

TRAUMA RETOLD BY THE CHARACTERS OF MARGARET ATWOOD



Dissertation submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY in English Language and Literature

By

VENI MARIADAS
Register No. SMP16EN009

September 2017

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**TRAUMA RETOLD BY THE CHARACTERS OF MARGARET ATWOOD –
M.Phil. Dissertation**

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “**Trauma Retold by the Characters of Margaret Atwood**”, is a record of bona fide work done by me under the supervision of Dr. Latha R. Nair, Associate Professor, Department of English for the degree of M.Phil. in English Language and Literature, and that no part of the dissertation has been presented earlier for the award of any degree, diploma or any other similar title of recognition.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this dissertation entitled, “**Trauma Retold by the Characters of Margaret Atwood**” submitted to St. Teresa’s College (Autonomous), affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam in partial fulfilment of the award of M.Phil. degree in English Language and Literature is a bona fide work carried out by Ms. Veni Mariadas under my supervision and guidance.

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18 September 2017

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Veni Mariadas

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Introduction

Literature is filled with theories even from the very classical age. The theories have evolved and today it is highly complex. Literature cannot stand alone without theories and literature is now interdependent to many other fields of study. Literature has now got intermingled with humanities, science, arts and psychology. There was an exploding mass of literature during the nineteenth and twentieth century with which many contemporary theories also came into light.

The most important incident that came into literature in the nineteenth century was the introduction of psychology into literature. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychology deduced new psychological theories which were later used in literature. One of Freud's greatest discoveries to the field of psychology was psychoanalysis. According to Freud, the human mind is divided into three layers: the conscious, preconscious and the unconscious. Freud suggested that all the thoughts, dreams and actions of a human being are governed by the unconscious level of the mind. But we are consciously unaware of our unconscious. "The mental processes of adults and children, whether in illness or health, have many meanings, and their infinite variations may produce a sense of estrangement" (The Essentials of Psycho-Analysis 1).

Freud's psychoanalysis was later used in literature. In literature psychoanalysis argues that literary texts, like dreams, express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author, that a literary work is a manifestation of the author's own neuroses. We are able to psychoanalyze a particular character within a literary work, but it is usually presumed that all such characters are reflections of the author's psyche.

Psychoanalysis is both a phenomenon and theory of the mind and also a "practice of interpretation" as the *Oxford Companion of Twentieth Century Literature* puts it (550). Freud's disciples like Marie Bonaparte and Ernest Jones studied about the psychology of the author in the text, concentrating on the repressed or displaced psychic material through textual analysis. Freud was indebted to works of William Empson's *Seven types of Ambiguity and Some Versions of Pastoral*, although the work was not purely psychoanalytic in nature.

Psychological novels are part of the psychoanalytic tradition. It is understood as a genre of prose fiction that revolves totally around the inner life of the characters, representing their thoughts, feelings, desires, memories etc.

While in its broadest usage the term psychological novel can refer to any work of narrative fiction with a strong emphasis on complex characterization, it has been associated specifically with literary movements such as nineteenth-century psychological realism, twentieth century literary modernism, and the "stream of consciousness" novel, and with which narrative techniques such as free indirect discourse and the interior monologue (Logan 633).

Psychological novels are also works of prose fiction that draws upon contemporary psychological theories and one such theory is the trauma theory. Trauma theory is a very recent psychological theory which is now very significant in the interpretation of psychological novels. Lenor Terr, a child psychiatrist defines trauma as “psychic trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or a series of blows assaults the person from outside. Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind” (8). Trauma was incorporated into literature very recently. There were many shocking and traumatizing incidents in the history in the twentieth century like the Holocaust, colonization, gender and labour issues etc. These events had severe impact on the psyche of people. The narrations during that time were also about the traumatic incidents and how it had affected the mental and physical state of the victims. Some of them were deliberate narrations and some of them were psychoanalytic kind of narrations.

The trauma in the psyche of the victims was medically named as post-traumatic stress disorder. Cases of severe PTSD can lead to high levels of neuroses. People who have experienced traumatic events like accidents, deaths, rapes etc can be victims of post-traumatic stress disorder in their later stage of life. As mentioned before, the events in history like the Holocaust, colonization, gender struggles, war etc had caused severe trauma in the minds of the people. People were witnessing deaths, attacks, exploitations, bloodshed and mental and physical torture. These incidents had great influence on the unconscious being of the human mind. These traumas were expressed later not only in literature, but also in movies. We can

say that the world was put into knowledge about trauma through films more than literature.

The people who have experienced traumatic events have flashbacks, nightmares or intrusive memories. Van der Kolk talks about the complicated nature of trauma, “Traumatisation occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat” (393). The clinicians say that it is not the trauma that does the damage, but it the way how the individual responds to the traumatic incident that does the damage. In medical terms, trauma has a very complicated description. The first and most important key word one should know about trauma is “the-fight-or-flight response”. Like all animals, human beings are also engineered in such a way that our body can protect ourselves from harm as best we can. This internal protective mechanism is called as “the-fight-or-flight response”. For example, some people can rescue themselves from drowning even if they do not know swimming. “The-fight-or-flight response” is spontaneous and involuntary. If we seem to fall or trip, immediately our heartbeat increases and we fall short of breath. This is how the body responds to panic situations. Trauma patients are unable to get back from their panic situations. The incidents might have shaken the unconscious of the victims and they are powerless to come back to their original self. The traumatizing incident would have put the victim in utter panic from which he/she is not able to fight. These incidents remain unforgettable and will be stored in the unconscious of the patients. They recur without any reason as memories or dreams. The disorder occurs due to the patient’s inability to recover from the traumatizing event.

Michele Balaev, a creative writer from US writes in her essay “Trends in Literary Trauma Theory”:

A central claim of contemporary literary trauma theory asserts that trauma creates a speechless fright that divides or destroys identity. This serves as the basis for a larger argument that suggests identity is formed by the intergenerational transmission of trauma. However, a discursive dependence upon a single psychological theory of trauma produces a homogenous interpretation of the diverse representations in the trauma novel and the interplay that occurs between language, experience, memory, and place (149).

Literature has used trauma even before the theory. It is just that it was baptised only recently. David Aberbach, an associate professor in the Department of Jewish Studies at McGill University claims that “bereavement can spur creative writing” (192). He writes about the how trauma has influenced literature in his text *Surviving Trauma: Loss, Literature and Psychoanalysis*. He also talks about how mourning affected a wide range of works by novelists, poets and philosophers from Lawrence to Whitman, to Spinoza, Pascal and Satre. Aberbach starts his study mentioning the literary reactions to the Holocaust.

There has been a lot of writing about the trauma involved in the Holocaust which includes both fiction and non-fiction. Agamben in his famous text *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* discusses about the trauma during the Holocaust.

The conciliatory vice of every theodicy is particularly clear here. Not only does this theodicy tell us nothing about Auschwitz, either about its victims or executioners: it does not even manage to avoid a happy ending. Behind the powerlessness of God, peeps the powerlessness of men who continues to cry “May that never happen again!” when it is clear “that” is, by now, everywhere (20).

Jean Baudrillard writes about the trauma involved in terrorism in his text *The Spirit of Terrorism*. In the text, Baudrillard talks about the various world events that happened in the recent history from the death of Diana, “the violent real events” from wars through genocides, globalization, the destruction of the American twin tower etc. He calls the destruction of the American World trade centre as the mother event of terrorism. According to Baudrillard, 1990 was the time when the world was beginning to witness the traumas of terrorism.

The moral condemnation and the holy alliance against terrorism are on the same scale as the prodigious jubilation at seeing this global power- better at seeing it, in a sense, destroying itself, committing suicide in a blaze of glory. For it is that superpower which, by its unbearable power, has fomented all this violence which is endemic throughout the world, and hence that (unwittingly) terroristic imagination which dwells in all of us (5).

An attempt to decipher the real trauma in literature is the main focus of this project. The project focuses especially on the works of the Canadian author Margaret Atwood. Atwood holds a very high and respected position in Canadian literature. Canadian novels are well recognized and read all over the world today.

The novel in Canada has evolved through the changing conceptions of the Canadian identity. The first Canadian novel was Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769). The changing structures and themes in the novels of Canada reflect the variously imperial, bicultural, pluralistic and regionalist conceptions of the country. The most famous writers of Canada are Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Antonine Maillet and Anne Herbert. The *Encyclopedia of Novel* places Atwood in the first place among the famous writers of Canada.

The Romantic origins of Canadian literature happened in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The two official languages of the country are English and French. The novels had themes of romance and realism, (namely historical romance, psychological realism and literary regionalism). The Canadian novel's roots are from Gothic romances, such as Brooke's *Emily Montague*, Julia Beckwith Hart's *St. Ursula's Convent* (1824), and Philippe Aubert de Gasp_e, Jr.'s *L'influence d'un livre* (1837, *The Influence of a Book*).

In the early twentieth century the historical novels gained prominence. The historical novels were about the psychological and cultural effects of the consolidation of the British Empire on Canada. Later Canada saw the evolution of the graphic novels. Literary realism emerged in Canada with the psychological, proto-feminist novel *Angeline de Montbrun* (1884) by the French Canadian Laure Conan, as well as with the pioneer novel *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925) by the German immigrant Frederick Philip Grove.

In the mid- to late twentieth century, a resurgence of cultural nationalism stemming from Canada's centenary (1967) and Quebec's "Quiet Revolution" rendered the realist novel an important vehicle for negotiating contemporary

anxieties about urbanization, American cultural influence, gender relations, and legacies of empire. Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972), for example, represents a powerful rejection of American cultural influence (portrayed allegorically as aggressive and male) on Canadian national character (portrayed as introspective and female) (Kroller 136).

It can be said that Atwood was the first writer in Canada to address gender issues. Even though Atwood started her career with the themes of gender, later she widened her perspective and today she is one of the most versatile writers the world has seen. She is a clever juggler with words and the way her characters are represented is unique and purely psychological. It was in the 1960s that Canada started witnessing women addressing the themes of gender and sexuality, and Margaret Atwood was one of the pioneer feminist writers of Canada, even though she does not call her as a feminist. Instead, she calls her to be a proto-feminist. Born as Margaret Eleanor Atwood in 1939, today Atwood is a well-known Canadian poet, literary critic, essayist, inventor and environmental activist. She has been shortlisted for Booker prize five times, winning once. She is also the winner of Arthur C Clarke Award and the Prince of Asturias Award for literature. She is the founder of the Writer's Trust of Canada which is a non-literary organisation that works to encourage the writing community of Canada. She is also the founding trustee of the Griffin Poetry Prize. There are innumerable literary services that Atwood is still doing for Canada. She is the inventor of Longpen, a robotic document writing facility. Atwood is best known for her novels, but she has also published fifteen books of poetry. She has also published four collections of short stories and three collections of unclassifiable short prose works.

Atwood was educated at the Victoria College in the University of Toronto. While doing her college studies, she published her poems and articles in *Acta Victoriana* which was the college literary journal. She pursued her MA from Radcliff in 1962. Atwood initially published *Double Persephone* (1961) and then *The Circle Game* (1966). These two collections raised Atwood to high acclaim that she was recognized as a great feminist writer in Canada after the publication of these collections. Her first novel was *The Edible Woman*, which was published in 1969. This is one of the texts that has been analyzed for trauma in this study. The novel “adopts the mode of social satire, refracted through the lens of feminism, in a tale of suppressed creativity, marital ennui, and eating disorders” (Hammil 32). In this study, more aspects of the novel have been discovered and it is put into notice how Atwood brings out the trauma of the various characters in the novel. The novel is seen as a feminist one, but there are more themes and hidden meanings in the novel that Atwood has left for the reader to figure out. The novel also shows the life of the Canadian women in the times and how they were seen unprofessional and silly. The novel is divided into three parts with thirty one chapters. There are shifts in the narration voices and also the narrative style. More about the novel can be found out in the rest of this study.

After the publication of *The Edible Woman*, Atwood published several volumes of poetry and prose in the 1970s. One of her notable works during that time was *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* which is regarded to be the finest collection of poetry of Atwood. This collection consists of poems revolving around Susanna Moodie’s perspective of the land. In her interview with Graeme Gibson in *Eleven Canadian Novelists*, Atwood explains how she wrote this series of poems:

They came as separate poems, and I had no idea when I began that I was going to end up with a book of that size. It wasn't planned that way. I wrote twelve at first and stopped and thought, you know, this is just sort of a long, short poem, twelve short poems, that's it. And then I started writing more of them but I didn't know where it was going. I don't write books of poetry as books. I don't write them like novels (6).

The name "Moodie" itself is quite tricky here. Atwood through her organised set of poems brings in the themes of Canadian identity, wilderness, heritage, colonization, etc. "Atwood confronts the somewhat poisonous legacy of immigrants such as Moodie, for whom England remained an ideal while Canada was illegible, incomprehensible, hostile" (Hammil 136). Here it can be said in other words that the name "Moodie" suggests trauma that haunts her being in a foreign land which is cured at the end when she becomes the spirit of the land once she hated. The collection of poems is divided into three different eras. At the first part, Moodie is brought into the land, where the wilderness brings chaos to her mind. The exploration of the land later becomes the exploration of the self. It can be noted that there are stark realities between Susanna Moodie and the narrator in *Surfacing*.

Atwood wrote *Survival* in 1972. In this period, she claimed that teaching of Canadian Literature became 'a political act' (Hammil 174). Atwood's deeply political messages in *Survival* have met with a great deal of predictable criticism. Her second novel is *Surfacing*, which was published in 1972. This is another text that has been used in this study to bring out the trauma in Atwood's characters.

Surfacing can be regarded purely as a psychological novel and Atwood has used various narrative strategies and techniques to ensure that.

The Edible Woman can also be put into the category of psychological novel because Atwood has explored the different levels of psychoses in the novel and the eating disorder even though used sarcastically, points to the severe level of the character's mental deterioration. In *Surfacing* "motherhood, sexuality, and identity are dissolved in a crucible of mysticism verging on madness, as she plunges into visions of the supernatural and the mythological, described in spare, poetic language that evokes the wonder and the horror of the Canadian wilderness" (Stringer 675).

The novel that was published next was *Lady Oracle* and its publication took place in the year 1976. This is a very interesting novel in which Atwood uses a number of themes which include the role of relationships, body shaming, identity crisis etc. The novel parodies Gothic romances and fairy tales as the protagonist is a romance novelist who lacks identity. It can be seen that in this novel also there are elements of trauma that Atwood has carefully used to make this yet another trauma novel.

