

Voices of Silent Women in Margaret Eleanor Atwood's

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Abstract

This research article is a modest attempt to focus on Margaret Atwood, the author of one of the most prominent polyphiloprogenic feminists. They spend their lives selflessly through their writings. Atwood's writings eradicated the prominent forms, faces, subjects, situations, and milieu of women throughout history. This research paper focuses on how Atwood chose her literature as a powerful medium to give voice to women in the world. This research article advances the idea that learned writers who are women tend to generalize about women in distress throughout their novels. In conclusion, this research article culminates in that Atwood has created an altruistic universe for the novel, where we can find answers to life's problems and shape our true selves.

Keywords: Margaret Atwood , women, Voice

Silence and speech are two themes that often appear in tandem in literature. Specifically in women's literature, silence and speech form a binary that is prevalent in depictions of women, women's relationships with each other and women's struggle with male-dominated society. A woman's ability to have a voice can be read as a reflection of her freedoms and identity, thereby making silence and speech significant when they appear in literary narratives. Speech and silence are not only intimately linked with personal identity, they are also gendered terms, and the woman is associated with silence. However, as we see in many literary texts, a woman can transcend the boundaries of a dominant culture, or the speech/silence binary, and find her own voice. It is through the process of learning morality that women are able to free themselves from the structures that restrain them (Hoad-Reddic K, 2010)

Everyone is accountable for the consequences of his or her actions and behaviors. He must recognize that every action will produce both positive and bad results. His positive attitudes and manners result in favorable effects, whilst his bad attitudes result in negative ones (Yahya, A. A., & Dakhil, T. A. 2022).

Femininity is supposedly the 'natural' essence of womanhood itself; to be feminine is to be a woman. By contrast, Conboy et al argue that femininity is just another social mechanism which is based on male desires and used to curtail the freedom of women. That bodies matter is axiomatic in feminist debate – a debate that is as prevalent in academia as it is in popular culture. The manner in which female bodies are unequally and negatively imbued with meaning has incited a number of feminist authors to attempt to decode the female body, both critiquing it and liberating it from traditional, patriarchal formulations. Indeed, as Maggie Humm suggests, 'it is in feminist fiction that new accounts of the female body, and its potential cultural representations, amount to a feminist rewriting of culture' (124).

One author who provides an astute and tangible analysis of the female body as it exists within our culture is Margaret Atwood.⁵ While not her only works to address the complexities of body image, her novels *The Edible Woman* (1969) and *Lady Oracle* (1976) are clear examples of Atwood demystifying the female form (Sanchez-grant S. , 2008) .

This study examines how the story enhances the female protagonist's feelings of dread, guilt, rage, and repression of uniqueness. Indeed, Atwood aims to remind us of the everyday work that women do and illustrates the victimization of women through the silence that they are forced to maintain because of the political climate. Female characters gradually through a process of introversion, self-psychoanalysis, and self-insight, as the novels make clear. Lastly, they appear more thought out, in charge of themselves, and cooperative. In this scenario, bodies turn into bizarre, evil foes of even their inhabitants. The root of diseases in Atwood's chosen novels is the body. Moreover, cruelty is used and practiced because it is a source of political power. According to Dorothy Jones, Atwood's works are consistently about women who are weak individuals caught in traps set by the powerful; in these instances, "power" is connected to those who set the traps either on a large or small scale. I investigate feminist perspectives on politics and sexuality in Atwood's chosen works, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Bodily Harm*, *The Edible Woman*, *The Blind Assassin*, and *Cat's Eye*, which are inextricably linked to these realities or concepts.

In Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, there is a long silence that embraced women's protagonists, their memories and their world which she tries to show and break it. This novel illustrates the females' need for voice and words in which they are controlled by government. Female protagonist in this novel lives in a society where silence has been forced on women and highlights a masculine society for readers. As a matter of fact, it portrays a "victimized and oppressed female gender" (Soofastaei and Mirenayat). Tyrannical restrictions are uncovered by Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* in which it subdues women's individuality (Mirenayat, S. A., & Soofastaei, E. 2015)

The culture in which a woman is raised has a significant impact on her quality and behavior. They learn how to act or react in a given scenario and the consequences of their actions, including whether or not they are acceptable to others. These ideals differ from one society to the next, and even from one family to the next. This adoration of a woman's silence has resulted in her ultimate repression. Inadvertently, denying her right to speak and assuming her acquiescence leads to her servitude. As a result, the woman's silence transforms her into a silent shadow. The silence in the lives of all women is a sign of their pessimism and despondency. This mentality, on the other hand, leads to their subjection and aids in the establishment of authoritarian patriarchal norms

In this male-dominated society, a woman is expected to be the perfect wife, mother, and homemaker, with multiple tasks within the family. As a wife and mother, she must demonstrate service, sacrifice, submissiveness, and tolerance. She has a lot of patience and makes a lot of modifications in her life quietly, faithfully, and obediently. As a result, her admired attributes include silence, faithfulness, and obedience. In a patriarchal society, her separate personality is mostly unrecognized. For the male-dominated activities, she is expected to stay calm and silent.

Many female figures in literature have been created to demonstrate how a woman might fulfill her longing for a home by maintaining silence and preserving serenity and pleasure. Though quiet is beneficial to maintaining family happiness, it should only be used to a certain extent. It causes harm if she is always silent. As a result, women must have the confidence to

speak up whenever necessary to maintain family peace. Women were not allowed to talk in ancient times. They had been entirely silenced. This silence was largely to blame for women's final oppression. Because they were ignorant, their lives consisted solely of home tasks and caring for their husband and children. They are unable to freely communicate their emotions to their husband or others. As a result, individuals are unable to express themselves.

However, in the current day, women's roles have shifted. Women today have defied all expectations to establish a niche for themselves as a wife, daughter, and business leader; she is seen managing all of their responsibilities with ease. They have crossed all borders in boardrooms, courtrooms, on screen, and in society. They've risen from the margins to shape their destinies in the spotlight. Women have proven to be a worldwide force, overcoming all crises and redefining the meaning of leadership, whether in the workplace or parliament. They have managed their cultural expectations and transformed their jobs into reality as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters.

For some, it was their mothers who drove them to pursue careers, while for others, it was their mothers. Others, meantime, credit their husbands, boyfriends, and children with promoting, supporting, and even accompanying them on the long and winding journey to fame. As a result, in today's world, a woman must be outspoken. Women's status is inextricably tied to their position in contemporary society. Women's function in society, according to Basden, is as follows:

The most striking facts perhaps about women are that they are extraordinarily alike. They are intensely conservative in their habit and their ideas and to know one is to know all, these women have their clubs and societies in every town and exercise great influence in various directions. (Brainy Quotes)

Women, in general, have varied qualities depending on their location and the needs of society and family. Their roles as mother, sister, and wife are the ones they cherish the most. They are not only in charge of the family's finances, house management, and kitchen housekeeping, but they are also attempting to preserve a harmonious relationship inside the family. When it comes to working women, they not only work side by side with men, but they also maintain a work-life balance that males rarely achieve. As a result, the lady is truly amazing.

Margaret Atwood, as a woman writer, is a proponent of women's empowerment. In her stories, she portrays her characters as both silent and outspoken. Due to the male-dominated society, her female characters reflect their mute voices in many instances. They've been referred to as "silent puppets" on several occasions. The unnamed narrator in *Surfacing* and *Iris* in *The Blind Assassin*, the characters of her two novels, reminisce about their old recollections as well as bitter memories. They portray themselves as silent images of their previous lives.

Surfacing begins with the reader seeing some of the causes for the narrator's isolation and incapacity to feel by looking at her upbringing. Her parents and she have never had a close relationship. Although her father spoke with her when she was young, his conversations were mainly about philosophical notions and did not connect the two. Her mother, on the other hand, didn't appear to say much. Although the narrator and her brother used to play together, his love for violence eventually drove them apart. The novel's first sentence foreshadows the death of white birches:

I can't believe I'm on the same road again, twisting along past the lake where the white

birches are dying, the disease is spreading up from the South, and I notice they now have sea-planes for hire. (Surfacing, 3)

As she grows older, the narrator's estrangement intensifies as she is forced to divide her time between the anonymity of huge towns and the seclusion of the island. With other youngsters, she is awkward and shy. They make fun of her and torment her. She begins to emulate the behavior of others as she gets older, and she does not do or express what she truly feels. Her tutor tells her that there have never been any famous female artists, so she abandons her dream of becoming an artist. She draws whatever pleases her publisher as a commercial artist. Her interaction with Joe also demonstrates that she is not only aloof but emotionally devoid. He was impressed by her coldness the first time they made love, she recalls. The narrator, on the other hand, did not find her behavior strange because she was not feeling anything.

