

## I. INTRODUCTION

### General Background

At the time of Atwood feminist polemical writing had already begun to proliferate. Much of the writing was ephemeral, but a considerable body of serious literature was accumulating valuable scholarship. Its purpose was parallel to women's literature and thereby provided scholarly support to women. The underlying premises were altered as the women's movement extended the range of materials deemed worthy of the study. Historians, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, theologians and students of comparative religion and critics, philosophers and theoreticians have based their disciplines linking themselves to the new area of women's studies. Scholarship in the novel field of women's studies, including Atwood, has added breathe to common knowledge, with the result that more of women's lives can be taken for literary purpose.

The impulse to report on personal experience is a pervasive element in feminist writing, especially in the work of women poets. Sometimes this reporting is fictionalized, but it does not detach itself entirely form the writer's impression nor from their didactic purpose.

There are two major elements in women's literature as it moves beyond the phase in which it was simply in search of an identity. First is the insistence on looking at the data of ordinary life and using the occupation of women, overlooked by high culture, as trustworthy evidence in which some kind of significance can be sought. Secondly, there is an urge to create a new set of values that will suit the lives and purposes of women as seen by women a system of authentic emotional relationship and interconnected beliefs down from lived experience. It is to develop the force of social myth, explain the working of the world and then direct appropriate behaviour.

Some feminist writing does such towards utopia, indulge in fantasies, and imagine future societies. So doctrinaire as to be hardly habitable by human beings. But this is typical of any movement writing in its early days.

When women began to write questioning the traditional truth about such arrangements, they found themselves questioning what their mothers taught them. No wonder, then, that painful and ambivalent attack on mother figure is very common in women literature.

Critics of the "patriarchal binary thought" created a list of oppositions for example. Day (Night mother/father, active/passive which can be analyzed as a hierarchy where the "feminine" side is always seen as the negative, powerless instance" (Moi 104). Atwood is obviously aware of these hidden oppositions and she cleverly inverts them and creates her own. Neither her female protagonists nor male characters can be categorized under such neat paradigms. She creates mostly female protagonists who are forced to remake themselves to achieve courage and self reliance in their attitudes and relationships with others and the world around them. Although, she writes at the heart of human behaviour, her ever present sense of the absurd rescues her from an overt and distressing bleakness.

This research paper tries to explore the idea of reconstruction of the self of a female character in the light of post structural feminism. Reconstruction is to remake something that has been damaged or destroyed. When one feels destroyed, s/he tries to reshape oneself to get one's own essence or identity.

The meaning of 'reconstruction' can be used in many ways. Reconstruction may be of body or of mind of somebody. But applying this term with 'self', the question may arise, could the 'self' be reconstructed? For reconstruction something

must be destroyed, could the 'self' be destroyed? Yes, this research tries to answer these questions.

Similarly, the term 'self' indicates the individual's essential being that identifies him/her from other's particular nature. It is the being of a person which gives the quality of individuality to him/her. In fact, it is a person's inner being, including the mind and soul. But in this research it is taken as an individual identity, character or essential qualities of somebody. Self is one's own personality distinct from all others. Anyway self is a distinct existence of somebody who is essentially different from others. To have one's self established, one has to act differently in a situation by making his/her own choice. And when one has no self determination or one becomes a parasite s/he certainly loses her/his self by recognizing their weaknesses.

Rennie, the central character of *Bodily Harm*, reconstructs herself first by her own willful consent of being mistreated and abused and then by developing her consciousness and self recognition. Though she is a bold, strong and self dependent (economically) lady, she is like a puppet, dancing in the hands of her boyfriends. She fails to protect her identity while exercising full freedom. She cannot stand/exist by herself, she is initially interested to be tied with male figure who leads her to destruction. It is too late when she realizes that he is contaminated in the male politics. When she becomes conscious, she finds herself inside a gulf. "Rennie can see what she is now: she's an object of negotiation [. . .]. She feels like a hostage and like a hostage, strangely uninvolved in her own fate [. . .] other people are deciding that for her" (Atwood 258).

### **Atwood and Contemporary Women Writers**

Women's literature in this era has come to survive as an advocate of different issues of women of various societal and cultural background. Elizabeth Janeway in her essay, "Women's literature" says:

Typical of women's literature is her analysis of what even the great male writers have presented as simply "female traits of characters." when writers are splitting open the atom to show us the mechanism inside. It is not a mechanism special to women. Understanding it enlarges our knowledge of psychological causation; another contribution to universality. (380)

Janeway gives a critical analysis of overall women's literature with the examples of various writer. Dorris Lessing is one of them who is contemporary to Atwood. She presents the texts which have a concept of free women. She, in her major work, *The Grass in Singing* deals with the story that describes relationship between a white farmer's wife and her black servant.

Other women writer like Sylvia Plath, Marry R. Beard are famous as madness and suicide writers. They revealed their experiences through madness and suicide. Madness and suicide have become the major characteristics of female poets which give impression of being "raped by life itself". They reflect on victimization, powerlessness and betrayal which turned women's life vulnerable, fragile and deformed. Sylvia Plath,. in her poetry presents her severe depression with intensity and painful state of mind. Her feminism lies on her experience of her pregnancy and childbirth.

"Black women writers have produced some of the most intense and revealing studies of the strains that a madness including society puts on its members" (Janeway 382). Toni Morrison, the famous and striking Black women writer, in her work. *The Bluest Eye* waves together the scenes from an underground whose inhabitants suffer as much from confused social directives as they do from abysmal poverty. In the work of Morrison and other black women writers we find examples of how women's

literature can extend itself beyond women's experience. A life without power, known to black women, produces an astonishing capacity to see into other similar conditions. Some black women writers cast black to strong women through a matrilineal connection.

Some women novelists use more conventional techniques like exploration of the experience of powerlessness in an effort to understand the past and its effects. One of them is Alice Walker whose writing revolves around the movement of rebellion and revolution that have engaged Americans during the last generation. She shows her sympathy and affection to the unsophisticated blacks of the south.

However, Margaret Atwood is different from other women writers of her time. Unlike others' her novels are social satires which take identity quest as their motif. Her typical heroine is a modern urban woman, often a writer or artist, always with some social-professional commitment, fighting for self and survival in a society where men are the all-too friendly enemies but women are often complicit in their own entrapment.

### **Critiques on *Bodily Harm***

*Bodily Harm* was published a decade later after Atwood gave readers *Surfacing* and before *Cat's Eye* which also has received many criticisms in fascinating ways. Atwood tells another tale of a victimized woman, who must struggle both internally and externally to overcome obstacles and ultimately become a survivor, as Howells says:

*Bodily Harm* is another version of writing the female body. This time from the point of view of a woman whose own body is already damaged by cancer and a mastectomy. From this "Post-operative" angle she scrutinizes social myths of femininity, medical discourse on

breast cancer and, most significantly, the rhetoric of pornography; this novel is emphatically not about bodily pleasure but about *Bodily Harm*. (106)

Indeed, there is a plethora of "harm" that Renie Wilford has to face throughout the novel. Another critic David Lucking explains *Bodily Harm* as, "work in the Atwood cannot that illustrates with particular clarity the ambivalence attaching to the initary journey." He further comments on the novel as "The thematic and metaphorical structure of which hinges on paradoxical rebirth' into the knowledge of death' (80).

