

## I. General Introduction

Margaret Eleanor Atwood is a renowned Canadian poet, novelist and critic who is often concerned with examining the position of women in the society and their relationships with their male counterparts. She was born in Ottawa Ontario in 1939. She received her undergraduate degree from Victoria College and the University of Toronto and her Master's degree from Redcliff College. She is also known as a politically committed cultural activist. She is a prolific and gifted author. In 1961, she had her first book published, a collection of poems entitled *Double Persephone*. However, she is best known for the novels in which she mostly creates female protagonists with open-ended stories which examine contemporary life and sexual politics.

Although she is often called a feminist novelist, she only writes simply as a woman, not as a feminist fighting (with) men. In an interview she has said: "I am a writer who is a female and therefore I write a lot from the point of view of a woman. In other words, I don't see myself as a woman who is writing to promote certain things (Lyons 221). Atwood's novels are social satires but deal with the identity quest of women in the world of commodification. Her typical heroine (woman protagonist) is a modern urban woman often a writer or an artist always with socio-professional commitment fighting for self and survival in a society where men are all too friendly enemies but women along with individual and society, nature and civilization. Her books include *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing*, *Lady Oracle*, *Life Before Man*, *Bodily Harm*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Cat's Eye*, *The Robber Bride* and *Alias Grace*. Most of Atwood's novels talk about victimized woman in the consumer society. Her novels also focus on contemporary political issues.

*Bodily Harm* (1982), the fifth novel in Atwood's canon, is a brilliantly crafted novel. It is a story of Rennie Wilford, a young life style journalist whose life has begun to shatter around the edges. Actually *Bodily Harm* is not different from her previous Atwood's novels in the sense that it follows a character trying to break free from her past and grasp on to a brighter and more promising future. It is ultimately an exploration of both sexual and political power.

Rennie, the main character of *Bodily Harm*, is born in a village called Grisword where the society was orthodoxical. As she is raised by her mother and other members from her family without her father. She is taught to internalize the norms and values upheld by the society. She leaves Grisword to study in Toronto and becomes a journalist. She leads a rather normal life having a partner, a job and a social life until she is diagnosed with a breast tumor. This cancer leads her to break up with Jake. As she finds herself alone, a mysterious stranger spies on her, enters her house while she is out but leaves a rope on her bed. Rennie will try to find help. She has an affair with her doctor and finally asks to be sent to the Caribbean to write a travel piece. Instead of resting and recovering she has an affair with a man involved in politics and illegal traffic. Though him, she is caught up in a revolution and ends up in jail. In the end her future reminds hazardous.

The protagonist Rennie Wilford is a lifestyle journalist living in Toronto. Through this job, she meets Jocasta who seems to be only friend and Jake, her soon-to-be boyfriend. She's diagnosed as having cancer and undergoes a partial mastectomy which is clinically successful, although she continues to be haunted by the fear of recurrence. She falls in love with Jake, the advertising designer, but although he partially reciprocates her feelings the affair is more a source of frustration than of fulfilment, and in the meantime the relationship with Jake comes to an end.

Shortly afterwards, Rennie learns that somebody has broken into her room in her absence and before being frightened away by the police has been waiting for her “as if he was an intimate.” The intruder has left a length of rope coiled on the bed, and the police warn Rennie that he will probably return. This sinister event prompts Rennie’s decision to travel to the Caribbean and write a piece about the island of St. Antoine.

Among the people she encounters in the island and on the neighbouring island of St. Agathe are Paul, an American involved in contraband activities, and his former mistress Lora who exploits Rennie to smuggle weapons into the country on Paul’s behalf. Despite herself Rennie becomes embroiled in the turmoil of a local election, a political assassination and aborted uprising, and together with Lora is arrested and confined to a subterranean cell in an old fort. While in the cell, she is forced to witness various scenes of brutality, culminating in a sadistic beating of Lora by their prison guards. The novel ends with the intervention of Canadian diplomatic authorities, although there is some uncertainty as whether this will in fact take place or is only a hopeful fantasy on her part.

All the troubles happen to her in the few months following the identification of her breast tumor. Without being able to resist, she is led to such bad events. These events appear to trap Rennie and to show how she deals and reacts. The focus on the novel is on her position and reactions. Her trip to Caribbean turns to be a nightmare. She feels empty alone and lost. As evident in the epigraph by John Berger, Rennie hopes to be saved an embodiment of the weak woman in a world of power-hungry men. Apart from other problems in life, she has to go through the surgery with the fear of finding out her tumor is malignant.

The woman’s passive acceptance takes various forms in Rennie. Women are largely treated as objects. In women’s objectification a woman is nothing but a body.

Above all, woman characters seem to be consenting to be ruled, abused and taken advantage of by the oppressors.

In the novel, Atwood manages to focus on pressing political concerns in which she had involved herself in the seventies, using a metaphor of cancer which reveals the connections between the larger political systems of power in the world (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, CIA repressive third world government, drug racketeers) and the system of power which oppress women (pornography, patriarchal control of medical practice, advertising). It makes visible the relationship between sexual and political oppression. A number of wild events force Rennie and other characters on the islands to question their place in the world. The novel shows many complex social and economic problems. For this purpose, Atwood has created many vivid characters dealing with their complex problems of debt, hunger, poverty and a largely uneducated population.

Rennie, the central character of the novel, gets enshrined in the complex web of power politics. Rennie becomes victimized by her counterpart and the government suppression, and attempts to cope with her situation. Due to the dominant discourse of the society, She loses her identity as an individual and becomes able to survive when she inculcates the ideology itself.

Rennie breaks up her relation with all male counterparts. She feels that she being used up considered as a 'headless body' or a mere exhibitionist object to fulfil male desire. She feels herself empty and loses her identity as an individual. In the idyllic island of her fantasies she sees harsh political reality, government suppression, corruption. Rennie deliberately tries to escape the reality indulging her-self in the surfaces. Although she struggles to absent herself from the local politics but soon she finds herself thrown into the nightmare she could not have anticipated. Her efforts not

only to survive but also to comprehend and report the swirl of events could lead her to new levels of personal and artistic awareness. She is imprisoned in an underground cell on the charge of 'suspicion'. By projecting Rennie's unequal power relation in the society, Atwood presents how an individual struggles with the dominant discourse of the society.

Atwood shapes her heroine in a new way that sharply contrasts in which women have been presented as passive, submissive, powerless, dependent. She is not a stereotypical female character. She seems to be relatively free and dependent. It is the history that Rennie resents. She tries to escape the traumatic experience of her own past (her upbringing in Griswold Ontario) by going on an assignment. She crosses the obstacles and ultimately becomes survivor. She struggles both internally and externally to gain her own self-identity. At the end of the novel Rennie is reincarnated as a 'subversive' reporter. Rennie, who is capable for the first time in her life of seeing things not as society pretends they are but as they are in reality: "What she sees has not altered; only the ways she sees it. All is exactly the same. Nothing is the same"(300). So Atwood shows how Rennie struggles to find her identity as an individual.

When one feels empty being used up by others, he/she reacts in a particular way in an effort to protect his/her individual identity. The real picture of play of power can be visualised through the analysis of the strength of the power as discourse. This research attempts to explore the functioning of power/discourse that come out in the narrative.

*Bodily Harm* has been analysed by a number of critics. Many critics have seen the novel from various perspectives. Marilyn Patton in her 1992 essay on the novel writes, "*Bodily Harm* is Margaret Atwood's fifth novel and one which may be

remembered in long run as one her major achievements” as it demarcates “distinct shift in her fiction from comedy of manner and psychological roots to a much more political fiction” (150-151). He views it as an anomaly in her trend of writing novel.