The reader learns a lot about the narrator's personality when the truth about her early love affair and abortion is disclosed. She began closing herself off from her feelings because she couldn't accept the truth about her background and the sorrow and guilt she was feeling. To cope with her suffering, she concocted intricate lies. She enables herself to experience truth once she comes face to face with it; she allows herself to experience suffering and begins to unlock her feelings. Accepting her past as it also meant accepting the guilt and responsibility that comes with it. She is a more emotional and less alienated person by the end of the novel. She becomes less skeptical of others, and she begins to understand Joe's desire to marry her as an expression of love rather than an attempt to subjugate her.

Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* contained a lot of theory and history at the same time. It delves into certain feminism and science fiction concepts. This novel is set in a world dominated by women. The majority of the work is told through the eyes of Iris Chase Griffen. Laura, her sister, Reenie, her housekeeper, and Winifred, her husband's sister, are her key contacts. This is, nonetheless, a world controlled by men for women. The women's principal concern is Richard's pleasure and excellent reputation. Although Winifred appears to be in control of the family, there is no genuine success in the story, given the male characters' eventual dominance and the terrible ending.

In this novel, the idea of the human male as an alien form is particularly apparent. Iris and Laura hide Alex Thomas in their attic early in the novel while the authorities look for him in connection with a fire at the Chase button business. For the girls, this is an adventure; they sneak food and literature up to Alex as if he were an illegitimate pet rather than a fellow human. Both appear to be enthralled by his existence. The novel's portrayal of males continues in this vein, with the women tolerating the men's presence and eccentricities with little comprehension.

In truth, Iris' work serves her objective of communicating among women and situating them in the context of specific periods, rather than building an absolutely "actual" history. Iris uses her position as an author or speaker to build a network between the 'you,' Myra, Sabrina, and herself in this scene. Iris has a chance to be remembered as she is or as she wants to be within this network. "What I remembered, as well as what I imagined, both of which are true. I imagined myself as a recorder." (517) Recording or recreating a life she formerly lived or believed in is a way for her to get her bearings:

1. Why is it we want so badly to memorialize ourselves? Even while we're still alive.
2. We wish to assert our existence, like dogs peeing on fire hydrants. We put on

3. display our framed photographs, our parchment diplomas, our silver-plated cups;
4. we monogram our linen, we carve our names on trees, we scrawl them on
5. washroom walls. (95)

In this novel, Alex told Iris about women as autonomous creators. Much could be written about how women are portrayed in general. They are usually weak, mute, and in need of rescue, yet outside of the story, Iris' whims control the plot. Of course, Alex is recounting the narrative for Iris, but it adds to the mystery surrounding the idea of a woman as a creator. The characters are not only of offspring, as this theme suggests but also of worlds, as men are. In this tale, several genuine women do their best in the face of societal constraints and the vagaries of fate. In her one-of-a-kind novel, Atwood merges feminism and science fiction in new and interesting ways.

In a nutshell, women, who make up half of the world's population, are paradoxically not regarded equally to males in all areas of human activity. Even though every woman slave for the development of her family, her husband, and children, they are repressed, stifled, and ostracized when it comes to sharing the available opportunities for fulfillment in their lives. Life is neither a rose garden nor a thorny Women must therefore gather strength and courage in difficult times of stress, anxiety, disappointments, and failures, and remember that they have inner strength and tranquility. Women should remember what Keats said in his poem Ode to a Nightingale. "If winter comes can spring be far behind." (Brainy Quotes) There is a morning full of brightness after every night. Soon, the pleasant times will return, filling one's life with joy.

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