Atwood's fourth novel was *Life Before Man*, which was published in 1979, and by this time Canada had accepted her as their national writer and she was coming into limelight all around the world. Today Atwood is one of the best writers in English and through her writings she has brought in to light the real image of Canada, its history and wilderness to the world. Atwood is not only a writer, but a technical genius. She published her first novel at the age of twenty four and it can be well understood that her writings are so mature in nature. Her visions, knowledge, playfulness with words, treatment of human psyche is very extraordinary and versatile.

The New Yorker Magazine calls Atwood as the “prophet of dystopia”. Atwood’s dystopian novel is *The Handmaid’s Tale*, which was published in 1985. The novel is still regarded to be one of the greatest novels in history because what Atwood predicted at that time had come real today. She had predicted in her novel the situation of governance in America today. The novel’s title echoes the tales from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, which shows that the novel is a political satire like the *Canterbury Tales*. The novel also has a feminist perspective as it progresses through the narration of the handmaids. The novel won several recognitions and was nominated for the Booker Prize in 1986. It was also adapted into a movie in the same name in 1990 and also it still runs as TV series.

There are several other novels in Atwood’s kitty which has several themes. She has also written science fictions, adaptations, juggled with myths and so on. Her other famous novels are *Orynx and Crake* (2003), *Robber Bride* (1993), *Cat’s Eye* (1988), *The Blind Assassin* (2000). She won the Booker Prize for the novel *The Blind Assassin*. These are only a few, but there are many. *Moral Disorder* that was published in 2006 is a collection of interconnected short stories. As the title suggests the stories are disordered and there are trauma characters in the stories. Her latest novel is the *Hag-Seed*, which was published in 2016. *Angel-Catbird* is another novel that was published last year, and this is Atwood’s first graphic novel. The novel being the first graphic novel of the Booker-prize winning author was sold out in a very good way and is still on high demand. The book proves that Atwood is also a good comic writer and it carries all elements of a comic book.

Hag-Seed is the main text that has been analysed in this study. The most recent novel of Atwood is an adaptation of Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*. This is a very

successful attempt in which Atwood has explored all the nook and corner of the play and has brought out a new Prospero and the “Calibans”. Atwood’s knowledge and versatility in English literature is well evident in this novel. Unlike her other novels, she has used a male protagonist in the novel, and it is her kind of revisionary writing. Atwood through presenting a male character and his psyche presents revisionary rhetoric. According to Julie Jung, “revisionary rhetors break down binaries in order to hear silences, to give active audience to the other side of the backlash” (10). The 1980s saw the rise of revisionary writing which was becoming very prominent in feminist writings. There were revisionary feminist analyses of the histories of countries like British and America. By presenting a male protagonist and through adapting Shakespeare, Atwood experiments with revisionary writing. She tries to break the binary thinking and as a woman she is successful in narrating Shakespeare.

The novel has in it the various levels of trauma and its manifestation.

The three main novels that are thoroughly examined for trauma in this study are the *Hag-Seed*, *The Edible Woman* and *Surfacing*. The different aspects of trauma are brought out from each novel and also the way Atwood has treated her traumatic characters are pointed out. As the title of the study suggests this is an attempt to unfold the trauma retold by the characters of Margaret Atwood.

Chapter 1

Trauma Theory and Margaret Atwood

Trauma theory is one of the most widely accepted and discussed theories in contemporary philosophy today. Unlike other theories, trauma studies keep the literary scholars, historians as well as clinicians very busy. The main reason for this is history itself. Starting with the Holocaust and other historical traumas, increased awareness of sexual abuse, war and so on were the reasons which led to the primitive diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder first entered the American Psychiatric Association diagnostic manual in 1980.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, trauma means a deeply distressing or disturbing experience. Cathy Caruth, who is the Frank H.T Rhodes Professor of Humane Letters at Cornell University writes about trauma theory in her famous works *Trauma: Explorations in Memory; Literature in the Ashes of History; Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, Freud;* and *Listening to Trauma: Conversations with Leaders in the Theory and Treatment of Catastrophic Experience*. Cathy Caruth, in the preface of her path breaking essay on trauma says that, “psychic trauma involves intense personal suffering” (1). Even though trauma theory is new to the field of literary studies, Freud has debated and written about psychoses and neuroses right from the beginning of psychoanalysis. The whole idea of trauma theory comes from a victim’s psychological trauma. Trauma studies were born out from the psychological suffering of the people, and

today new research methodologies have entered in this field and have helped a lot to alleviate the suffering of the victims. Some people started writing and expressing their traumatic memories and this is how trauma gains prominence in literature. The main group of people who started to experiment with trauma in literature were the Black writers, rape victims, Holocaust survivors etc. Caruth writes in the preface to *“Introduction of Recapturing the Past”* that,

The difficulty of listening and responding to traumatic stories in the way that does not lose their impact, they do not reduce them to clichés or turn them all into versions of the same story, is a problem that remains central to the task of therapists, literary critics, neurobiologists and film makers alike (1).

Caruth calls post-traumatic stress disorder as a historical phenomenon. She defines it as “singular possession by the past” (2). The “past” is that traumatic event that haunts the victim, this past in like a ghostly spirit attached on to the mind of the victim. The memory recollects of its own unconsciously in the psyche of the victim. “Trauma, that is, does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned” (2). Traumatic recollection is not just simple memory. The traumas in the minds of the victims stay without diminishing or disappearing. It is unforgettable. The images remain accurate and precise. The traumatized flashback remains like a waking dream, appears in nightmares and torments the victim’s psyche. Trauma theory is an interdisciplinary area of Western scholarship and humanities and it gained prominence in the 1980s.

The strong effects of psychological trauma entered into the mind of mainstream America as the veterans were returning from the Vietnam War. The

recognition of the disorder and its baptism happened in 1980. Before being named as the post-traumatic stress disorder, terms like “shell shock”, “combat fatigue” and “hysteria” were used to describe the long and short symptoms that the patients were suffering after a traumatic incident.

According to the National Institute of Health, PTSD is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous event. There are different processes happening in the human body. The stimulus and response system itself is one such example. We respond to the stimuli around us even without us knowing. We go through different emotions. Biologically speaking, our body responds to emotions through chemical changes. For example, fear, trauma, anger, pain etc lead to the production of adrenaline in the body, which is then responsible for the increased heartbeat, dilated pupils etc. But this split-second reaction resides after the production of the counter hormone, noradrenalin. But trauma happens out of fear. In the living body, the fear triggers many split-second changes to help defend against danger or to avoid it. The typical reaction that the body confronts to protect a person from harm is called as “the fight-or-flight response”. Almost everyone will have to go through a range of reactions after trauma, but some people recover from the prior symptoms naturally. The unrecovered people are the ones who will be later diagnosed with PTSD. The PTSD victims are always under the torment of fear and stress even when they are not in danger.

It cannot be said that every traumatised person develops ongoing (chronic) or even short-term (acute) PTSD. It cannot also be said that not everyone with PTSD has been through a dangerous event. Some unexpected experiences like accidents,

injury, death of a loved one etc can cause PTSD. Symptoms usually begin within three months of the traumatic incident, but for some people it may take years. Soldiers and army men are very susceptible to trauma disorders, because of the violence that they see around them daily. Even after retirement some people are in constant fear and stress, they feel insecure and mentally irritated.

PTSD patients will have at least one re-experiencing symptom, one avoidance symptom, at least two arousal and reactivity symptoms, at least two cognition and mood symptoms. The re-experiencing symptoms are the flashbacks of the incident and may result in physical symptoms like increase in heartbeat, sweating, nightmares etc. These re-experiences will be part of the person's everyday routine. The symptoms are the person's own thoughts and feelings. There can be reminders like words, situations or objects which can lead to re-experiencing. Dreams keep recurring and are important symptoms of trauma.

From the folklore of the dead visiting dreamers to Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth sleepwalking and trying to wash blood off her hands, people in centuries past have known of the special relationship between trauma and dreaming (Barrett 2).

Some trauma victims show avoidance symptoms. They try to stay from the event or situation that has caused the trauma. For example, a car accident victim might stop driving a car, or even stop being near moving objects. This symptom is called as the avoidance symptom. The victims even try to stop thinking about the event or incident. They tend to make routine changes that avoid them being subjected to the traumatic situation.

The two concepts are not upon the same plane. Inhibition has a special relation to function. It does not necessarily have a pathological implication. One can quite well call a normal restriction of a function an inhibition of it. A symptom, on the other hand, actually denotes the presence of some pathological process. Thus, an inhibition may be a symptom as well. Linguistic usage, then, employs the word *inhibition* when there is a simple lowering of function, and *symptom* when a function has undergone some unusual change or when a new phenomenon has arisen out of it. Very often it seems to be quite an arbitrary matter whether we emphasize the positive side of a pathological process and call its outcome a symptom, or its negative side and call its outcome an inhibition. But all this is really of little interest; and the problem as we have stated it does not carry us very far (*Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* 87).

The signs and symptoms of PTSD are classified together as arousal and reactivity symptoms and cognition and mood symptoms. Arousal and reactivity symptoms include easily being startled, stress, tension, feeling of being on the edge, insomnia, and uncontrollable anger. These symptoms are always constant, and these make the patient tensed and uncomfortable. It becomes hard for them to do daily tasks such as sleeping, eating, and concentrating. Cognition and mood symptoms include difficulty in remembering the events of the traumatic incident, self-negative thoughts, feeling of guilt or shame (especially in rape victims), loss of interest in public activities. Children may respond to PTSD in a different way. They may show symptoms of being introverts, fear of the public space, wetting the bed, being clingy

to parents etc. Anybody can develop PTSD in any point of time, and different people respond to it in different ways.

Trauma theory is a very inevitable part of literature today. It can be devised from autobiographical accounts, Holocaust narrations, movies, feminist novels etc. The accounts that Franz Fanon gives in his famous text *The Wretched of the Earth* on the dehumanising psychiatric effects of colonization are also examples of trauma. Fanon gives a liturgical detail of trauma in the chapter on violence through Césaire's poetry.

Césaire's poetry takes on a prophetic significance in this very prospect of violence. Let us recall one of the most decisive pages of his tragedy where the rebel (what a coincidence!) proclaims,

Rebel

My family name: offended; my given name: humiliated; my profession:
rebel; my age: stone age.

Mother:

My race: the human race; my religion: brotherhood

Rebel

My race: the fallen race; my religion...

But it is not you who will prepare it with disarmament;

It is my revolt and my poor clenched fists and my bushy head.

(very calmly) (44).

Colonial war was also one of the reasons which led to the expansion of trauma on people and Fanon through his case studies cover the scope of mental

disturbances as a consequence of revolutionary struggle and illustrate the perversity of colonialism.

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas, by John Boyne is one good example of a trauma novel.

...only the victims and survivors can truly comprehend the awfulness of that time and place: the rest of us live on the other side of the fence, starting through from our own comfortable place, trying in our own clumsy ways to make sense of it all (25).

The same novel was adapted into a movie in 2008 in United States. The plot of the novel revolves around the life of two eight-year-old boys during the Nazi rule. The novel is a Holocaust drama which explores the horrors of the Nazi extermination camp. The image of “striped pajamas” itself symbolifies trauma during the period. The pajamas were the uniform of the prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps where they were subjected to cruel torture and finally deadly death.

Trauma is a 2008 novel by Patrick McGrath, who is a British writer. The novel is based on post-traumatic stress disorder cases as narrated by an American psychiatrist named Dr. Charles Weir. The protagonist is famous for his treatment of PTSD cases, but in fact Dr. Weir himself is a victim of several traumatic incidents which include the death of his mother who was suffering from depressive illness and other relationship problems. The novel ends with the scene showing Dr. Weir ending up as a psychiatric patient with severe post-traumatic stress disorder. The

predominant theme of the novel is the effect of post-traumatic stress disorder and how the mind deals with significant psychological trauma. Mcgrath in an interview he gave to Nicola Barranger in 2016 says about his novel,

Charlie Weir suffers trauma, but then rather than try to heal himself, have it seen to as he says, he instead examines it rather like a scientist, who has scratched his skin and infected himself with some virus. He watches it, simply out of the curiosity as to what psychologically it looks like when one suffers the sort of disorder – the sort of post-traumatic disorder – that he has observed in his patients.

Another famous novel titled *The Girl in the Woods* that revolves around the trauma of a rape victim is an account of real life incident of Ms. Aspen Matis. Ms. Matis was raped as a freshman at Colorado College in 2008. She was raped on the second day of college and unable to bear the trauma she drops out of the college and then she heads out to the Mexican border to hike to Canada to recover from trauma. Aspen documented her incident of trauma and her recovery journey in her debut book *The Girl in the Woods*.

Even though the diagnosis of PTSD happened only in the late 1980s, the effects of psychological trauma were discussed in literature and movies much before that. Films were effective means through which the varied and unpredictable symptoms in the sufferers were represented. Over the years, the film industry has captured many events and situations which can lead to injury in the psyche. The main part of these trauma movies are occupied by war movies. The movie

Deer Hunter (1978) is one of the pioneer war movies which show the effect of serving in the war and its emotional aftermath. The *Deer Hunter* is categorised as a great trauma movie because it depicts that different people can be affected in different ways by the same event. Another movie that was released in 1991, titled *The Fisher King* which revolves around a psycho named Parry, who is a trauma patient haunted by his own visions and waking memory of having witnessed his wife's murder. His hallucinations make him believe that he is on a quest of finding the Holy Grail. Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 movie *Marnie* is another great example of a trauma movie which shows female-centered trauma on screen. The traumatic incident of the heroine of being molested during a young age and accidentally killing the attacker had caused an emotional constriction in Marnie which made her block out her memory and she develops a fear of colour red. There are more examples of Hollywood movies that talk about post-traumatic stress disorder.

It is quite interesting to note that there are such movies in Malayalam too. The best example of a trauma movie in Malayalam is *Manichitrathazhu*, in which the heroine Ganga is a PTSD patient and due to her disorder, she is prone to display multiple personalities. The most popular psychological novel in Malayalam by Malayattoor, *Yakshi* (1961) also deals with the theme of trauma. The protagonist is a chemistry professor who had disfigured his face in a laboratory accident. This traumatic incident and also his awareness of his sexual impotency make him a PTSD patient, making him believe his lover is a ghost. The novel is narrated by the protagonist when he is imprisoned as a mental patient.

