CHAPTER – III

CHAOS AND LONGING FOR ORDER

Even the things we look at demand our participation, and our commitment: if this participation and commitment are given, what can result is a "jail-break", an escape from our old habits of looking at things, and a "re-creation", a new way of seeing, experiencing and imaging – or imagining – which we ourselves have helped to shape. (Atwood, *Survival* 246)

The intrinsic quality of man is affected by the influence of the external world which is changing day by day because of the development of science. Cultural development also affects the inner most self of man, for he has to live a social life where society plays a dominant role. Writers portray the society they belong to with all its advantages and disadvantages and often direct the people to lead a better life.

Throughout literary history writers try to create a world where man can lead a peaceful life. American transcendentalists like Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman gave importance to human nature and highlighted the relationship between man and nature, and Thomas
More tried to create an ideal world – a Utopia where man could lead a happy and healthy life, in his Utopia. John Milton was influenced by the story of the ‘Fall of Man’ and he wrote *Paradise Lost* to justify the ways of God to man. Though his approach was puritanical by nature, he aimed at creating a world where morality definitely had a place. He portrayed hell and heaven: the former associated with evil, and the latter associated with good qualities being a place of happiness. External suffering in hell finds a place in Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*, where the central character’s suffering is highlighted by the author and he insisted that man has to rely on good qualities. So, the concept of suffering varies from writer to writer according to his/her own background and education. At the end of the modernist tradition, writers like Beckett visualize the chaotic nature of man through their works, which is difficult to understand. Beckett in fact, visualized the psyche of man through his absurd play *Waiting for Godot*. In the style of writing he breaks the traditional style. As David Lodge rightly puts it in his book *The Modes of Modern Writing*.

Beckett disrupts the continuity of his discourse by unpredictable swerves of tone, metafictional asides to the reader, blank spaces in the text, contradiction and permutation. (231)
After Samuel Beckett’s play of discontinuity, few writers concentrated on the purposelessness of man’s existence and highlighted it. In the postmodern era (David Lodge believes that Samuel Beckett is the pioneer of post modernism) writers try to present their character’s sufferings with keen interest especially their perverted behaviour through their actions. Today’s literature presents man’s inner most self as a disturbed self. Multiple selves are employed by postmodern writers like Margaret Atwood. Unlike the poets of her own age, Atwood, being a feminist and a post modernist reverts power roles. She highlights the male dominated world which is full of violence which ill treats the other unavoidable part of humanity i.e. women. In most of her works including her poetry collections and novels the female heroes are caught up in tight corners out of compulsion and they often involve in circle games of power politics. It is remarkable that her female heroes enact their roles by breaking the male imposed history of silence and try to create a world where their roles are also included for throughout history their roles are excluded.

Gerda Lerner rightly observes,

Women have been left out of history not because of the evil conspiracies of men is general or male historians in particular,

but because we have conspiracies history only in male
centered terms. We have missed women and their activities, because we have asked question of history which are inappropriate to women. To rectify this and to light up the areas of historical darkness we must, for a time focus on women centered enquiry considering the possibility of the existence of a female culture with in the general culture shared by men and women. History must include an account of the female experience over time and should include the development of feminist consciousness as an essential aspect of women past. (qtd. in Schneir 420)

In fact Atwood tries to rewrite the male dominated history which excluded women’s experience and considered them as passive, weak etc., Her female heroes in her works like You Are Happy are powerful and active and in works like The Edible Woman and Power Politics in fact challenge the male dominated world.

Atwood’s characters suffer from appropriation and separatism and often oscillate between the two and this leads to duality. Dualism plays a major role in her poems and in fact titles of her poetry collections namely Double Persephone and Two-Headed Poems suggest the doubleness. Sherill Grace calls Atwood’s use of duality as “violent duality”.
Atwood's personae in her poems and protagonists in her novels undergo a great deal of suffering to live not to escape. They are victims of authorities and social institutions and are often violated by the male dominated world. They live in a world where survival itself is difficult.

While reviewing Sherill Grace's book *Violent Duality: a Study of Margaret Atwood*, D.G. Jones says,

The implication of Atwood's work, says Grace, is that to live as humans we must learn, not to escape, but to live the duality, which means neither suppressing one term nor polarizing both as absolutes. To do either is to do violence to reality, to ourselves. However, extreme the dualities, they are no more absolute than the seasons; they exist in a dynamic relation, in continuous transformation (111)

Transformation finds an unavoidable place in her works which is not only mental but also physical as in the poem ‘He is a strange biological phenomenon’ where the ‘male’ is reduced to a creature having violent qualities. The use of space between lines helps the reader to think about the transformation. The discontinuity helps the reader to become an active participant of the creative process. It is remarkable that discontinuity finds a place in her works like Beckett’s works. In her works discontinuity between
lines expect more participation from the readers, for; the space between the lines has to be filled by the reader. Postmodern writings expect equal participation from the reader, for the reader has an inevitable role to play in the creative process. While answering the question about reading poetry, Atwood says,

The way to read poetry is to transmit it to the reader and let him to do his own connections with it rather than taking the reader for some sort of fool for whom you have to emphasize each word (Ingersoll 23)

Atwood fascinates the reader through her words, for; through words she makes it possible for the reader to understand her perception. Readers can experience the visual sensibility and the aural quality through the words and it is remarkable that words are used as devices in Atwood’s writing which makes the reader realize the tension.