Mostly her novels revolves around female characters who are dramatized uniquely. *Bodily Harm* also gave birth to Rennie whose submissiveness takes different shapes. She is treated as nothing but a body. In this regard Justine writes in her essay:

Rennie represents all women who, though the influence of culture have become passive and allow themselves to be taken advantage of by men whom they are obvious to please. She attacks herself to fulfill 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 see to know her an object of desire, an attempt to visually control her feminine sexuality. (51)

According to Justine, women's anxiety to please man in culturally rooted in the society. Woman's body is like a playground where a man can come and play even without her permission. She is a "package of packager" (Atwood 103). But Mrs. Gladysz Zilndel views this novel as centered on male-female power relationship. She says:

Rennie is always trying to find help, comfort and support by men.

Though it seems that unconsciously she rightly sees men as patientally dangerous. Even Jake, Rennie's lover is sometimes violent with her and she gets scared of him . . . Though she never really expresses it, she sees him as an object to fear . . . she turns to men to help her. (73)

Rennie's love-hate relationship with her male counterparts is shown by Zindel. Rennie on the one hand takes men as the objects of fear and at the same time needs their support. Her life is like those snapshots which she takes and hangs in her apartment. In this regard Sharon R. Wilson writes:

The picture of cut-open melon in Rennie's room at the sunset inn is, like most of the other pictures and products, how apparent as an image of Rennie and in one sense, all women. Having been surgically as well as sexually 'opened' or violated by men and a reality or moligancy of which she would rather repress knowledge. Rennie scar on her breast, will split open "like a diseased fruit" and the centipede, maggots, worms, or something which might be in Paul's Garden or in the "cellar" of her Griswold "subground" will Crawl out. (142)

For women 'body' matters a lot. Rennie gets scared a lot thinking about the recurrence of her disease that may cause her to be alone forever. For e. verrilolo reading this book is just "wasted potential." He says, "it is flawless but this book fails to live up to its title and to its potentials" (4).

Though many critics have seen and evaluated this novel from different angles and with different lenses, *Bodily Harm* is an exploration of rebirth of a women, Rennie. This study is different form the aforementioned critics because it focuses on the female character who suffers through failed relationships which lead her to

constant self-pity. But, by the end of the novel, she is forced to face many of her weaknesses and she is ultimately able to reach out and connect, making her a survivor. She reconstructs her 'self' at the end of the novel.

This research has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter is general introduction of the study including critical history of Atwood's writing and that of her contemporary women writers. It also gives a brief introduction of the novel. The second chapter introduces the concept of post-feminist perspective on reconstruction of the self. Textual analysis of *Bodily Harm* based on the central character Rennie is makes the third chapter, whereas the last chapter presents the conclusion of this study.



## **II. FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON RECONSTRUCTION OF SELF**

### **Feminism: A Movement against Male Centeredness**

Feminism, a political movement which emerged in the late 1960s is a theoretical discourse advocating women's rights based on belief in the equality of the sexes. It is a doctrine that refuses to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that considers women to a sex object, a second sex, second class human being and submissive other by redefining women's activities and goals from a women centered point of view. This movement is committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism. The growing feminist movement sought not only to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak passive, docile and dependent individual but also to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices women suffer because of the sex. It defend equal rights for women in a political social, psychological, personal and aesthetic sexes.

Generally the concept of femaleness is related to female body and female's experience that is biological but most of the feminist have accepted that femininity essentially a cultural product. They believe that sex is biological but gender is psychological concept which refers to culturally acquired sexual identity.

Feminism is the organized movement which promotes equality for men and women in political, economic and social spheres. Being a broad movement, feminism embraces numerous phases of women's emancipation; that aims to understand women's oppressions in terms of race, class, gender and sexual preferences and its efforts lies in changing it. Feminists try to explore women's personal as well as common experiences of sufferings, exploitation and oppression and their struggle for independences and liberation, feminism tries to discover all forms of violence and oppression against

women of all different socio-political context. Women were and are violated due to their body and this matter is also studied, examined and experiences by feminists.

Women in the past were considered as inferior and second class, while men were perceived as the superior beings. In the name of so called culture and religion women were obliged to endure and accept male domination. As an inferior being she had been assigned subordinate and peripheral position in society. It was believed that women were made for men and were expected to serve them physically, sexually and mentally. They were always being dominated , violated and subjected to male supremacist ideology. They were not only victimized by man made culture and patriarchal society but also were doing unjust to them due to the lack of consciousness and awareness. Though the condition of women still remains same, feminist political movement emerged in 1960 with an aim to enhance the status of women both in theory and practice; somehow succeeded to elevate women's status. Women, after this movement try to break the prevalent tradition that women are inferior in comparison to male ideology.

The hierarchy between the male and female, has been prevalent everywhere that places man in centre and marginalizes woman. Within a same room one is privileged and the other endures sorrows and sufferings. The inequality is a by- product of social values,. religion, man made culture and the common consent of human beings which has created a gulf in between two sexes. Males were gifted with higher place due to the culture and norms of society. So they began to enjoy it and subjugate their female counterparts; and that shaped their identity as the ruler and women as ruled. The notion of patriarchy has determined almost entirely in the nature and quality of the society, its values and priorities, the place and image of women within.

Highly discriminative history of western society remained biased in women's career advancement. Great philosophers and scholars depicted women as inferior, immature incomplete in their intellectual potentialities, by their biased definition. Some philosophers like Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas and Rousseau declared women as secondary being; who are born for male and live to please and obey men. Aristotle considered a woman to be an unfinished man and her femininity was by virtue a lack of certain qualities. Thomas Aquinas thought woman to be an imperfect man and said that form was masculine and matter feminine; the superior god like male intellect impressed its form upon the malleable inert female matter. In Rousseau's view women should be educated in the way that they could please and complement men properly. It is the rest of philosophy which set the culture in the society. These types of philosophies contains a long history of gender discrimination since mythical and biblical ages, most of the societies since the primitive time have been built upon the patriarchal foundation that therefore have invigorated and unduly authorized men folk to define the world and society. They defined every aspect of society and culture from their perspectives and depicted that in the works of art and literature.

