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# Examining the Female Ego and Trauma in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*

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*Abstract: This study delves into the intricate complexities of the female psyche and the trauma experienced by women within patriarchal societies, as depicted in Margaret Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman* (1969). The female characters in Atwood's writings are often portrayed as being caught between their need for personal freedom and the inescapable reality of living in a patriarchal world. In this novel, Atwood's primary objective is to explore the inner lives of women, their struggles, and their quest for self-awareness. Through the protagonist, Marian, Atwood examines themes of identity, autonomy, and societal expectations. Marian's journey is emblematic of the struggle to maintain one's sense of self in the face of societal pressures that often reduce women to mere commodities. As Marian navigates her everyday life, she becomes increasingly aware of how societal norms and gender expectations shape her self-image and influence her choices. This heightened awareness leads to a psychological conflict that manifests in her inability to eat, symbolising her rejection of being consumed by societal roles. By analysing Marian's psychological journey, this study sheds light on Atwood's critique of gender politics, illustrating how patriarchal and capitalist systems perpetuate the commodification and oppression of women. This analysis invites readers to reconsider the power dynamics inherent in societal structures and reflect on the broader implications of gender norms on women's mental and emotional well-being. Through Marian's story, Atwood challenges readers to recognise and question the societal constructs that shape and often limit women's lives.*

**Keywords:** *Patriarchy, Capitalism, Commodification, Oppression and Survival.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Margaret Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman* stands as a profound exploration of the female psyche and the complexities of navigating patriarchal societies. Published in 1969, this early work by Atwood delves into themes of identity, autonomy, and the psychological toll of societal expectations on women. Through the protagonist Marian McAlpin, Atwood crafts a



narrative that critiques gender norms and challenges the traditional roles imposed on women. The novel opens with Marian, a young woman working in consumer research at Seymour Surveys, a company where she grapples with the dehumanizing aspects of her job. The workplace environment is a microcosm of patriarchal norms, where men hold the more prestigious positions while women like Marian find themselves relegated to subordinate roles. Atwood immediately sets the stage for Marian's existential crisis, highlighting the tensions between her desire for independence and the societal pressures pushing her towards conformity.

Marian's engagement with Peter, a lawyer with traditional views on gender roles, exacerbates her internal struggle. Peter views Marian through a lens of possession and control, seeking a partner who will complement his image of a subservient woman. This dynamic unfolds gradually, with Marian initially acquiescing to Peter's expectations but increasingly feeling trapped and objectified. Their relationship becomes a battleground where Marian's sense of self is continually eroded, culminating in her disturbing inability to consume food as a manifestation of her internal conflict. Atwood skillfully uses food as a metaphor throughout the novel, symbolizing Marian's entrapment and loss of autonomy. Marian's gradual aversion to eating mirrors her growing discomfort with the roles society expects her to fulfill as a woman—roles that suffocate her individuality and reduce her to an object for consumption by others, particularly men like Peter and Duncan.

Duncan, a more unconventional and bohemian character compared to Peter, initially appears as a potential escape from Marian's suffocating engagement. However, his own expectations and projections ultimately contribute to Marian's sense of being consumed—physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Marian's interactions with Duncan further underscore Atwood's critique of how even seemingly progressive relationships can still perpetuate patriarchal dynamics and undermine women's autonomy. The turning point in Marian's journey comes with her symbolic act of baking a woman-shaped cake. This creative gesture serves as a defiant reclaiming of agency—a moment where Marian asserts herself against the societal expectations and male dominance that have confined her. By offering the cake to Peter as a substitute for herself, Marian not only challenges his perceptions but also initiates her own process of self-liberation from the roles imposed upon her.

Through Marian's narrative arc, Atwood interrogates the damaging effects of gender norms and societal expectations on women's mental and emotional well-being. Marian's struggle to maintain her sense of self amidst external pressures resonates as a universal theme, highlighting the broader societal constraints that limit women's autonomy and individuality. Atwood offers a critique of societal norms and invites readers to reflect on the power dynamics that shape women's lives. The novel challenges readers to confront the ways in which gender roles and expectations can constrain and define individual identity, while also celebrating the resilience and agency of women who dare to defy societal constraints. Margaret Atwood's novel thus stands not only as a literary achievement but also as a poignant exploration of the human condition, advocating for greater awareness and empowerment in the face of systemic inequalities.

