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## Rewriting the Self: A Feminist Analysis of Identity and Self-Discovery in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*

**Dr. Mahmuda Nongjai**

Assistant Professor, Department of English

G.P. Women's College, Dhanamanjuri University, Manipur -795001

e-mail: maheik24@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

This paper, adapted from an unpublished chapter of my doctoral thesis, offers a feminist reading of Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* (1976), with particular emphasis on the novel's treatment of female identity and the theme of self-discovery. The narrative reflects Atwood's engagement with feminist discourses surrounding individuality and identity, as it follows the protagonist, Joan Foster, in her struggle against patriarchal norms and expectations that obstruct her efforts to define herself. Drawing on feminist theories of subjectivity and identity politics, the paper explores the complex conditions women navigate within patriarchal societies. It examines how Joan resists imposed gender roles—most notably through her obesity and turn to writing—as acts of defiance and avenues for confronting her unconscious. Ultimately, the study foregrounds Joan's marginalization and pursuit of autonomy, as she challenges dominant patriarchal structures and strives to assert her individuality and selfhood.

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Margaret Eleanor Atwood, acknowledged as a foremost Canadian author, is hailed as one of the most distinguished literary figures currently writing in English. She has written in every conceivable genre and has become an internationally famous novelist, poet, critic, environmentalist, and human rights activist. She is a highly prolific and extremely versatile author of volumes of poetry, novels, literary criticism, short stories, children's books, editor of anthologies, as well as author of much uncollected



journalism. Atwood has incorporated a variety and diversity of themes in her works. Some of the major recurring themes that Atwood has employed in her works are – survival, victimization, gender issues, national identity, Canada's relations with the US and Europe, environmental issues, Canadian wilderness, social myths of femininity, woman's rights and human rights in general, social and economic exploitation of woman as well as woman's relationship with each other and with man.

Amidst the various themes explored in Atwood's novels, feminist issues occupy a prominent place in her fictional oeuvres. Most of her novels examine themes related to the issue of gender such as enforced alienation of women under patriarchy, the delimiting definition of women as a function, 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. This paper is a humble attempt to bring out the intricate situations of women in the society and how she strives to evade the roles assigned to her by the society as depicted by Margaret Atwood in her novel, *Lady Oracle*. The novel examines the conflict between the person, the artist and the social environment by exploring the embodied experiences of the protagonist and examining the relation between selfhood, memory and artistic creations. The novel is involved with childhood memories which intercede in the narration with the purpose of making the Protagonist aware of the various sources which brought about her state of mental turmoil and confusion about her self-hood.

Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* (1976) explores the development of the woman-as-artist within a social framework that forces female protagonists to choose between their creative impulses and the traditional cultural expectations of femininity. The novel interrogates the tensions between personal identity, artistic expression, and a restrictive social environment that offers women limited space for self-definition. Through the embodied experiences of its central character, the narrative examines the complex relationship between selfhood, memory, and artistic creation. Childhood memories—woven throughout the narration—serve to illuminate the origins of the protagonist's psychological unrest and her ongoing struggle to reconcile multiple, often conflicting, facets of her identity.

*Lady Oracle*, very much like the gothic novels which the protagonist of this novel creates, tells the story of a young lady named Joan Foster who has to encounter the threat of patriarchal society while trying to carve out her own space and form an independent identity. The novel, wittily and poignantly, exhibits the various strategies that she adopts in order to save herself from the controlling designs of her mother and the men in her life, including her cold and distant father, who are all embodiments of social conventions or norms. Initially, Joan, in the same manner as her mother as well as the heroines of her costume gothic novels, wants and hopes to be rescued by love. However, as the novel progresses, most



of the men in Joan's life: her father; her first lover, Paul; her husband, Arthur; her lover, Chuck Brewer, the Royal Porcupine; the scheming journalist, Fraser Buchanan – all proved to be duplicitous and this brings Joan to realize that she herself has to take the responsibility of rescuing her own self.