In short, literature, theory and movies around the world have adopted the effects of trauma into their life blood. The events mentioned in these movies and texts are not fictional, but real and cut fresh from people's lives. This is the reason why the study of trauma has high relevance today. The traumatic narrations continue to happen, because there are ripples in human minds every time.

Margaret Atwood is a writer who explores the inner conflicts of the mind and many of her characters show the symptoms of trauma disorder. Honoured as one of the major writers of Canada, Atwood never fails to keep her readers waiting for her new releases. Atwood is one of the best leading women writers. She has written poetry, novels, criticism, and short stories. Atwood is a great admirer of arts and creativity, which are major themes of her writing. The other themes that Atwood writes about include dangers of ideology and sexual politics. She has also the amazing talent of deconstructing myths, fairy tales and classics. The one and main reason of Atwood's wide recognition as a writer is because of the gothic elements in her work.

Atwood is famous as a feminist writer. She admires nature and loves Canadian literature. There are lot of studies done in regard with Atwood's treatment of females who have undergone traumatic experiences. But it can be said that all her characters, regardless of being male or female are victims of trauma. Atwood blends feminism, psychoanalysis and post modernism in her writings. Atwood breaks the margins and borders of literature. It would be not right to say that only Atwood's female characters have been treated with trauma and psychoanalysis. She has written many novels, and it would not be wrong to say that most of her writings have women

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central characters. But her recent novel is not about a woman, but still, it deals with trauma. As said earlier Atwood has a special talent for adaptations and deconstructions. Her most recent novel is one such adaptation. She has attempted to adapt Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in a unique manner. *The Tempest* is presumed to be the final play that Shakespeare wrote independently and belongs to the classification of romantic comedy. Prospero, the central character is a victim of trauma and the whole plot revolves around his revenge. Atwood cleverly uses the plot in a different situation without losing the beauty of Shakespeare's original play.

The novel *Hag-Seed* was published in 2016 by Hogarth press. It is known that the Hogarth press was founded by Virginia and Leonard Woolf with a mission to publish the best new writing of the age. In 2012, Hogarth was launched in London and New York to continue their mission. *Hag-Seed* was published by the Hogarth Shakespeare project and is considered to be one of the best novels of the year. The Guardian's review on the *Hag-Seed* is as follows,

This retelling of *The Tempest* is one of four novels so far released as part of Vintage's Hogarth Shakespeare initiative. It joins Jeanette Winterson's *The Gap of Time (The Winter's Tale)*, Howard Jacobson's *Shylock Is My Name (The Merchant of Venice)* and Anne Tyler's *Vinegar Girl (The Taming of the Shrew)*, with Tracy Chevalier's *Othello*, Gillian Flynn's *Hamlet*, Jo Nesbo's *Macbeth* and Edward St Aubyn's *King Lear* to come.

The title *Hag-Seed* comes from the "curse words" in the play, and the word describes Caliban. Atwood does not forget to provide short yet precise summary of

The Tempest in the book, so that people who do not know the story can read and relate to the novel. Atwood's encounter with Shakespeare started while she was in Toronto High School, and she has named Shakespeare to be one of the most influential figures of her works. Atwood talks about Shakespeare and *The Tempest* like this,

The Tempest is, in some ways, an early multimedia musical. If Shakespeare were working today, he'd be using every special effect technology now makes available. But the tempest is especially intriguing because of the many questions it leaves unanswered. What a strenuous pleasure it has been to wrestle with it! (*Hag-Seed* Introduction)

The protagonist of the novel is Felix Philips, who was the artistic director of the Makeshiwig theatre festival. Felix's only life was the theatre, and his latest work was going to be the production of *The Tempest*. This is how Felix wanted to create *The Tempest*.

And he did concern himself with higher aims. To create the lushest, the most beautiful, the most awe-inspiring, the most inventive, the most numinous theatrical experiences ever. To raise that bar as high as the moon. To forge from every production an experience no one attending it would ever forget (12).

This was Felix's only wish, and for that purpose Felix was working hard without even a wink of sleep. But Felix is unable to complete his dreams as he is betrayed by his secretary Tony and is pulled off from his majestic throne of the

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artistic director just like Prospero from whom his kingdom was taken away. Being betrayed and losing his life's work was not the first trauma that happened in Felix's life. Felix had a late marriage, and his wife Nadia had died after a year of their marriage. He was shocked by the death of his wife, because he was just starting to know her, and he had discovered that she was a woman of virtues. Nadia dies right after child birth, and she is now just an outline of sorrow for him. Felix named his daughter Miranda, as she was a motherless baby girl with a middle-aged doting father. Here too we can see the effect of *The Tempest* in the psyche of Felix, and he regards himself to be the lost Prospero. Miranda was a perfect little baby girl. Felix wanted to see the world with her. But the fate is cruel to him. At the age of three Miranda gets a fever which later turns out to be meningitis. Felix immerses himself in his work.

They'd tried to reach him, the women, but he'd been in rehearsal with strict orders not to be interrupted and they hadn't known what to do. When he finally got home there were frantic tears, and then the drive to the hospital, but it was too late, too late (15).

This was the second trauma that attacked Felix. The grief that he goes through after the death of his dear and only daughter is inexplicable.

What to do with such a sorrow? It was like an enormous black cloud boiling up over the horizon. No: it was like a blizzard. No: it was like nothing he could put into language. He couldn't face it head on. He had to transform it or very least enclose it (15).

This transformation, Felix could find through his *Tempest*. Throughout the play he was the Prospero and he consoled himself and thought that his Miranda was alive. He did not dare to believe that his daughter had died. No, Miranda continues to live. She has no mother, but she has a father capable of protecting her, and as she is imaginary she cannot die again. This is what Felix thought. Throughout the play he had tried to run away from the trauma he had suffered, the trauma of losing his wife and daughter. Felix was a minor post-traumatic stress patient at the time of the death of his daughter. But we cannot say that he had turned a psycho, because he had his mind under control. Felix had the theatre as his medicine. But again fate, but not exactly fate, shrewd and cunning people, terminated him from his dream job and this happens to be the biggest trauma in Felix's life. "The secrecy, the sabotage. The snake-like subterfuge. The stupendous betrayal." (23).

Felix is being thrown out of the place where he was the master and the ruler. Tony had rehearsed two security guards and Felix is being pushed out of the theatre. The betrayers claim that Felix had become psychotic and paranoid after his daughter's death. They had even brought in a psychiatrist to prove that Felix is paranoid. Prospero was the rightful Duke of Milan, but Alonso his brother had captured the kingdom and Prospero and his little daughter was put in a leaky boat and drifted to an unknown island. Shakespeare also treats Prospero as a trauma patient. Prospero's tool was magic, and Felix's tool was theatre. Prospero had lost his kingdom, but he had his little daughter with him. But Felix had lost his theatre and also his family. "The rest of his life. How long that time had once felt to him.

How quickly it has sped by. How much of it had been wasted. How soon it will be over” (29).

Unable to bear the trauma, Felix moves out of his home into a countryside and lives an unidentified life. He disappears from his old life. The memories of his daughter and the Makeshiwig festival taunt him. He imagines that his daughter is alive and is with him. He does not believe that his daughter is dead, but to bring his daughter to real life he wants Prospero’s Miranda to be back to life. He wants Miranda to be brought out from the glass case. Felix is unable to think, or work at the initial days of his exile. He lives in a village guest house for rent. He does not reveal his name to anybody. Mr. Duke is the fake name in which he lives there. At first he stays away from the Makeshiwig festival’s news. But later he starts to collect his enemy’s news. Tony and Sal are his biggest enemies and the reason for his trauma. The only thing that Felix seeks now is revenge, just like Prospero. Prospero uses magic to spy on his enemies and Felix uses technology. He becomes a frequent visitor to the Wilmot cafe while he had no work during the beginning days of his exile. But he did not want to be suspected of watching porn, so he gets hold of a second-hand computer and Google becomes his companion for spying on his enemies.

Tony, the biggest traitor had taken the post of the artistic director of the festival. After pushing out Felix, Tony was climbing the ladder of success year by year, and knowing all this increased Felix’s angst. He thought of ways for executing his revenge. His revenge seeking was a part of his trauma disorder.

Would he sneak into Tony's house/office/ favourite restaurant and spike Tony's lunch with a toxic agent that would give Tony an incurable illness or inflict upon him a lingering and painful death? Then Felix could disguise himself as a doctor and appear in Tony's hospital and gloat. He'd read a murder mystery in which the victim had died from eating daffodil bulbs (43).

The other symptom that Felix experienced was his phobia of the public and the waking images of his daughter, Miranda. He imagined that Miranda was growing up with him. He talked to her and she responded. He imagined Miranda being taught by him while in school, playing chess with him, and while he is busy Miranda found happiness by playing outside the little village cottage. Felix was not afraid of letting Miranda out because he knew she cannot get flu. That means Felix in reality knew that there was no Miranda around, but she was the only companion that he had and at one part of his mind he believed that she was alive and was growing up with him watching her old dad working so hard to get his revenge done. But his imagination was running wild. His trauma was vibrating at times; his psyche was deranged at times. The death of his dearest daughter, the loss of his dearest job, the loneliness, the exile, all of it began to upset his mind. He was out of mind, and Felix needed help, because he did not want the trauma to swallow him completely. He had wanted to take revenge, stage *The Tempest* and bring back Miranda to life.

One day he heard her singing, right outside the window. He didn't daydream it, the way he had been semi-daydreaming up to then. It wasn't one of his whimsical yet despairing fabrications. He actually heard a voice. It was not a consolation. Instead, it frightened him (47).

It is in the ninth year of his exile that Felix decides to break out of his shell. Here is the next turning point in the story. He did not want a high profile job, because recognition was the least thing that he wanted. To increase the flavour of trauma in the novel, Atwood uses intelligent strategies. The place where Felix joins for job is very interesting. He takes a teaching job in the Fletcher County Correctional. Fletcher Correctional is actually a prison and Felix's job involves teaching English to the inmates. Felix is recruited by Estelle, who recognizes that Mr. Duke is his fake name, and that he was the former artistic director of the Makeshiwig festival. Estelle promises to keep it a secret and she recruits Felix as the English teacher to the Correctional. Atwood cleverly does not use the term prison in the novel. Here Fletcher Correctional is another station of trauma. The inmates are criminals involved in different types of crimes, and these people later turn up to be important part of Felix's mission. Like Prospero's deserted island, Fletcher Correctional serves to be the island where Felix can weave his magic. Like Caliban and Ariel, Felix also finds aid from the inmates, who are already the victims of trauma. The course involved teaching *The Catcher in the Rye*, but Felix negotiates of teaching Shakespeare to which Estelle disagrees due to the reason that Shakespeare had bloodshed and violence and as these were taught to a bunch of thieves, drug dealers, embezzlers, man-slaughters, fraudsters, and con-men. But Felix convinces Estelle and starts teaching Shakespeare by teaching them theatre and ends up being a super hit. Felix was happy that fact that he was still with theatre and he enjoyed what he did. But the other thing kept being reminded by his mind.

Surely there was one. An unopened box, hidden somewhere under a rock, marked V for vengeance. He didn't see clearly where he was going, but he had to trust that he was going somewhere (59).

It is the twelfth year of Felix's confined life and all these years he had been waiting for only one thing, and that is revenge. He had the hope that a day would come and like Prospero he could take a harmless, but unforgettable revenge and get back his throne in the Makeshiwig festival. In the January of 2013, Felix receives a message from Estelle that she wants to meet him urgently to convey a happy news. The news was something that made Felix skip his heartbeat. Estelle conveys to him that two ministers are going to come to the Fletcher Correctional to watch Mr. Duke's students perform Shakespeare, and these ministers happen to be the people who Felix had been waiting for, his enemies. The people who betrayed him. The people who had taken away his kingdom. The time for Felix to execute his revenge had come, and he was overwhelmed. The news comes in January when he is about to start the classes. The ministers, the wicked Tony and Sal were coming in March when the students staged the drama.

Atwood is a very clever and versatile writer. The description of the Fletcher Correctional imbues a feeling of trauma into the minds of the readers. Atwood says that this place is a fictional place, and that she had consciously chosen this job for Felix to add different shades of trauma that the readers can feel. Fletcher Correctional is a highly traumatic place. Even though Felix had been teaching there for the last twelve years, he had to undergo series of security checks everyday, and also a pager was attached to his pocket to alert the security if something goes wrong.

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All the inmates of the Correctional were victims of trauma and it was unpredictable how their behaviours would change, and Felix was always under threat of being attacked, but he did not bother. He had turned the Correctional into his theatre. That was his passion for arts, literature and theatre. The new batch had arrived, and he announces the new drama for the year. It is *The Tempest*. The inmates are not happy with Felix's selection of the play. They argue that they need more drama, and also asks Felix that who would be Miranda. None of them were ready to play the part of Miranda, because they were criminals and they believed playing a woman would make them seem weak. Also, they refused to play Caliban. But Felix was clever enough. He had set everything, and he had perfect plans. He is a word juggler, far cleverer than Shakespeare. To make them convince he says that he would bring a girl for Miranda and that he would bring cigarettes for the inmates. It was Felix's play. He wanted it to be staged at any cost. This was what he was waiting for the past twelve years.

Felix gets his Miranda that will be played by Annie Marie Greenland. He had chosen her while working at the Makeshiwig festival. Greenland is another important character here. She is physically not attractive and is a failed artist. She would have got an exposure if she had been in *The Tempest* that Felix directed twelve years ago, but fate did not favour that. This was her trauma. She wanted to be a great actress, which did not happen. Even though she works hard, she had not received enough recognition till date. She is a great dancer, but she believed theatre was her forte, but did not come to her way. For Felix, Greenland was the perfect Miranda, and unconsciously he was bringing his Miranda to life, and he feels

paternal emotions to her. Greenland also had the trauma of a failed relationship with one of the artists in the Makeshiwig festival and she had a bee tattoo which she kept as a token for remembering her failed relationship.

Annie Marie Greenland is introduced to the inmates. The presence of a woman makes them feel a shower of rain in their confined lives. Now Felix has started his act, and is into *the Tempest*. He writes the names of the characters and their descriptions. This is the trauma of Prospero and Miranda:

The next ones to come to the island are Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan, and baby Miranda who have been set adrift in a leaky boat by Prospero's wicked brother, Antonio. They're lucky they landed there because otherwise they would have starved or drowned. But they have to live in a cave and there aren't any people around, except Caliban... (113).