In the same vein Naum Gzywacz says that *Bodily Harm* is a real articulation of politics. He adds:

The novel consists of parts of a conversation between two women incarnated as political prisoners in a tiny two island Caribbean republic, St Antoine and St. Agathe (parallel to St Vincent and St Lucia). In order to discover how she came to be in prison, the heroine, Rennie, tells the story of her life, her repressed childhood, her career as a lifestyle reporter, her attempt to cover a pornography exhibition, her breast cancer and mastectomy, her discovery that police have frightened away stranger who had exerted her force intending to tie her down a rope and rape her. (4)

Grzywacz also comments this novel as a “thriller genre.” He comments that echoing the vocabulary of the traditional thriller, the blurb on the back notes that Rennie is “confronted by a world where her rules for survival no longer apply. “Inside, the reviews continue in the same vein, and include one which is particularly suggestive of the male erotic of the thriller genre” (5).

Another critic Justine reads this novel from the feminist viewpoint. He argues that women are merely treated as objects of the ‘headless body’ for voyeuristic attitude of men. In this regard, Justine writes:

Rennie represents all women who, through the influence of culture, have become passive and allow themselves to be taken advantages of by men whom they are anxious to please. She allows herself to fulfil

the male desire, that exhibitionist object to fill the man's gaze. She is in fact observed and she feels observed by the intruder who seems know and once again turns her into an object of desire, an attempt to visualize control her feminine sexuality. (51)

According to Justine women's anxiety to please man is culturally rooted in the society. She is 'package of packager' (Atwood 103). But David Lucking explains this novel as a work in the Atwood cannon that illustrates with particular clarity the ambivalence attaching to the initially journey" the thematic and metaphorical structure of which hinges on a paradoxical "rebirth" into the knowledge of death and of the things that death can symbolize. Similarly, Carrington points out that "Rennie's way of seeing life through the eyes of a tourist is a metaphor of deliberate refusal to commit oneself to life, to risk the vulnerability of active participation" and draws a valuable analogy with Atwood's short story A Travel Piece.

Many critics have seen and analysed this novel from different angles and with different lenses. None of the critics, however, has attempted to study it from the viewpoint of power, both political and sexual. Therefore, the present work will examine the enactment of lust for power by applying Foucauldian concept of power and discourse and others.

*Bodily Harm* mirrors the functioning of power dynamics in patriarchal social structure. It explores how an individual reacts in the harsh situation and eventually becomes able to reconstruct the lost self with self-realization. The dominant discourse (patriarchy) has given us a perspective to observe Rennie's position in the society. It enables us to understand the social condition, mental state, and intellectual responses.

The present research work focuses on the condition of the protagonist, her psyche and her reaction to the situation. The study tries to analyse how supremacist

patriarchal ideology functions through different social, cultural, political agencies, organization and institutions. Rennie experiences different types of physical as well as mental hardship such as cruelty, discrimination and violence inflicted upon her by the external world. In the text, discriminatory attitude of the dominant discourse because females are treated as inferior. Here discriminatory attitude denotes to the denial of equality, freedom and opportunity. The power is circulated through different social and political organizations such as police, market and other. In the novel , the protagonist Rennie and Lora suffer both physically and mentally because of these agencies of ruling ideology. The false belief about one's gender sexuality is the major cause of the women's suffering that results in the women's treatment as the "Second Sex". It is a cluster of images that deprive the women from being independent. Thus, the objective of this research is to study the reflection of that ideology of the males upon the women on the basis of dominant discourse in the text which resulted from biased motivated attitude and its consequences.

This research work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter is general introduction of the author and also a brief discussion on her work *Bodily Harm*. The second chapter explains briefly the theoretical modality applied in this research work. It discusses power and discourse. On the basis of methodology outlined in the second chapter, the third chapter analyzes the text. The fourth chapter is the conclusion of this research. Furthermore, the concluding part of my research communicates the brief overview of the whole research.



## **II. Power, Discourse and the Formation of Subjectivity**

### **Foucauldian Notion of Power**

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines power as “the ability to control people or things.” Power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others in order to further particular desire and purpose. The general concept of power is centralization, i.e. domination, within the system of hierarchy. The absolute and higher power is conceived only in the centre from where the subordinating elements are controlled and ruled. But, Michel Foucault, a leading French intellectual and the professor at college de France from 1970, critically examines the traditional concept of power. Foucault rejects the totalizing explanations of human development in favour of more detailed analysis of how power functions within a particular discourse. Power does not lie in the centre because power is exercised rather than centralized/possessed. Power is not circulated from top to bottom. Power is not vertically shaped but it circulates horizontally. In other words, power is relational rather than hierarchical . The power covers all directions of social levels at all times. Power circulates as never ending proliferation of exchange.

Michel Foucault is concerned with history of present, i.e. how we have come to think and act as we do. His concern with the present is a critical one. He is renowned for his historical studies that reveal his thought over power and power relations. His thought was largely influenced by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. He owed more to Nietzsche than to Karl Mark, who like Foucault, saw history in terms of power but defined power as something wielded by someone upon the other. Nietzsche argued that all knowledge is an expression of the “will to Power” (qtd. in Selden 100). He believes nobody can speak of “absolute truths”, that all linguistic activities are related to our will to power. Power should not be simply taken

as a repressive force to control. But it is a complex web of forces that produces what happens in a society. Moreover, power relation between people determines the truth. So power produces what we call the reality.

Foucault's ideas on power discourse, knowledge truth and subject make him sound like a political philosopher. His main concern lies not merely on power and its manifestation but also in techniques that produce truth so as to lead an individual to subjection. Unlike the contemporary scholars, Foucault has defined power as a complex tool that make the suitable atmosphere and produces what happens in society. He seems reluctant to view power as an entity or a process than an interrogation of the material conditions which accelerate specific power relations. His interests are not on the status of the truth but on the condition necessary for the production of the 'truth' peculiar to a specific society. There is not a particular individual to well power rather he himself is ensnared and empowered by the discourse that ultimately constitutes power, and power at that situation is productive in its exercise. The exercise of power produces knowledge regarding every component in social settings.

The major concern of the power is with the language and society. The language is a social system. The knowledge is associated with language because it proceeds through the letter, and the language is related to the society but not with individual mind and consciousness. So, it is the language that plays the vital role in controlling and loosing the power (position). In this sense, language is the means of replacing and displacing the power Truth and power are just like the two sides of the same coin but it is the linguistic discourse that originates the truth and truth produces power and again it is the knowledge that brings the better discourse and effective power is produced through the better knowledge. In this regard, Ramen Selden

argues: “The real effects of power is executed through linguistic discourse which is the result of knowledge is an expression of the will to power, and therefore, the discourse of knowledge is involved in power but will to knowledge not power rather is an impersonal force“ (83). Foucault uses metaphor of matrix to describe power. The matrix is contributed in two ways: first by many relations of force, corporative existent and tran formative that operate in a given sphere of activity and second, the strategies by which they operate. The matrix in operation and not simply repressive force is what Foucault describes as power, “Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in particular society” (qtd. in Cranny Francis 66).

