



## TONI MORRISON AND MARGARET ATWOOD: A CREDIBLE COSMOS OF ALTRUISM AND AUTHENTIC SELF : A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*This research article at the outset is a humble attempt to lay focus on the most notable polyphiloprogenitive feminist writers Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison, who spend their life in the selfless path through their writings. Writings of Atwood and Morrison uprooted the distinguished forms, faces, subjects, situations and environment of woman throughout the history. This research paper focuses on the question that how Atwood and Morrison chose Literature as a powerful medium to give voice for the women in the world? These research article further proceeds with a notion that these two erudite writers as a woman tends to universalize the suffering women through their novels. Finally this research article culminate with a point that Atwood and Morrison created an altruistic cosmos of novels, where one can find answers to their life's questions and can shape them to an authentic self.*

**Key words:** Atwood, Morrison, selfless, novels, woman, feminism, literature, voice, women.

### INTRODUCTION

*“The clarity of writers to imagine what is not the self and mystify the familiar is the test of their power”. –(Toni Morrison)*

*“Possibly then writing has to with darkness and adesire or perhaps a compulsio to enter*

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*it, and with luck, to illuminate it and to bring  
back something back out to the light". (Margaret Atwood)*

Writing is the art through which not only one can penetrate into one's mind but also can hear the voice of the writer's mind. Everyone in this world is able to write. In the early days, the process of writing happens only for communication then later it is meant for recording historical events. The invention of paper had a greater turn over in the field of writing for gaining knowledge. When the days gone by, writing paved way for the evolution of historians, poets, dramatists and novelist etc... Historians recorded the events and wars through their writings. Poets wrote poems with the objective subject matter such as people's culture, king and his followers and about societies' optimistic and pessimistic circumstances etc... And also subjective subject matters such love, hate, peace nature, religious notions, life's ideologies etc... Dramatists entertained the people by staging the play with his esoteric script writing mirrored the divergent people with contrasting characters and the role of society and how it differed according to development in the world in each century. From early period to still present period the act of writing is like a weapon which slays the troublesome mind and environment in the world. It is evidenced in the words of Martin Luther's as follows;

*"If you want to change  
the world pick up your  
pen and write". - (Martin Luther )*

Writings play a vital role in the world of feminism. For long period of time, women were in the clutch of domination. They struck into the four walls of suppression, oppression, subjugation and marginalization. At first in olden days women were not allowed to study and write gradually they were given education but not allowed to write. If they were allowed to write they were not allowed to write their name instead they have to use their pseudonym or husband's name. Only then later a little breath of freedom was given to them and they started writing. Woman's writings divided into three phases and these three phases are divided according to the content and psychic of the writers they wrote. It is well understood in Elaine Showalter's "*Towards a Feminist poetics*" as follows. Showalter views that female writing has evolved into three stages "the Feminine, the Feminist and the Female stages".

*The Feminine phase* dates about 1840- 1880. Women in this stage wrote to level standards of intellectual achievement with that of male culture. Though they started to write their mind is occupied with inferior complex is quite clear. The unique aspect of this stage is use of male pseudonyms on the part of female writer. *The Feminist Phase* ranged from 1880- 1920. It is the stage where women writers took efforts to win their rights. Their efforts made to form the New Women Movement, which had won the right to vote. During this stage women

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writer expresses their feeling regarding suffering of women in the society. *The Female Phase* has been continuing since 1920 to present twenty first century. During this phase, woman writers symbolized, imitated and protested the dependence of female on male. And also woman writers in this stage started and motivated other voiceless woman depend on their own attitude and experiences to participate in the literary process. Woman writers began to identify the uniqueness of female experience and went to the extreme of finding the distinguished notion between male and female sentences in the writings. Finally women in general began to be more aware about the forms and techniques of art and literature.

Numerous woman writers budded and bloomed all over the world to unmute the muted women because of the domination, suppression, marginalization, oppression and subjugation. They not only created awareness through their writing but also revealed the divergent psychic characteristics of distinguished range of women from upper to lower class. Woman writer's picturized the agonizing condition of women in the society and they also gave solution to that troublesome life of women. Few woman writers wrote their life's experience as a novel, which gave rise to the philosophical and spiritual mood for the women who hear and read the story of these novels. Among those cultivated civilized sagacious bloomed writers two such woman writers carved their world of experience into cosmos of words. As faithful and true writers they gave life to their stories in their head and the stories that happened in the world. Those two adroit woman writers were **Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison**.