Subverting this idea of biological or physical construction, feminists exclaimed sex is created by nature. Some social & cultural differences lie in terms their behavior, education and the attitude of society towards them. By nature, women have some specific qualities, which make them different from male, that's why 'man can define human, not woman', according to Beauvior. The existential feminist Beauviour in her *The Second Sex* mentions the great collective myths and then criticizes them reasonably. The first paragraph of the essay says:

The flesh of the male is produced in the mother's body and re-created in the embraces of the woman in love. Thus woman is related to

nature, she incarnates it: value of blood, open rose, siren, the curve of hill, she represents to man the fertile soil, the sap, the material beauty and the soul of the world. She can hold the keys to poetry; she can be mediatrix between this world and the beyond: grace or oracle, star or sorceress, she opens the door to the supernatural, the surreal. She is doomed to immense; and through her passivity she bestows peace and harmony-but if she declines this role she is seen forth with as a praying mantis, an aggressor. In any case she is seen as the privileged other through whom the subject fulfills himself; one of the measure of man, his counterbalance, his salvation, his adventure, his happiness.

(994)

Women love life as mother loves her children, they are the one who valorizes and nurtures life. They own a lovely heart in spite of a weak one. Women are much more sufferers during the period of violence instead of their hatred towards violence and favor of love and humanity. But women's this love and humanity always falls in danger from the hand of the violent nature of man.

To give outlet to their aggressive nature they created violence in the society by giving it different names like politics, religion, race and sex etc. They are violating women by pretending as if they are supporting them. To exercise their male ego and power they make women a parasite. Women's body is misused and commodified in the market.

Despite various activities, no significant development in feminism is seen before the 1960s. During the late 1960s the impact of feminism began to be felt in literary circles. It moved forward progressively and reached its height during the 60s

with Showalterian concept of Gynocritics. Kate Millet developed the ideas of unequal relation of domination and subordination of women by patriarchal culture.

Kate Millett's analysis of sexual politics of literature in her *Sexual Politics* (1969) emphasizes that women should be given power to develop their personalities, economic status and literary career. Power is an essential weapon in human society. So she says, "The essence of politics is power" (205). She claims that patriarchy is the main cause of women's suppression and it makes them inferior, "Patriarchy subordinate the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male. Power is exerted directly or indirectly in civil and domestic life, to constrain women" (137). Millett argues that western institution have manipulated power to establish the dominance of men and subordination of women in society . She further criticizes Freud's psychoanalytical theory for its male bias and analyses the fiction of D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet uncovering how they dignify there aggressive as submission sexual object in their works. Millett further opines that sex is biologically determined and gender is psychological concept.

*A literature of their own : British Woman Novelist from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) by Elaine Showalter is considered to be a prominent masterpiece of theoretical work on feminism. "Gynocritics" is the terms that Showalter invents to describe the study of women as writers in which women are invited to speak for themselves, whatever situation they are in . She divided women feminist critics into two groups. The first is the ideological which is concerned with the feminist as the reader, that offers feminist readings of text which consider the images and stereotypes of women in literature. The second one is the study of women as writers. It considers history, style , themes genres and structures of writing by women. In her analysis of historical development of feminism Showalter presents three important stages of women writing: feminine ,

feminist and female .First is the female imitation of mainstream ( male) literary tradition dated from 1840 to 1880 and it includes the writers like George Eliot and Bronte sisters. The second is the protest against the standards of this dominant tradition concerning social values and rights. It is dated from 1880 to 1920 and it includes the writers like Elizabeth Gaskell and Oliver Schveiner. The third stage is self-discovery which aims at search for independent identity . It is dated from 1920 onward, it includes the writers like Dorothy, Richardson , Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf. Anyway she has said that female psyche is influences by the general culture , but within it, there is their own subculture which forms of collective experience of women of everywhere. She says that female have their own types of body, speaking styles, language capacity to think and behave, and the psyche all are their own sorts and men have their own. So , they are naturally different.

The phallic and ovarian theories of art, that oppressed women in the past. Victorian physicians believed that women's physiological functions diverted about twenty percent of their creative energy from brain activity. Not only the physician but also the anthropologists of that time believed that frontal lobes of the male brain were heavier and more developed than female lobes and thus women were inferior in intelligence. The attribution of literal biological inferiority is rejected by feminist critics while some theorists seem to have accepted the metaphorical implication of female biological difference in writing.

In this regard Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar structure their analysis of women's writing around metaphors of literary paternity in the *Madwoman in Attic* (1979). In patriarchal western culture, they maintain, text's author is a father, progenitor a procreator an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his pen. Lacking phallic authority, they go on to suggest ,

women's writing is profoundly marked by the anxieties of this difference: "If the pen is a metaphorical penis, from what organ can female generate texts?" according to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar.

Sandra and Susan's *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) is a brilliantly written massive book on historical study of feminism which stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century. They in this book, according to M.H. Abrams:

Propose that this anxiety of authorship that resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively male prerogative, effected in women writers psychological duplicity that project monstrous counter figure to the heroine [ . . . ; such a figure is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage. (236)

They appeared concentrating on the figure of the suppressed female . It is a kind of realization of female identity. In its larger context that locate the female territory. Their main argument is that artistic creativity of the nineteenth century tradition which is perceived basically as a male quality, is in fact patriarchal superimposition upon the women writers who are imprisoned within it. They suggest the female writer first to struggle against the effect of socialization that becomes struggle against men's oppressive reading of women. But they further argue that the women can begin such struggle only by actively seeking a female precursor who, far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by examples that a revolt against patriarchal authority is possible.

The development of whole feminist literary criticism can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase was concerned on "The misogyny of literary practice" The stereotyped images of women in literature as angel or monsters, the literary

abuses or textual harassment of women in classic and popular male literature, and the exclusion of women from literary history" (Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism* 5). The second phase of it was the discovery that women writers had literature of their own, whose historical, thematic and artistic importance, had been obscured by the patriarchal values that dominate the culture. Many of the lost women writers were rediscovered, and the territory of the females plot were constructed in this phase. Third and the last phase of feminist criticism demanded a radical rethinking of the conceptual ground of literary study, a revision of the accepted theoretical assumptions about reading and writing that have been based entirely on male literary experiences.

Being a broad concept, feminism covers broader scope and includes different aspects of humanity despite its focus on the entire issues of women. Influenced by a great variety of theoretical emergences it manifest a great variety of critical vantage points and procedures. Feminism includes psychoanalytic, Marxist and diverse post-structuralist theories. According to its affiliation to certain theoretical backgrounds, feminism can be briefly studied by dividing it into different dimensions : Radical Feminism

Radical feminism promotes the basis for many of the ideas of feminism. Advocates of radical feminism usually clash with the idea of the liberal feminist because the further believes that society must be changed at its core in order to dissolve patriarchy, not just through acts of legislation. Unfortunately, this type of negative media attention creates a backlash of feminism. Aim of radical feminists is to free both men and women from the rigid gender roles that society has imposes upon them. Their mission is to overthrow the sex-gender system that has created oppression. Sometimes they believe that they must rage a war against men, patriarchy and the gender system which confines them to rigid social role. They not only reject these roles



of patriarchy but also reject men as well. Excluding males completely, they form groups to emphasize their difference from men. They highlight the importance of individual feelings, experiences and relationships. They were divided into two groups: Radical - Libertarian Feminism and Radical - cultural feminism .