Another important corollary of Foucault’s model of power is seen as a pervasive. In *History of Sexuality* (Vol. I) Foucault’s writes about the pervasive nature of power:

Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything but it comes from everywhere [. . .] Power comes from below: that is there is not binary and all encompassing opposition between ruler and ruled cultured at the root at power relation, and serving as a general matrix- no such duality extending from the top down and reaching on more and more limited hours to the very depth of social body. (93-94)

Thus, he sees power not simply as a repressive tool of scheme, but a s complex force that produce what happens in society. It is not wielded by somebody because he himself is caught in certain discourse and practices that wholly constitute power.

We are all implicated in the operations of power. No particular group can absent itself from the operation of power because no group exists in isolation. Even

in the most isolated group, power will operate. According to Foucault the lines of force will run through that group which will operate strategically at certain point to produce effects. Foucault understands power as associative not with repression or direct application of force (domination) but as working through institutionalization and accustomed discourses which open up delimited forms of action, knowledge and being. In this way the exercise of power simultaneously constitutes and controls individual subjects.

Foucault draws upon an anti Enlightenment tradition that rejects the equation of reason, emancipation and progress arguing that an interface between modern forms of power and knowledge has served to create new forms of domination and power. Paul Rainbow writes about the Foucauldian concept of power:

Foucault calls a new regime of power ‘bio-power’ he explains that ‘bio-power’ brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and mode of knowledge power an agent of the transformation of human life. He further describes that other pole of bio-power is the human body: the body approached directly in its biological dimension, but as an object to be manipulated, and controlled. (Rainbow 17)

Power, for Foucault, has creative and positive potentials. According to Foucault, power is creative source of positive values and practiced hegemonically. Power, in fact, is not top to down flow to dominate. Unlike other theorists, his power thesis is not compatible to the repressive hypothesis that sees the functioning of power in the trend that confines power into a small group of society. Power is creative because it enables things to happen. Power is productive for it “brings subjects into being” (Faubion 136). Power circulates horizontally. For him, power is not just ruthless

domination of weak by stronger. This idea is akin to Nietzsche who says that power is not bad at all.

Foucault argues that “power comes from below” and it is distributed through social relations. In fact, power is intangible in terms of techniques through which it is exercised. In today’s highly intellectualised world, power is not exercised brutally with the blood-shed, but with the change of concept and beliefs of the individual in the society. It is possible only through the various types of discourse. Then, different tricks are to be applied so as to maintain one’s controlling position. It is a sort of tricks of throwing dust in the eyes of ruled ones.

Many different forms of power exist in our society: legal, administrative, economic, military and so forth. What characterizes the power is that it brings into play relation between individuals. If we speak of the power of laws, institutions and ideologies. If we speak of structures of the mechanisms of power, it is only in so far as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others. The term ‘Power’ designates relationships between “partners” (“The Subjects” 337).

Foucaults genealogies analyse the way in which new forms of subjectivity arose as effects of disciplinary and pastoral power Foucault makes a distinction between the operation of discipline and pastorship. Discipline, for him, is inherently, violent. Those who do not abide to laws are punished with violence-beaten, imprisoned and the like. Such violence might confront resistance. On the contrary, pastoral power has to flow through the consciousness of subjects in such a way that they internalize the relevant laws, rules and norms so as to regulate themselves in accord with them. It operates not as a direct form of domination as does violence but as a type of influence.

For Foucault, popular clichés of modern government like freedom, liberalism, human rights etc. are all illusionary that subjugate us. They are prescribed for us by the technologies self sanctioned by the modern regime of power. Foucault opines that the freedom and power can't go side by side for there is "a more complicated interplay", Foucault sees every action and every historical event as an exercise of power. The society is a huge web, and much of the power tends to be concerned towards the higher echelons. Power flows simultaneously in different directions and different volumes according to the various forms of power relations in network of power exchange.

### **The Role of Power in Discursive Practices**

Discourse is inherent part of power. Discourse refers to a social language created by particular socio-cultural situation in a practical time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding an experience. For example liberal humanism, white supremacy, Christian fundamentalism etc., are all discourses. No discourse by itself can adequately explain the complex cultural dynamics of social power. Discourse is always in a state of flux overlapping and competing with one another in any number of ways at any given point of time. But no discourse is permanent. Discourse wields power for those in change, but they also stimulate opposition of that power.

Discourse means communicating using signs to designate things. Discourse is a major point in society that affects how we can speak, act and interpret things. As Michael Foucault says:

Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics of truth" that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as truth; the mechanisms and instances with which enables one to distinguish

true and false statement, the means by which each is sanctioned, the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who changed with saying what counts as truth. (75)

According to Foucault, truth is not outside power or lacking in power. It is rather a thing of this world which is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraints in a society. So each society has its own regime of truth.

Power diffuses itself in the system of authority and the effects of truth are produced within discourses. But discourses themselves are neither true nor false Foucault argues, “truth is linked in a circular relation with system of power which produces and sustains it, and which extends it (Adam 145). Thus, Foucault sees the truth as a product of power relation and it changes as the system changes.

Like Nietzsche, Foucault regards discourse as a central human activity but not a ‘universal text’ a vast sea of signification. Foucault developed a theory of discourse in relation to the power structures operating in society. His main idea is that discourse is involved in power. He views that discourses are rooted in social institutions and that social and political power operates through discourse. This is a means of achieving power. The social, moral and religious disciplines always control human behaviour directly by means of discourse. Discourse is the ordinary force that governs every institution. Hence, the discourse is inseparable from power.

Discourse is a system of constraint or exclusion which sets boundaries for what can and can not be said or done in our everyday lives. The experts define the situation and then divides the lines between reason and unreason for society. And it determines for us what is proper and improper through the eyes of the experts. In this regard, Selden writes:

The work of Michel Foucault has gone much further than this in mapping the discursive formations which, often in the name of science, have enabled institutions to wield power and domination by defining and excluding the mad, the sick, the criminals, the poor and deviant. For Foucault discourse is always inseparable from power, because discourse is governing and ordering medium of every institution. Discourse determines what is possible to say, what are the criteria of 'truth' who is allowed to speak with authority and where such speech can be spoken? (76)

This makes clear that power holder by means of discourse exclude 'others'. Discourse can be a theoretical framework for manifestation of ideology of any society. And by this logic, a discourse never allows freedom to an individual.

Foucault believes that discourse operates not only by defining their field of interest, but also by establishing what available perspective on this field is and also by defining the ground rules about what kinds of theory can be regarded as legitimate in to this field for a theorist operating from this perspective. Discourse, according to Foucault, is produced in which concept of madness, criminality and sexual abnormality are perceived. Such discursive formations massively determine and constrain the forms of knowledge which prevail in a particular period. In this essay, Foucault argues that "the rules and procedures, which determine what is considered normal and mental, have the power to silence what they exclude (1142)". His main point, here, is that meaning of any discourse depends on who controls it. Truth can be proved wrong by power. People recognize particular piece of philosophy or scientific theory as true only if it fits the description of truth laid down by the intellectual



institution of the day by members of ruling elite or the existing ideologies of knowledge.

A discourse consists of numerous statements and events. Discourses have the direct relation with power. For Foucault, no discourse can represent the truth of crime, madness, sexuality and so on. It can only treat them, contain them somehow, within the 'sovereign' discourse of science. Power is always in discursive relation rather than something which person or group wields or bears. Alice Mchoul and Wendy Grace also relate Foucault's discourse with power. They says:

Discourse move in, and as, the flows of power. Discourse for example scientific discourse never moves outside the limits of power to as to be able to 'purely analyse' it. The structuralists' notion that 'ordinary' language always needs to be supplemented by an analysis of its truer and deeper meaning it effectively annulled. (McHoul 23)

They regard interpretation is nothing more than one discourse and complete interpretation is impossible. Truth can be never achieved through the discourse because truth changes as the system of power changes.

