



DELINEATING ECOFEMINIST PRINCIPLE OF DUALISM IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *LADY ORACLE*

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ABSTRACT

Women and nature are the two main components for Universe to evolve it is unethical to identify them as separate entities but these two components have been degraded and subjugated under the norms of patriarchy the social setup and evolving materialism has been the value of women and nature by enforcing certain the rules by men designed to their own convenience this paper dress out the enforcement of male chauvinistic ethics upon women and nature as traced in Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle.

Key words: ecofeminism, duality, patriarchy, ecology, physic, psyche

Through a gothic novel, Atwood experiments the Solely western issue gender politics. Atwood's *Lady Oracle* parallels with most probably all of the themes of *The Edible Woman*. The most important is the protest of the female physic.

I planned my death carefully, unlike my life which I meandered along from one thing to another, despite my feeble attempts to control it. My life had a tendency to spread, to get flabby, to scroll and festoon like the frame of a

baroque mirror . . . I wanted my death, by contrast, to be neat and simple, understated, even a little severe, like a Quaker Church or the basic black dress with a single strand of pearls much praised by fashion magazines when I was fifteen. No trumpets, no megaphones, no spangles, no loose ends, this time. (3)

The opening of the novel *Lady Oracle* expresses the inability of a women writer to hold control over her life and force her to design a fake death.

As a female writer Margaret Atwood, through her protagonist, John explains “the woman writer, then, exists in a society that, though it may turn certain individual writers into revered cult objects, has little respect for writing as a profession, and not much respect for woman either” (204). The patriarchy societal setup has propagated, over time, that literary creations are merely related to phallogocentric fantasy and imagination. Thus, it becomes a must for women to escape from the male designed literary world and to create a new one for and by themselves. It is evident from Gilber's and Gubar's statement that:

Since both patriarchy and its texts subordinate and impression women, before women can even attempt that pen which are so rigorously kept from them they must escape just those male texts which, defining them as "Cyphers," deny them the autonomy to formulate alternatives to the authority that has imprisoned them and kept them from attempting the pen. (Madwoman 13).

The ecofeminist dichotomy principle of spirit/mind and body; and male and female concepts are handled wonderful by the authour in this novel. As per the ecofeminist philosophy this position of dichotomy forces human being to experience the spirit and body as two different entities where the physic is just only a container of the rational spirit. Susan Bordo vividly captures this mind / body struggle thus:

What remains the constant element

is the construction of body as something apart from the true self (whether conceived as soul, mind, spirit, will, freedom...) and as undermining the best efforts of that self. That which is body is the albatross, the heavy drag on self-realization. (5)

It is also not so difficult for a rational mind to identify this concept of the self and the other dichotomy in the contradictorily built concepts of culture and nature, and reason and emotion. Lady Oracle is such a novel in which the ecofeminist dichotomy principle could be detected as the author designs the character of the tricker protagonist.

Joan Foster, the protagonist of the novel, grows up into and secret gothic writer from being a child of utter obesity and even the same at a teenage. Though she was “merely pulp” (39), as a baby she does not bother of being obese and get her size increase even as he grows into an adult.

Joan's mother responds to her size by attempting to deliver her undetectable, starting with the withdrawal of a visual record. Once, to make Joan realise her weight, her mother secretly conspires with Miss Flegg, her ballet teacher, who in turn insists Joan to turn into moth ball than being a butterfly. Joan is offered a white teddy bear costume than wearing the wings of the butterfly costume. This leads Joan to develop difference with her ballet teacher. Thus she portraits her as “almost as slender and disapproving as my mother” (39) and further identifies her as a “spiny exterior, the long bony

hands, the hair wrenched into a bun” (40).though Joan’s mother does this to restrict her participation in an annual celebration the dress exaggerated Joan’s obesity that showing her lean.

As John grows her physical appearance is paralleled with the ideal classical body of her mother Joan’s mother glorify socially designed figure of a beautiful woman as she herself is an inmate of the phallogocentric society and has been subliminally forced to develop the part of objectification. As she entertains the structure of an ideally beautiful woman as designed by the society, she names Joan in remembrance of Joan Crawford, a film star, a woman who represents, for her, the most perfect sized women who could impress others by her structure and beauty.