Right from the beginning of her writing career, Atwood has repeatedly expressed her view that there is no specific boundary between the public and personal as far as the conception of identity is concerned, since she believes, the public and personal are inter-related with each other and linked inextricably as every individual has to co-exist with other individuals in a social set-up. Therefore, the public invariably and tenaciously influences every aspect of human identity. To Atwood, this influence of the public on the personal is equivalent with invasion or intrusion in one's personal space which brings about feelings of uncertainty and confusion in the minds of the individual which in turn affects the person's development of self-hood and identity. This spatial encroachment and public influences are more conspicuous in the case of women as the societies they inhabit rely on the ideology of patriarchy which means that female subjects face more intrusion of the external forces than their male counterparts do. Thus, society or the public plays a vital role in the construction of subjectivity or identity of women in Atwood's oeuvre. In *Lady Oracle*, Margaret Atwood delineates the pressures under which a woman finds herself living, in a society, saturated with the customs and conventions that are espoused by a conformist majority. In the novel, Atwood exposes the cultural fabrication of identity on the basis of gender.

One of the main concerns that Margaret Atwood discusses in *Lady Oracle* is the internalization of social codes and cultural representations of femininity which influence the construction of female identity. Joan in *Lady Oracle* is impelled to assimilate and follow the approved conventional rules of manners and actions which the society in which she lives in promotes. Even though she is portrayed as quite independent, yet she, like many other women, could not get away from the influence of the society she inhabits. This influence has a deep impact on the formulation of her identity as autonomous individuals. The novel exemplifies the manner in which a woman's perception of individuality is manipulated by the traditional conventions or expectations of the society she lives in. As for instance, Joan was perceived as gross, vulgar and improper when she wanted to wear the pink suits and leggings which are emblematic of ballet dancers because of being an overweight child: "The problem was fairly simple in the short pink skirt with my waist arms and legs exposed, I was grotesque. I am reconstructing this from the point of view of an adult, an anxious, prudish adult like my mother or Mrs. Flegg" (44-45)

The lives of most of Margaret Atwood's female protagonists are marked by ambivalence which is caused mainly by the antagonistic forces of their social milieu which asks from them to acquiesce with



the social norms that rely on the ideology of patriarchy thereby impeding their liberty of thought and accomplishment. The internalization of these characteristic features which are social, cultural and political in nature evokes confusing and baffling outlooks on life to the central female characters. In *Lady Oracle*, Joan is so pressured to embody the social concept of beauty against her huge and overweight body that she could not develop a strong sense of selfhood. As such, she has developed a disbelief and suspicion regarding the legitimacy of her judgment and actions. In *Lady Oracle*, Margaret Atwood draws attention to the relationship between the body and self as a significant aspect in the construction of identity. Physical feature and personal appearance form an important aspect of the cultural representation of femininity and the image of body is linked closely and forcefully to social expectations. This reminds of the “absolute obsession in Western’s society with the shape of women’s bodies in terms of fatness and thinness” (Lyonns 225). Slenderness is a feature in female body which meets the social expectations pertaining to the ideal image of femininity. This is evident in the chapter from Joan’s childhood when Joan is denied to dress as butterflies and flowers in a ballet recital in one of her school functions because of being an overweight child. Rather, her teacher asks her to play the role of a mothball and made her wear a suit which is shaped as mothball thereby personifying an object that is used as a repellent. The reason for the teacher to do so is because she did not want to defy the cultural codes (the way how a girl should appear in a ballet scene) and disappoint the expectations of the general public by showing the surfeit of Joan’s bodily weight. However, Joan, being a child, did not have the knowledge of this cultural representation of female body and developed a feeling of being neglected. Feeling mistreated and forsaken, Joan describes her reaction as

At the right moment Miss Flegg gave me a shove and I lurched onto the stage, trying to look, as she had instructed me, as much like a mothball as possible. Then I danced. There were no steps to my dance, as I hadn't been taught any, so I made it up as I went along. I swung my arms, I bumped into the butterflies, I spun in circles and stamped my feet as hard as I could on the boards of the flimsy stage, until it shook. I threw myself into the part, it was a dance of rage and destruction, tears rolled down my cheeks behind the fur, the butterflies would die; my feet hurt for days afterwards. "This isn't me," I kept saying to myself, "they're making me do it"; yet even though I was concealed in the teddy-bear suit, which flopped about me and made me sweat, I felt naked and exposed, as if this ridiculous dance was the truth about me and everyone could see it (46).

