in her life.

The protagonist of is victimized in a number of ways. She has been captured with the dilemma of falling in natural disorder, losing the power to eat. However, she is not a character like Offred in *Handmaid Tales* who loses her power just because of marginalization due to slavery, later on, losing her identity but the case of *Edible's Woman* is totally different, though, she is given the opportunity to work in the market despite her feminine character. But still she is marginalized and oppressed character in the context of the novel. Due to this factor she loses her identity and gives off the idea to detach herself from bodily representation. Further, she is not like other character of Margaret Atwood whose oppressions come in shape of many restrictions i.e restriction on free use of language and literacy, prohibition on any kind of alliance restricts their chances of connecting to others as well. This struggle for connection with the past and other people is common to all her protagonists. The restoration of that struggle is the only way to survival. This connection is not just at the social level with the others but also at the personal level with themselves and their past. Overcoming all impediments is the basic struggle for restoration of their connections. Once restored, they evolve as fully integrated selves. In addition the victimization is to some extent self-inflicted and contribute to her own victimization. The protagonist has adjusted to the new world as she has does not want to be sent off to the world like women become unwomen/ her mother. She has successfully assimilated herself in turn adding to her own victimization. She has resolved to a passive, dependent and naïve way of life.

On the other hand, there are other characters like Ainsley's intentions to become mother without marriage, shocking Marian, however, and these passive reclinations make these women to have the capacity to raise voice against oppression. Although, this the fact that women do have strong attachment with their bodies as character like is the close example of giving her body for sexual orientation without marriage. This stance is practically and preliminary the first stance towards bodily representation in the novel, but character like Marian is exclusively a separate character who does not support this stance of giving her body, or throwing herself into the dilemma of become the victim of bodily



representation. Later on, this stance is proactively positive for Marian who stands with logical approaches, rather than emotional attachments.

Likely other characters of *The Edible Woman*, Margret Atwood at the same time replicate other stories which have close relationship with Marian such as the nameless protagonist of *Surfacing* is also a victim. She is victimized both because of internal and external reasons. She is a loner, an outcast with experience of an idyllic childhood and subsequently has been singled out of the social circles in adulthood. Her anguish and loss of her father, loss of her child due to abortion, she has lost all her sensitivity to pain and pleasure. She fails to connect with people around her. Her mental struggle relegates her to seclusion and withdrawal from the society of outer company. In order to find her true whole self she will have to dive into the depths of her subconscious to retrieve connection with her own self and others. She admits herself as being an outcast and berated even in her own homeland, she feels rootless and displaced. "Now we were on my home ground, foreign territory" (Atwood *Surfacing* 7). She feels like a foreigner even in her own homeland. She has a desire to get rid of the friends whom she has brought along on the journey in search of her father. She says, "I can't think of anyone else I like better, but right now I wish they were not here" (Atwood *Surfacing* 13). In her childhood memories she remembers her wish as "she prayed to be invisible" (Atwood *Surfacing* 70). As a child she was never comfortable in the company of others and would refuse to play and "some were disappointed, they found (her) hermit crab habits amusing, they found (her) amusing in general. (She) was the one who did not know the local customs, like a person from another culture: on (her) they could try out the tricks and minor tortures they'd already used up on each other. When the boys chased and captured the girls after school and tied them up with their own skipping ropes, (she) was the only one they would forget on purpose to untie" (Atwood *Surfacing* 69). As a child what seems amusing becomes annoying in the adulthood. Jole is infuriated when she refuses to respond to his love for her.

Intaking the role of Marian in the same way, in *The Edible Woman* the protagonist Marian again struggles between the two roles; the social role on the one hand which is specified by the patriarchy and her personal definition of self in the novel, the food for her becomes a symbol of struggle and resistance. The eating disorder of Marian stands as a metaphor of rebellion and protest. Marian being a lively woman with an ideal job of market research lives an idealistic life both at private and social level but loses her appetite during a talk with her boyfriend in a restaurant as she finds her boyfriend's consumer nature disgusting. This eating disorder starts initially with lack of desire to eat but later it intensifies into a disorder. The reaction of her body comes naturally from the society's imposition of its laws and policies on human beings. The novel is structured into three parts: in part one the background causes are discussed, in the second part the mind body dualism and the third part sheds light on the final problem. Patricia Goldblat states in her essay *Reconstructing Margret Atwood's Protagonists*, "Atwood creates situations in which women burdened by the rules and inequalities of their societies, discover that they must reconstruct braver, self-reliant, personae in order to survive". Marian finally has a realization through her inner struggle and mental trauma and reconstructs her new personae

or concept the self through renewal of her relationship with food. In refusal to eat she is defying against the patriarchal model of femininity