## **2. RELATED WORKS**

Exploring the themes of the female ego and trauma in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* offers a rich analysis of how women navigate identity and societal expectations. Here are several works:

*Surfacing* (1972) Themes: Identity, psychological trauma, and the search for self.

Relevance: Like *The Edible Woman*, this novel deals with a female protagonist who undergoes a psychological crisis.

*Alias Grace* (1996), Themes: Female oppression, memory, and trauma.

Relevance: This novel, based on a true story, delves into the psyche of a woman accused of murder, addressing the impact of trauma on memory and identity.

Works by Other Authors

*The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath (1963), Themes: Mental illness, identity, and societal expectations of women.

Relevance: This semi-autobiographical novel explores the descent into mental illness of a young woman, paralleling Marian's psychological struggles in *The Edible Woman*.

*Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys (1966), Themes: Colonialism, identity, and female oppression.

Relevance: A prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, it tells the story of Bertha Mason and explores themes of identity and trauma from a postcolonial feminist perspective.

*Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston (1937) Themes: Female empowerment, identity, and autonomy. Relevance: The protagonist, Janie Crawford, embarks on a journey of self-discovery, grappling with societal expectations and personal trauma, akin to Marian's journey.

### **Scholarly Articles and Criticism:**

*Reconstructing the Female Self: Feminist Readings of Margaret Atwood's 'The Edible Woman'* Author: Critics such as Shirley Neuman and Susanne Becker have analysed this work.

Themes: Feminist literary theory, identity, and societal expectations.

Relevance: These critiques provide a theoretical framework for understanding Marian's resistance to traditional female roles.

*The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979), Themes: Female authorship, identity, and literary representation.

To thoroughly examine the themes of the female ego and trauma in Margaret Atwood's "*The Edible Woman*," employing a structured research methodology is essential. Here's a detailed outline that integrates various research approaches:

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Examining the female ego and trauma in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* requires a robust and well-structured research methodology. Comprehensive approach includes:

#### **Literature Review**

**Objective:** To understand existing scholarly work on *The Edible Woman*, the concepts of the female ego, and trauma.

**Sources:** Academic journals, books, dissertations, and theses that discuss Atwood's works, feminist literary criticism, and psychoanalytic theory.

**Steps:** Collect and review relevant literature on Atwood's writing style and themes.

Identify key theories and methodologies used in similar studies.

Synthesize findings to establish a theoretical framework.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

**Objective:** To outline the theories and concepts that will guide your analysis.

Key Theories:

Psychoanalytic Theory: Especially concepts from Freud and Lacan regarding the ego, identity, and trauma.

Feminist Theory: To explore how female identity and trauma are depicted and constructed in literature.

Postmodern Theory: To understand the fragmented nature of identity and reality in Atwood's narrative.

Application: Use these theories to interpret the protagonist's experiences and behavior in *The Edible Woman*.

#### **Textual Analysis**

**Objective:** To closely read and analyze the text to uncover themes related to the female ego and trauma.

**Method:** Close Reading: Detailed examination of key passages, character development, narrative style, and symbolism. Thematic Analysis: Identify and categorize instances of trauma and the evolution of the female ego. Character Analysis: Focus on the protagonist, Marian McAlpin, and other significant female characters to understand their psychological and emotional journeys.

#### **Contextual Analysis**

**Objective:** To situate the novel within its broader socio-cultural and historical context.

**Components:** Historical Context: Explore the socio-political climate of the 1960s, particularly regarding gender. Biographical Context: Consider Atwood's own life experiences and how they may have influenced the novel.

Cultural Context: Analyze the depiction of consumer culture, marriage, and professional life in the book.



### **Comparative Analysis**

**Objective:** To compare *The Edible Woman* with other works by Atwood or similar texts by other authors.

**Method:** Select other literary works that address similar themes (e.g., Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*). Compare narrative techniques, character portrayals, and thematic concerns.

### **Qualitative Research Methods**

**Objective:** To gather additional insights from external perspectives.

**Methods:** Interviews: Conduct interviews with literary scholars and psychologists specializing in trauma and feminist literature.

Surveys: Use surveys to gather opinions from readers and scholars about the interpretation of the female ego and trauma in the novel.