The other main characters which Felix likes are Ariel and Caliban. The title *Hag-Seed* itself defines Caliban. It can be said that Caliban is also a trauma victim. He is born of a witch Sycorax. He is made slave by Prospero. Caliban also has very unattractive physical characteristics. He wants to marry Miranda and keep her in the island. Caliban is a very frustrated character. He is forced to servitude by Prospero even though he is the rightful owner of the island. Caliban is depicted as half-human. He could have been a Wildman or a beast man or even the mix of a fish and man. His home island is no more his home and it torments him now. In Act 3, scene 2 of the *Tempest*, Caliban grieves:

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep... (47).

All the characters in the novel and also in Shakespeare's play are victims of trauma in one way or the other. This is where Atwood uses her magic wand to make to novel a traumatic one. *Hag-seed* is about revenge, Felix's revenge through *The Tempest*. Felix is successful in taking his revenge. He had gone a very long way and tried hard to get his revenge done. In the end, he gets all he had lost except his dead daughter.

Hag-Seed is a very interesting novel. Atwood's perception of a man's mind is without any flaws and should be applauded. The novel is divided into five parts and unlike her other novels the narration is not first person. Felix has thoughts, but these were narrated by second person. There are flashbacks only in the first few chapters. After that the narration follows strict chronological pattern and is more like a diary entry with dates. All the chapters have titles, and some have dates. These dates are linked to events in Felix's life. All these characteristics make *Hag-Seed* very different from the other novels of Atwood. She has used new strategies in this novel, but still the novel is purely psychological. There are only a few female characters and it can be seen that all the inmates of the Fletcher Correctional are males. Annie Marie Greenland is one important female character who is failed as an artist and as a lover. She is also being exploited in the Correctional. The other character Esther is

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also significant. Even though there are only a few scenes for her, she is a good aid for Felix. It can also be seen that Esther is physically attracted to Felix. Her admiration and respect might be the reason why she has those kinds of feelings to Felix. But Felix stays out of it thinking his daughter might know.

In short, Hag-Seed can be seen as a trauma novel in which Atwood has portrayed almost all the characters as victims of trauma. Not only Felix, each and every character in the novel has their own traumatic background and story. This reworking of *The Tempest* is flawless and perfect, and Atwood deserves high praise to have re-visioned Shakespeare in such a manner.

Chapter 2

Trauma and Catharsis

The term catharsis is so familiar to us. Atwood's works cannot be defined as tragedies, but there are tragic elements in all her works. According to Aristotle tragedy is defined as "the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself," in the medium of poetic language and in the manner of dramatic rather than of narrative presentation, involving "incidents arousing pity and fear" (Abrams 408). So, it can be said that the works of Atwood do have a narrative strategy which involves the presentation of "pity and fear". The other term that stands with tragedy is "catharsis" which in Greek means purgation or purification.

It can be seen that there are elements of tragedy and catharsis in Atwood's works. Taking the case of *Hag-Seed* itself, it can be understood that Felix had to undergo severe tragedies in his life and hence fell into trauma. The catharsis is through vengeance and that vengeance he does through forgiveness just like Prospero. In 1969, a writer called Harry Berger offered an account of the prevailing reading of *the Tempest*, "The action of the play is Prospero's discovery of his enemies, their discovery of themselves, the lovers' discovery of a new world of wonder, and Prospero's own discovery of an ethic of forgiveness, and the renunciation of his magical power" (147). In the same way the remedy for Felix's trauma was to discover and hunt his enemies.

Atwood has specific reasons for choosing *the Tempest*. It is mainly to depict the elements of trauma from the drama to the novel. It is very well known that the drama is not a tragedy of Shakespeare, because unlike other Shakespearean plays there are no deaths happening, there is no blood-shed and everything is back to normal at the end of the play. Prospero gets back his rightful kingdom, Miranda is happily wedded to her love, Ariel is free and so is Caliban. But in the novel the protagonist experiences several tragic situations than Prospero. He had lost his lovely wife and his dear daughter and was in exile for twelve years waiting for his time for revenge. Atwood also through the image of the prison and the backgrounds of the prisoners enhances the effect of trauma in the novel. She cleverly does not use the term “prisoners” but uses the term “inmates” and these inmates do have a serious criminal background. And another interesting fact is that there are inmates diagnosed to have post-traumatic stress disorder and these are the kind of people that Felix is working with to execute his vengeance. The PTSD patient is his Caliban:

Caliban: Leggs. About thirty. Mixed background, Irish and black. Red hair, freckles, heavy build, works out a lot. A vet was in Afganistan. Veterans Affairs failed to pay for PTSD treatment... (134).

Atwood also through her title tries to say that our real hero is not Prospero but is Caliban. Caliban is the “Hag-Seed”. He is the one who is truly traumatized, and ironically the inmate who is doing the role of Caliban is another trauma patient who is denied of any treatment. The 28th chapter is titled Caliban and here he comes to life.

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My name is Caliban, got scales and long nails,
I smell like fish and not like a man-
But my other name's Hag-Seed, or that's what he call me
He call me a lotta names, he play me a lotta games:
He call me a poison, a filth, a slave,
He prison me up to make me behave,
But I'm a Hag-Seed! (174).

Atwood summarizes the trauma hidden in the novel through these lines. The title of the novel is explained. Hag-Seed means offspring of a witch. The Hag-Seeds here are the prisoners. They are treated like poison and filth, and they are imprisoned to teach them to behave. But there is catharsis taking place here. Felix is released from his trauma the moment he gets back his throne of the artistic Director. His enemies are well-paid and are miserable. The inmates are also relieved. Every play that Felix had staged had cathartic effect in their lives. The name "Fletcher Correctional" itself suggests of bringing back the good in them, and Felix was successful in inflicting catharsis upon the inmates and the novel ends happily without blood or tear shed.

To talk about trauma in Atwood's novel, it would be necessary to take a look to her other works also. As mentioned before, Atwood is highly versatile in handling psyche of both men and women, deconstructing myths, creating adaptations, science fictions and even political novels. Her first novel is *The Edible Woman* which was published in 1969. Atwood started experimenting with trauma from her first novel. This was the novel through which Atwood put her signature in literature. Atwood

explores woman psyche in her pioneer works. But she likes to call her works proto-feminist rather than feminist. Still Atwood cannot be labelled just as a feminist writer. The novel was published during the time feminism and gender issues were beginning to be addressed in Canada. It is said that there are incidents related to Atwood's personal life in this novel as she writes in the introduction to the novel, "*The Edible Woman*, then was conceived by a twenty-three-year-old and written by a twenty-four-year-old, and its more self-indulgent grotesqueries are perhaps attributable to the youth of the author, though I would prefer to think that they derive instead from the society by which she found herself surrounded."

The title itself presents confusion, repression, and deterioration. The Times magazine describes the novel as, "funny, sharp, witty and clever". In the introduction to the book Atwood talks about the circumstances which made her write the book. She had started to write *The Edible Woman* in the spring and summer of 1965. Her first scripts were written in empty examination booklets flied from the University of British Columbia, where she had been teaching freshman English for the previous eight months.

The title scene dates from a year earlier; I'd thought it up while gazing as I recall, at a confectioner's display window full of marzipan pigs. It may have been a Woolworth's window full of Mickey Mouse cakes, but in any case, I'd been speculation for some time about symbolic cannibalism

(*The Edible Woman*, Introduction).

The novel finally appeared in 1969 and it had been four years after it was written. It was the time feminism was gaining prominence in North America and the novel coincided with its rise. The people assumed the book was part of the movement, but in fact Atwood had completed the book even before the rise of the movement and she had not even anticipated that her novel would be called a feminist one. But Atwood says, “I myself she the book as proto-feminist rather than feminist: there was no women’s movement in sight when I was composing the book in 1965...” Atwood also points out the reason why she calls the novel as a proto-feminist one. It is to be noted that her heroine is a stereotypical one. During that time in Canada, the females had only very few options before them. If their career was in shatters, their other only option was marriage. This was the same for all women, be it educated or uneducated. This is the trauma that Atwood points out in the novel through the life of Miss MacAlpin. Atwood summarizes that trauma of female psyche never ends, “The goals of the feminist movement have not been achieved, and those who claim we’re living in a post-feminist era are either sadly mistaken or tired of thinking about the whole subject” (*The Edible Woman*, Introduction).

The novel revolves around the life of Marian MacAlpin, who is a typical Canadian woman of the 1960s. The trauma that drowns Marian is the capitalist life around her. Women were stereotyped to do meagre jobs and then get married off to a well-settled husband. The novel’s catharsis happens through materialist-feminist protest. Atwood exhibits the effect of the trauma that the protagonist undergoes through her manipulation of shifting narrative point of view and her use of

unbalanced structure. The anorexia that she uses is a discursive technique which turns out to be the effect of trauma in MacAlpin's life. The question is whether MacAlpin gains her liberation and that is what puts the reader in a dilemma.

Marian MacAlpin stays with her room-mate Ainsley. MacAlpin works in a survey company and her job profile is to take surveys from people regarding different products. It can be seen that every page of the novel consists of thoughts and truths that have caused trauma in woman then and now. Even though Ainsley and MacAlpin do not share same characteristics they face same psychic problems. Ainsley works as a tester of defective toothbrushes in an electronic toothbrush factory. Atwood discusses the fact that women are seen as mere sexual devices from the first chapter itself as Ainsley comments about her job, "And most men look at something besides your teeth, for god's sake" (*The Edible Woman* 1).

Ainsley also had very strange kind of dressing and wore heavy make-up which made their house owner to feel that Ainsley was not a respectable lady. Ainsley had a temporary job and she wanted to work at Art houses in future just to meet artists. Money did not blind her, Ainsley wanted to follow her passion. Even though MacAlpin had a better paying job than Ainsley, she wished she did Ainsley's job. The job of doing surveys had turned up to be so boring to her. The Seymour Company in which she worked was also not a woman friendly company. The floor in which the women worked had poor infrastructure and they were given brainless jobs. But men had wonderful jobs and they were given well-maintained offices and they were doing the intelligent part of the job, or that is what they thought of.

On the floor above are the executives and the psychologists- referred to as the men upstairs, since they are all men- who arrange things with the clients. I've caught the glimpses of their offices, which have carpets and expensive furniture and silk-screen reprints of Group of Seven paintings on the wall (13).

The women in the company were not given any prominence. Their role was to deal with the human element and the people who were surveyed were mainly housewives and they were not paid too. Everything in the second floor where the women worked was "feminine" as they call it. "...we also have a pink washroom with a sign over the mirrors asking us not to leave our hairs or tea leaves in the sink" (14). The colour pink and the warning itself show that women are weak, careless and untidy. One of her colleagues is dismissed from the company for the reason that she is pregnant, "she regards pregnancy as an act of disloyalty to the company" (21).

Marian is actively eating at the beginning of the novel. She feels hunger and craves for food. She had been waiting for a dinner with her fiancé Peter that gets cancelled and she regrets having lost a dinner more than not able to be with Peter. The other character who comes to the scene next is Clara. Clara is one of the old friends of Marian. She is pregnant with her third child and lives in a countryside with her husband. Clara is stuck with her family and kids, and she has not even completed her degree. She does nothing in the house and is down with her pregnancy problems. All her pregnancies were unplanned, and she had tried the best to do family planning but had failed. Clara is another important female character in the novel. Even though Joe does all the housework and takes care of Clara, he is a man who does not like women to be free. He is unbothered about their family

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planning, and he likes his wife to be imprisoned inside the house. He thinks unmarried women are to take care of themselves and feels that marriage protects women. Ainsley hates the family situation of Clara, and Marian feels pity for her. That night Ainsley tells Marian that she has decided to have a baby out of marriage. Marian is shocked by this revelation, but Ainsley is adamant on her decision. Being a single mother was out of question, but Ainsley says,

‘How’s the society ever going to change,’ with the dignity of a crusader, ‘if some individuals in it don’t lead the way? I will simply tell the truth. I know I’ll have trouble here and there, but some people will be quite tolerant about it, I’m sure, even here. I mean, it won’t be as though I’ve gotten pregnant by accident or anything (44).

Marian gets to work, and she interviews people about products. While she was interviewing some men regarding the consumption of beer, she does not get good responses as the men think why a woman would want to know how much beer they consume. There are men who also try to flirt with her in the middle of her business. ‘Now what’s a nice little girl asking men all about their beer?’ he said moistly. ‘You ought to be at home with some big strong man to take care of you’ (52).

Marian’s lover Peter is also not different. Marian meets Peter in his apartment, and Peter invites her to the bathtub. The image of the bathtub haunts Marian. Her mental instability starts from then. She is horrified by the image of the bathtub which had sheepskin on it. She feels it as the symbol of death. She imagines of being drowned in the bathtub. The bathtub makes her feel weak and dead. It inflicts trauma in her. ‘Suicide,’ they’d all say. ‘Died for love’. And on summer nights our ghosts

would be seen gliding along the halls of the Brentview Apartments (69). The bathtub and the sheepskin also make her feel captured for sacrifice. She feels that she is a prey going to be hunted to death. This image of the bathtub reoccurs in other trauma novels too. For example, Sylvia Plath in her autobiographical novel writes about the white bathtub and for her the bath tub was a place of resurrection and rebirth. It was the place where she found relaxation from her trauma. “I don’t believe in baptism or the waters of Jordan or anything like that, but I guess I feel about a hot bath the way those religious people feel about holy water” (Plath 19). But it was also in the bathtub that Esther Greenwood tries to commit suicide. Both Marian and Esther here are traumatized victims. Plath’s *The Bell Jar* also handles trauma to a great extent and Esther Greenwood is in search of catharsis. She knows that she is a trauma victim, but our Marian is just discovering that she is undergoing a trauma situation and now her mind has started to produce symptoms of the disorder.

Marian ponders about her relationship with Peter. He described her not as being the “other kind”. She was patient on the relationship with him. “Of course, I had to adjust to his moods, and his were too obvious to cause much difficulty (70). Marian is so passive at the initial stages of her relationship with Peter. Peter is a prototypical man. He likes to stay unmarried, and he loses his control at the marriage of his best friend Trigger. Peter thinks that marriage is a very terrible thing, and he was sad that he had lost his last friend and he feels pity for him. Peter shouts at Marian for not cooking him food. Even though Marian liked cooking, she thought Peter would like to eat smoked meat because he loved it. Marian does not respond to

Peter's behaviour as she attributes it to Peter's emotions over the loss of his intimate friend.