Radical -libertarian feminist violate sexual norms and believe that women should control every aspect of their sexuality because the femininity and reproduction are the things that limit women's capacity to contribute to society. They advocates artificial means of reproduction whereas radical-cultural feminism believe that they should encompass their femininity. They opposes libertarian by saying that reproduction is the source of power for women. Liberal Feminism

When civil rights movements were taking place in the 1950's and 1960's , liberal feminism was most popular. Liberal feminist believe that women have the same mental capacity as their male counterparts and should be given the same opportunities in the mainstream of political, economic and social spheres. Women are equally created by god as he created men, so they should have equal right to choose the things that they like. They believe that oppression exists because of the way in which men and women are socialized, which supports patriarchy and keeps men in power position.

Liberal feminists demand equal opportunities and rights for women, including equal access to jobs and equal pay by creating and supporting acts of legislation. By doing so they challenges the ideology of patriarchy and liberates women. They are responsible for many important acts of legislation.

### **Socialist Feminism**

They believe that there is a direct link between class structure and the oppression of women. So they like to challenge the ideologies of capitalism and patriarchy that make themselves. They believe that although women are divided by

class, race, ethnicity and religion , they all experience the same oppression simply for being a woman. According to them there must be a coalition between men and women and they must see each others as equal in all spheres of life, The socialist theory focuses on the broader context of social relations in the community including the aspect of race, ethnicity and other differences. Their idea contrast to the idea of liberal feminism.

### **Cultural Feminism**

Cultural feminists believe that there are fundamental, biological difference between men and women , and that women should celebrate these difference. Women are inherently more kind and gentle. Cultural feminists believe that because of these differences, if women ruled the world there would be no more war and it would be a better place. Essentially, a women's way is the right and better way for everyone. Western society values male thought and the ideas of independence, hierarchy, competition and domination. Females are valued as interdependence, cooperation, relationships, community, sharing, joy, trust and peace.

Another dimension of feminist history is bio-feminism, which is often called corporal feminism that raises the issue of women's body as an essential part of women's writing because women have more biological experiences that men do. Experiences like menstruation, gestation ,ovulation and childbirth are mere women's and there lie several important things which are unexplored subjects for men. They generally stress the importance of the body as a source of imagery. They consider their physicality as a resource rather than destiny. They believe that patriarchal thought has limited female biology to its own narrow specification and they urge for the frank exposition of their body in their writing. Feminist criticism written in the biological perspective generally stresses the importance of the body as a source of imagery. Alicia Ostriker argues that contemporary American women poets use a franker more pervasive anatomy imagery

that their male counterparts and that this insistent body language refuses the spurious transcendence that comes at the price of denying the flesh. In a fascinating essay on Whiteman and Dickinson, Terence Doggory shows that physical nakedness had very different connotation for Dickinson and her successors, who associated nakedness with the objectified or sexually exploited female nude bio-feminist criticism itself has been intimate, confessional and often innovative in style and form. As Rachel Blau Duplessis in *Washing Blood* introduces a special issue of feminist studies on the subject of motherhood, "healing unification of body and mind based not only on the lived experienced of motherhood as a social institution but also on a biological power speaking through us", Feminist criticism makes itself defiantly vulnerable, virtually bares its throat to the knife, since our professional taboos against self-revelation are so strong.

Postcolonial feminists are concerned with the 'double colonization' of third world women under empirical condition. They are stuck between two trends of domination : patriarchy and imperialism subject constitution and object formation. They hardly approve them speaking in favour of women of all ranks and races. They blame them being more imperialist than feminist and claim that true feminist spirit and sentiment lies in the marginalized non-western society. Gayatri Spivok and Talpade Mohanty are important postcolonial feminists who raise their voice in favour of third-world women criticizing the mainstream western feminist.

The above discussed feminist discourse has helped to generate arguments and justify the protagonist of Margaret Atwood's novel *"Bodily Harm"* where Rennie's lost identity is regained due to her self realization. In which all the misfortunes happen to her are caused by male figures and how the 'body matters for women is being broadly analyzed. The discourse has given us a perspective to observe and analyzed the

novel in a meticulous and a scrupulous manner . It has enabled us to understand the condition, mental state , intellect and the feelings of female and their urge to bring out significant changes in the society so that a woman will live as free individual human being.

### III. RECONSTRUCTION OF RENNIE'S SELF IN *BODILY HARM*

#### Rennie: A Subject of Traditional Consciousness

'*Bodily Harm*' tells a tale of a victimized woman Rennie, who has to struggle both internally and externally to overcome obstacles. This novel is about female body form the point of view of a woman whose body is already damaged by cancer and mastectomy. In this regard Coral Ann Howells writes in her book about Atwood: From this "post-operative" angle she scrutinizes social myths of femininity, medical discourse on breast cancer and, most significantly, the rhetoric of pornography; this novel is emphatically not about bodily pleasure but about *Bodily Harm*. (Howells 106)

Society where Rennie born and raised up is also the patriarchal society; then how it remained untouched with the traditions of patriarchal consciousness? As other women in such society, Rennie, the protagonist of this novel, is also become the subject of traditional consciousness. She also suffers from the traditional social myths about femininity.

When the novel begins we can see Rennie's arrival at home; but before she enters she finds the door was opened and inside the room she finds two policemen waiting for her. She is informed that her apartment has had an uninvited intruder and he had left a coiled rope on her bed. Right then we come to know that Rennie is a victim. This break-in initiates the image of a faceless stranger, which haunts Rennie throughout the novel. Rennie is not only disturbed by this break-in, but is also more disturbed by the treatment of policemen. Their worthless questions and instructions bother her. They ask such questions because, as Rennie has thought, "he wanted it to be my fault, just a little, some indiscretion, some provocation" (15). A policeman

starts lecturing her about locks, about living alone and about safety. Howells further states:

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 malevolent attack. She is a victim and yet in the eyes of the Toronto police she is not innocent precisely because she is a woman. (Howells 112)

Rennie is a victim on all different levels simply because she is a woman. She has been diagnosed with breast cancer. It is one way that she is victimized as a woman because it is a disease that is predominantly found in women. The policeman blames her for provoking the intrusion and implies that she dresses in front of her windows, thus using her femininity to provoke the intruder. When Rennie shows her scare which is caused by mastery un buttoning her blouse, proof that she would not do what she was being accused of, the policeman is somewhat offended. We no longer sees Rennie as a whole woman and is therefore repulsed by her. The policeman's focus was on the missing part of her body instead of what was still there.