### **Data Analysis**

**Objective:** To synthesize all collected data and interpret the findings.

**Methods:** Coding: Develop a coding system for thematic analysis of textual data.

Synthesis: Integrate findings from the literature review, textual analysis, contextual analysis, and qualitative research.

### **Writing and Presentation**

**Objective:** To effectively communicate your research findings.

**Structure:** Introduction: Present the research question, objectives, and significance.

Literature Review: Summarize key sources and theoretical frameworks.

Methodology: Detail the research design and methods used.

Analysis: Present and analyze the findings from the textual, contextual, and comparative analyses.

Conclusion: Summarize the main findings and suggest areas for further research.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ensure proper citation and acknowledgment of all sources.

Obtain consent for any interviews or surveys conducted.

This methodology provides a comprehensive approach to exploring the intricate themes of the female ego and trauma in *The Edible Woman*, combining literary analysis with theoretical and contextual insights.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In *The Edible Woman*, Margaret Atwood explores the psychological turmoil of Marian, a young woman caught in the grip of societal pressures. Marian's journey toward self-awareness and defiance against being commodified reflects Atwood's broader critique of gender norms and the capitalist society that enforces them. Through Marian's experiences, Atwood highlights the detrimental impact of rigid gender roles and the trauma that societal expectations inflict on women. Despite encountering oppressive patriarchal forces, the protagonist exhibits resilience and inspires hope by reclaiming her identity. Atwood's novels

serve as powerful tools for exposing the underlying mechanisms of gender dynamics. Through her storytelling, she provides nuanced critiques of existing social structures, urging readers to rethink their views on gender. As Christine Gomez in *Perspectives on Canadian Fiction* (1994) remarks: Atwood's novels examine themes related to the politics of gender, such as the enforced alienation of women under patriarchy... the patriarchal attempt to annihilate the selfhood of women, the gradual carving out of female space by women through various strategies, and women's quest for identity, self-definition, and autonomy (74).

Despite facing numerous forms of victimization, Atwood's female protagonists ultimately survive and discover their true identities. They endure significant trauma but manage to overcome these adversities, emerging stronger and more self-aware. This resilience underscores Atwood's critique of societal standards that define women, emphasizing how these criteria are often restrictive and harmful. Through their journeys, Atwood highlights the strength and resilience of women, challenging the damaging norms imposed by society. George Woodcock, in *Canadian Literature* (1975), compares *The Edible Woman* with Atwood's poetry, praising "the extremely capable way in which Atwood has handled the elements of fantasy, which has become a key element in the New Fiction" (99). Through its blend of fantasy and realism, *The Edible Woman* challenges readers to reflect on how societal norms can constrain individual identity. Atwood's narrative urges readers to critically examine and challenge prevailing power structures, fostering a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between personal identity and societal expectations. The novel not only critiques the societal criteria used to define women but also serves as a broader commentary on how these criteria are ingrained in the fabric of everyday life.

By portraying Marian's struggle and ultimate triumph over the pressures that seek to consume her, Atwood invites readers to question and resist the forces that perpetuate gender-based oppression. This nuanced exploration of identity and autonomy, set against the backdrop of a capitalist society, encourages readers to reconsider their perspectives on gender and power dynamics. Through *The Edible Woman*, Atwood provides a profound commentary on the resilience of women and the importance of reclaiming one's sense of self in the face of societal constraints. As Christine Gomez in *Perspectives on Canadian Fiction* (1994) writes: In *The Edible Woman* ... Women are reduced to the position of victim, though their own complicity in the process is also acknowledged. Women may either sink into unawareness and thus deny the fact of being victims, or accept it passively, or repudiate the victim role and try to reverse the victor-victim roles, or come out of the gender-struggle situation by becoming creative non-victims (1994: 85).