The discourse is formative and action oriented. It is constructed to achieve particular social goals rather than representing facts. And it helps power holder to control people. The people have beliefs on presented truth because our social lines are dominated by the written words of discourse. Any form of discourse is considered to be a source of power because it tells us to speak and act in certain ways. Almost every section of social life is taken over by the rules and rituals of discourse and the expert carry it out within society. So, discourse is no more of an invisible type of power that we take for granted, and do not even think to a question in our everyday lives. Society regulates different forms of discourse. The regulations join the production of

knowledge to the exercise of power. Michel Foucault sees power as associated not with repression or straightforward domination but working through institutions and accustomed discourses which open up delimited forms of action, knowledge and being.

### **Discourse, Ideology and Subject Position**

Above mentioned discussion on the role of power in discursive practices clearly illustrates the fact that power is inextricably linked with discourse. Discourse means signs which designate things. It expresses a particular way of understanding human experience. Moreover, it is a set of practices that sets boundaries for what can be said or done in our everyday lives. Discourse is constructed to achieve particular social goals rather than representing actual facts. And it helps power holders to control people,. Hence, our social lives are determined by the discourses. To put it differently, our minds are moulded largely by the system of the society/ culture.

Ideology is a text woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands, it is traced through by divergent histories. An early example of the usage of the term ‘ideology’ appears in *The German Ideology* (1845-6) where the authors Marx and Engels define ideology as a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true but a “false consciousness”. They regards ideology as something related with the interest of the dominant social group or class as a distorted and illustration body of ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power. According to the Marxist usage of the term, ideology reflects the ideas living conditions or interests of a particular social class or group. While defining it, Eagleton writes:

To claim in ordinary conversation that someone is speaking ideologically is surely to hold that they are judging a particular issue

through some rigid framework preconceived ideas which distorts their understanding. Viewing things as they really are also involved on over simplifying new of the world- that is to speak schematically, stereotypically and perhaps with the faintest hint of fanaticism. So, the opposite of ideology, here, would be less absolute truth than empirical or pragmatic. (3)

Some later uses of the term see it as a form of discourse related with power, identity and meaning in social life. Ideology is defined as a process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life; as that which offers a position for a subject; as identity thinking. Finally it is defined in terms of its relation with the linguistics and semiotic phenomena on the one hand and with natural reality on the other hand.

Ideology refers not only to belief system but dominant social group or class. A dominant power legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values congenial to it, it tries to universalize and naturalize them. The dominant power excludes the rival forms of thought and obscures social reality. Such mystification masks or suppresses social conflicts, from which arises the conception of ideology as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions. Ideology denotes the way in which the power process gets caught up in the realm of signification.

Louis Althusser, a post structuralists Marxist, distinguished it from 'science'. Ideology is defined as the means whereby, at the level of ideas, every social group produces and reproduces the conditions of existence. In order to ensure that political power remains the preserve of a dominant class, individual 'subjects' are assigned particular positions in society. A full range of social institutions, such as the family and education system, are the means through which a particular hierarchy of value is disseminated.

Terry Eagleton, in his *Ideology* (1990), observes the meaningless material life in the advanced capitalistic system as:

Ideology is essentially a matter of meaning, but the condition of advanced capitalism is one of pervasive non-meaning. The sway of utility and technology bleach social life of significance, subordinating use-value to the empty form of exchange-value. Consumerism bypasses meaning in order to engage the subject subliminally libidinally, at the level of visceral response rather than reflective consciousness (37).

So form overwhelms content, signifier lords over signified. This haemorrhaging of meaning triggers pathological symptoms in society drugs, violence, and mindless revolt. The lack of meaning keeps us in place.

For Althusser, ideology represents the way 'I live' my relations to society as a whole. Ideology, for him, is a particular organization of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects, and which produces the lived relations by which such subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in the society. Althusser maintains that ideology alludes to our affective and unconscious relations with the world, and to the ways in which we are pre-reflectively bound up within social reality. Ideology distinguishes the real material relations between the different social classes, and this knowledge can be retrieved through a theoretically aware analysis of the interrelationships that prevail within society at any one time. A ruling class sustains itself in power, partly by coercion (repressive apparatuses) but also by negotiation with other subordinate classes (ideological state of apparatus). According to him in the contemporary social formation ruling ideology realized in the ideological state apparatuses "the education

apparatuses, the religious apparatuses, the family apparatuses, the political apparatuses, the trade-union apparatuses, the communication apparatuses, the cultural apparatuses, etc” (115). Its utterances are the expressive of speakers’ attitudes or lived relations, to the world. Ideological statements, then, would seem to be subjective. It constitutes our identity. It is a set of viewpoints one happens to hold.

Gramsci uses the word ‘hegemony’ to mean the ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates. Since ideology may be forcibly imposed it is different from hegemony. Ideology refers specifically to the way power struggles are fought out at the level of significations. It is also carried out in cultural, political and economic forms in non-discursive practices as well as in rhetorical utterances. Gramsci associates hegemony with civil society. The dominant power is diffused throughout habitual daily practices, intimately interwoven with culture, itself. Capitalism, Gramsci argues, maintains control not just through violence and political and economic coercion, but also ideologically, through a hegemonic culture in which the values of the bourgeoisie become the “common sense value” of all. Thus, a consensus culture develops in which people in the working class identify their own good with the good of the capital system. The intermediary institutions in the civil society-school, church, family, newspaper, etc count as hegemonic apparatuses binding the individuals to ruling power by consent.

Subject is the state of being under the control or influence of somebody or something. Subject is the ultimate outcome of struggles of power and power relation. Foucault links the state of subject with the struggles and its power effects over individuality. It is the form of power that makes the individual subjects. Along with the dangers behind the exercise of power, there lies the attachment of the waking of subjectivity to power relations. Because discourse of a discipline limits an individual

around the boundary in thinking, reasoning and putting their efforts to act out accordingly, they act out within the boundary of discourse. This is so because knowledge that humans have gained is the outcome of power relations. There, an individual is largely subjected and that does not go beyond the demarcated circle. Thus, Foucauldian theory recognizes concept of self embedded in institutions and practices.

The general theme of Foucault's study was the subject and its relation with power. Subject position is placed in the relation of production and significance, he is placed in power relations that are very complex. Michel Foucault also talks about the matter of "rationalization" that determines the subject position with the help of power. In other words, rationalization is largely determined by power and fixes the power position as 'other'. For example, to find out what our society means by sanity perhaps it is required to look into what is happening in the field of insanity. Hence, sanity is the metaphor of the power that relates the positions of insanity in society.

Discourse can be a theoretical framework for the manifestation of ideology of any society. In other words, discourse functions as a medium of sustaining the ideology. Discursive formations such as madness, criminality etc. determine and sustain the forms of knowledge which determine and sustain the forms of knowledge which prevail in a particular period. Discursive practices function to shape the individuals who conform to a particular ideology. What is not rational or normal to a particular ideology is silenced through power. The dominant power legitimizes itself by promoting certain values and beliefs congenial to it. In this way knowledge of truth should fit within the ideological framework.