Rennie is victimized for she is somehow breaking the tradition. Coming out of the four walls and trying to live her own life is like a stone in the throat of the society. She does that she chooses the life which is preferred for men only. To be a journalist, moreover a reporter is a job given to the male figures of the society. Patriarchal society does not digest the thing that a women become free and do the works that men were doing form centuries. Women have been journalistically silenced and harshly criticized for desiring to "size the pen".

She used to be a brave journalist before, Rennie feels weak within and scares a lot due to her diagnosis of cancer. Externally she is victimized by the break-in that happens in the very beginning of the novel and internally by the cancer. She vies the 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 her life has changed after the diagnosis. She starts to fear that many things could go wrong as a result of operation. Before the surgery she is pessimistic about what they might find in the time of operation. She thinks "may be they would open her up and finds that she was permitted, riddled, rotting away from the inside" (BH 11). After the operation she is frequently fearful of what she perceives could happen with the scare. "The camera bag strap cuts into her shoulder and the flesh above her left breast; the scar is pulling again. When it feels like this she's afraid to look down, she's afraid she'll still see blood, leakage, her stuffing come in gout" (BH 14). She has literally lost a part of her body but she is trying not to lose a larger part of herself. At one point, she tries to trivialize the cancer by saying she will write about it as "Cancer, the coming thing" or "the cut-off point" (BH 19), but the seriousness of it all takes over and she actually loses some of her writing talent too. Palumbo states, "Rennie's series of close calls with death has made her doubt her ability to write successfully about surfaces, the principal theme of her journalism" (Palumbo 80).

The existence of the cancer drastically changes Rennie, that she can no longer "assume the future" (BH 88) as she once could. The cancer victimizes both physically and mentally. Rennie represents all women of patriarchal society who, through the influence of culture, have become passive, docile and easily allow themselves to be taken advantage of by men whom they are anxious to please. Being capable and self dependent, they always need a male supporter in their life. It is social construction

that women do not like to live by themselves. Rennie the lifestyle journalist also feels empty without male friends and when she gets any men in her life she is betrayed by them later on. When she was working with Jake, the predator in her life. She got ready and prepared herself to fulfill the physical desire of Jake. "Jake, an adopt in the field of advertising, inhabits the plane of disembodied appearances alone, manipulating images which bears no relation to the world of substance" (Lucking 41). "He was a packager" (BH 103) by profession and Rennie eventually discovers that "she was one of the things Jake was packaging" (104). Before her illness, Rennie has resembled Jake in evaluating attitudes and beliefs not according to their intrinsic validity or sincerity but in terms of whether they are fashionable or not. Being his lover, Rennie also changes into "packager" according to the interest of Jake. She has been a packager exploiting the media in order to manipulate tastes and inspire fashion trends at almost awesome triviality.

Rennie's relationship with Jake is misrepresented by her distorted version of it. Jake appears to have been quite dominating. He tried to shape her into who he wanted her to be. She allows him to do the things that he wants, allows him to package her. He hangs pictures up in her own apartment that make her feel uncomfortable but she leaves them up instead of taking them down. Slowly she detaches herself from him and forgets to have any feelings for him. It could be argued that Jake is just another tormentor in Rennie's life. It seems that he is victimizing Rennie by his rape fantasies, his short porn art photographs, his 'lunch time quickies, his 'ungrammatical obscene letters composed of words snipped from newspaper and his pretension to be a lurker. These portray him as a negative life. It is the truth that she goes along with these things. She thinks of herself as "raw material" for Jake, yet she doesn't feel strongly enough to anything about it.



The casual and non-binding relationship she has formed with Jake cannot survive the revelation of depth that Rennie's illness entails and symbolizes: afterwards. "She did not want him to touch her and she didn't know why, and he didn't really want to touch her either but he wouldn't admit it" (BH 197). Their relationship was a contract of mutual gratification. So it breaks down.

Since Jake had seen her in completely sexual terms, Rennie initially turns to Deniel. Deniel is her surgeon who is the protector (again man) by saving her life. He claims that he is the one who gives another life to Rennie. He possesses the healing touch that Rennie comes to obsess about in his hands and her want and needs for them to touch her:

She did not see hands but an odd growth, like a plant or something with tentacles, detachable [. . .]. She fell in love with him because he was the first thing she saw after her life had been saved. (BH 32)

Deniel saved her once from cancer but question arises could he reconcile her self with her body? But their sexual encounter does not tear her out of the darkness and insecurity that overwhelmed her after the operation. They have physical relation after much had-holding and moral dilemmas. After that she feels she saved him in some way.

Subsequently, she feels violated, victimized and raped once again since in his ordinariness Deniel still manages to take something of her which was out of her expectation. He too became the winner and her fantasy is unfulfilled. He is the man with the scalpel mutilating the female body, who can be paralleled with the man with the rope. He is the stereotype of an idealized man. According to Freud, this recalls the projection of a father in the eyes of a little girl, both powerful and protective.

Rennie has been treating her body as a machine that needs good repair. She tended to regard illnesses such as cancer no more than the outward manifestation of some mental disability. Deniel tells her that "the body is not separate from the mind" (BH 82), neither can the body and its ailments be regarded merely as a function of mind.

Rennie makes a trip to Caribbean island to write a travel piece. In fact she wants to run away from her anxiety, pain and disturbed life. There she meets with Paul who also is a fantasy because he is a man of Rennie's imagination. But he doesn't appear as he is in reality. He fits the image Rennie has in mind even though 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 first and in the return he takes advantage of her. Rennie feels so lost in St. Antoine that she is ready to follow and obey anyone. There she finds no other way to survive. Though the laws of our society now allow women to be in charge of themselves, Rennie finds herself in a situation where she depends on men. Because of that, she gets involved in something that she has nothing to do with and not interested with.

Paul, who reconciles Rennie's body and self too is typically a male. Again a male protector. He lives on the edge and deals drugs, he rescues maidens in distress. With the help of another lady of his group 'Lora', Paul makes Rennie help them in their arm traffic. In the name of giving something, Paul is rather taking something more from her. He may have the most effect on Rennie's life because he is the one who really takes her over and finally uses her. He is an American arrived in a post-colonial island who enjoys the lack of limit on it.

He is the risk loving man and likes playing war and past legal limits. He uses Rennie for his benefit and pushes her too into the risk and leaves her up. He is a symbol of male power who takes advantage of weak point of innocence of women. Though he is powerful, lacks the knowledge to use power to avoid any danger.

Every man she meets actually uses her. Not only the three boys with whom she had physical relation but also the man she meets in airplane tries to use her. Dr. Minnow, who seems concerned by the fact that she is on her own, without a man and speaks about "the sweet Canadian" (BH 29), as if they were little kids, naïve enough to think that the whole world is as honest and nice as their microcosm. In this issue, women and Canadians are given the same place; Rennie is therefore twice weak, being Canadian. Dr. Minnow is an ambiguous character, even though he is not as violent as other men. In much more concerned way he tries to use Rennie. He wants to have her write piece on the local situation, defending his opinion. But Rennie denies him saying that she is a lifestyle journalist.