Marian's first symptom of mental deterioration happens in a hotel where she meets her old friend Len with Peter and Ainsley. Ainsley sees Len as her potential candidate for being the father of her baby. Marian loses control as she feels ignored by Peter at the dinner table with Len and Peter having men talk and Ainsley trying to flirt with Len. Marian finds to her horror that she is weeping, and she breaks out terribly in the toilet and she is quite unsure why she is crying so hard. The first trauma breaks out that happens to Marian is this incident. After the dinner is over, we see Marian running out of the restaurant without looking back. She is running and running, and the others are taken back by this scene because they were unaware of what was happening. "I was running along the sidewalk. After the first minute I was surprised to see my feet moving, wondering how they had begun, but I didn't stop" (85). Marian was somehow losing her mind. She was behaving very irrationally and the reason why she was running was not known. Marian had her mind under control before, but now things had changed. She used to think, but now she had started to contemplate on her life. But her symptoms do not end here. It is just a beginning. She is traumatized by understanding that fact that she is been consumed by a patriarchal culture. She is caught by Peter and is taken to Len's house. While the others are busy talking, Marian hides herself under a dusty bed and eventually gets stuck. She finds it safe there and she is also quite unsure why she was behaving this way.

Things were quite normal for Marian before. But now everything is changing. What was it that has groped her mind? She had started to behave like a maniac. The guests felt she was drunk, but what was exactly happening to Marian? That evening itself Peter proposes Marian. Things turn up worse to her. Peter had decided to marry Marian because his friend Trigger had got married and, he was nearing twenty six. He thought he was old enough to get married or else if he had not got married, he thought that people would think that he was queer. “A fellow can’t keep running around indefinitely. It’ll be a lot better in the long run for my practice too, the clients like to know you’ve got a wife; people get suspicious of a single man after a certain age, they start thinking you’re a queer or something” (106). He calls Marian “sensible:” and not like other women, which does not please Marian at all. In short Peter wanted to marry for his professional and social needs and what he wanted was a trophy wife.

Marian’s disorientation was just beginning. She meets an invalid named Duncan, to whom she is attracted to without reason. He was an English literature student who was a genius in his subject and was writing term papers in literature. Marian become friends with him and the reason why Marian likes him is not known. Maybe that was also a part of her disorientation, a symptom of her trauma. “I still can’t quite fit in the man at the Laundromat or account for my behaviour. Maybe it was a kind of lapse, a blank in the ego, like amnesia” (125). She might have found some kind of cathartic effect in Duncan, but Duncan is nobody, yet another man.

Marian is no more the old Marian from chapter thirteen. The narration shifts from first person to second person from chapter two. Atwood uses this narrative

strategy to show that Marian's old psyche has been disrupted and now she is a patient of trauma. Her confusion and dissolutions increase day by day and finally puts her into total trauma disorder. She is really not happy with Peter, and she is also doubtful whether she loves him and also whether that he loves her. Peter does not want Marian to work after marriage, but she disagrees with that idea. He says that he is financially well enough to take care of his wife. The thoughts of Peter were not giving butterflies in her stomach anymore. She believed Peter had secret identities. She alludes Peter to the Underwear man, who was a sex maniac. This man called women saying that he was from the Seymour Surveys and asked questions about women's underwear. He seems nice at the beginning and then later on, turns in to a nuisance. "Perhaps this was what lay hidden under the surface, under the other surfaces, that secret identity which in spite of her many guesses and attempts and half-successes she was aware she had still not uncovered: he was really the Underwear Man" (142).

Clara, another character is introduced who is a victim of marriage trauma. Clara had given birth to her third child and Marian goes to meet Clara in the hospital where she finds Clara to be euphoric. The sight of pregnant Clara had always disgusted Marian, and now that she had delivered Clara looked thin, pale and fragile. Marian felt that Clara's marriage was a disaster. "Clara's life seemed cut off from her, set apart, something she could only gaze through a window" (157). Marian thought her marriage would not turn like to be that of Clara's. Clara is another character who has lost hopes and aspirations in life. She had been a mere plaything in the hands of her husband. She failed to complete her degree and had three

unexpected pregnancies. She had the full responsibility of birth control which her husband did not bother. Joe Bates, another true male character likes to confine his wife at home, and he feels marriage protects women and women are to be under men. The three continuous pregnancies traumatize Clara both mentally and physically. She is now hysteric, and she exposes the true colour of her marriage to Marian. “Of course, you never really know someone till you’ve been married to them for a while and discover some of their scruffier habits” (159). Clare unveils about her unorganized disoriented marriage trauma to Marian, “Oh, Screw. It hurts in the most ungodly places. No, you don’t; you think we’re both shiftless and disorganised and you’d go bats if you lived in all that chaos, you can’t understand how we’ve survived without hating each other” (160). Clara’s life was in chaos and she was falling and had already lost control of her own life. She sees the delivery of her baby to be a catharsis for her. But it cannot be permanent, and she was now hysterical, and her trauma had no cure.

From chapter sixteen, the narration gets more complicated. Till now Atwood was following a linear narration, but it changes from now on. The novel was narrated by Marian till the twelfth chapter, and from the thirteenth the narration changes to second person. The narration loses order from the sixteenth chapter. There is a mixture of present, past and future in the narration. Atwood uses this technique to show that Marian has clearly lost her mind control and is now purely under trauma. She visits Duncan when he calls her up and even though he is not her friend she meets him up in his apartment. When he tries to get close with her, Marian warns that

she is engaged. Duncan has no feeling when he hears this and he is happy that she is engaged:

‘But you are here.’ He smiled. Actually, I am glad you told me. It makes me feel a lot safer. Because really’, he said earnestly, ‘I don’t want you to think this means anything. It never sort of does, for me. It’s all happening really to somebody else’. He kissed the end of her nose. ‘You’re just another substitute for the Laundromat’ (176).

Marian was just a plaything for Duncan to escape from his trauma. He never regarded Marian as a human being and Duncan was consuming Marian just like Peter. But Marian sticks to Duncan, as he was her means of escape from her trauma. She did not feel like cheating Peter, so she took the privilege of cheating on Peter. Shortly the trauma hits her really bad. It affects her diet. She is unable to eat anything. She completely turns into a stress disorder patient. “She looked down at her own half-eaten steak and suddenly saw it as a hunk of muscle. Blood red” (185).

The other important female character in the novel is Ainsley. She does not appear throughout the novel. Ainsley sees herself as a liberated woman. She has an identity which she does not want to be manipulated by men. She does not like Peter, because she thinks that Peter is a male chauvinist and says that he has “monopolised” Marian. Ainsley believes that all females should get pregnant to complete their femininity and she cleverly seduces Marian’s friend Len who she believes is an appropriate candidate and gets pregnant by him. Ainsley was quite happy and confident about the ways in which she was going to nurture the child

without a father figure. Ainsley was totally against the marriage setup and wanted to be a single mother. But when Len Slank comes to know about Ainsley's pregnancy, he is quite shocked and intimidated. He had not even known that Ainsley was college-educated. Len was allergic to the words birth and pregnancy. He felt nauseated by it. But Ainsley is adamant at her decision, and she counters Len by telling him that he had "uterus envy". Ainsley wanted to prove here than women are superior to men because all human beings have come out of the womb. But Ainsley gets into trauma too. Because of being a woman, she is also finally in trauma and depression. The liberation that she felt she had was just an illusion. She is also made to believe that woman comes under man. Ainsley is made to believe that the baby needs a father figure, or it will turn to be a homosexual, but Len is not ready to marry her. Ainsley finally has to forget all her policies and she marries one of Duncan's friends. Ainsley who thought herself to be a feminist is left unliberated and her feminist policies are drowned and deliberately forgotten.

Marian's trauma continues and she is unable to eat anything. She even takes vitamin supplements to keep her surviving. She understands something had gone wrong with her and asks everybody whether she seems normal. Ainsley would say that Marian had post-traumatic stress disorder which Marian denied. "Or some traumatic experience, in her childhood, like finding a centipede in salad or like Len and the baby chicken" (254). Marian is unable to figure out what had gone wrong with her. Her eating had stopped completely and now she was completely dependent on vitamin pills.

Peter was arranging his final party for wedding and Marian was asked to dress up well for the party. Marian goes to the salon and does her hair and also puts make up. All these formalities were new to her and she kind of disapproved of all these. Peter had invited all of his friends and he wanted to show off his fiancé to everybody. “Now that she had been ringed, he took pride in displaying her” (217). Marian invites Duncan to the party. Marian thinks that she was using Duncan, but, the reverse was happening. Duncan saw woman as just a commodity to be utilized. When Marian asks him about dating a girl from his college, he gives sexual remark saying that they lack breasts or have too much. He was using Marian for his physical and mental needs. Duncan was unbothered that Marian was getting married which shows that he had no feelings for Marian which he openly confessed. Duncan invites her to bed without any emotion, “You know, I think it might be a good idea if we went to bed” (233). When Marian reminds him that she is engaged, he says that it has nothing to do with him. Duncan says that he wants to have sex not because he wants it, but to know whether he is a homosexual or not. Duncan is a PTSD patient. He had been suffering and Marian was his way of escaping from his mental agony. His term papers, loneliness, lack of identity and over intelligence had put him in to trauma.

Marian finds herself out of place in the party. She is sexily dressed, and Peter is very impressed to see her dressed that way. Peter was pleased, “Darling, you look marvellous’, he had said as soon as he had come up through the stairwell. The implication had been that it would be most pleasant if she could arrange to look like that all the time” (287). It is quite obvious that Atwood does not write anything

about what Marian was wearing or how she had dressed up throughout the novel. It is only when Marian meets Peter for the final party, she wears makeup and exposing clothes. Even the office virgins who were Marian's colleagues had sense of high fashion and went out dining in high class restaurants even if they could not afford it. But Marian was different. She preferred to be simple and normal, but now that has been questioned. She had dressed up for the sake of someone else and even though she looked pretty she is not happy about it.

Peter brings a camera to take a picture and here her body goes rigid and she is unable to move. She felt that it is not shooting a picture, but shooting herself into death. "Her body had frozen, gone rigid. She couldn't move, she couldn't even move the muscles of her face as she stood and stared into the round glass lens pointing towards her ..." (291). In Plath's novel *the Bell Jar*, also we can see the same incident happening. Esther Greenwood breaks out while her picture is being taken. "I didn't want my picture to be taken because I was going to cry. I didn't know why I was going to cry, but I knew that if anybody spoke to me or looked at me too closely that tears would fly out of my eyes and the sobs would fly out of my throat and I'd cry for a week" (Plath 96). The camera was a symbol. A symbol which shows that they are victimized. This is why the image of the camera brings in fear, and this fear is a manifestation of trauma.

The party does not go well. She runs off with Duncan during the party and sleeps with him in a lodge. Duncan is unable to have sex and their physical relationship does not end up in a pleasurable way. Marian is embarrassed and disgusted about this. Duncan was pretending as an innocent chap who did not know

about sex, but he later tells her that it was “good as usual” that means she was not his first. Now Marian is clearly aware that she had been manipulated.

Now Marian needs her catharsis. She had had enough. She is unable to eat and she was being manipulated and consumed by the men around her, and the mere realization had been cathartic to her. Marian prepares a cake in the shape of a woman and calls in the intimidated Peter and makes him eat it. “You’ve been trying to destroy me, haven’t you,’ she said. ‘You’ve been trying to assimilate me. But I’ve made you a substitute, something you’ll like much better” (344). Ainsley gets the implication and exclaims, “You’re rejecting your femininity!” (345). This was the claim that Peter always made to Marian. Marian escapes from her trauma by rejecting her femininity.

From part three Marian is back to her senses. The narration becomes in Marian’s perspective and is back to linearity. Marian finds her catharsis through her “rejection of femininity”. In the end, we find her cleaning the house, and the house here implies her own mind. She is washing off all the stains with chemical cleaners. The rest of the cake is being eaten by Duncan who tells her that it is good. “He scraped the last chocolate curl up with his fork and pushed away the plate. ‘Thank you,’ he said, licking his lips. ‘It was delicious’ (354). This is the last quote of the novel that suggests that the society enjoys giving trauma to women and they love consuming them and hence the title of the novel. But Marian realizes that she was in trauma and she tries to jump out of it. Now that she is free, can we say that she is out of trauma? Atwood puts the reader into dilemma and chaos of not knowing whether Marian had recovered from her trauma.

Atwood's uses trauma in both the novels. All the characters in this novel are victims of trauma in one way or the other. The gender identity of Peter can be questioned. He is traumatized by the marriage of his friend. He sees Marian as a stereotypical woman. He wanted her to be perfect and flawless just to be displayed in his social groups. He wants to marry her just to inform the society that he is not a homosexual.

Atwood says that she had read Betty Freidan and Simone de Beauvoir behind locked doors that prove that Atwood herself was a victim of the capitalist society of that time. As the chapter's title suggests there is catharsis. The tragedy creates trauma, and in every tragedy, there is catharsis or purgation taking place. For Felix theatre and revenge lead to his catharsis and for Marian MacAlpin breaking away from being a stereotypical woman leads to her catharsis. Also, other important theme that can be read from the novel is the relationship between women. Even though Ainsley is not regarded to be Marian's close companion, she has a great part in Marian's life. Also the relationship between Clara and Marian is also something to be discussed. The theme of sisterhood can be seen here. This sisterhood is also a kind of catharsis. Clara is hysterical after pregnancy, and she opens up to Marian about her inner conflicts and she finds a kind of peace from Marian even though Marian does not try to console her in any way. Also, Marian keeps asking Ainsley and Clara whether she is normal. Even though it is not known whether Marian had emotional bonding to Ainsley, she is the one who lends a hand of help when Marian is in need and Ainsley reveals all her secrets and desires to Marian as well. Here the

relationship between the women is a catharsis for them. There is sisterhood, which is a very important theme in the novel and this sisterhood is cathartic also.

The trauma writing of Atwood continues. It cannot be blindly said that Atwood is a trauma writer just by analysing two of her works. Atwood has plenty of books in her kitty. It would be wrong to say that she has added the element of trauma in all her works. But may be because she is a woman who lived in the feminist era, trauma had severe impact in her works. Atwood's works can also be read with Plath's novel *The Bell Jar*. They were women, who lived in two different sides of America, but their works have stark similarities and also the time the novels were written is around the same. Not only *the Edible Woman*, Atwood's second novel *Surfacing* also has similarities with Plath's novel. Esther Greenwood's trauma was because of her loss of her father, her identity, her New York life and her cheating boy friend. Greenwood tried to find catharsis through her suicidal attempts. Out of her trauma, Greenwood tried to run away from life, and death was something which emphasised her identity. Atwood in a very powerful manner does have something terribly important to tell us, something that we need to know that women's life and trauma are all the same everywhere, throughout the world.