Since ideology is a form of communication systematically distorted by power, a discourse becomes a medium of domination and serves to legitimate relations of

organized forces. Ideology can be viewed less as a particular set of discourses than as a particular set of effects within discourses. Every discursive process is inscribed in ideological relations as Rosalind Coward and John Ellis in *Language and Materialism*, put it, “ Ideological practice works to fix the subject in certain positions in relation to certain fixities of discourse (qtd. In Eagleton 197)”

### III. Power Dynamics in *Bodily Harm*

#### Rennie Enmeshed in the Web of Power Dynamics

Rennie Wilford, the central character of Margaret Atwood's 1982 novel *Bodily Harm*, gets ensnared in the complex network of power relation. She happens to establish relations with many characters that project the functioning of power. Her relation especially with her male counterparts is characterized by unequal power relation designated by multiple discursive and ideological practices that mould her subjectivity. From her harsh upbringing in Griswold, Ontario, to the nightmarish life 'here' in a Subalteran cell that she is sharing with Lara whom she meets in the island of St. Antoni Rennie views brutal dramatization of divergent forces. Though Rennie appears to be a victimized woman amidst power hungry men, somehow she attempts to resist her harsh upbringing by challenging patriarchal norms and values by setting herself against her own background, by rejecting maternal role by indulging herself in the profession of lifestyle journalism, by breaking the relations with oppressive and manipulative male figures.

As the novel begins, Rennie says, "This is how I got here" (11). The very first line is structural and thematic clue, which holds together and interweaves the main storylines and setting of the novel. On the one hand there is Rennie's Puritan upbringing in Griswold and her adult life as lifestyle Journalist in Toronto, Canada, where she has just survived of a cancer scar and partial mastectomy. She has also broken free from her sadomasochistic relationship with product designer Jake. There is her working holiday assignment in the Ste. Agathe which turns out to be nightmarish in contrast to the idyllic place of her fantasies she had hoped for. In this "tropical paradise" of her imagination, she is enmeshed in the local political turmoil of St. Antoine. Rather than recuperation or emotional improvement, her physical



survival becomes prominent issue amidst smuggling, bloodshed, betrayal, malnourishment, imprisonment, etc.. Hence, the opening line of the novel establishes juncture between these two storylines and equips the readers with the lens to view the trajectory of whole events in the protagonist's life. The 'this' signals Rennie's past in Canada echoing her cancer and subsequent break ups whereas 'here' refers to her present and the prison cell she is forced to share with Lora on St. Agate during a political turmoil following the political corruption she witnesses on the islands.

A stalker with a rope breaks into Rennie's apartment and is interrupted in his activities when he is overheard by a neighbour, who calls the police. As she arrives at her apartment from the market, she sees police cars outside, the door of her room open inside and then "feet and legs, shining feet, pressed legs"(12). Rennie finds two policemen there who show her "a length of rope coiled neatly" on her bed and tell her that a man had broken in perhaps intending to strangle her. When their questions reveal their suspicion that she might have encouraged a voyeur, she bares her scarred breast to prove that she is no longer worth looking. To escape from all this horror, to absent herself from real life she flies to the Caribbean island of St. Antoine for a working vacation. But it is there that the most brutal playing of power comes into surface. Though the unknown intruder who leaves the rope on her bed remains unidentified, the break in initiates the image of "faceless stranger" which haunts Rennie throughout the novel. It may be the presence of a threatening figure imposing power over Rennie's life. The rope that is seen as a cold suggestion to hang herself is also a symbol that she can't escape.

She is more disturbed by the treatment of the policemen to her than the breaking in itself. One of the policemen says, "He was waiting for you" (14) even though she was completely unknown to him. Then he warned her "he'll be back [ . . . ]

that kind always comes back (14)". He thought it to be her fault. He also lectures her about locks, about living alone and about safety. In this regard, Howells asserts:

She is a woman living alone at the end of an affair and under threat, for her private space has been invaded by a "faceless stranger" and the coiled rope on the bed would seem to signify the possibility of a male violent attack. She is a victim and in the eyes of the Toronto police she is not innocent precisely because she is a woman. (Howells 112).

Indeed, the act of throwing the coiled rope on Rennie's apartment threatens Rennie. The two policemen's discovery of the rope in her apartment precipitated her decision to make the trip of the Caribbean islands. Hence, power not only influences or dominates but also promotes the action.

Because of her profession, Rennie prefers superficiality. Her job is to report new fashion trends of people. So, she lacks agency. In other words, she just reports the statements whatever other people make. Since she is 'versatile' and 'not tied down', she feels free to know people, to stand at frontier and observe. Keith, who is one of the 'contacts' of her who works for the 'Visor' magazine, tries to set boundaries for her work by employing the discourse of lifestyle journalism that its restless Caribbean politics. He wants her to have "a good fun in the sun" but it contradicts Rennie's intent to arrive in the Caribbean island. Rennie resents the idea of "charity" that Keith may show after knowing about her operation, about Jake's learning and subsequent solitariness. Later, Atwood writes "she would much rather be the one who writes things about people like this than be the one that got written about". It illustrates that Rennie is not only the victim of various discourses and power is unilaterally exercised upon her but she also exerts the power and tries to represent the truth about different aspects of people's aspirations for fashion trends.

In Toronto, Jake, the advertising designer and predator in her life, “runs campaign to alter her” and make her ‘submissive’. Before her operation, he pretends to “cheer her up” in order to avoid her ‘boredom’. Hoping that “she would be less boring if she drank, he ordered a bottle of wine and urged her to drink more of it than she wanted to”. He tries to shape her into who he wants her to be. She allows him to do the things that he wants, allows him to package. Jake exercises power over her. Gradually Rennie begins to realize she was “permeated, riddled, rotting away from the inside” and being used up an object of fascination for Jake.

The relationship between Rennie and Jake is an instance of violent understanding of power, for, in Jake's hands and his sage Rennie is turned from a subject to an object. Their relationship can't be a contact of mutual gratification. So, she breaks it:

That was what it had been at first: no mess in love. By the time she met with Jake she'd decided she didn't much like being in love. Being in love was like running bare foot along a street covered with broken bottles. It was fool hardy and if you got through it without image it was by sheer luck. It was like taking off your clothes at lunchtime in a bank. It let people think they knew something about you that you didn't know about them. It gave them power over you. It made you visible, soft, penetrable, it made you ludicrous." (*BH* 102)

For Rennie, being in love was a matter of losing a battle and being victimized or tormented. In her relation with Jake she was like “a blank sheet of paper”- vulnerable, dicile and defeated. So Rennie decides that she needs to take a holiday and remove herself from what appears to be one-way track of enslavement.

The existence of cancer drastically changes Rennie. It victimizes her both physically and mentally. She takes cancer as a sort of betrayal of her own body. The diagnosis of breast cancer and subsequent mastectomy are obvious forms of victimization. She feels that her life has changed after the diagnosis. She starts to fear that many things could go wrong as a result of operation. Jake is frightened and repelled by Rennie's scar for he was solely inversed to her body. It promotes him to detach from him.

Rennie represents all women who through the influence of culture, have become passive and allowed themselves to be taken advantage of and those anxious to please. Rennie also seems to be seeking for male supporter though she is betrayed. It is social construction that a woman do not live by themselves.

When Rennie was working with Jake, she gets ready and prepared herself to fulfill the physical desire of Jake. "Jake, an adopt in the field of the advertising, inhabits the plane of disembodied appearance alone, manipulating images which bears no relation to the world of substance" (Lucking 41). He was a packager by profession and Rennie eventually discovers that "she was one of the things Jake was packaging (104)". By contrasts Rennie resembles Jake in evaluating attitudes and beliefs and not according to their intrinsic validity or sincerity but in terms of whether they are fashionable or not. She herself turns out to be a package exploiting the media in order to manipulate tastes and aspire fashion trends at almost awesome triviality.