The guidelines of ecofeminism are evident when the protagonist’s mother uncovers the way in which living in a typifying society trains women to take a spectator's viewpoint on the actual self regularly. Joan perceives herself with her the mother, both her great and terrible sides. Since she experienced in patriarchy's reality and casted in its way, a similar demeanour seemed to be normal from her little girl. She is a casualty of male mistreatment experiencing in the possession of her better half. She portrays her mother’s trouble as expressed:

She used to say that nobody appreciated her, and this was not paranoia. Nobody did appreciate her, even though she'd done the right thing, she had devoted her life to us, she had made her family her career as she had been told to do,

and looks at us: a sulky fat slob of a daughter and a husband who wouldn't talk to her. (200)

Yet, Joan likewise finds proof of a sort of resistance in the existence of her mother. Taking a gander at a few old photos, Joan sees that the mother has really removed the part of her father and few of his companions, looking for vengeance on the male sex in this emblematic way. Her father is an obtuse and unreliable man. He leaving his pregnant wife for war and does not return till Joan turns five. He suspects his wife with betrayal. The pitiable state of a women in the hands of an irresponsible, suspicious man could be traced when she utters:

... you don't know what it was like, all alone with her to bring up while you were over there enjoying yourself . . . It's not as though I wanted to have her. It's not as though I wanted to marry you. I had to make the best of a bad job (75).

She is one of those ladies who are caught into marriage by an undesired pregnancy and trapped in home life “a plastic-shrouded tomb from which there was no exit” (180).

Clinical Psychologist Freedman writes:

Not only is a woman socialized to act differently than a normal adult, but to look different as well-more like a female than a person. Her lips must be redder, lashes longer, waist smaller, skin

smoother . . . props and paint accentuate gender differences, creating some that have no basis in nature (blue eyelids) and exaggerating others that are minimal (hairless legs). Shape of brows, contour of feet, style of hair become potent substitutes for natural sex differences. (30- 35)

Ecofeminists trust in the philosophy that if women invest more energy in natural settings as opposed to carrying on with a metropolitan existence that incorporate unavoidable business settings their feeling of association with nature increments; and this works with good self-perception. Ecofeminist Greta Gaard, in her article "Ecofeminism and Wilderness" insists that With every word that has been associated with the social development of women brings out her "closeness to nature," it is to be noted that insufficient explanations has been given about different types of female's estrangement from nature.

Initially, ecofeminists spent considerable time differentiating ecofeminism from deep ecology, but soon moved on to develop ecofeminist positions on ethics and spirituality and to provide theoretical links and applications for ecofeminism and a number of related concerns: animals, architecture, bioregionalism, biotechnology, community, democracy, development,

environmental racism, health, militarism and reproductive technologies. What has not yet been established, however, is the place of wilderness in ecofeminist theory. (5)

She further initiates that however, it is a typical that in male centric western culture, a woman has to followed her spouses as far as finding the family home, seeking after work or profession yearnings, in this manner ladies have comprised a privatized sexual state in which they also have been cut off from their countries to guarantee their monetary endurance. A female should fear wilderness because of the conceivable danger of assaults or the delicateness of their own skill of survival strategy coming about estrangement from wilderness. Joan likewise fears wild since her mother generally addresses her about the dread of the gulley,

My mother was terrified of this ravine: it crawled with vines and weedy undergrowth, it was dense with willow trees and bushes, behind everyone of which she pictured a lurking pervert, an old derelict rendered insane by rubbing alcohol, a child molester or worse (54).

All through the novel the picture of mother torment Joan and it is solely only after her mother's passing, does she accomplish clearness:

I knew that in my mother's view both I and my father had totally failed to justify her life the

way she felt it should have been justified. She used to say that nobody appreciated her, and this was not paranoia. Nobody did appreciate her, even though she'd done the right thing, she had devoted her life to us and made her family her career as she had been told to do. (179)

Joan leaves her home to England pursuing dreams of Camelot searching for her knight who could sweep her off her feet. She is dampened anyway when she tracks down that, in actuality, London "is not as romantic as she expected it to be" (Jensen 32). In contrary to her expectation of "castles and princesses, the Lady of Shallot floating down the river in a boat" (142), Joan could only recognize "a lot of traffic and a large number of people with bad teeth" (143).

Not harping on her disappointment, Joan sincerely connects herself with sovereignty, a clean count named Paul, yet very early starts to feel limited by his control of her life. Soon Joan figures out the genuine person of Paul - a controller. She tracks down him a danger to her way of life as an writer. She shows no interest to spend her life with men who classify women as 'wives' or 'mistresses' - slanderous words. She utters: It's an old term, 'mistress,' but that was how he thought of me, these were the categories into which his sexual life was arranged; wives and mistresses. I was not the first mistress. For him there was no such thing as a female lover. (150) She leaves Paul for Arthur. Her meeting with Arthur is a coincidence that happens when she

strolls through the Hyde Park to create a mind set to compose her work "Escape from Love." This work has been the result of her disappointment with Paul and to get away from him. She promptly romanticizes Arthur, and prevails upon him through affectation and untruths. Joan commits herself to Arthur's political reason and showing her dedication, she conceals her way of life as a raw fiction essayist.