Chapter 3

Repression and Trauma

Repression is one of the key concepts in psychoanalytic theory and most of the characters of Margaret Atwood's characters are victims of various types of repression. Freud has already formulated the three different levels of awareness: the preconscious, the conscious and the unconscious. It is believed that man's behaviour and personality are governed by the constant and unique interaction of these psychological forces. According to Freud, it is our unconscious that influences our behaviour and experiences, but we are so unaware of what really lies in our unconscious mind. Our conscious mind is a very strange place. It is the storage place of all our feelings, thoughts, urges, desires, and memories that lie outside of our conscious awareness. Unconscious mind is not a reservoir of only pleasant or pleasurable memories. Most likely the pleasant and pleasurable memories are not stored in the unconscious and the contents here are always unpleasant, such as feelings of pain, anxiety or conflict. But our conscious mind tries to push inside and tries to turn away or hide from these unpleasant memories. Freud calls this phenomenon as repression and repression is another very important symptom of trauma. "For Freud, repression was the fundamental problem from which 'the study of the neurotic processes took its whole start'; the theory of repression became the corner stone of our understanding of the neuroses" (*The Essentials of Psycho-Analysis* 519). Freud called repression as a mechanism and Atwood uses this mechanism as a tool in her creation of characters.

It is already seen how Atwood's characters are victims of this mechanism. In fact all the people around have repressed their unconscious, but for some people this repression leads to trauma. This is the reason Freud has derived this phenomenon and wrote about it. Repression causes trauma and can lead to severe neuroses.

If what was in question was an operation, the appropriate method would be to adopt would obviously be flight: with an instinct, flight is of no avail, for the ego cannot escape from itself. At some later period, rejection based on judgement (condemnation) will be found to be a good method to adopt against an instinctual impulse. Repression is a preliminary stage of condemnation, something between flight and condemnation: it is a concept which could not have been formulated before the time of psychoanalytic studies (*The Essentials of Psycho-Analysis* 523).

Atwood also uses this technique of flight and condemnation in her characters and her characters end up as neurotics at the end. In *Hag-Seed*, Felix is a repressed character, and he is in exile for twelve years which can be seen as his "flight" and he lives with his imaginary daughter Miranda. Atwood leaves the readers in a dilemma whether Felix is cured from his neurosis or if he is still repressed. In the novel, it can be seen that the protagonist is in the stage of repression and is highly in trauma. But in the case of *The Edible Woman*, it is quite evident that Marian MacAlpin has clearly lost her mind and her inability to digest shows the extent of her neurosis. Marian's relationship with Duncan can be seen as her "flight" and her psyche was trying to condemn her neurosis which led to her inability to eat. But Atwood brings the character back to her formal state at the end of the novel where the narration is

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back to first person, but it cannot be said that the character has moved out of complete repression.

Atwood's treatment of trauma does not end here. Atwood experiments a lot with the psyche of the characters. The other significant novel that can be discussed is *Surfacing*, which is Atwood's second novel. The novel was published in 1972 by McClelland and Stewart. It is said to be the companion novel of her collection of poems titled *Power Politics*. The poem collection was published in 1971 and it focuses on the themes of gender, which was the most debated topic of that time. The book startled the audience with its vital dance of woman and man. Atwood handles the gender theme showing the power struggles between man and woman, and through her iconic verses shows how the women are being traumatized.

This is this shortest love poem in the collection, and it has a twist. The famous simile in the collection itself shows the depth of Atwood's imagery and versatility in playing with words:

You fit into me
like a hook into an eye
a fish hook
an open eye (*Selected Poems* 245)

The method through which Atwood uses the effect of trauma in these poems is through her idea of not giving titles for the poems. Only a few poems have names. There are no names for the characters and the narration is by the first person, who is either a "he" or "you". The narrator is angry, traumatized and depressed. This

trauma is what we can see in the first lines of the poem. Atwood through her poetic narration proves that both men and women are equally affected by the trauma of power politics. Both genders are isolated and repressed. *Surfacing* was published a year after the publication of *Power Politics*. It would be so insufficient just to tell that the novel deals with power politics only. Through the novel Atwood tries to give the reader more than just gendered relationships. The novel is about trauma and Atwood uses disoriented narration, lack of chronology, nameless protagonist, the isolated and polluted countryside etc to show the effect of trauma. The narrative techniques reinforce the thematic content. “Freud believed that regardless of the consequences, the release of the repressed urges and memories does more good than harm, resulting in a new balance and distribution of psychic energy” (Stevenson 2014). Atwood has also used the stream of consciousness technique to make the novel a purely psychological one. The novel revolves around the narrator’s point of view. The glossary defines point of view as “the way the story gets told” (Abrams 301). The narrator of the novel is a fallible or unreliable narrator which again shows the depth of psychology and trauma in the novel. “The fallible or unreliable narrator is one whose perception, interpretation and evaluation of the matters he or she narrates do not coincide with the opinions and norms implied by the author” (Abrams 304). The narrator can turn to a fallible one because of hallucinations, repressed sexuality etc. In the case of our narrator, she becomes fallible because of her repressions, trauma, and depression.

The central character in the novel is a woman whose name is unknown. She is on a journey to her home in search of her lost father. As mentioned before, the

repressed memories are memories which are unpleasant. But the problem with human psyche is that the brain refuses to forget, and these memories nauseate the victims at times. The novel starts in the same way. The protagonist is in a car with her friends to her home country and she is not quite happy about it. “I can’t believe that I’m on this road again, twisting along past the lake where the white birches are dying, the disease is spreading up the south and I notice they now have sea-planes for hire” (*Surfacing* 3). The lines show that the lady’s eyes see things that are dying and also the sea-planes show that the village had started to develop which for her was another sign of deterioration. Atwood does not equate modern technology with development. The nameless woman here is not a character, but a voice. She is with her lover Joe, her best friend Anna and Anna’s lover David. The men had agreed to come with her as they were planning to make a film and that they wanted to see different locations.

The protagonist calls Anna her best friend, but then she says that she has known her only for two months. So, the reader is left in doubt regarding the extent of this friendship. Joe was also a new-found lover and nothing sweet or romantic is said about their relationship. Most of the incidents happening in the novel are seen through the narrator’s perspective. Her psyche is tormented with memories and incidents of her childhood and her past. Her mother had died young and that might have been the first traumatic incident in her life. We are unsure about how much trauma she might have gone through because all her narrations are dry and emotionless. The reader gets into chaos of not understanding what kind of mental emotion the narrator is going through. In fact, this is how the narrator repressed her

emotions and memories. “I am not going to your funeral, I said. I had to lean close to her, the hearing in one of her ears were gone. I wanted her to understand in advance and approve” (23). Here we can understand that the narrator is afraid of death and she cannot face the fact that her mother had died.

The memories in the mind of the narrator are disoriented. She had left home years back. Anna once read the narrator’s palm and exclaimed that she had a good childhood. The narrator had thought at first that she had a good childhood, later she understands it was not a very easy life that she had led. The image of her brother who drowned in a lake continued to haunt her. Even though the brother was saved and the incident had happened before her birth she is unable to forget it. “It was before I was born but I can remember it as clearly as if I saw it, and perhaps I did see it. I believe that an unborn baby has its eyes open and can look out through the walls of the mother’s stomach, like a frog in a jar” (36). The image of the unborn baby here can be attributed to” Freudian slip or parapraxis” (*The Psychopathology Of Everyday Life* 270).

Parapraxis is a verbal slip or mistake that reveals an unconscious thought or emotion. The narrator is traumatized by the unseen sight of her drowned brother, and she brings in the image of an unborn baby because of her memory of her aborted child which is revealed only in the later stage of the novel. The reader is here again left in dilemma because her narrations about her marriage, husband and child lacks stability.

There’s no point, they never forgave me, they didn’t understand the divorce: I don’t think they even understood the marriage, which wasn’t surprising since

it didn't understand it myself. What upset them was the way I did it, so suddenly and then running off and leaving my husband and child, my attractive full-colour magazine illustrations, suitable for framing (32).

Here the reader cannot easily decipher what really happened in the narrator's marital life. She had totally moved away from her family, but the parents had received hints about what was happening in their daughter's life. She had a marriage, which even she didn't understand. But there is deliberate ambiguity that surrounds her baby. At first she says she left it with her husband, and this is another kind of Freudian slip. She was trying to hide her inner regret of having aborted her own child.

Leaving my child, that was the unpardonable sin; it was no use trying to explain to them why it wasn't really mine. But I admit I was stupid, stupidity is same as evil if you judge by results and I didn't have excuses, I was never good at them. My brother was, he used to make them up in advance of the transgressions; that's the logical way (32).

The brother comes to her memories once in a while. The narrator should have been close to her brother in their childhood. She does not talk about where her brother is at present. It is the memories of her brother that stays in her mind. Her brother used to be kept in a chicken wire enclosure made by their father. One day he was missing from the fence and later he was found to be in the lake. This chicken wire fence is still there in her home. She thinks that her parents might have kept it for their grandchildren and the sight of the chicken wire fence upsets her. "The fence is a reproach, it points to my failure" (38).

The marital status of the narrator is a problem for her. Her status as a divorcee is something that she defines as a failure. She lies to Madame and Paul that Joe is her husband as they were unaware about her divorce. She feels that it would be a shame to be with another man with her divorced status and she keeps her wedding ring. This stems from her desire to subscribe to the codes of morality. “My status is a problem, they obviously think I’m married. But I’m safe, I’m wearing my ring, I never threw it out, it’s useful for the landladies” (24). Here a stereotypical woman of the age is portrayed. The society wants her to be married and they believed that her marital status is a protection. She would not even have had place to live if she hadn’t had the ring on her finger. Her divorce or unmarried status would have been a problem for the people around her.

The narrator’s friends are another mystery. She does not know about their past and is not inclined to know it. In the later stage of the novel, we find that Anna and David as married couples and the narrator feels that it is strange to be married for such a long period. These people are not close to her heart, but she does not like the idea of being alone. “Still, I’m glad they’re with me, I wouldn’t want to be here alone; at any moment the loss, vacancy will overtake me, they ward it off” (46).

The narrator feels that marriage is a very mysterious thing. She asks Anna about the way she manages her marriage to which Anna gives a neutral reply, “We tell a lot of jokes” (56). She looks at Anna as if for advice. Anna advises her that marriage is like skiing because you cannot see in advance what would happen but you had to let go. But for the narrator, marriage was not skiing, but she felt it to be like “jumping off a cliff”. “Maybe that was why I failed because I didn’t know what

I had to let go of. For me it hadn't been like skiing, it was more like jumping off a cliff" (57). But it cannot be said that Anna and David are truly happy as they are pretentious. Anna always wears make up and she says that David does not like her without it. In the next instance she says that David does not know that she wears make up. "Anna says in a low voice, 'He doesn't like to see me without it, and then contradicting herself, 'He doesn't know I wear it" (52). This means that David just admires Anna's artificial beauty and all these nine years of being married he had not understood that Anna he saw was unreal. Anna does not like David growing a beard. They had a relationship based on facades rather than true love. Here too Atwood depicts the trauma in marriage. It can also be said that Anna and David are repressing their true consciousness. Anna is quite sarcastic about David. She criticises him behind his back. David's desire to make films is questioned by Anna and she teases him by calling his movie as "Random Pimples" which really is named as "Random Samples".

At the beginning of the novel the narrator thinks everything is perfect between Anna and David. But at a later stage, she realizes that the relationship between Anna and David is broken. David is a male stereotype who thinks that a woman is just to satisfy his physical needs. He is a sadist and Anna calls him a "schmuck". He insists that Anna take oral contraceptives, but she suffers from its use. David does not care about it and insists that she plan their family, but he needs sex as he demands it. Sex was always to satisfy his needs and women are playthings.

Love without fear, sex without risk, that's what they wanted to be true; and they almost did it, I thought they almost pulled it off, but as in magician's

tricks or burglaries half success is a failure and we are back to the other things. Love is taking precautions. Did you take any precautions, they say, not before but after (100).

As we can see all the thoughts of the narrator are separated by semicolons, colons, or commas. Atwood cleverly does not use full stops. It is to show the flow of thoughts in the mind of the narrator and also reveals that her mind is working incessantly. We can also notice that Atwood does not use the concept of “making love”. She talks about “having sex”, which is more biological than emotional. Even Marian did not enjoy sex both with Peter or Duncan. Here too Anna and the narrator do not feel sex to be pleasurable. It had caused trauma in them. Sex now smelled like “rubber gloves” (100) for them. The narrator is upset when she hears Anna moan while she is in bed with David. She feels pity for her as she sees her as an animal in a trap. She feels it is like death. “It’s like death, I thought, the bad part isn’t the thing but being a witness. I suppose they could hear us too, the times before. But I never say anything” (104).

David makes remarks about the narrator’s body in front of Joe and Anna. Anna warns the narrator to stay away from David as he is a womanizer and Anna says that David does it not for pleasure but to make Anna jealous and to hurt her. David loves to hurt Anna. He tries to flirt with the narrator at times to which she responds coldly. She has neutral feelings for David. She does not feel offended or humiliated, because she seems to be unconcerned about him. David tries to film naked Anna and humiliates her. They get into constant fights later. David thinks Anna is a fool, and he says that he just married “a pair of boobs” (176) and he thinks

that he has been manipulated by her. David feels that Anna is cheating on him. David tries to seduce the narrator telling her Anna is having sex with Joe and he does it only to give a “tit for tat” and not for his phallic pleasure.