The picture hung in Jake's apartment are interpretive of his rape fantasies and voyeuristic attitude of him. One of the pictures Jake puts is interpretive of woman "enigma" which shows "a brown skinned woman wound up in material that held her arms to her sides but lifts her breasts and thighs and buttocks exposed" (105). His short pun art photographs, his lunch time quickies, 'his ungrammatical absence letters

composed of words skipped from newspaper and his pretension to be a lurker reveal that he thinks her as a 'raw material'. It mirrors the voyeuristic attitude of men towards women, with overtones of sadistic control.

It can be argued that Jake is just a tormenter in Rennie's life. He treats her whatever ways he likes. "Put your arms over your head, Jake said, it lifts the breasts. Move your leg apart, just a little, your left knee. You look fantastic" (105). Rennie too didn't want to be touched by him. She didn't want to be seen, the way she was damaged and imputed. The relationship between Jake and Rennie which is casual and non-binding can't survive for a long time.

The events in this novel are not there to show Rennie's adventures, but mostly to trap Rennie. She becomes particularly weak, due to what happens to her in the few months after the identification of her breast tumour. In very short time Rennie's physical and social life falls apart. Though she remains still alive, she remains practically alone and empty, harmed and helpless unable to save herself only hoping to be saved. The epigraph by John Berger says "A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you. By contrast, a woman's presence defines what can and can't be done in her." Rennie is an archetype of a weak woman in the world of power hungry men.

Since Jake had seen her in a completely sexual term, Rennie initially turns to Daniel. Daniel, she thinks, is her protector who saves her life. He claims that he is one who gives another life to Rennie, he possesses the 'healing touch' that Rennie is obsessed with. "He was telling her that he had saved her life, for the time being anyway, and now he was dragging her back into it, this life he had saved. By the hand, Malignant, Rennie thought [. . .] she falls in love with him because he was the first thing she saw after her life had been saved (32)". After her operation Rennie has

the feeling of insecurity and loneliness. After moral dilemma Rennie makes physical relation with Daniel. But, their physical encounter does not tear out of the darkness and insecurity. Subsequently, she feels violated, victimized, raped once again, he still manages to take something out which was out of her expectation. He too becomes the winner and her fantasy is unfulfilled. He is the stereotype of an idealized man. He has been treating her body as a machine that needs good repair.

Rennie makes a trip to Caribbean island to write a travel piece. In fact, she wants to run away from anxiety, pain and disturbed life. This Caribbean island is going to be a place where the protagonist will penetrate the surface and see what she has refused to let herself see before. She meets Paul, an American in the postcolonial island. He fits the image Rennie has in her mind even though his activities are unclear. He holds power and sexually desires her that makes her able to accept her mutilated body, to recognize it as her own and again be one with it. Paul makes her body exist and gives it back to her. She needs a man to do that to be a whole woman again, Paul by using his power saves her life and in return takes advantage of her.

Paul the last man to touch her, reconciles Rennie's body and self, exerts power over her. By taking help from another woman Lora, he makes Rennie to give her help to her in their arm traffic. He involves in illegal activities and uses Rennie also for his benefit. Rennie has become dangerously involved in island politics close to the boiling point because of the impending elections that threaten to unseat the corrupt government in power. He puts Rennie into risk and leaves her after using her up. He takes advantage of the weak point of her innocence. Though he is powerful, he lacks the knowledge to use power to avoid any danger.

Rennie's relation with many characters is characterized by the power relation. Dr. Minnow, the man whom Rennie meets in the airport, also tries to use her. He is the

man running against Ellis, CIA supported incumbent. He talks about Rennie's naivety implicitly criticizing Canada's involvement in International Politics. In much more concerned way, Dr. Minnow tries to use her for his benefit. He urges her to write a piece on local politics defending his position. He begs her to write the truth about the poverty and political corruption on the island. He assigns a writer's moral responsibility to speak in crisis. He tries to persuade her to report because she is a journalist. But, Rennie defends her position saying that she is a lifestyle journalist.

Rennie shares cell with Lora. Lora tells the story of her life and describes the cellar: "When I was growing up, says Lora, we lived in cellars (110)". She says that the cellars of the apartment buildings in which she used live "smelled like cat piss" and were infested by rats and mice. Lora has actually been raised in the cellars of one of kind and another and therefore conversant with the depths that Rennie has always shunned. Lora prostitutes herself in order to secure minor concessions from the prison guards. Lora is a woman whose presence defines her as the quintessential sexual victim. She describes how immediately after her bloody event she had to fight off the advances of her lecherous stepfather who instinctively sensed that her sexual imitation had made her available for more gratifying victimization than the beatings he used to administer her.

Where there is repression there is resistance in general cases. Repression and resistance go side by side, but difference is that it may be implicit or explicit. Resistance suggests one's awareness of domination or injustice. In *Bodily Harm*, Rennie's struggles for her 'identity', 'freedom', and 'equality'. Her resistance seems not so violent. Nevertheless Rennie resists/questions the dominant ideology of the society/culture.

Though Griswold is Rennie's background where she was raised up in stark Puritan society in accordance to the Victorian norms and values, she tries to define herself against it. She leaves her birthplace to become a journalist in Toronto. Undoubtedly, her profession challenges the traditional mindset of Griswold people where the society teaches a woman not to cross the barriers that adhere to male ideology. Patriarchal society does not digest the thing that a woman becomes free and works that men were doing for centuries. Women have been journalistically silenced and harshly criticized for desiring to seize the pen. Rennie abandoned her past, the stifling world of Griswold to act as a freelance journalist. To Rennie, Griswold represents duty, self-sacrifice and dance where women are narrowly confined to assigned roles. So, she chooses city life mobility. She tries to detach herself because she wants to make her own identity, name and stance. To some degree this seems to represent a purely personal reaction against a claustrophobic environment: "All I could think of the time was how to get away from Griswold, I didn't want to be trapped [. . .]. I didn't want to have a family as be anyone's mother, ever, I had none of those ambitions; I didn't want to own any objects or inherit any" (58).

Margaret Atwood through her character Rennie is showing that a professionally independent woman are not totally free. Rennie seems unconventional for she tries to break the social norms and live her own life. Rennie makes love with Jake and breaks her relation that doesn't satisfy her. Similarly, when she finds her desire still unfulfilled by Denial, she leaves him too. So, she exercises the right to choose a suitable guy for her.

### **Discursive/Ideological Practices and Rennie's Condition**

Bodily Harm becomes successive to reflect the dynamic nature of power and power has been shifted from one group to another. Atwood brings into fore the



dramatization of various discursive practices such as patriarchy, life style journalism, and third world politics, foreign aids and so on that mould the subjectivity of the protagonist Rennie's life. *Bodily Harm* scrutinizes the position of a victimized woman Rennie who struggles with the prevalent values upheld by the patriarchy. She struggles both internally and externally to overcome the obstacles. As the society where Rennie was born and raised up was patriarchal, she harbors the traditional consciousness of patriarchy. She suffers from traditional social myths about femininity. She has been subjected to a submissive woman abiding to the patriarchal codes and conducts. Likewise, Rennie is also shaped by the discourse of life style journalism and in turn, shapes the aspirations and patterns of people's life style. *Bodily Harm* is a political novel in the sense that it focuses on third world politics, repressive government and foreign aids.

Rennie is brought up in a stark puritan society of Griswold. In Griswold women are assigned certain duties that confine women in the domestic spheres. Rennie recalls that her grandmother used to imprison her in the underground cell. So, she stands against the backdrop of Griswold, but "it is not always to easy to get rid of Griswold" (18).