This shows that the features of femininity which the convention of society offers are very restrictive and therefore offers limited opportunities for the female subjects to create a sense of selfhood. The



internalization of the cultural representations of femininity made Joan's mother make steady effort to being "in shape" and desire to be "an attractive woman, even into her late thirties" (67). Yearning for attention of others and acceptance in the society, Joans mother, as Shannon Hengen observes,

. . . cares primarily about "what kind of impression she makes" and never grows to accept her life. Joan describes her as "an anxious, prudish adult" (46), "too intense to be likable" (180), with "a hawk's eye for anything out of place" (66), "menacing and cold" (214). Very much like Joan's teenage confidantes who trade their potential for the promised security of conventional marriage, Fran "had made her family her career as she had been told to do, and look at us: a sulky fat slob of a daughter and a husband who wouldn't talk to her"; Joan adds, "I and my father had totally failed to justify her life the way she felt it should have been justified" (178). (Hengen 68-69)

Her belief in conformism to the socially created boundaries relating to the female body made Joan's mother, Fran, to worry as well as feel disgust and hatred about Joan's huge body resulting from over eating. She is aware of the general attitude towards people especially women who do fit into established patterns of physical appearance and therefore she tries to teach Joan that no one cares about such a person. True, to what Joan's mother believes, people "saw my obesity as an unfortunate handicap, like a hump or a club foot," as Joan puts it (70). As the novel progresses and Joan goes on putting weight, her mother with her conformist ideology continuously scolds, criticizes and finds fault with her: "Eat, eat, that's all you ever do," Joan recalls her mother saying. "You're disgusting, you really are, if I were you I'd be ashamed to show my face outside the house" (136). All the time, her mother tries to teach her "some lesson or other" (85) with the motive for Joan to "change into someone else" (56). In doing this, she constricts Joan's sense of space and curtails "her daughter's development of feelings of self-worth and authenticity" (Bouson 66). Under the kind of treatment that her mother subjects her to, Joan suffers from a diminished sense of self and is afraid that she is not really there. She even heard her mother calling her an accident which destabilizes Joan's existence and she goes on eating out of fear as well as to defy her mother.

As Sarah Sceats proclaims in her book, *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, "Atwood focuses on a remarkable variety of cultural and political issues through eating and female bodies and these combine to expose differences and dislocations between culturally constructed roles and experienced realities" (Sceats 95). *Lady Oracle* presents a particular focus on female obesity and the related issues, both cultural and political. The constant attempts of Joan's mother to change Joan



into a slender beauty by various means, such as, providing her “the diet booklets” or bribing her with beautiful dresses reflects the internalization of the social concept of beauty which initiates male control of female body. The ideal images of femininity, that Joan’s mother is trying to enforce on her daughter are not related to nature because of which Joan is unable to apply them to her own situation. Joan’s inability to give in to her mother who appreciates the artificiality of feminine image and thinks of it as the proper way in which a person should order her life or to cultural conventions should not be seen as lacking ability, rather, it can be taken as an example of resistance.

The environment in which Joan inhabits is surrounded by ideal images of femininity but she does not want to conform to this artificial ideology regarding women. This brings about Joan’s alienation and a feeling of inappropriateness as she was loathed and ignored by many who were supposed to be her friends and near and dear ones because she did not fit into the extensively accepted social norms or conventions. Contemplating upon the cultural emphasis of the social concept of feminine beauty, she asks herself, “If Desdemona was fat who would care whether or not Othello strangled her?” (51). Her non-compliance to the ideology of her mother brings about estrangement with her mother: “I can never remember calling her anything but Mother, never one of those childish diminutives; I must have, but she must have discouraged It” (63). Joan is convinced that the only concern her mother has for her is her body: “Our relationship was professionalized early. She was to be the manager, the creator, the agent; I was to be the product. I suppose one of the most important things she wanted from me was gratitude. She wanted me to do well, but she wanted to be responsible for it” (63).

