Margaret Atwood in her novels questions patriarchal power structures that subsume the identity of women. While doing so, she also questions the domination of Canada by the U.S. She notices several similarities between women's powerlessness, born out of victim complex, and that of Canada's. However a simple reduction of Atwood's work as merely feminist or nationalist does not do justice to this great writer. Many labels can be conveniently tagged to her work. According to her, one form of oppression should only point to the different power struggles that constitute each and every hierarchy. Applying the Derridean notion of deconstruction, it however, follows that no power centre is static and permanent. As Bhabha remarks, “America leads to Africa, the nations of Europe and Asia meet in Australia, the margins of the nation displace the centre; the people of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis” (Nation
and Narration 6-7). In the dynamics of power, the margins are reinstated from the edges and are reinscribed into the white pages.

The ‘excentric’s’ problem of ‘becoming’ becomes one of the major concerns for Atwood. In *Lady Oracle*, Joan finds herself lost in the self-drawn mazes of her fabricated stories. Submitting herself to society’s imperialism at first, she suffers the loss of an authentic identity. Finally she succeeds in escaping the barriers that prevented her from asserting her self. Similar is the case of Marian in *The Edible Woman*. At first she willingly submits herself to the desires of Peter, but later realizes her own folly and strives to create an identity of her own. Disintegration or division, gradual realization and an integration of the conflicting components, is the pattern that recurs in Atwood. Dismemberment as in the case of Rennie in *Bodily Harm* or the unnamed narrator in *Surfacing* only leads to a reshuffled integration. Once the realization dawns on the protagonist, she takes up tools that she feels can change her. Rennie understands the lack of depth in her writing and Elaine has new visions of her paintings. The changed perspective helps the protagonists to see things in a clearer and better light.

The question of women’s survival, in Atwood, is closely linked to Canada’s need to survive as a separate nation. The dismantling of the phallocentric structures becomes metaphorical and includes a deconstruction of
colonialist and imperialist structures as well. Her metanarratives like *The Handmaid’s Tale* question the validity and truth of history. History in the novel is a reconstruction of past events, a reading of the past in the light of the present. It is a pasting together of fragments recalled from the unconscious and need not be chronological. By writing their stories into the male text of history, women undermine the continuity and finality associated with history. The temporal games in Atwood work to emphasize this point. The unchronological narrative order and the shifting points of view help to deny any closure to the texts. This is supported by the fact that the novels are openended. The ambivalence associated with fixity and wholeness is foregrounded.

If temporality becomes an indicator of change, of disruption and discontinuity, space becomes the locus of this overthrow. In the oppositional dyad, nature/culture, women are often associated with nature. The fertility myths endowed Nature with womanly attributes and labelled her Mother Nature. So the urban vs rural becomes a major component in Atwood’s fictional structure. Novels like *Surfacing* clearly point to the way in which natural resources are destroyed by hostile forces. Though she clubs this with American technological invasion of Canada’s wilderness, Atwood once again reiterates her liberal stand when she points out that the destructors were
Canadians with an American attitude. So Man or America is only a metaphor for Atwood. Similarly she does not portray the rural as heaven and urban as hell. The unnamed narrator in *Surfacing* finally understands that an integration of both is necessary for the creation of a matured personality. Elaine in *Cat’s Eye* also contrasts the ignorant bliss that her rural life provided and the mental agony that she had to undergo once she settles down in Toronto. But finally she understands that to “see life entire” one must reconcile oppositions (*Cat’s Eye* 398). Being a visual artist she breaks the restrictive frames of art causing alterations. This breaking of frames becomes symbolic of altering historical and spatial frames to include the history and geography of the silenced and the faded that includes women, nature as well as Canada.

Thus we find that the displaced power of the powerless is restored by Atwood. So power becomes a significant aspect in her works. Dealing with the manifestations of power at different levels, she points out how excessive power can destroy individuals, groups or even nations. Women who are underrated as the powerless, are also endowed with authority in Atwood and she shows how they encounter power at individual and political levels. This does not mean that Atwood subverts the existing notions of totality and authoritarianism to replace them with other similar structures. In Atwood’s
work, oppositions and split discourses overlap, creating what Hutcheon calls, a “problematic site of interaction” (“Circling” 168). Incorporating techniques that have the potential to subvert from within, Atwood synthesizes existing discourses into a “constructive political enterprise” (Hutcheon 167). A “committed identification with Otherness,” prompts her to give voice to the “noncanonical” or “otherside of the story” (DuPlessis 108). By displacing and decolonizing, Atwood points to the transition from “internalized colonial mentality to an anti-colonial world view” (DuPlessis 110). By focussing on women, she shifts them from objects to subjects. But roles are often doubled and man as well as the woman becomes good and evil at the same time. Thus everything is made symbolic and traditionally inherited patterns are changed. Atwood writes beyond the margins and blends hierarchies “exposing issues of class; internal political fragmentation; and social, sexual, cultural...orthodoxy” (Wilson 34). However her work does not imply a reversal of roles or the creation of a matriarchy. Rather it explores the possibilities for the peaceful co-existence of differences, a harmony between man, woman, animal and nature.