The policemen who appear in the beginning of the novel, and their images recurs frequently throughout the novel, are the agents of patriarchy and harbingers of the civilization. When they enter into her apartment and find a coiled rope on her bed, they unnecessarily try to terrify her. They make statements about living alone, safety and so on. Police and prison are the institutions of dominating individuals and turn them into subject.

All male figures with whom Rennie keeps 'contacts' are oppressive who exploit her mentally as well as physically. They use her up and turn out to be victor

whereas Rennie becomes a submissive victimized woman. In their eyes Rennie is just 'a headless body' and treated as a mere object to be consumed. Her individual identity is denied. She suffers from traditional social myths of femininity. More importantly, she internalizes the norms and values of patriarchy and consent them to rule her.

Rennie believes that her relations with everyone provide her help but they actually lead her to the circle of problems and difficulties. Rennie is always trying to find help, comfort and support by men because it is culturally developed habit that is deeply rooted in the society and in the mind of women. Though she seems to be violated and mistreated by men, she is more victim of tradition and culture. She becomes the subject of traditional consciousness. She is also violated by other women too. Athood presents Rennie's grandmother as a typical bad mother figure. Her mother has sent her to the cell and locked her there for doing something wrong. This echoes her incarnation in the basement cell of a prison for an unknown crime. Though Rennie is an independent professional lady, she cannot cross the male power in the society "Grisword is ingrained in her" (118). She unconsciously internalize patriarchal norms and values, and becomes the victim of patriarchy.

Rennie is victimized by the rape fantasies of Jake. He is preoccupied with her body. He encroaches the private sphere of Rennie and always tries to make her a puppet. "Jake told stories about people they knew gossip stories with malicious twist, the kind she used to enjoy" (20). Since Jake denied her diseased body she turned to Daniel whose magical hands saved her life. Rennie thinks that Daniel is the protector who gave her body back. He used to talk about the 'importance of attitude' when she was feeling infested after the operation and she used to pretend that she had a 'positive attitude' It is a part of patriarchal discourse that a woman needs a man to be herself and to define herself. Being dependent means being chained and unable to

live without upper power. “She longed to be sick again so that Daniel would have to take care” (82).

The final step of her involvement occurs when the gun runner, an American named Paul, becomes her lover. Unlike Jake, he is not repelled by her scar, for in Vietnam “he’s seen people a lot deader than her.” When he makes love to her, Rennie feels deeply “grateful” that “she can still be touched” (204). When Rennie replies that feminist have long ago move onto important issues, Paul insists that “issues” are simply excuses for eliminating “people you don’t like. There’s only people with power and people without power. Sometimes they change places, that’s all” (240). It is interesting to note that Paul, who sounds like Astwood’s didactic persona here, seems to contradict the implication of the novels’ epigraph. He doesn’t believe as Berger suggests, that women are the only victims or that avoiding victimization is simply an act of will.

When Dr. Minnow takes Rennie to the old fort where she and Lora are later imprisoned, Rennie sees a ‘group of well dressed’ tourists with binoculars and camera, the symbol of their voyeurism, walk around a muddy field smelling of “bodies, of latrines and line and decaying food.” Rennie is uncomfortably unconscious of being one of them. When she sees a young girl nurtuting a baby, Rennie is ironically, envious. The mother and the child are hurricane victims who have not been helped by the relief funds donated to the government. She has been reduced to a being – a tourist merely observing her own life as well as the lives of others. But she eventually learns that everything in life is risk and that she can’t be exempt from the human condition.

For Rennie, the image of exotic holiday island is preferable to the real experience. The image is safe but the reality is harsh one. There are numerous

examples in the novel in which Rennie chooses safe surfaces than threatening reality. Rennie's cancer underneath an apparently normal exterior and political corruption on the islands underneath the gossipy brochures are the obvious examples. This shows that Rennie privileges representation over the real. In fact it is an attempt to create the real discursively so that representation might provide the lens through which the real is viewed.

Throughout her work, Atwood uses literal and metaphoric camera images including photographs, commercial and non commercial arts, etc. as symbols of seeing and being in the world. Her characters and personas often view life through a celluloid film. Seeing themselves, the past, and other people as photograph trophies or the raw materials for popular journalistic pieces on life style fear themselves of fear guns which turn them into products for consumption. They seek validation in being seen trying to escape "massive involvement" by creating tourist-brochure reality.

Rennie often views existence and herself like a film strip, one frozen "collectible" moment at a time. As a narrator Rennie is both packager, photographer/victimizer as well as photo/product/victim. She 'snapshots' the present by doing 'mental pieces' on the order of actual life-style journalism for *Visor* magazine. She also carries an actual camera bag throughout her trip to Caribbean. It symbolizes her tourist vision and identity. Rennie is fully aware of the fact that photographs and the act of photographing can change reality by attracting it or making it fake: "As soon as you take a picture of something', it's a picture. Picturesque" (132)

This way of seeing through the eyes of a tourist is a metaphor for a deliberate refusal to commit oneself to life, to risk the vulnerability of active participation she

believes that tourists do not get hurt in life; they are 'exempt' Because they can always keep their 'options open' .

Rennie exploits the discourse of life style journalism. She attempts to shape the patterns of the life of the island people as some critics argue that she possesses the gaze of the hunter. Rennie decides that the need to take a holiday thus removes herself from what appears to be one way track of enslavement. Having gained the "awareness that she has become, in John Berger's term 'a sight', she sees her escape in attaining invisibility, the invisibility of a stranger in an alien land: "The differences between this and home isn't so much that she knows nobody so that nobody knows her. In a way she is invisible. In a way she's safe" (39). The 'this' part of the novel i.e. Rennie's past in Canada, reveals that the power was exercised upon her and the 'here' part of the novel i.e. her present in St. Agathe shows her as an agent. Rennie is replicating the violent gaze of which she herself is a victim in this part.

Rennie arrives on the island of St. Antonie armed with her notebooks, her travel guide, and her camera, ready to compose a glossary image of 'Fun on the Sun' that like Jakes fantasy image of her bears little resemblance to the political turmoil that is right in front of her. Seeing is here an act of violent construction, or super imposition, rather than a simple taking in of what her eyes show her. In other words, the "here" part of the novel portrays Rennie as a complicit orientalist who is unable to perceive another culture other than through her own cultural lens.

Rennie repeatedly attempts to insulate herself against the threat of too much reality by invoking print material. There is a frequent mention of the wish for a book, for example, in situations when she is trying to avoid contact with the locals. Similarly when Rennie first meets Lora, she longs for means to break off their conversation: "She wishes she had a book then she could pretend to read" (86).

Throughout the novel, book or other print materials serve as a shield to ward off which is real.

*Bodily Harm* also seeks to assess the discourse of foreign aids and third world politics. When Rennie meets Dr. Minnow for the first time, he talks about the foreign aids provided by the "Sweet Canadians" to the hurricane victims but they don't get it because of the corrupt government. There is frequent mention of British occupation of the island its colonial past, involvement of CIA, American, Russian, etc. in the island politics. Dr. Minnow says:

This is our first election since the departure of the British. Perhaps it will be the last for it is my own belief that the British parliamentary system no longer work in this place [ . . . ] if you were a political journalist the government would not have been happy to see you, they would have delayed you or expelled you. In any case we are too small to attract the attention of any one from the outside, and by the time they are interested it will be too late. They always want for the blood.

(133)

It reveals that the foreign aids don't improve the situation, for repressive government deprives the people of the grants.