The novel deals with Marian McAlpin's predicament, highlighting her psychic trauma stemming from her workplace experiences and her engagement with Peter. Atwood exposes the hollowness of the patriarchal power structure, revealing how it leads to such trauma. Through Marian's journey, the novel critiques the superficial and damaging nature of these societal constructs, emphasizing the profound impact they have on women's lives. As J. Brooks Bouson states, "Atwood deploys her female protagonist, Marian McAlpin, to expose and subvert the ideological constructs that have long defined and confined women" (1990: 230). The organizational structure of her company is such that its employees can be assigned any job at random. Marian discusses the nature of her job at Seymour Surveys, where men

hold all significant roles. “Since patriarchal times women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men” (Beauvoir, 1949: 84). Equally qualified women like Marian work at lower levels, doing less important work, while the men above perform the more “important” duties and make decisions. Marian draws attention to the prejudice that exists at Seymour Surveys: 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; Below us are the machines—mimeo machines, machines for counting, sorting, and tabulating the information; I have been down there too, into that factory-like clatter where the operatives seem frayed and overworked and have ink on their fingers (19).

Marian soon begins to identify with the food she tastes, paralleling how her employers evaluate her for exploitation. Consequently, the metaphor of the woman as an edible product dominates the novel. Her trauma particularly stems from the unequal distribution of work at Seymour Surveys. She expresses her agony: “I couldn’t become one of the men upstairs. I might conceivably turn into Ms. Bogue or her assistant, but as far as I could see, that would take a long time” (20). Marian’s predicament demonstrates the victimization of women in a patriarchal society. Throughout the book, Marian questions the morality of the commercial world and the notion of normality (Lilburn, 1999: 37).

Marian, attracted to Peter, a lawyer, becomes engaged to him. Peter's hobbies include collecting guns and cameras, and he desires a partner who complements his collection of knives, guns, and cameras. He sees her as a “girl who wouldn’t take over his life” (61). However, Peter assumes great significance in Marian’s life, and she admires him for his perceived superiority. She constantly strives to please Peter and accepts the traditional role of a wife. Over time, though, Marian becomes increasingly aware of his dominance. Through the disillusionment of the protagonist, Atwood tries to unravel the notion of “the romantic fantasy of marriage as a blissful union of opposites or complements” by replacing it “with a condemning picture of marriage as sexual manipulation and warfare”(Bouson, 1993: 43).She begins to feel afraid of his possessiveness and control: Peter took pride in displaying her.

As time passes, Marian comes to understand Peter's true nature—a manipulator and exploiter. Peter’s disturbing description of hunting a rabbit terrifies Marian, and she is shocked to learn about his hobby of hunting innocent animals. The image of Peter as the hunter and herself as the hunted haunts her mind. Eventually, she begins to distance herself from him, realizing that he is using her solely for his own benefit. The relationship becomes a source of endless trauma and an intensifying sense of self-annihilation. Marian imagines:

Time eddying and curling almost visibly around her feet, rising around her, lifting her body... and bearing her, slowly and circuitously, but with the inevitability of water moving downhill, towards the distant, not too distant anymore day they had agreed on... that would end this phase and begin another (112).

Marian’s loss of identity and individuality is indicated by the silencing of her inner voice. Initially, she does not wish to marry but later agrees due to Peter's persuasion. However, Marian’s inner consciousness ultimately prevents her from continuing to live with Peter. She wants to gain a distinct identity and hence denies being an “edible woman” (217). She defies Peter’s desire to control and dominate her life by breaking off their engagement. However,

following Peter's betrayal, she seeks refuge with Duncan, viewing it as an escape from an intolerable situation. Hoping to find emotional security and genuine love with Duncan, Marian instead falls prey to his exploitation of her trusting nature. He calls himself a "virgin," but she soon discovers that Duncan's pose as a virgin is fake. It is a trick to seduce and exploit her. He himself declares, "I like people participating in my fantasy life, and I'm usually willing to participate in theirs, up to a point"(264). This statement clearly reveals that he is a seducer who has exploited many women, and Marian too falls prey to his whims.

Marian's experience with Duncan leaves her shattered. Her crisis peaks as she struggles with the fear of being consumed, which manifests in her inability to eat. Frustrated and overwhelmed, Marian decides to leave Duncan and his environment behind, understanding that both Peter and Duncan have victimized her. Through these traumatic relationships, Marian comes to grasp the damaging consequences of passively accepting male dominance and power. When she sees her reflection in the mirror, she feels that something must be done: "All at once, she was afraid that she was dissolving, coming apart layer by layer like a piece of cardboard in a gutter puddle" (218). Both Peter and Duncan exert dominance over her, yet Marian ultimately rejects the role of the victim-wife. As noted by Christine Gomez, Marian's subconscious rejection of this role becomes overtly conscious due to two pivotal events. One is Duncan's brutally frank question: "You did not tell me it was a masquerade; who the hell are you supposed to be?"(265). The other is Peter's attempt to photograph her... She finds this a threat to her real self, delimitation, and a dehumanization of herself into an image..." (83).