She anticipates that Arthur should be unique in relation to the other men; yet she is dampened to understand that Arthur, the supposed 'liberal' anticipates that she should be a decent cook like a cliché spouse. Like a devoted spouse Joan takes a shot at cooking. She before long understands that Arthur doesn't believe she should have a free character, and he ends up being a twisted person who passes on no possibility to put his significant other down. She says:

Arthur enjoyed my defeats. They cheered him up. He loved hearing the crash as I dropped a red-hot platter on the floor, having forgotten to put on my oven mitt; he liked to hear me swearing in the kitchen; and when I would emerge sweaty faced . . . he would greet me with a smile and a little joke, or perhaps even a kiss, which was as much for the display, the energy I'd wasted, as for the food. My frustration and anger were real, my failure was a performance and Arthur was the audience. (211)

He is against her wish of getting pregnant and to

become a mother. Thus, she is forced by him to take birth controlling pills. She feels choked with Arthur and tracks down composing novel of gothic, a profound need. As per Joan, women are supposed to develop interest both in gothic and sentiment in their day to day lives:

They wanted their men to be strong, lustful, passionate and exciting, with hard rapacious mouths, but also tender and worshipful. They wanted men in mysterious cloaks who would rescue them from balconies, but they also wanted meaningful in-depth relationships and total openness . . . They wanted multiple orgasms, they wanted the earth to move, but they also wanted help with the dishes. (217)

Joan is very keen in pleasing her husband Arthur at home. She does not even mind degrading herself to satisfy him. She continues to write under a pseudonym that allows action gives her a mysterious autonomous character, the opportunity of a confidential financial balance, yet more critically, the dream life of the Gothic situation. She conceals her way of life as an essayist from Arthur, in feeling of dread toward dismissal. Her stifling conjugal relationship with Arthur drives her into an adulterous enterprise with Chuck. Then she realises “I was triple, multiple, and now I could see that there was more than one life to come, there were many. The Royal Porcupine had opened a time space door to the fifth dimension” (247).

She has to leave Chuck when she understands that he too has plans to possess Arthur's place, which she feared. Paul returns in her day-to-day existence and subsequent to being familiar with her disintegrating marriage, he attempts to persuade her to leave Arthur. He tells her assuming need emerges he will kidnap her. Before long she understands that Paul has no obvious affections for her, he simply needs to have “the adventure of kidnapping her from what he imagined to be a den of fanged and dangerous communists” (285).

Through the personality of Joan, Atwood has skilfully uncovered the impediments looked by female writers in a male centric culture. By and large, a female who could think and compose has frequently been blamed for one or the other frenzy or divination to stop her alarming statement to phallogocentric power. This could be clearly noted through the words of Elaine Showalter as she contends in “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,” that “in ecstatic religions, women more frequently than men speak in tongues, a phenomenon attributed by anthropologists to their relative inarticulateness in formal religious discourse” (340). Showalter further demonstrates: “the problem is not that language is insufficient to express women’s consciousness but that women have been denied the full resource of language” (341).

Various characteristics of Joan, support and grow a conviction sustained in western culture depicted by Julie Fenwick as the “underlying theme of the risk to women of certain choice – to seek forbidden knowledge, to exercise creativity,

to desire, to speak, to dance” (51). Joan draws a striking lined up between phallogocentric hostility and ordinary language by recommending that the two are inseparably connected “words were not a prelude to war but the war itself, a devious, subterranean war that was unending because there were no decisive acts, no knockdown blows that could be Jacques Derrida calls “the unity of violence and writing” (Derrida 106).

Lady Oracle challenges bogus gentility that permits a female to encounter want just to the extent that it is endorsed by the longings of men. Joan characterizes herself as an “artist-an escape artist” (335). Her imaginativeness gets from her capacity to sidestep solitary exemplification. She is not one female, yet numerous and her variety cannot be settled unambiguously into consistency. As such the female body and eventually female personality can't be perfectly bundled inside ‘femininity’.

On designing a courageous and strong feminine character who can disrupt the phallogocentric conveyance of imaginative power Atwood has made Joan arises out as “a powerful woman ... a potentially dangerous anomaly” (Second Words 331). Novel finishes with a line which recommends that Joan knows about her capacity to make disorder in the existences of men around her, and simultaneously partakes in their weakness. She ends up being a female 'picaroon'.

The variety of her personality uncovers the intricacy of her mind, and her feeling of estrangement. Joan at last “got on as far as saying I am who I am, take it or leave it” (Struthers, “Interview” 25).

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