This shows how the feminine identity and the definition of limits of women's bodies are mixed, and how both of these elements interact. Rennie's body integrity as well as her feminine identity are threatened by men.

Rennie is always trying to find help, comfort and support by men because it is the culturally developed habit that is deeply rooted in the society and in the mind of women. Though, Rennie rightly sees men as potentially dangerous, she feels empty without them. The mysterious man who leaves the rope on her bed is clearly a threatening figure. He is the exact stereotype of the man who is imposing his presence in woman's life, sometimes violently and without any care about what women think. Even Jake, Rennie's lover is mostly violent with her and she gets scared of him. She sees him as an object of fear and her feelings about him remains unclear. He

represents the man who begins to take hold of and control her life to the point where she only lives through him and feels alone and empty when he leaves. Deniel is the stereotype of an ideal man. Rennie imagines all his power and even his soul in his hands, because he was operated through his hands. Again Paul and Minnow who try to use her for their own benefits by blackmailing her emotionally.

Rennie, though she is mostly violated and mistreated by men, she is more so the victim of tradition and culture. Rennie becomes the subject of traditional consciousness. She is also violated by other women too.

If we go back to her past we come to know that she was borned and raised up in Grishood, a small village. Rennie's childhood was spent with her mother and grandmother without her father; Her grandmother is a typical bad mother figure that Atwood presents in her novels. Rennie's grandmother has sent her to the cellar and locked her there for doing something wrong. This echoes her incarnation in the basement cell of a prison for an unknown crime. This seems to show that Rennie, like other women in general is condemned to the cultural role of a victim.

They had been fulfilling all kinds of relationship before Rennie's mastectomy. But the tragedy begins after her mastectomy, things begin to go sour between them. But Jake does not lose interest because she is so passive and accepting of his oppressive and abusive nature. Even when Jake leaves her, she takes it upon herself to be absolute realization.

The disconnection is rooted in Rennie's mind. So she imagines Jake's lover as 'a headless body' and feels this alienation with her own body. Since Jake had seen her in completely sexual terms. She seeks for a man who would be in touch of her heart despite her body. So, she initially turns to Deniel, her surgeon, the male protector,

who is seen in contrast to Jake, the predator. He possesses the heading touch that Rennie comes to obsess about in his hand and her need for them to touch her.

### **Resistance against Patriarchy**

Though the entire plot of this novel revolves around a victimized woman, it also has some elements of resistance. Rennie is a typical woman who somehow resists patriarchal norms. She, somehow breaks the social norms and tries to live her own life. No doubt, she has some weaknesses that spoil her 'self' in the beginning, but it can easily be felt that these weaknesses of a woman like Rennie are the social and cultural products. These weaknesses as taking man for support and easy acceptance of male's desire are within her because of the society taught her in this way.

When we see her past; she's found in Griswold, her birthplace; a very small village. We find Rennie as a revolutionary lady; she not only questions her femininity but also her whole identity. When she was young girl, she wanted to leave Griswold to detach herself from her root. She eventually leaves Griswold, because she wanted to make her own identity, own name, that is her own stance.

She wanted to be a journalist; that goal she met. She is a journalist, a reporter. Her duty is to visit different places and write about the "life style". To be a reporter in such patriarchal society is really a challenging job. The work, especially given to male has been chosen by Rennie. She has gone against traditional norms and values; so she has to face various problems. The patriarchal notion is that a women should remain within four walls; she should work only in the kitchen; she should get marriage in time and serve her husband. She should given birth of children and spend life in the home itself taking is as the world. But Rennie is somehow resisting against patriarchy. She no more remain within four walls. First of all she leaves her home. Secondly, she leaves Toronto where she is working and living with Jake.

It is very challenging for a woman to go alone to St. Antonio, a Caribbean island. She has gone there to write a travel piece but falls in political uprising. Rennie is being used by Paul and almost being tried to be used by Dr. Minnow, a politician.

Here, according to some feminists, Rennie and another female character fall into identity crisis. Those identity crisis, according to feminist perspective, come from the fact that women are trying to change the place they have been given in society, i.e. taking care of the house and children. Of course, in the case of Rennie, she has no children and has a job of her own. Margaret Atwood, through her character Rennie, is showing that a single and professionally independent women too are not totally free of the patriarchal order. They internalize it. It is what most of the women have been taught, consciously or unconsciously. Rennie has been raised in a puritan neighbourhood, where women must be decent and one of their main aims to get married. The fact remains that she wants to escape a life where she feels threatened to build another one. The personal choice seems to be very important point here. They are trying to obtain because they need to decide for themselves and not let men rule their life. It is the resistance against patriarchy.

Rennie is marked as unconventional and in the eyes of her Griswoldian counterparts, her job as female writer is unacceptable. The patriarchal culture of Griswold advocated for women to be in submissive roles. Rennie admits that at one point she wanted to be a doctor like her worshipped grandfather, but she quickly leaves the idea. In Griswold "men were doctors, women were nurses; men were heroes, and what were women? Women rolled the bandages and that was all anyone ever said about that" (BH 48).

Women in patriarchal society are not allowed to choose a man who can satisfy them. But in case of Rennie it is different. She crosses the fence that society has

created for women. She has a man Jake whom she was not satisfied and falls in love with Daniel; when she finds her desires remains unfulfilled with him she leaves him too. So she uses her right to choose a suitable guy for her; which is against the norms of society.

Hence we can see some events of resistance in *Bodily Harm*. How a women, who tries to oppose traditional norms and patriarchal values, are treated and tortured in our society is presented in the novel. Rennie has to suffer and run from one place to another to preserve her identity because she is resisting against the society.

### **Rennie's Crisis of Identity**

Though, Rennie a professional lady, earning money for herself and has her own existence; she suffers form identity crisis. Sometimes she goes through a crisis about her femininity and sometimes she feels herself empty and nude. She always wants male company to support her that puts her identity in question.

First of all Rennie goes through a crisis about her femininity. She undergoes a breast surgery. The importance of breasts needs to be pointed out. Breasts have been a symbol of fertility for ages and of femininity in our society. It is believed that the main purpose of female beings to get marriage and give birth. For this reason a woman harmed in this part of her body will question her femininity. She feels her is no more a female. It is hard for her to make love with her boyfriend, who also seems to see her differently since he learns about her breast tumor. He neglects her body because this body seems strange, distant and different. Rennie has the feeling that he denies her body. In doing so he denies her femininity. It is the crisis of her feminine identity.