Atwood and Morrison come in the category of modern and post- modern feminist writers. They carved their foot print in the fictional realm through their novels which are truly faithful in sense and it portrays the profound unhypocritical, keenly observed and enlightening impressed visualization of human life in this world. They led their life in an altruistic path and proved their authentic self through their writings. As feminist writers they have given shape to their experiences through their novels and they treated various kinds of subject matters which served as a solution for the problem solving techniques, way to understand various mindsets of people, philosophy for life, a good lesson to learn what is life etc... The novels written by these writers have the quality of truthful reality with the technique of verisimilitude.

Atwood and Toni Morrison is a spellbind weaver of stories which mixes historical, real, magical, supernatural and spiritual that are the people's lives. Their writing of novels is immensely energetic with lively picturization, written with adroit beautifulness, sensitive lyrics(words) and affective dramatic vocabularies. Atwood and Morrison's novels are extraordinarily intriguing, tragic, ironic delighting and occupies the readers with lot of subject matters such as equality, gender and identity, religion and myth, the power of language, power politics, sexual politics, nature and environment, sense of loss and regaining roots, community and identity, quest for freedom and identity, responsibility, slavery of women is

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the central theme of African American Literature and Canadian Literature is handled by Atwood and Morrison in their novels. Though Atwood and Morrison belong to divergent angle of landscapes they sail in the same boat of feminism with the paddle connected the abstract notion of feminist ideologies. Both the writers use imagery, symbols and metaphors as motifs where all are concrete and real that are gripping and emotional. The messages that come through their novels are about the principal importance of individuality, heritage, memory, myth and self-worth where it represents many voices, versions, experiences, perceptions. Both Atwood and Morrison recreate their dialogues through different voices, irony, imagery where it make the readers to involves themselves into the debates and issues that penetrate the insights into the individual lives of people which delineate their hopes, fears and experiences in their lives.

Toni Morrison had a distinguished career as a teacher, editor and professor. From 1955- 57 she was working as a English teacher at Texas Southern University Houston. Following this period of teaching she turned to publishing and became a senior editor at the New York Publishing company Random House where she worked from 1965-85 from 1971-72. Morrison was Associate Professor of English at the state University of New York. Alongside her teaching and publishing, Morrison began to write.

Morrison's novel focuses on the African- American community and she set her novels resembling her birthplace, a crossing point between North and South America. As an Afro American woman writer she invites the complexities ethical issues, racism, memory, interpersonal relationship, codes of femininity, significance of Afro American folklore, recovery of black family, Afro American woman's double marginalization and traumatic scenario of growing up as an African American especially as a woman. Morrison re-imagined her forebears, her mothers and grandmothers through her novel. Through her novels Morrison brought forward the issues of race, color, roots, motherhood, relationships, identity, and women's roles, representations community, the supernatural, the spiritual, recuperating the hidden stories. Her novels concerned with both racism and sexism. She also focuses on rewriting history investigating and questioning stereotypes of race and gender.

Morrison picturizes the lives of African American people in different historical period. She represent individuals their families and communities by exploring their encounters in different periods of the history. She also depicts the inner feelings, imagination, and the stories of concrete and abstract notion by which construction of life happened through the characters that she drew from the reality. In the words of Toni Morrison as follows;

*“To make the story appear, oral, meandering effortless,  
spoken to have the reader feel the narrator without identifying  
that narrator or hearing him or her knock about, and to have*

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*the reader work with the author in construction of the book - is what's important. What is left out is as important what is there".*

*Evans, Black women writers, 1985, p.341)*

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is written in an experimental mode where Morrison centers on the issues of racial inequality, psychic feelings of being inferiorized to second rate which destruct the life and identity of a working class black girl Pecola. Morrison's *Sula* addresses the confusing mysteries of human emotion and relationship. This novel *Sula* depicts alternative histories of African American people in the town named bottom considering people's subversive habits and myst, a good and evil mixed Sula and her community role as an outsider. Morrison wrote *Song of Solomon* in the year 1977, where the people's lives are occupied with the disease of materialism and it was during this period Civil Rights Movement developed in United States of America. This novel concentrates on rediscovering history and African roots through quest, magic and relationships in the year 1950s and 1960s.

The novel *Beloved* encapsulates the emotions and trauma of slave women Sethe. The novel has a ghost story dealing with historical past centers on history recuperated. The novel is enveloped with haunted nightmares, where the protagonist of Morrison Sethe brutally abused and mortally wounded as a slave. The story revolves around slavery, memory, and supernatural elements. Morrison's *Paradise* surrounds on religion and on the vanishing energies of an old fashioned Black community during Civil Rights Movement looking at their inability to live alongside a community of women constructed as outsiders. Morrison unearths the different stories of women such as loveless relationship oppression, excessive religious control and hypocrisy attacking on radical feminism. Toni Morrison with her powerful vocabulary in her novels emerged as worthful and formidable writer in the middle of so many struggles as an Afro American woman.