Marian finally rejects the role of The Edible Woman. At last, she bakes a cake in the shape of a woman to expose both Peter and Duncan. By creating the cake, she symbolizes her traumatic experience with Peter and Duncan. Thus, Marian, in this symbolic act of self-realization, finds a release from what George Woodcock calls "emotional cannibalism" (153). When Marian offers the cake to Peter as a substitute for herself, she justifies her act by saying, "You've been trying to destroy me, haven't you? You've been trying to assimilate me. But I've made you a substitute, something you'll like much better. This is what you really wanted all along, isn't it?"(271). Peter feels embarrassed by the cake, and Marian's behavior humiliates him to the point where he leaves. Marian decides to eat the cake herself, and this act helps her overcome her struggle with anorexia. Later, she offers the same cake to Duncan, who consumes it without realizing its deeper implications. The act of baking and sharing this cake symbolizes Marian's journey towards a new sense of self and her rejection of the victim role. When Peter recounts a hunting story involving a rabbit, Marian empathizes deeply with the animal and sees parallels between its plight and her own situation. This empathy prompts her to leave Peter, determined not to become a victim like the rabbit. This escape and her hiding under a bed give her a sense of achievement and victory: "Though I was only two or three feet lower than the rest of them, I was thinking of the room as 'up there'. I myself underground, I had dug myself a private burrow. I felt smug" (76).

Another significant source of Marian's psychic predicament is her engagement with Peter. Marian's "parents adhere to the social norms of their time, expressing concern that she might become a mere high school teacher" (45). Seeing marriage as essential for a fulfilling life, Marian decides to get engaged to Peter to conform to societal norms. However, it's only after becoming engaged that Marian begins to feel trapped. She surrenders control to Peter,





gradually recognizing his dominance and her increasing dependence on him. Marian perceives Peter as a threat to her identity, discovering his desire to reshape her according to his expectations and preferences. This realization triggers a series of distressing events for Marian, exacerbated by symptoms of anorexia. She loses her appetite for a wide range of foods, including cake, eggs, vegetables, meat, and pumpkin seeds. As Marian observes Peter confidently consuming food, she becomes acutely aware of her own growing sense of being consumed rather than being in control.

The novel vividly illustrates how patriarchal dominance and societal pressures inhibit women's individual growth and personal development. Marian's journey toward self-discovery begins when she rejects the steak Peter chooses for her and refuses to accept the submissive roles he tries to impose. Food and body become powerful symbols as Marian asserts her independence from Peter's control. In a bold act of defiance, Marian bakes a cake shaped like a woman and confronts Peter, expressing her defiance with these words: "You've been trying to destroy me, haven't you? You've been trying to assimilate me. But I've made you a substitute, something you'll like much better. This is what you wanted all along, isn't it? I'll get you a fork," (352). This pivotal moment marks Marian's symbolic resurrection. The end of her relationship with Peter signifies the conclusion of her quest to reclaim her lost identity. As she consumes the cake voraciously, Marian metaphorically consumes and destroys the stereotypical image of femininity imposed upon her by patriarchal norms. This act represents Marian's assertion of her artistic powers and marks her liberation from the constraints of societal expectations. By rejecting the role society prescribes for her and embracing her true self, Marian overcomes her anorexia and reaffirms her individuality with newfound confidence. In addition, this act symbolizes Marian's celebration of newfound freedom and her determination to take full control of her life. Marian faces a profound existential dilemma of 'becoming' both in metaphysical and socio-political contexts. Metaphysically, her quest revolves around forging a meaningful individual identity, while socio-politically; she strives to establish an absolute identity as a woman, distinct from the narrowly defined roles imposed by society. Atwood uses Marian's experiences to critique patriarchal hegemony and the restrictive roles assigned to women.