Elis, the man in power, seems totally neglectful of the growing unemployment. He uses the foreign aids money for the hurricane victims to bribe the people. He thinks that hurricane victim is the "act of God" and threatens people to take away their jobs and burn down their houses if they don't vote him in the election. Also he manipulates media, he has brought the editor of the news paper. Whereas Dr. Minnow opines, "The sweet Canadians have not learned this yet. The Cubans are building a large building in Grenada. The CIA is here, they with to hip history in the

bud, and the Russian agents. It is of general interest to them.” Later a local newspaper reports that he is a good for nothing man. Rennie, comes to crow that “he stirs people up for nothing” (137). The foreign aids provided by the Canada and United States is not utilized properly. Nevertheless, foreign powers keep on granting so as to keep their influence in the internal politics of the island.

### **The Formation of Rennie’s Subjectivity**

Rennie’s attitudes begins to undergo a transformation once she understand that the rope left in her apartment in Toronto, which is the personification of the civilized order, was smuggly exhibited to her by two policeman officers. She encounters subsequent pairs of policemen. None of whom aspire much confidence, at the air terminal on St. Antoine, at a bar, in the street outside her hotel and in her own hotel room when she is arrested in the charge of suspicion. After the uprising on St Agathe has been quelled, the police have sounded up the insurgents and “tied the men up with ropes.” Sometime later their police guards in a courtyard torture a number of these prisoners. It recalls the British occupation of the island during which ‘civilizing mission’ was spreaded as an instrument of social regimentation. One prisoner the dead and dumb man is treated with particular ferocity.

The climate of Griswold and the dominant discursive practices visualize how Rennie’s subjectivity since her early childhood is delimited . “As a child” recalls Reeine, “I learned three things well: how to be quiet, what not to say, and how to look at things without touching them” (54). Rennie’s grandmother had attempted to eradicate in the girls any impulse towards active participation in her environment. One of Rennie’s earliest recollections is of her grandmother in Griswold, “prying my hands away figure by finger” (53) in punishment of some unremembered transgression, after which the girl was confined in a cellar.

Towards the end of the novel, Rennie has a kind of epiphany: "Renneta means reborn" (12). The meaning of 'Reneta' 'born again' and perhaps even of 'Wilford' . . . will 'ford' or 'will cross over', suggests the symbolic significance of her identity. It can be deduced that the Caribbean island is going to be a place where the protagonist will penetrate the surface and see what she has refused to let herself see before. She comes to recognize that Lara's prostitution was much braver than her tendency not to touch anything. Ultimately in licking away incrustated blood in Lora's face, Rennie touches in contrast to looking. And she realizes her duty to write, to report the truth: 'She will pick up her time: then she will report'. As a journalist she has taken on a new outlook. She has recovered her lost voice and recognizes the ultimate power of language. To continue to be a journalist means that she is not going to abdicate this power, instead she is going to use it to her advantage; she is regaining her lost identity. She is going to change her old ways and write about what is important. She says at the end "In any case she is subversive. She was not one once but now she is a reporter. She will pick her time; then she will report. For the first time in her life, she can't think of a title" (290). She realizes the political importance of this change and cannot ignore the changes going on around her.



#### IV. Conclusion

Margaret Atwood's *Bodily Harm*, is an exploration of the functioning of power dynamics in multiple ways. The central character Rennie gets ensnared in the complex network of power relation. Her relation especially with male characters is characterized by the unequal power relation that designates multiple discursive and ideological practices such as patriarchy, lifestyle journalism, third world governance, foreign aids and so on. Besides, a number of factors contribute to mould Rennie's subjectivity.

In the novel the main focus is laid on the protagonist Rennie's life- how she lives, her relations with other characters, how divergent forces shape her character and how she reacts to the situation in which she lives. She survives after the breast cancer and subsequent break-ups. She is a life style journalist who mostly writes about fashion trends and travel. She indulges in mere appearances rather than delving into the depths of reality that he culturally inherits. Though Rennie appears to be an independent woman, she is not free; power functions as dominating force. At first she leads a normal life spending her free time with her controlling but sensual boyfriend Jake. Her life changes drastically when she is diagnosed of breast cancer, the breaking in of an unknown intruder into her apartment in Toronto who leaves a coiled rope on her bed that haunts her throughout her life and the treatment of the police officers (the image that repeatedly appears in the novel as the harbinger of the civilization) precipitated her decision to make the trip of the Caribbean islands. Rennie is victimized both physically as well as mentally. The presence of breast cancer weakens her physically and the bread-ups tortures her mentally.

However, some elements of resistance can be traced in the novel. Rennie combats her harsh upbringing in stark puritan setting Griswold and constantly resents

her history. She flees away from her birth place thereby rejecting her maternal role. Again she disconnects herself from her origin Canada by going on an assignment to the tiny islands of st. Antonie and st. Agathe. Furthermore, she breaks her relation with the product designer Jake because Jake viewed her in completely sexual term. Though Rennie seems to be a victimized woman, power, here functions as action oriented and formative force.

Rennie is largely affected by patriarchal norms and values. Social, cultural, sexual and many other man made factors hinder her self that lead to identity crisis. Men's gaze and behaviour become the main cause behind the destruction of women's self. In the novel Jake who is preoccupied with her body to satisfy his physical desire is seen packaging her into what he wants her to be. The relationship between Rennie and Jake is an instance of violent understanding of power. As Rennie feels vulnerable and defeated, she decides that she needs to remove herself from what appears to be one way track of enslavement. Similarly, Dr. Danial in the name of giving her new life holds her and instigates her to fulfill his sexual desire. Paul rescues her from physical and mental disgust. But in doing so he also uses her in the arm traffic. So male figures are putting her into trouble and suffering.

Rennie is not only the victim of various discourses and power is not unilaterally exercised upon her but she also exerts her presence; she stands at the frontier and observes. She tries to represent the truth about different aspects of people's aspirations for fashion trends. In the Caribbean islands, she is surrounded by various problems. She is confronted by a world where her rules for survival no longer apply. The idyllic Eden of her imagination turns out to be a depressed country on the brink of civil uprising, She finds herself in the whirl of political turmoil.

Rennie's subjectivity is embedded in the institutions and patriarchal practices Rennie always tries to get help and support because it is culturally developed habit. While she was locked up in the underground cell, she questions her identity When Rennie is arrested together with Lora and confined in the Subaltorean cell in an old fort. She is forced to witness various scenes of brutality culminating in the sadistic beating of Lora by their prison guards. The subaltorean cell becomes the place of enlightenment. Likewise, Rennie is shaped by the discourse of life style journalism and third world politics. Due to her professional commitment she lives in the surfaces avoiding the reality. The novel shifts to the future tense to describe Rennie's release. It suggests that though Renne decides to live for herself, She cannot escape is the web of power relation But whether she is physically liberated from the prisoner or not, she can never escape the knowledge of human evil which that prison has come to symbolize. At the same time the recognition of human kinship which finds positive expression in Rennie's effort to revive Lora is one whose redemptive value is entirely dependent of its practical consequences. Regardless of her ultimate fate, she is able to overcome her humorous torments and her silence. As a journalist Rennis has taken a new outlook (of a subversive reporter) she had recovered her lost voice and recognizes the ultimate power of language by deciding to be a journalist she is not going to abdicate this power, instead, she is going to use it to her advantage. Thus, the protagonist Rennie and other characters suffer from the social or cultural institutions, organizations, forces or practices. The ideology of ruling class is imposed on Rennie through different agencies and discourses.

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