In the realm of literature, Margaret Atwood plays the role of poet, novelist, literary critic, short story writer and author of children's books and a prominent figure in the contemporary Canadian Literature. Alike Toni Morrison, Atwood incorporates and uses devices such as irony, symbolism, imagery and self-conscious narrations. She uproots the connection between humanity and nature especially women and nature and light and dark side of human behavior and their power, gender and politics.

Through her novels Atwood had helped the voiceless woman to define and identity the goals of their life. Atwood is a writer of more than forty years. All of her writings explore women's lives, submissive territories colonized by men and women as victims and questions, woman's marginal position in hegemonic environment. Alike Morrison, the novels of Atwood deals with the Canadian identity and its wilderness, the picturization of women and history and its narration. As she is a versatile writer, she focused on social criticism, feminism and women's

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literature. Atwood feminist writing includes the flavor of gothic element and cultural politics. The novels of Margaret Atwood is modern structure with the express of revolutionary, optimistic, pessimistic, realistic, and suggestive, view of life and these above expressions are the mouthpiece of the protagonist. Her fictions are enveloped with Canadian cultural codes. She is writer for the common all over the world. In the words of Atwood as follows:

*“Far from thinking of writers as totally isolated individuals. I see them as inescapably connected with their society. The nature of the connection will vary the writer may unconsciously reflect the society, he may consciously examine it and project ways of changing it and the connection between writers and society becomes the subject of the writer”. (111)*

The each novels of Atwood is shaped with gothic, romance, fairy tale, spy thriller, science fiction and history. Atwood faithfully believed in the social functioning of art and in the writers responsibility to her readers:

*“If you think of a book as an experience as almost the equivalent of having the experience you’re not going to put them through a lot of blood and more for nothing at least I’m not”. (34)*

Atwood through her novels constructed rich experience of life with her erudite artistic intellectuality. She examines the notion of societies through her novel. The characters defined by Atwood in her novel are distinctively wealthier in their motivations, conflicts and manners. As a feminist writer, she traces the physical, political, economic, and social control over woman in the world. Atwood novel *Surfacing* is sumptuously filled with feminist ideologies, where she handle the issue of gender politics in matters of profession, marriage and motherhood which disturbs, destructs and cripples the woman’s intellectually, emotionally and morally. In the end of novel the unnamed protagonist struggles to free herself from the clutch of domination and emerged as a brave new woman with her own identity. *The Handmaid’s tale* is the most popular novel of Margaret Atwood. This novel picturizes woman as a birth giving machines and they are allowed lead their life only for their reproductive machine. Atwood applied the theme of sex, procreation, love and nature and how the male society corrupted the goodness of wifehood, motherhood and womanhood. Finally it

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was a question left for the readers to guess whether the protagonist Offred escapes the trap and clutch of domination to free her to lead an independent life.

*Lady Oracle* is the third novel of Margaret Atwood which focuses on the theme of gothic romance. This novel claims that both male and female are equal and they have the unique human capabilities. The protagonist Joan Foster is a writer who strives hard to survive in the midst of obstacles in patriarchal society. As a woman writer, the protagonist suffers identity crisis and her individuality as a writer is destructed by the invisible domination of male writers. Atwood attacked the hegemonic pattern of gender relation in contemporary society through this novel *Lady Oracle*. *Oryx and Crake* is a science fiction by Margaret Atwood in the year (2003). This novel represents the post human world. It deals with the issues of pandemic spread all over the world because of human ravenous attitude towards the development of science and technology and finally only human is alive and he is the protagonist named snowman. It is futuristic novel and Atwood warns the world for the destruction of nature and its elements through this novel *Oryx and Crake*. *Life before Man* is a pure feminist novel by Atwood. It deals with triangular plot and domestic in sense which depicts the interpersonal relationship between wife and husband. It focus on the destruction a modern marriage and made woman to realize the power of motherhood and her grieving and agonizing suffering in the institution of modern marriage.

To conclude, Life is filled with the circumstances of reality which are given shape through pen. Women writers have been recording their encounters and creative energies through literature. Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison shared their perspectives on fluctuated subject matters of woman and the society, mirroring their recognition through their writing. It is to note that the novels of Atwood and Morrison made the muted women voices to be heard. Both the writers express their notions through their novels and gives voice to the women's liberation. Thus Atwood and Morrison belongs to two different culture, they fix their protagonist in the field of solitary, nebulized and alienated land, where they search for their true identity. Through their fictional realm, as altruistic writers, they proved themselves to be authentic self by giving voice the voiceless suppressed and oppressed woman to face the challenges and prevent the struggling and how to create a chance for survival in their life.



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