As Joan Foster grows-up, she realizes that the image of self that Joan’s mother and other conformists had regarding her femininity did not match with the one she would like to construct for herself and she refuses to give up in her attempt to achieve it. As a consequence, a conflict is developed between Joan and her mother during her adolescence. In her attempt to defy her mother’s intercession in her life, she decided to become what her mother does not like and therefore becomes obese:

The war between myself and my mother was on in earnest; the disputed territory was my body. I didn't quite know this though I sensed it in a hazy way; but I reacted to the diet booklets she left on my pillow, to the bribes of dresses she would give me if I would reduce to fit them – formal gowns with layers of tulle and wired busts, perky little frocks, skirts with slim waists and frothy crinolines – to her cutting remarks about my size, to her pleas about my health (I would die of a heart attack, I would get high blood pressure), to the specialists she sent me to and the pills they prescribed, to all of these things, with



another Mars Bar or a double helping of french fries. I swelled visibly, relentlessly, before her very eyes, I rose like dough, my body advanced inch by inch towards her across the dining-room table, in this at least I was undefeated. I was five feet four and still growing, and I weighed a hundred and eighty-two pounds (65-66).

Joan's obesity is not only a means for confronting her mother: "I wouldn't ever let her make me over in her image, thin and beautiful," as Joan puts it (94) but it also serves as a "magic cloak of blubber and invisibility" (157) that helps her to evade the sexual attentions and hence the social control of female body by men. Furthermore, her obesity can be read as her rebellion against the social construction of femininity and a denial to conform to the approved rules of society which her mother so keenly tries to follow. As J. Brooks Bouson, rightly observes, "Through its focus on female obesity, then, *Lady Oracle* rebels against the social discipline and male control of the female body. But it also depicts the unregulated and undisciplined female body as a grotesque spectacle" (Bouson 69).

However, as Sarah Sceats observes, "The battle between Joan and her mother is only superficially about Joan's size; it centres on identity and control" (Sceats 101). To Joan's mother, the obese body of Joan is an embodiment of the failure of her own "essential femininity" as she fails to fulfill her duty of being a mother by failing to make her daughter slim and beautiful so as to fulfill the social expectations of femininity. For her, Joan's body is the commodity through which she can renegotiate her position in the world because having a beautiful daughter strengthens one's own sense of femininity. This implies that her effort to bring Joan into an ideal shape is not really out of concern for her daughter as being a mother, on the contrary, it is to gain social acceptance for herself and to affirm her own identity by taking control of the life of her daughter. "The climax, in which Joan announces she is moving out and her mother desperately stabs her arm with a kitchen knife," as Sarah Sceats very pertinently observes, "is a dramatic culmination of this struggle for control, a struggle enacted almost entirely through food" (Sceats 101).

In *Lady Oracle*, Joan strives to reduce the size of her body not only for getting the inheritance from her aunt but also to receive a positive response from the society. In concurrence with her wish, she receives more attention for her looks rather than her talent as found in the description of newspaper:

*Joan Foster, celebrated author of Lady Oracle, looking like a lush Rossetti portrait, radiating intensity, hypnotized the audience with her unearthly . . . (The Toronto Star). Prose-poetess Joan Foster looked*



*impressively Junoesque in her flowing red hair and green robe; unfortunately she was largely inaudible* . . . (The Globe and Mail). (*Lady Oracle* 10)

These descriptions, according to how Elaine, the protagonist of *Cat's Eye* expresses in the novel, encompass some of the main features of a Pre-Raphaelite portrait which implicitly contains the idea of women as alluring objects in the general social and cultural understanding of femininity and such conventional representations of femininity are devised to please and entice the male viewer. "They could trace my hair much more easily than they could ever trace me," as Joan puts it (10). Whether or not Joan's actual intention is to allure men using her body, she is seen and recognized for her physical appearance instead of her talent as a writer.

Example of this kind reveals Joan's awareness of the external forces that controlled her life. Even though, she has modeled herself to meet the cultural representations of femininity, Joan encounters many difficulties and complexities in her adult life. In her relationship with several men, she comes to know that social expectations are connected not only to the female body but to other wider aspects such as obedience to the prescribed gender roles and assuming secondary position etc. All the men in her life often try to manipulate her and assume dominance over her. Her former lover Paul, a Polish Count views women as dependent and immature. He categorizes women as wives and mistresses: "It's an odd 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" (148). Even her husband, Arthur whom she thought to be a good man turns out to be perpetuator of patriarchal ideology.