A woman needs a man to be herself and to define herself. It is a part of patriarchal order that feminists wanted to eradicate. Being dependent means being

chained and unable to live without an upper power. Atwood chooses a main character Rennie who is the opposite example of feminist ideal. It can be a warning to what could happen if women would let men rule their lives. The female characters featured in this novel, though they do not exactly fit in this group, cannot imagine living without men. This need compelled them to accept the power of men over them. Women's identity falls in crisis not only due to the men but also from the women who are unable to take care themselves and to stand in front of men. Women want to be the equal of men and at the same time to be treated specially and helped by them. They are willing to place themselves in dependence but still want to keep their freedom. In order to free themselves from this condition, women must accept that men will not take care of them anymore.

Rennie, when she is living with Jake, she has written what he wants. She has not written what she wanted and interested but she has to write what Jake wanted for his people. Rennie's idea was no more respected. She does what he wants. She makes bed for him, takes baths for him and though she has pain inside she tries to make him happy.

Jake took her to fentons, which used to be more than he could afford, and they sat under one of the indoor trees. At first he held her hand, but she felt he was doing it because he thought he ought to and after a while he stopped. He ordered a bottle of wine and urged her to drink more of it that she wanted to. Perhaps he thought she would be less boring if she got drink. (BH 19)

Throughout the novel, her whole life seems to be collapsing and she is practically left alone wondering what her life is about. The answer she finds does not help her because it is the realization of the emptiness of her existence. She has failed



in many ways, looking at the aims that she had in her youth. She has been unable to forget Griswold. She did not keep some promises like never being boring or never faking. Her love life loses its meaning during this identity crisis. She realize that most of her friends are not real ones, that her job is not what she expected it to be and that she is not as good as she wanted to be. Rennie decided to go in search of a new identity, because she lost the former one, and feels now like nude.

Rennie does not consciously decide to begin a new life but it is obvious that this is exactly what she wants. She chooses the Caribbean island because she wants a change. Her real life is starting in St. Antoine, the promised Eden. But the beautiful island happens to fade very quickly, and Rennie aims to sleep in order to forget what she is doing there. Furthermore, she seems not to be very pleased, away form home, especially missing its security. When she arrives. She first thinks succeeded in making herself invisible, free to decide whatever she wants, nobody being in a position to do so. She sees herself safe in this way. But, to her expense, she realizes that she is not, that even if she cannot have any connection with local people, she is watched form the beginning, and the one composing her identity is not herself. As with Jake, she appears as a blank paper and somebody else has got the pen.

Like migrating birds traveling over dark, seas, Rennie does not realize that her involvement could put her into an unsafe situation. In St. Antonio, she is a tourist. So Paul told her that the upcoming trouble did not concern her. But she ends up in the middle of it because of him she feels protected, also does not worry nor wants to think about the future.

She is afraid of what her future could be or that there could not be any future for her, and that she could face death any time. She leaves her former home and life to escape to a place she imagines full of hope and bright. Unfortunately, she deeps

running through black clouds, even under the burning sun of the Caribbean island.

There she does not find her real existence.

In order to find her true self, a woman must be strong enough to search it and go through the emptiness she might face sometimes. Rennie is not so strong. Running from place to place and person to person she cannot go away from her life. But is actually left behind by it. Her health is replaced by an illness, without her doing anything for it to happen and it opens the door for numerous problems to come, also making her love life collapse. The basic elements of her life disappear and she remains alone and lost in crowd. This added to her weakness and the need she experiences to have a man taking care of her, does not allow her to develop her personality and on the contrary puts her in jeopardy. She loses her identity; it is in crisis. She does not have her own 'self' in the time of identity crisis. Her 'self' itself is in question. This crisis ruins her 'self'.

### **Reconstruction**

In the last part of the novel Rennie is able to learn her own gullibility. When she is arrested from her hotel room and is treated badly in subaltern cell she realizes her own weakness and thinks seriously about her own life.

Firstly, her feminine identity is reconstructed after her operation/surgery. Dr. Denial gives her life and it could be described as Rennie's rebirth. She is awakened to the fact that an invader has entered her body and will have to embark on the journey to recover her lost sense of self. Rennie is unknowingly struggling on a journey to reconnect.

Paul is one who aids in Rennie's recovery by helping to put things in a "wider human perspective. In the significant scene where Paul and Rennie make love, she begins to repair her once severed connections with humanity. She notes:

He reaches out his hands and Rennie can't remember ever having been touched before. Nobody lives forever, who said you could? This much will have to do, this much is enough. She's open now, she's been opened, she's being drawn back down, she enters her body again and there's a moment of pain, incarnation, this may be only the body's desperations, a flare up, a last clutch at the world before the long slide into final illness and death; but meanwhile she's solid after all, she's still here on earth, she's grateful, he's touching her, she can still be touched. (BH 193)

Hence, with the reconstruction of her body her feminine identity also comes into existence. With this victory over cancer, she again gain her whole body. When she finds she can be touched again it is the greatest pleasure for her.

The fact that she can still be touched, not just physically, but mentally is important. She is again capable of human emotion, human attachment. In this scene Rennie is able to bridge the gap between mind and body. She discovers that connections are still possible. By recognizing the fact that she can be touched, she realizes her own power in touching others. The incident with Paul certainly helps Rennie begin to recover her lost connections, but there is one final event which seals her recovery and reconstructs her.

Rennie says that what Paul has given her is enough. "She can live with that, it's something, and something is better than nothing after all" (BH 212), but it is not until Rennie is imprisoned in a St. Antione Jail cell that she is fully healed of her detached, unfeeling self. During her imprisonment Rennie witnessed much violence that she has never seen before. She observes men getting brutally beaten outside of her jail cell and she watches as lora is violently attacked by the prison guards. As Rubenstein notes: "Only with the awful knowledge about personal responsibility,

female alliance and the terrible consequences of their abdication can Rennie Wilford be truly, redeemed and whole" (Pandoras Box 274).

It is unfortunate that Rennie has to be subjected to so much pain and suffering before she can become whole again. In the most important scene of Rennie's recovery, she truly does reconnect with a lost part of herself. After Lora has been beaten by the turnkeys, Rennie is unsure what to do. A memory of her childhood invades her thoughts she had lost her "feeling" hands. Rennie's mother had looked at Rennie with disgust, as if telling Rennie that she should know what to do by now. Her mother had taken hold of her "grandmother's dangling hands, clasping them in her own" (BH 287).