The story is now moving from body to mind that enhances the beauty of the story because women's position in any novel when given subjective position, is preliminarily based on agency. She becomes agentic, and envisaged as character based on intellect. Similarly, Margaret Atwood envisages the mind and body that split, also pervades in *The Handmaid's Tale* where Atwood creates a futuristic feminine dystopia. She herself defines dystopia as a place where "power is absolute and control over sense is also stringent. (They) are places in which you don't like where you are; that's what they are by definition" (Dodson 99-100).

The narrator Offred who has been captured by the Gilead Regime is oppressed in innumerable ways. Her abrupt capture, loss of her daughter and husband haunt her memories in fragments. She also like the narrator of *Surfacing* and *Marian* suffers seclusion and solitude. Although she is been victimized in many ways but the worst of all is that she is nothing more than a "walking womb". She is forced to indulge into horrific crimes like murder and rape. She is deprived of her real name and is forbidden to utter it in Gilead is a mark of identity distortion and subsequently denies her any claim to cultural or personal history. "My name isn't Offred, I have another name which nobody uses because it's forbidden. Name is like your telephone number useful only to others" (Atwood *the Handmaid's Tale* 79).

The body and mind split is obvious in the extract, "The reduction of women's bodies to reproductive system finds its true representation in case of handmaids. They are known as sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices and containers. They are tamed through brainwashing for the noble services of offering their bodies to be used for the service of nation. Gilead practices a religion which legitimizes female oppression. The handmaids undergo the sexual ceremonies experiencing humiliation every month in the name of religion: "The monthly rape "Ceremony" grotesquely requires the presence of wife, Handmaid and commander. It synthesizes the institutionalized humiliation, objectification and ownership of women in Gilead" (Gavalcanti 166). As these women have no right over their own bodies, they end up with loss of identity.

Similar situation can be seen in *The Edible Woman* in case of women not allowed to keep their earrings, if pregnant or marrying which otherwise counts as betrayal towards the institution. Furthermore, the minor characters Emily, Lucy and Milles all fit into the roles of victims. The aim of their life is to get perfect matches for themselves. It is because they have internalized the society's specific gender roles of a lover, mother, a wife or an inferior. They are the embodiment of female workers who were exploited by men. They use their sexuality and feminity to attract civilized and cultured men. Lucy takes care of her dress and looks, and visits famous restaurants for finding a man of prospects. When Marian's engagement to Peter comes to her colleagues as a surprise because of the general understanding that women must adapt themselves according to the male desires otherwise they were denied existence. In case of these women body is symbol of existence for them.

The mind and body dualism appears repeatedly in *Surfacing* where the feminine is associated with Nature, the body inessentiality and irrationality whereas masculine represents rationality and is essential. In her struggle for acquiring an integrated whole self she tries to reunite the two – the mind and body: “The trouble is all in the knob at the top of our own bodies. I’m not against the head or the body either; only the neck that creates the illusion that they are separate... if the head extended directly into the shoulders like a worm’s or a frog’s without the constriction that lie, they would not be able to look down at their bodies and move them around as if they would have to realize that if the head is detached from the body both of them will die” (Atwood *Surfacing* 77).

Margaret Atwood is a great Canadian poet and novelist with diverse literary career. Her works embody thematic diversity comprising of Canadian national identity, relationship of Canada with America and Europe, the wilderness of Canada, issues concerning environment, human rights and feminist issues. She has effectively represented gender/ sex differentiation and social myth specifying womanhood, representation of female bodies in literature and other forms of art, women’s exploitation at the economic and social level as well as their relationships with each other and men in general. All her fictional works are based on these relationships. *The Edible Woman* and *Surfacing* are based on women’s relationship with men, whereas *A Handmaid’s Tale* is based on the relationship of women and women. Above all, her work is a continuous struggle for drawing the relationship of the characters with their own ‘real’ self. All her novels are representation of complex sexual power politics which no doubt leads to the development of her feminist sympathies.