In the initial stages of their relationship, Joan mistakenly had a happy feeling about her relationship with her husband: "I myself was bliss-filled and limpid-eyed: the right man had come along, complete with a cause I could devote myself to. My life had significance" (171). However, soon Joan realizes that Arthur, like most men, expects her to be submissive and obedient to him. He wants her to be deficient in many matters and expects from her not to have a voice of herself yet strong enough to support him when he needs her: "He wanted me to be inept and vulnerable, it's true, but only superficially. Underneath this was another myth: that I could permit myself to be inept and vulnerable only because I had a core of strength, a reservoir of support and warmth that could be drawn on when needed" (88). Arthur has instilled a sense of self-deficiency in Joan that she conceals her identity as a writer. Being with Arthur, her identity becomes 'double' rather than a complete integrated one. She takes up to her writing only





when Arthur is not at home and publishes her book using a pseudonym, Louisa K. Delacourt. The reason for not telling Arthur about her being a writer, as Joan explains is

. . . fear, mostly. When I first met him he talked a lot about wanting a woman whose mind he could respect, and I knew that if he found out I'd written *The Secret of Morgrave Manor* he wouldn't respect mine. I wanted very much to have a respectable mind. Arthur's friends and the books he read, which always had footnotes, and the causes he took up made me feel deficient and somehow absurd, a sort of intellectual village idiot, and revealing my profession would certainly have made it worse. These books, with their covers featuring gloomy, foreboding castles and apprehensive maidens in modified nightgowns, hair streaming in the wind, eyes bulging like those of a goiter victim, toes poised for flight, would be considered trash of the lowest order. Worse than trash, for didn't they exploit the masses, corrupt by distracting, and perpetuate degrading stereotypes of women as helpless and persecuted? They did and I knew it, but I couldn't stop (31).

In their married life together, Arthur assumes dominance over her and he is the one who takes decisions regarding every matter ranging from what Joan should and should not wear to their having a child. According to Joan, "It was Arthur who'd festooned our bedroom with every known form of birth-control device, urged me to take the Pill . . ." (231). He is never pleased with what Joan does and is very difficult to adjust with because he keeps on changing his theories and ideals. "By the time I'd adjusted my views to Arthur's, his had already changed," as Joan says, "Then I would have to be converted anew, improved, made to see the light once more" (210). In contradiction to Joan's yearning for appreciation for her endeavor and aspiration from Arthur, he derives pleasure in her defeats and enjoys every mistake and misconduct on her part:

It took me a while to realize that 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 and disheveled after one of my battles, 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, but I wasn't that bad a cook. My failure was a performance and Arthur was the audience. His applause kept me going (209).

Arthur takes pleasure in Joan's failure because it proves Joan to be deficient and subordinate to him and that boosted his ego. Moreover, he believes in the secondary role of women and become jealous of Joan



when he comes to know about her success as a writer. As Joan wanted to tell him about her writing career, she gives “Arthur a copy of *Lady Oracle*, inscribed in the front, *For Arthur, With All My Love, XXXX, Joan*” after her book is published and has become a success. Arthur’s reaction to Joan after this, is one of indifference as she observes,

But he didn't say one word about it, and I was afraid to ask him what he thought. His manner became distant, and he began to spend a lot of time at the university, or so he said. I would catch him giving me hurt looks when he thought I wasn't watching. I couldn't figure it out. I'd been expecting him to tell me the book was bourgeois or tasteless or obscure or a piece of mystification, but instead he was acting as though I'd committed some unpardonable but unmentionable sin (234).

As is evident in the above passage, as Arthur comes to know about Joan’s writing and eminence, he becomes sad and “He was beginning to accuse me of not taking enough interest in his work” as Joan says (257). He also starts avoiding her and there occurs a rift between them. About this change in the behavior of Arthur, Nathalie Cooke rightly comments, “Arthur proves a bit uncomfortable about Joan’s rise to fame, and even more uncomfortable when he reads the book autobiographically as an unflattering portrait of their marriage” (85).

It is this constrictive environment which diminishes Joan’s sense of selfhood. Arthur’s indifference and unresponsiveness towards Joan provokes her to involve in extramarital affairs as a form of escape from the restrictive situation. As Joan states, “From this soggy domestic atmosphere the Royal Porcupine was a welcome escape. He didn't make many demands; with him it was easy come, easy go” (257). Joan reasons her involvement with other men or her extramarital affairs as an act of trying to find love and consideration as a human being: “I only wanted to be loved. I only wanted some human consideration, was that so terrible, was that so impossible?” (272). Exposing the social norms which offer a limiting and restrictive life to women, Simone de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*: “Patriarchal civilization dedicated woman to chastity; it recognized more or less openly the right of the male to sexual freedom, while woman was restricted to marriage” (de Beauvoir 397). Taking this view of de Beauvoir, Joan’s adultery can be read as subversion against the norms of society.