Joe, who is said to be the narrator’s lover, is another mysterious character. She met him in a hardware store, and they had a coffee and ended up in bed. Joe was just physical companion for her. She had no emotional attachment to him. “What impressed him that time, he even mentioned it later, cool he called it, was the way I took off my clothes and put them on again later very smoothly as if I were feeling no emotion” (31). Joe was like Duncan for Marian in *the Edible Woman*. Both relationships can be compared, and it can be called to be a kind of “flight” from repression as Freud puts it. The narrator has physical attraction towards Joe, but she has no emotional attachment to him. The narrator remains totally detached from human relationships. She is always lost in thoughts, and nothing impresses her or makes her happy. She is unable to decide whether she loves Joe. But she keeps him with her to be on the safe side to show that she is married. “I am trying to decide whether or not I love him” (49). But in fact she does not love him, but its mere biology that keeps her stuck to him. She has a high physical attraction to Joe that she keeps talking about. “I sum him up, dividing him into categories: he’s good in bed, better than the one before; he’s moody but he’s is not much bother, we split the rent and he doesn’t talk much, that’s an advantage” (49). So, it can be seen that the narrator needs Joe for certain reasons and his presence does not give her goose bumps or butterflies in her stomach which shows that she does not love Joe. Joe’s presence also lets her escape from the repression caused by her previous

relationship. She says Joe never makes her sad like her husband. Joe's background is unknown. But what is strange about him is that he talks in his sleep. He loses the sense of time, place and location while asleep. This can mean that Joe is also a repressed character. He might also not be in his normal senses. But it is unknown to us that what is that has caused trauma and repression in his mind and the narrator does not bother about it. What she keeps talking about Joe is just his body. So in a way she too uses him only for physical pleasure.

I remember the hair on Joe's back, vestigial, like appendices and little toes: soon we'll evolve into total baldness. I like the hair though and the heavy teeth, thick shoulders, unexpectedly slight hips, hands whose texture I can feel on my skin, roughened and leathery from clay. Everything I value about him seems to be physical, rest is either unknown, disagreeable or ridiculous (68).

The narrator is unable to figure out what emotion she has towards Joe and this creates another kind of trauma in her mind. "Perhaps its only his body I like, perhaps it's his failure, that also has a kind of purity" (70). Here the narrator claims that even though Joe tries to keep her happy, she is unsatisfied the way she is being treated and she attributes her inability to love him as his failure. It can also be said that Joe and David are failed artists. The film that they are making on the way to the island is also a parody of art and life. The instance when they film the "dead heron" also shows the death of art and life which shows the trauma of failure in their lives.

Joe is not like David. He shows some respect towards women. Even though Joe was with the narrator only for a few days he proposes to her. He is sceptical about her love for him. The narrator is emotionless about the proposal. She says that

she had been married already and had a child. “Look’, I said, I’ve been married before and it didn’t work out. I had a baby too” (111). The narrator feels his insistence on getting married was like a threat. Joe feels that she does not care about him, and that depresses him. He proposes the narrator to feel loved and to gain power over her emotions which the narrator resists. The narrator is afraid about marriage. She believes that all marriages are the same and she gives the feeling that her previous marriage still torments her. “But marriage was like playing monopoly or doing crossword puzzles, either your mind worked that way, like Anna’s or it didn’t; and I’d proved mine didn’t” (111).

Joe is under depression and tension after the rejection of his proposal. It can be understood that Joe had some kind of behavioural problems. He does not try to reconcile with the narrator after the rejection. Maybe he felt his masculinity was being questioned. In fact, he was really being used. Used a mere object for the narrator’s escape from repression. “I curled up, concentrating on excluding him: he was merely an object in the bed, like a sack or a large turnip” (117). Joe feels totally dejected and they decide to break up. But after a few days Joe is back with the love for narrator which she again rejects. This puts him into rage, and he tries to attack her. Even though Joe is deranged, he had true feelings for the narrator. The narrator feels that she is stone-hearted like David. She does not know to love. But Anna and Joe are emotional and know to love which causes them trauma.

The psychic vibrations that the narrator has are endless. She is completely tormented from the beginning to the end. The reader can understand that the fact the narrator is mentally abnormal and her thoughts are unstable and totally disoriented.

In the beginning it is very hard to deduce what is really wrong with her. The reader might feel that the journey back to her past is what's haunting her. But in the course of time, it can be understood that it is not the journey to her hometown, but it is something else. The narrator is here in search of her father. She thinks that her father is sneaking somewhere around in the island. There are no accounts of the memories she had shared with her father. But she is sincerely in hope that she will find him sooner or later. At times, her father figure scares her. She feels that he might appear anytime and get shocked seeing her friends. Sometimes she thinks that her father has gone mad. "My father will have the island to himself: madness is private, I respect that, however he may be living, it's better than an institution" (82). The narrator goes in search of father's adventures. Even though her father's friend Paul thinks he is dead, the narrator does not believe that her father would have died. She also decides not to sell her father's property.

The other traumatic incident that recurs in the mind of the narrator is her marriage. She imagines that she was married once and says that she also had a baby. She believes that former husband was keeping the child. The first mention about her child is:

It was my husband's, he imposed it on me, all the time it was growing on me I felt like an incubator. He measured everything he would let me eat, he was feeding it on me, he wanted a replica of himself; after it was born, I was no more use. I couldn't prove it though, he was clever: he kept saying he loved me (39).

The narrator feels that marriage was just a “paper act” and that her husband changed after doing that “paper act”. She is traumatized by her marriage and the divorce. The thoughts of her marriage appear at times in her mind. Her husband used to make her sad. “A divorce is like an amputation, you survive but there’s less of you” (49). Trauma causes repetition of memories. She is reminded of her husband repeatedly without any reason. She is tormented deeply about the fact that she had been married and divorced. “My bitterness about him surprises me: I was what’s known as the offending party, the one who left, he didn’t do anything to me. He wanted a child, that’s normal, he wanted us to be married” (56). She felt her marriage was like “jumping off a cliff” (57).

As the novel progresses the authenticity of her thoughts are to be questioned. It can be understood that those thoughts were mere imaginations and kind of parapraxis or Freudian slips. The narrator is an artist. She is passionate about art and has good creativity. But at some instance she feels she should have learnt linguistics. She feels unsatisfied about her job and the sight of the countryside gives her random thoughts about her childhood and her family.

From part two, the novel takes another turn. In *The Edible Woman* Marian was starting to lose her normal mental temperament and the narration shifts from first person to second person. Here the narrator is starting to feel derangement and her thoughts increase in intensity.

I was seeing poorly, translating badly, a dialect problem, I should have used my own. In the experiments they did with children, shutting them up with the deaf and dumb nurses, locking them in closets, depriving them of words, they

found that after a certain age the mind is incapable of absorbing any language; but how could they tell the child hadn't invented one, unrecognizable to everyone but itself? (96).

The repressed emotions of the narrator were coming out. However hard she tried to escape, the inner trauma she had inside was huge and was waiting to erupt like a volcano. She tried to keep herself busy and engaged by weeding the garden, finding worms for fishing, and going for fishing with her friends. "I wanted to keep busy, preserve at least the signs of order, conceal my fear, both from others and from him. Fear has a smell, as love does" (97). She has memories about her mother, father and brother from time to time. Her mother had a tragic death, and the present status of her brother is not mentioned. The incident in which her brother drowned, the memory of the chicken-wire fence where her brother was kept etc remained in her memories and recurred at times. Even though she was not born at the time when her brother drowned, she knew exactly where he had drowned and how her mother pulled him out of the water tugging at his hair. Now that her father is missing, she feels responsible for finding him. She tries to investigate, but all the repressed memories haunt her. She is unable to love and to live. She is blind about Joe's love to her. She thinks Joe might be like her former husband. His protection does not make her happy, but makes her feel like an invalid. "He was talking to me as though I was an invalid, not a bride" (112). Also, when David makes filthy remarks about her body and at another instance when he tries to grope her, she does not feel humiliated, embarrassed or angry. She is still left emotionless and cold. There are a very few instances which we see her angry, but she stays very adamant about not

marrying Joe. The image of the dead heron haunts her. The thought that the island is being exploited, the animals killed, and the island being captured by the foreigners scare her. And she says that she does not like war.

I felt a sickening complexity, sticky as glue, blood on my hand, as though I had been there and watched without saying No or doing anything to stop it: one of the silent guarded faces in the crowd. The trouble some people have being German, I thought, I have being human. In a way it was stupid to be disturbed by a dead bird than by those other things, the wars and riots and the massacres in the newspapers. But for the wars and the riots there was always an explanation, people wrote books about them saying why they happened: the death of the heron was causeless, undiluted (167).

They find intruders in the island and think that they are foreigners exploiting the island by killing the animals and polluting the land. But later she realizes it is not the foreigners, but the natives itself who are exploiting the island. She was exploited too. And this feeling makes her uncomfortable. The image of the heron disturbs her. It puts her into random thoughts which are not easy to decipher.

As the novel is nearing its climax, we get to know to what extent the narrator is repressed. All her thoughts she had been having seems to go flat and shallow. The reality comes in. She comes back to senses of what really happened in her life. She erupts out of her repression. She gets the meaning of all the images that had been haunting her. She loses control and goes totally lost. All the thoughts she had been going through were kinds of parapraxis. Freudian slips or parapraxis is a mental phenomenon in which errors can happen in speech, memory or physical action that

can occur due to a subdued wish or internal train of thought. In simple terms, Freudian slips are our mind's technique of repressing the unconscious. The narrator's actions are examples of Freudian slips. It is a purely psychological term, and the narrator's thoughts can be explained with this phenomenon. In the beginning, the narrator is haunted by a few incidents that come to her mind without any reason. The first one is the image of her drowned brother and the second one is the memory of her marriage and divorce. But in the later stage we understand that it was not the image of the brother that haunted her, it was the image in an unborn baby: "...unborn baby has its eyes open and can look out through the walls of the mother's stomach, like a frog in a jar" (36). This unborn baby was not her brother, and she has the revelation when she dives into the river in search of her father's paintings. In the water she sees a dead baby, drifting down her. "It was blurred but it had eyes, they were open, it was something I knew about, a dead thing, it was dead (182). First she thinks it is her drowned brother, but later the truth subsided in her unconscious memory comes out. Whatever it is, part of myself or a separate creature, I killed it. It wasn't a child, but it could have been one, I didn't allow it" (183). The narrator had aborted her child. It was not born. It was not even allowed to be a child. Her memories are coming back to life. She had an abortion in an illegal and unsafe clinic, where "they scraped it into a bucket" (183). Here it refers to her baby. Later it is also revealed that she was not married at all. She had a relationship with her art professor who she admired. The ring on her finger was gifted by him and she had kept it as a memoir. The professor was married and had another family. He was the one who made her do the abortion. He convinced saying her that "it wasn't a person, only an animal" (185). The abortion traumatizes her and puts her

into utter regret. Her conscious was trying to escape from this regret and that is why she had thoughts that she was married and that her child was living. She was exploited and left empty. “I was emptied, amputated; I stank of salt and antiseptic, they had planted death in me like a seed” (184).

The narrator cannot stand the thought of getting pregnant again. She is not able to love Joe and he tries to rape her, which she stops by saying that she would get pregnant. For Joe the rape was not for pleasure. Through her rejection his masculinity was questioned. He was repressed and was in trauma. The rape was the way through which he could prove himself. “Perhaps for him I am the entrance, as the lake was the entrance for me” (188). But when she alerts him that the rape would make her pregnant, he is drawn back. “It was the truth, it stopped him: flesh making more flesh, miracle, that frightens all of them” (188). Joe’s masculinity was questioned. He was traumatized by the thought that the narrator had rejected his proposal. Marriage was an escape for him. His physical relationship with Anna is kind of a catharsis. He has physical relationship with Anna not for pleasure but to repress his inner trauma.

The narrator gets the information that her father had died. His body had been found. She has cold feelings about the news. She does not cry over her dead father. Her mind was filled with memories and emotions that she had no space to mourn the dead father.

From part three, the insanity of the narrator begins. The art professor was a man she worshipped. She was head-over-heels in love with him. But he had a family and wanted her to be “mature” as he called it. The fact that he left broke her. She

was left in trauma. Now she needs her catharsis, and she thinks she would gain it by getting pregnant. She is about to do what scared her before. She felt that by getting pregnant she could bring back her lost child. “He trembles and I can feel my lost child, surfacing within me, forgiving me, rising from the lake where it has been prisoned for so long... (209). The title gains prominence here. The abortion was her biggest trauma, and that memory was being repressed in her mind. She uses Joe to get pregnant and to surface her child. But it can be seen that this was the beginning of her insanity. The trauma had caused her to erupt. There were no more slips and everything had gone out of control.

At the end of the novel, we see the narrator as an insane woman. Whatever her conscious mind had tried to repress had come out. She was lost and abnormal. She runs off from her friends, roams around in the forest, has visions of her mother, wanders around naked. All of these turn out to be therapeutic. She realizes the fact that she need to survive because there is a baby in her. She decides to leave the island and live with Joe.

Surfacing is one of Atwood’s best novels. There are a variety of themes explored in the novel. The novel cannot just be put in a “feminist cover” as the novel deals with aspects that involve relationships, memories, psychology, nature, parenthood etc. Atwood is a juggler with human psyche. In all her novels, she makes a clever portrayal of characters and their behaviour. Atwood also uses the stream of consciousness technique which can be understood by her significant use of punctuations. Atwood does not use any full stops which gives the novel a trait of psychological novel. The narrator can also be seen as a fallible narrator which again

shows trauma. The credibility of the narrator's narration is falling flat in the course of the novel. This can be regarded as another trait of a psychological novel. The narrator is seen to be normal in the beginning, but shortly it is understood that she is clearly abnormal. All the thoughts of the narrator are her stream of consciousness. It flows random and is spontaneous. There is no point in the novel where the narrator is not in thoughts. Even while scraping food of the dishes, she is lost in thoughts. She cooks food and fish for herself and her friends. At instances that she indulges in household chores. But eating does not gratify her. Nothing makes her happy. The men with her do not care about the household chores, when she and Anna are made responsible to satisfy their hunger in all ways. Here too Atwood shows how women are stereotyped. The trauma of a stereotypical woman of the times.

In *The Edible Woman*, it can be seen how Atwood uses the term "edible" to show how women are being consumed just as an object. It can be seen in *The Edible Woman* that Marian is back to her normal senses. The narration is in first person and Marian breaks off from the people who were consuming her. But it is quite unsure that whether Marian was totally liberated. In *Surfacing*, we see that all the repressed emotions finally conquer the narrator, and she is left deranged. But finally the narrator is coming back to senses by her own, which shows that she is indeed a strong woman. She had fought against all her repressions and trauma. She was acquainting to the fact that there was a life in her and that it cannot be killed like her first baby.