## CONCLUSION

The research provides the analysis of the female objectification in *The Edible Woman* and how women is represented with the body, but later it has seen clearly that the main protagonist of the novel is not only the fabrication of the patriarchal society who has been labeled with certain duties but also she resists against the patriarchal society, reaching to a prominent position. The novel has been analyzed under the umbrella term feminism which is a social movement, planting the strategies to lodge their voices against the patriarchal injustices. Feminism basically answers all those questions, grounding that woman is seen as second class citizen. According to Sarah Gamble (2006), women become everything, and men are not, therefore, when men are considered strong, women are weak; when rational men are emotional; when active men are passive; and so on (vii). Feminism is an effort to alleviate this problem and advance women’s rights to equal treatment in a male-dominated society where women face such obstacles because of the way they are treated (ibid).

Women’s roles in this society are strictly limited to childbearing and the welfare of the male population as the female character of the novel is presented. Women are not treated as equals and seen as "Others" in the society as shown in *The Edible Woman*. They play the role of fetish items in men’s sexual and pleasure fantasies. The only thing that separates a woman from a male in the society of the novel is the fact that she is a woman, and that she is limited to her body. Simone de Beauvoir argues that patriarchal society oppresses women primarily

due to their biology and sexuality. Atwood's feminine character depicts a patriarchal world in which women are subjugated and enslaved sexually. This study demonstrates how women's basic autonomy is disregarded in this patriarchal society. Women in the Gileadian Republic are treated more like objects than people. As a result of this, it is clear that women in patriarchal countries are portrayed as helpless and submissive creatures. Common practices among Gilead males include prostitution and monthly sexual acts, both of which Beauvoir views as exploitative. This study employed Simone de Beauvoir's philosophical framework to inquire into the nature and causes of women's subjugation in patriarchal societies. Biological Oppression of Women and the Concept of "Other" in Beauvoir's depiction of women are given in a patriarchal society. Women are being viewed and defined by their biology in *The Second Sex*, is striking element. Woman, basically, she makes an exclamation. Simplistic formula purists would have you believe she is nothing more than a womb. Similarly, woman in *The Handmaid Tale* is presented with womb, a child bearing machine, having no logical approached. The novel presents woman as an ovary and hence is feminine. All you need is one word to describe her, and that's all you need. It's problematic not because it promotes the idea that women are inherently less evolved than men, but because it limits them to the realm of their sex as feminists reject the derogatory label and term female. The portrayal of women in the Gilead community as reproductive organs. It is commonplace in Gilead for the state to exert control over and manipulate women's reproductive and biological potential. Women are exploited in Atwood's society for the most part because of their biology and the need to procreate. Women in Gilead are seen as property for breeding purposes, as the protagonist puts it. None of us here are geishas, courtesans, or concubines. As the phrase goes, we're ladies. We've gone to great lengths to disassociate ourselves from the realm of the entertaining, despite what you might have heard. Here Atwood under the Beauvoir's depiction of woman giving a prominent position that woman is a rational being not a bodily figure that she is always represented with the womb. The novel clearly indicates the representation which is given, although, related to the body but still the writer does not undermine the role of woman as a rational being and call for the duty that woman are free from the clutches of men and they can think logical, decide what they need to plan and many others.

Throughout the novel we see that women are oppressed with the depiction of bodies but the fact is divers and women hold a very strong position through the concept of motherhood in the novel. Women, though, give birth to children but they are now logical being because they give a subjective position, how they employ their bodies, used against the patriarchal society. They gave their bodies with their consent is a submissive approach but the stance was based on logical approach to raise their voice against the patriarchal society, and at the end we see that women hold subjective and agentic position and start living with honour in their own society which is free from the clutches of the male's tyranny and objectification. Therefore, the novel is not objectification of the women but an agentic position for women to reach to subjective stance. And the novelist herself is subjective that she can represent women's voices with full dignity and power that itself is subjective and logical.

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