Thus, *Lady Oracle* expresses that the prevalent system of matrimony in patriarchal society is highly gender-biased as it is restrictive, problematic and exploitative as far as women are concerned. Romantic love and marriage are represented as “a potential form of bondage and persecution which endangers,



rather than enhances, female selfhood” in the novel (Bouson 177).As a consequence, it serves to undermine women’s space as well as identity.

In *Lady Oracle*, Margaret Atwood not only examines the theme of victimization and assimilation of women’s identity but also exposes women’s own complicity in their exploitation by men or by the established norms of society which is largely patriarchal in nature. The protagonist of *Lady Oracle* fails to take necessary actions to confront impositions of cultural norms and to reject the appropriation of her identity. However, Atwood relates her complicity to her internalization of cultural representations of femininity which impose predetermined gender roles in order to appropriate women’s identity. Yet again, Joan Foster’s internalization of the patriarchal values and her efforts to fit into given role-models is not an untypical one.

Like many other female characters depicted in feminist texts, Joan Foster’s rebellion against the system that constricts her space and assimilates her identity lies in her own subconscious. Her resistance is manifested in the artistic works which she produces. In *Lady Oracle*, Joan is a writer who writes gothic fiction mostly. One typical feature of gothic fantasy is the victimization of the young and chaste heroine. Joan writes gothic fiction because “The Gothics increasingly relate her fear of disclosure and rejection, while her constant use of cinematic references (most notably to the films of Fellini) and discourse illustrates the detached manner in which she views her life,” as Alice A. Palumbo remarks (Palumbo 25). Helene Cixous in the *Laugh of the Medusa* observes that “*Writing is precisely the very possibility of change*, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures” (“Medusa,” p.337). Considering this definition of writing, Joan’s writing can be read as expressing her will to transform social and cultural norms thereby bringing a change in her passive life. It can also be said that she takes up writing in order to make her story heard as Madeleine Davies asserts that “Women’s writing is an assertion of the right to be heard and it is a rejection of cultural myths that position women writers . . . .” (Davies 63) as secondary to men.

In the same manner as painting is a form of bringing to the surface elements of Elaine’s unconscious *Cat’s Eye*, in *Lady Oracle*, this is done by Joan’s writing. In *Lady Oracle*, Joan’s writing which brings about Arthur’s indifference to her which in turns leads her to fake her dead can be read as a source of regaining her memory. The place she goes after her fake death brings about a retrospection in Joan’s life as this is the place where she starts her life with Arthur as well as her life as a writer. In this place with



nothing much to do, Joan gets a chance to contemplate upon her life. Here, through her mother's album, Joan is able to access the memory of her entire life and she realizes that the strange lady of her poems in the collection *Lady Oracle* is in fact her mother. As Joan says,

She'd never really let go of me because I had never let her go. It had been she standing behind me in the mirror, she was the one who was waiting around each turn, her voice whispered the words. She had been the lady in the boat, the death barge, the tragic lady with flowing hair and stricken eyes, the lady in the tower. She couldn't stand the view from the window, life was her curse. How could I renounce her? She needed the freedom also; she had been my reflection too long (329-30).

With this realization she is not only able to forgive her mother for what she did to her, but also forgive Arthur. Through the understanding she gained from her memory and introspection, she realizes that she has been escaping all along instead of taking responsibility of her own life. In the meantime, she learns that her friends who help her to accomplish her fake dead are arrested on suspicion of her murder. Taking responsibility, she decides to come back and saves her friends and also faces the reality. Her will to take responsibility and control of her life is evident in her consideration of stopping to write gothic fiction and start writing science fiction as it is concerned with the future.

Thus, through her writing, Joan Foster is able to become 'creative non-victim' in the novel *Lady Oracle*. Atwood, through this novel, proves her own theory that one can become self-assertive and reclaim his/her identity by becoming a 'creative non-victim'.

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