This vivid memory illuminates for Rennie the absolute necessity for human contact. "Rennie kneels on the wet floor and touches the hand, which feels cold" (BH 287). She moves Lora's limp body to a corner of the cell and brushes her hair away from her face, a face which is barely recognizable. She realizes that there is no such thing as a "faceless stranger":

She is holding Lora's hand, between both of her own, perfectly still, nothing is moving, and yet she knows she is pulling on the hand, as hard as she can, there's an invisible hole in the air, Lora is on the other side of it and she has to pull through, she's grafting her teeth with the effort, she can hear herself, a moaning, it must be her own voice, this is a gift, this is the hardest things he's ever done. (BH 288)

It is unclear if she succeeds in reviving Lora from death or not, but Atwood brilliantly makes that fact almost arbitrary in light of the fact that while Rennie is struggling to save Lora, she is actually saving herself. The scene depicts Rennie's rebirth into a world that she will be able to connect with. Rennie sees a reflection of

herself in Lora. She recognizes that both women have suffered at the hands of a patriarchal society. By saving Lora, Rennie also chooses to save herself. She acknowledges that she is not the only victim and by helping others, she can overcome her own victimization. By reaching out to Lora, Rennie succeeds in shedding the constraints that have kept her a victim for so long. As Hansen states, "Rennie's transforming experience's a personal triumph essential to and secured by narrative closure, is qualified by the fact that the heroine's "cure" depends on another women's pain, suffering and possible death" (Hansen 6).

Rennie survive in the end and is able to become a more fully integrated person. Hwether or not Rennis is physically liberated from prison, the importance lies in the fact that Rennie was ultimately able to connect, to feel again. Regardless of her ultimate fate, she was able to connect and form an alliance. The final redemptive acts of Rennie are more important than her ultimate fate, Rennie suffers in many different ways throughout her life time. The break-in and diagnosis of cancer victimize her. Her childhood and naivete render her a victim as well. But at last she is able to overcome and reconstruct herself; she is able to overcome her silence. 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 will not write for someone's desire. 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" (BH 290). She realizes the political importance of this change and she cannot ignore the changes going on around her.

The subalterian cell becomes the place of enlightenment for Rennie. There, she questions her identity and realizes her fault. She realizes that still then she was living a life guided by others. In the beginning, when she was engaged with other male figure, totally depend upon them to do anything. She did whatever they want. Her consent becomes her failure. So at the point of this realization she decides to live for herself. Here she borns again. It is the rebirth of Rennie.

By her realization she gains her lost 'self'. It was destroyed in the time of identity crisis. Though there is no actions that proves Rennie is regaining or reconstructing her self but her realization itself is the reconstruction. At the end of the novel there is not only the reconstruction of body but also the reconstruction of self is reflected.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The story of *Bodily Harm* revolves around its central character who is a young fashion reporter. She travels to island of St. Antoine with the intention of indulging herself surviving a bout with breast cancer and traumatic break up. Because of breast cancer she is victimized physically; and mentally she is victimized because of the break- up. Rennie's imaginative Eden St Antonio turns to be a depressed country on the brink of revolution and civil uprising. After being infatuated with Paul , a shadowy player in the local scene, she involves in the politics without her interest. With commitment comes responsibility and implication, and Rennie soon finds herself thrown into a nightmare she couldn't have anticipated her efforts not only survive but comprehend and report the swirl of events around her lead her to new levels of personal and artistic awareness.

In the novel, Atwood presents a woman character who unknowingly loses her identity , Rennie unlike most of the women, resists patriarchy, and social norms. She at the very beginning is aware of her identity. She leaves Griswold, a small village because there she couldn't exist by herself. In Toronto she becomes independent being a reporter. She has her own life; free and self motivated. There somehow she gets her name and identity. But later on , due to some weaknesses which she inherits from the society she lives, loses her identity, She does what others want her to do she is what others want her to be . Here, in this situation she forgets her individual identity and her self is destroyed . She doesn't have her own self. She becomes a puppet dancing in the hand of male counterparts.

'Self' is the greatest ornament of an individual that indicates one's essential being by identifying him/ her from other's particular nature. To have one's own identity and to exist by himself/herself one should be able to preserve the self. Social,

cultural , sexual, authoritative and many other man made factors may hinder women's self and that leads to identity crisis. Mostly, in patriarchal society, women feel identity crisis due to the destruction of the self.

The main cause behind this destruction is man's perspectives and behaviors of 'second-sex' a submissive and complementary to them. Man thinks himself as a support and makes woman a ' Parasite'. Man does so with the help of different social, cultural and religious myths about women. These women have to fight with more obstacles for their individual identity. Their first effort should be in equating themselves to men being self dependent as well as by eliminating all kinds of gender inequalities and discrimination in society. They should establish their own sphere analogues to that of men .They should not compromise to preserve their identity that consists their self. Only then they own complete individual identity .

Rennie, in *Bodily Harm*, suffers a crisis of identity while she involves herself with different men. Though she is independent, she always needs male support to live life. Physically and mentally victimized Rennie does not think about herself until she is locked up in an underground cell. Inside the cell she questions her individual identity and seeks her 'self.'

Inside the jail a kind of consciousness knocks her heart and she realizes her fault. She, at that times remembers her life which she was living for others. What she was writing and how she was working as a reporter was not according to her will she finds her will power being lost. Men like Paul, Minnew, Dr. Deniel and Jack are using here according to their child obey everything does whatever they want her to do. Rennie, throughout the novel, does not think or even know what her desire and interest are, Jack is seen packaging her. Dr. Deniel in the name of giving her new life holds her hand and instigate her to fulfill his sexual desire. Paul rescues her from



physical and mental disgust. But in doing so he also uses her in his arm traffic. He is a risk lover man and Rennie, unfortunately becomes his victim.

All the end of the novel, when Rennie, thinks all about these happenings in her life claim with herself to be a self motivated person. She plans for her future to continue the job as a reporter. But then she will work as she wants. She will be what she wants to be. When the novel shifts to the future tense to describe Rennie's release that actually, intends to introduce an element of formal ambiguity which is essential to her meaning. For the clear implication of the story is that Rennie, "whether she is physically liberated from the prison or not, 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 independent of its practical consequences.

It is irrelevant fact where Rennie will be, the importance lies in the fate that Rennie was ultimately able to connect, to feel again. Regardless of her ultimate fate, she was able to connect and form an alliance. The final redemptive acts of Rennie are more important than her ultimate fate. She suffers in many ways throughout her lifetime. The break-in and diagnosis of cancer both victimized her. Her childhood and naivete render her a victim as well. Most debilitating though is her inability to feel, her absolute detachment from emotion and humanity. But in the end of this novel she is able to overcome all these matters and survive all of these numerous torments; significantly, she is able to overcome her silence. It is very important to note that, as a journalist. Rennie 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 Rennie is not going to abdicate this power; instead, she is going to use it to her advantage. She is going to change her old ways and write about what is important.

Hence, we can see how a woman falls into identity crisis because of traditional consciousness. How the social, cultural myths about women and male ideology trap a woman and how they badly victimize is being presented through the character Rennie in this novel. Rennie's lost self is reconstructed at the end of the novel. Her self is reconstructed by consciousness and realization.

Her efforts to not only survive but comprehend and report the swirl of events around her lead her to new levels of personal and artistic awareness; that leads herself towards reconstruction. Hence, the novel ends with the reconstruction of Rennie's self.

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