Peter, Marian's fiancé, seeks to dominate and possess her, viewing her as someone who won't disrupt his life (71). Armed with his metaphorical 'weapons' of camera and hunting mentality, Peter attempts to mold Marian into his ideal image of femininity. Initially, Marian acquiesces to his assertions of male authority. She accepts his marriage proposal eagerly, seeing him as a stabilizing force amid life's chaos. Marian adopts a soft, submissive voice she scarcely recognizes as her own, yielding decision-making to Peter (109). She suppresses her natural inclination to challenge him, feeling compelled to adjust her behavior to suit his expectations, even censoring her remarks to avoid his ire (140-141). Marian persuades herself that life operates through compromises rather than principles (125), gradually allowing Peter's dominance to shape her. Another source of psychic distress for Marian is her conflicted experience of 'being in love,' which she finds suffocating and consuming (125). Marriage, depicted as an ownership that entraps, exacerbates Marian's anxieties. Initially enamored with Peter's surface charm, Marian becomes fixated on uncovering his hidden



depths, sensing an elusive identity beneath his facade (191). Her existential fears manifest vividly, likening herself to a helpless rabbit and imagining her body dissolving, symbolizing her fears of losing autonomy and identity (83, 47). Accepting Peter's marriage proposal leaves Marian feeling mentally hollow, sensing her inner self being hollowed out (99). Over time, she realizes Peter isn't the liberator she envisioned but a threat to her individuality. His perfectionism and structured life impose further constraints, eroding Marian's sense of self and even her ability to eat, a physical protest against her powerlessness (125).

In *The Edible Woman*, Marian, through the act of baking a woman-shaped cake, creates a caricature of her most artificial self, preparing it for the party: "with its ruffled red dress, its smiling, lush-lipped pink mouth, its pink shoes and pink fingernails, and fantastically elaborate coiffure"(350). Symbolically, this cake represents a woman as an object ready for male consumption. The cake-as-woman also signifies Marian's rejection of her role as food for both Peter and Duncan. J. Brooks Bouson explains, "Atwood deploys her female protagonist, Marian McAlpin, to expose and subvert the ideological constructs that have long defined and confined women"(230). Marian, addressing her edible creation, says, "You look delicious... very appetizing. And that's what will happen to you; that's what you get for being food"(351). By offering Peter a consumable image of herself, Marian refuses to be available for male dominance. She asserts her "liberation" from the economic and power system of the early 1960s that enforces her subordination, using the cake as a consummate symbol of her newfound freedom (2002: 147). This moment of defiance presents an unusual threat to Peter, ending their predator-prey relationship. Peter, depicted as the hunter in Marian's vision, cannot accept what Marian offers: "She could see him... posed jauntily in the foreground of an elegant salon... impeccably dressed, a glass of rye whisky in one hand; his foot was on the head of a stuffed lion, and he had an eye patch over one eye. Beneath one arm was a strapped revolver"(353). With Peter disposed of, Marian attacks the cake, ending her withdrawal from food and symbolically repossessing her identity. Emma Parker notes the conspicuous absence of images of women eating in literature, reflecting on how such imagery has been suppressed (1995: 349). Marian's act of eating the cake signifies her reclamation of autonomy and rejection of the roles imposed on her by society and patriarchal norms.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

*The Edible Woman* by Margaret Atwood is a profound exploration of the female experience within patriarchal societies. Through the character of Marian, Atwood intricately examines the layers of identity and autonomy, revealing the ongoing struggle women face in maintaining their sense of self amidst societal pressures. Marian's journey serves as a poignant reflection of how entrenched gender norms and the relentless demands of capitalist societies can systematically erode personal autonomy, often relegating women to the status of mere commodities. Atwood's narrative critiques gender politics through Marian's encounters and revelations, providing readers with a deep insight into the underlying power dynamics that define societal structures. Through Marian's narrative arc, Atwood challenges readers to confront and reconsider the inherent inequalities and injustices that permeate women's lives, urging a critical examination of societal norms and expectations. Atwood's novel stands as a

testament to Atwood's skill in unraveling the complexities of human existence and societal constructs. By weaving Marian's personal evolution with broader social commentary, Atwood invites readers to engage with the novel not only as a compelling story of individual growth but also as a catalyst for questioning and challenging prevailing social norms. Ultimately, Atwood's work encourages readers to reflect on their own roles within societal frameworks and contemplate possibilities for meaningful change and equality.

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