The narrator had reached a stage where she was back to her normal life, "... defining them (her parents) by their absence and love by its failure, power by its

loss, its renunciation” (195). The narrator had successfully conquered her haunting psyche and it shows the power of a woman. But here too the question of whether the narrator is totally liberated arises. She decides to leave with Joe, who is just a stereotypical man even though he loves her. We cannot say that the narrator had feelings for Joe. The narrator feels Joe is weak and only “half-formed” (251). Finally, she decides to trust but her body does not respond to her mind, “To trust is to let go. I tense forward, towards the demands and questions, though my feet do not move yet” (251). The liberation does not happen here also. “The lake is quiet, the trees surround me, asking and giving nothing” (251).

The reader would feel par with the character and that is the success of Atwood. The reader is also put into the trauma that the character is going through. It haunts us too. The imageries, the intelligent play of words, the sceneries, the sentences without full stops, all of it torments the reader also. The novel sometimes gives the feel of reading a suspense or horror thriller. The horror and the suspense aspects are real in the mind of the narrator. *Surfacing* is psychological novel, and it deals with various dimensions of trauma. In this novel also Atwood uses the theme of sisterhood. The relationship between the narrator and Anna can be compared to the relationship between Marian and Ainsley in *The Edible Woman*. In both the novels Atwood uses the theme of women companionship and to an extent this relieves their trauma. Anna shares all her secrets and the truth of her marriage with the narrator which makes the narrator ponder about her life. The women characters are portrayed as faithful allies in a way that men never do.

Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to bring out the role of trauma in literature. Through the analysis of the different works of Margaret Atwood it is quite evident how her characters are mirror images of trauma. The trauma studies are the new branch of psychoanalytic study of literature. The discussion of what is post-traumatic stress disorder covers the initial pages of the study. Post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly called as “PTSD” is a mental problem that occurs in people who have experienced trauma. The patients are unable to recover from the trauma experienced and their psyche is severely tormented by the memories of trauma. Trauma disorder is hence not a new disease or disorder. It was there from the time human beings were there on earth. Even in the primitive days, diagnosis of mental problems was done and treated. There are evidences that show the primitive men had done lobotomies that suggest there were mental patients and treatments even in that time.

Today mental treatment and diagnosis is far more competent than the ancient days. There are different types of treatments involving drug administrations, hypnotisms and other practical treatments. Even severe stress patients can be put under treatment and today there are a number of reported cases where the patient has completely resolved of the trauma. In the case of traumas and phobias, the patients are put into stress situations and then made to overcome their fear. For example, for an accident victim, he/she is put to face the same situation in safe conditions and his/her unconscious is made to acquaint to that trauma experienced. The stress

disorder patients will not have control over their life, and it is important that they gain control over the disorder. Psychotherapy is another important type of treatment for PTSD patients. Psychotherapy, also called talk therapy is a very effective way today to ensure the complete recovery of post-traumatic stress disorder. The three main types of psychotherapy for PTSD are cognitive psychotherapy, exposure therapy and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR). Exposure therapy is a behavioural therapy, and the technique was mentioned before. Cognitive therapy is used along with exposure therapy where the patient is let to talk and recognize the patterns of thinking. The last one (EMDR) is also combined with exposure therapy where the guided movements of the eye help the patients to process traumatic memories and change how they react to them.

The therapist can help to manage stress and make the patient handle stressful situations in life. There are several types of medications today that can help the patient to cope up with the disorder. Anti-depressants, anti-anxiety medications etc can be administered in to the patients and these medications have proved to be quite useful for many patients.

Psychological trauma remains a compelling vital human phenomenon and subject of human inquiry. Traumatic reactions are indicators of how people face extreme circumstances that are often human-made. Many possible situations of trauma, of violence, social neglect and commodification, endure in a world of increasing inequity. Further investigation of these contexts and their effects may help raise questions about these situations, help avoid them in future and mitigate the propensity to blame victims. Though severe,

traumatic experience also provides insight into more common defensive human responses to stress (Vickroy, Preface).

The evolution of the trauma literature is from post-traumatic stress disorder. In the previous chapters, lot of things about the disorder were discussed and also about how it gained prominence in the field of literature. In the very postmodern era, science, art, literature, humanities, economics and movies saw the arrival of varieties of new technologies, theories and culture. In literature, the emergence of the theories like the queer theory, chaos theory, psychogeography etc were so unpredictable. But in fact, all these are not new, it is just that all of it were given names now and made it into theories. For example, taking the term “queer” it already existed from the classical ages. There were drag queens even at that time. Writers like Aphra Behn, Shakespeare etc had already written queer poems. Even trauma was there in literature even before it was made a theory. If there is an analysis of the Shakespearean tragedies, trauma can be seen everywhere. Macbeth, Hamlet, Lady Macbeth, Prospero, Ophelia, Romeo, Juliet, all of them were victims of trauma. These are only a few to name and it is known that there are more. Taking the classical period, the great tragedy of that time, *Oedipus Rex* is another great example in which we can see the play of trauma created by fate and how it affects and torments human minds. In fact, it can be said that all the tragedies evolve from the traumas of the humankind. Catharsis happens only from this trauma and that can lead to the breaking of the trauma.

In this study, some works of Atwood are analysed and the trauma in her characters are deciphered. The three novels that have been studied here are her best

novels. But there is more trauma involved in her works, and there is a lot to say about the way she handles trauma not only in fiction, but also in non-fiction.

The poems of Atwood are also best examples in which she portrays the different levels of trauma in human minds. The way she organises her poetry collections show that the characters are random and disoriented. Most of her poems lack titles and the narrations are ambiguous. One of the poems in which Atwood clearly uses trauma is “Death of a Young Son by Drowning”. The poem is from *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. It can be imagined that nothing can be more pathetic and tragic than the death of a son by drowning. Here the usage of drowning is another image that Atwood cleverly uses. It can be seen in the novel *Surfacing* that the narrator is haunted by the memory of her brother drowning. The “drowning” for Atwood shows severe trauma. It shows lost motherhood. The baby in the womb is in water. Drowning involves water. It is slow, but tragic death.

After the long trip I was tired of waves.
My foot hit rock. The dreamed sails
collapsed, ragged.
I planted him in this country
like a flag (24-28).

There are stark similarities between Susanna Moodie and the narrator in *Surfacing*. Susanna Moodie is Atwood’s voice. Moodie is alienated in the beginning part of the work. The wilderness of the land torments her. Moodie is a trauma victim. She is in utter chaos and dilemma. The poetry collection is divided into three parts. Even though at first Moodie is alienated, in the later stage she tries to blend in

just like the narrator in *Surfacing*. Moodie, like the narrator also has problems with figuring out her relationships. Both the works are about the exploration of self through the exploration of land.

Also there has been an analysis about “Power Politics” in the third chapter and also discussed about how Atwood has brought about the issues of gender and how she has used trauma in the lines of her poems. In her works like *Alias Grace* and *Blind Assassin*, the Atwood’s treatment of trauma through the projection of split-self can be noted. “Margaret Atwood expresses a similar approach (trauma) to the victims when in *Alias Grace* she illustrates how the social and political climate of the time creates assumptions of the Grace’s guilt because Grace is an immigrant servant and seems to lax morals” (Vickroy 11). Atwood uses dream sequences through which she brings the readers into fearful and conflicted emotions of the characters. The characters might be unaware of these emotions and these dream metaphors are visual figurations of traumatic memory. The dream sequences are part of trauma novels as it is known that the trauma patients are haunted by the dreams. The trauma authors like Atwood use these dream sequences as figurative imageries through which the reader can gain access to the character’s innermost thoughts. Even though there are only a few dream sequences in the three novels that has been analysed, Atwood has used this technique in her other novels like *Cat’s Eye* and *the Blind Assassin*. In *the Blind Assassin*, the protagonist Iris is tormented with dreams and she is unaware of what is really happening to her. The recurring dreams that she has reveal her inner fears that she represses in her life. There is trauma expressed in *Lady Oracle*, where again the protagonist is a highly traumatized one

and is in utter chaos. The fact that the protagonist is over-weight, and the image of her mother keeps traumatizing her throughout the novel.

It can be understood that the narration of Hag-Seed is a kind of revisionary writing. Felix is a male character and the attempt of a woman to write the feelings of a man is quite successful in this novel. Atwood's binary thinking has proved that the fact that being a woman does not make any difference in thinking and that woman and man can think the same. In the novel, Atwood explores the play *The Tempest* and she has shown fidelity to Shakespeare by bringing it to a new level. Even though the most admired and talked about character is Felix, the real trauma does not lie in his character. Atwood through the novel wants to make Caliban her ultimate hero, and it is Caliban who is more traumatized than Prospero. The title "Hag-seed" itself is a curse word of Caliban.

My mom's name was Sycorax, they call her a witch,

A blue-eyed had and real bad bitch;

My daddy was the devil, or that's their story,

So I'm two times evil and I ain't never sorry,

'Cause I'm Hag-Seed! (*Hag-Seed* 174).

Born to a witch and an evil father, Caliban is born evil. But still, he is the true owner of the island. But he is being colonized and his past and his devilish looks traumatize him. He is unable to even prove his gender. In fact, he is imprisoned and made a slave. Even though Prospero has lost his kingdom, he is able to maintain his

rule even in the island. His only trauma is that he has lost his rightful kingdom and that he is left in an island with his only daughter Miranda. But Caliban has a background that is real traumatic than Prospero. Through bringing the image of the Fletcher Correctional, Atwood here shows the hidden logic. The real trauma victims are the inmates. The inmates can be compared to Caliban and the Hag-Seed that Atwood draws here are the prisoners of the Fletcher Correctional. It does not mean that our main character Felix is not a trauma patient. Felix has had more traumas in life than Prospero. Prospero had his daughter with him, but Felix had lost his daughter and the very big proof of Felix's trauma is his visions of Miranda, his dead daughter.

Hag-Seed is very special in many ways. Atwood has tried a new kind of narrative strategy in the novel. The flashbacks in the narration take place through the memories of Felix. Unlike her other novels, this novel's narration is chronological and is more like a diary entry with dates. Felix was in exile for twelve years and his life's only aim is to take revenge. He joins the Fletcher Correctional and when the time arrives for his revenge the narration gets more precise and time-based. Atwood has used this strategy to make the reader get into heat that Felix is going through. The novel is quite big with a prologue and is divided into five parts with a total of forty seven chapters and ends with an epilogue. The parts are named purely in the context of the play *The Tempest*. The novel is a great attempt and Atwood is quite successful in portraying trauma of the various characters in the novel.

The next novel that was studied about was *The Edible Woman*, which gave Atwood the recognition as a novelist. The novel has been thoroughly analysed, and

the trauma in the novel is quite evident to whoever reads it. The novel involves trauma in gender issues, relationships, marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, etc. All of characters in the novel have tinges of trauma and they all have different reasons and situations to which their trauma can be attributed. The novel is divided into three chapters with a total of thirty one chapters. In this study, the different aspects where Atwood has used the effect of trauma has been understood. Marian MacAlpin is a typical Canadian woman of the time, and the novel unfolds all the trauma that she faces for the reason that she is a woman.

The novel was a huge success and adorned a feminist title for Atwood which she rejects. *The Edible Woman* was just a beginning. In this novel, Atwood adopts the stream of consciousness technique. In the first part of the novel, the narration is in first person. Here the flow of thoughts in Marian's mind is like a stream. The stream of consciousness strategy here makes this a psychological novel. Atwood also through Marian's narration shows that she has not lost her mind now but she might lose in the later stage. As the narration shifts from first person to second, the point that Marian is no more in her senses is made. Her strange behaviours also show the same. The running away in the late night party, the image of the bathtub, the hiding under the bed all these show the beginning of her derangement. Marian is a character of trauma. Not only Marian, if properly analysed every character of the novel is traumatized. For example, Len has a phobia towards birth. It means that Atwood treats both men and women equally. Even though she puts her female characters in the forefront, her male characters are also significant and that is the reason why Atwood is loved by both men and women equally. Men also have issues

because they are also stereotyped. This is where the issue of gender arises. The men are treated as men only if they have control over women. The society had made them like that. Peter and Duncan are typical men who want control over women just to please the society and prove that they are “men”. Duncan’s trauma was his lack of awareness about his sexual instincts. It is unsure whether he is a homosexual. In the same way Peter wanted to get married to prove to the society that he was not homosexual. The entire trauma happened in the minds of the men because of wanting to please the society and to conform to the societal gender rules

In the novels analysed, another interesting part is that no character is left isolated or in trauma forever. In *Hag-Seed*, the traumatic Felix gains his normal psyche when his revenge is done. He is back to the Makeshiwig festival, and his throne of the artistic director is regained. He is successful in staging his dream play and the only thing that Felix had lost was his daughter, Miranda. But he overcomes that trauma by bringing Miranda into theatre and giving her life through *The Tempest*. Even though the prisoners are not left free, they are also shown to be happy as the theatre becomes a cathartic art for them. In *The Edible Woman* also it can be seen that the narration is back to normal in the last part. Even though it cannot be said that Marian has become a liberated woman, Marian had broken away from the things that were consuming her. Here too Atwood shows that Marian’s trauma was diminishing, and she was about to find her happiness and get control over her “self”. In *Surfacing* also Atwood does not leave the narrator alone in the wilderness. Atwood does not want her characters to be swallowed by trauma. The narrator is coming to senses on her own and is ready to bear her child and give it

life. The child was surfacing in her, and that made her come back to her normal “self”.

In *Surfacing*, the effect of trauma is well-evident even from the first lines. Atwood has used very brilliant narrative strategy in this novel. The title of the novel itself is great. Every character in the novel has names except the narrator. The whole novel takes place in the perspective of the narrator. The narrator comes out of nowhere and the novel is a journey through the thoughts of the narrator. The reader feels being with the narrator, but at times the reader is left in chaos unable to figure out what has really happened to the narrator. Atwood’s treatment of various images in the novel like the drowned brother, the dead heron, the killing of the fish etc invokes fear not only in the mind of the narrator, but also in the minds of the reader. This is where Atwood is successful. The reader can feel the trauma of the narrator. Like Susanna Moodie, the narrator explores her “self” through the exploration and the imageries of the wilderness. Even though the wilderness brings both of their repressions to life, it is the same wilderness that cures them.

Atwood does not end the novels in trauma. The reader does not know to what extent the character has broken away from trauma, but still Atwood has tried to give peaceful endings to her novels which has been analysed in this study. As a writer Atwood is primarily concerned with the psychological and physical survival of women. She incorporates the theme of rediscovery of the self like the heroine of the *Surfacing* who rediscovers her mother, and this rediscovers herself. Atwood leaves the reader and the characters in hope that all the traumas can be overcome, and the “self” can be regained.

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