For poets like Milton chaos is hell and is associated with evil qualities but in the Atwoodian world chaos prevails in the external world, and the influence of the external world affects the inner world. The existence of chaos is acknowledged by Atwood, for according to her chaos prevails in the man-woman relationship because of misunderstanding,
inequality and suppression which leads to alienation and rootlessness where survival itself becomes a problem. The private life of her female hero in her well known collection *Power Politics* is not a harmonious one for she is caught up in a critical situation where love and understanding are lacking. Her partner's actions are frightening and the relationship itself is horrible. The poem which begins with 'you fit into me' brings out the pain involved in the sexual relationship and this poem is included in her well known collection *Power Politics* which is often called as 'sexual politics' for it deals with sex. In this poem Atwood visualizes the painful action of sexual union or physical union. Like all her works here also the female persona experience the pain imposed on her by the dominated male society. She says,

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You fit into me
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook

an open eye (Atwood, *Power Politics* 1)
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The images 'hook' and 'eye' are often used by Atwood in her several poems like 'Two Fires' and 'Man with a Hook' etc., 'Hook' is mostly associated with cruelty and hence with man i.e. an image of
violence and of domination. The image suggested by Atwood in this poem is a crude, aggressive and a highly factual one. This is sheer truth.

Visual sensibility is one of the most important components in Atwood’s poems and this poem also visualizes physical union through the key images ‘hook’ and ‘eye’. The action is painful for the violent male (you) who violates the female; (the hook fit in to me (female). Hook and eye represents the sexual relationship between the male and the female, and the relationship is horrible and the female hero addresses him by using the second person ‘you’. As in this poem, most of Atwood’s poems refer to the female as ‘I’. Here the female is an innocent victim of the male dominated setup where even the relationship itself is operated by the male who is often considered as powerful by the patriarchal setup. The unwilling victim is violated by the male.

Usually power plays a dominant role in Atwood’s poems. It is significant that power operates in every aspect of life and the existing patriarchal setup suppresses all, including females and violates them for its pleasure. It is remarkable that Atwood says in her notes on Power Politics. “The exercise of power is the opposite of the practice of love” (qtd. in Hengen 16) Here in this poem also the persona experiences pain in sexual relationship for power is exercised on her by the male but not love. A
physical union is pictured by Atwood here. In this sequence this union does not carry the connotation of love or affection or softness but sordid imposition by the female as was done in the colonial countries where the slave women were subjected to male torture. Shannon Hengen observes. “Power without love becomes as harmful as love without power.” (16)

Atwood’s female characters and personae often experience the operation of power and Atwood explicitly talks about the violence against women and it is clearly portrayed by her in this poem.

It is remarkable that in the postmodern era it appears that nothing is personal and Atwood being a postmodern writer presents the private life between a male and female and she politicizes the personal, for throughout history the females are used as sex objects and their (women) personal feelings are not considered at all.

This poem also depicts how the persona is psychologically distracted by the physical union which is vulnerable, where the female is not treated as equal but she is reduced to the level of a commodity. Hence the persona is in a chaotic mood for the relationship is not a harmonious one. She is disturbed, tensed up and nervous.
Atwood persona voices her own personal feelings openly and she considers the suffering of the female race throughout the world, as universal. It is fit enough to point out that in India also, females are colonized or consumed. To Sherrill Grace “The poem itself is the hook in the eye of the reader violating his security and complacency preparing him for power politics.” *(Atwood Poetics of Duplicity 61)*

The poem with its cruel portrayal is definitely a hook in the reader’s eye for the idea remains torturing the reader. The same violating tendency prevails in another poem entitled ‘They are hostile nations’ in the same collection *Power Politics* where the persona says.

Instead we are opposite, we

touch as though attacking *(Atwood, Power Politics 37)*

Atwood’s persona usually suffers within the circles and here also the persona is pictured as undergoing pain to come out from the prevailing situation, which creates tension and psychological disturbance. This leads to chaos and hence she longs for an orderly life. It is worthy to note that the relationship between the male and female happens because of compulsion and not because of love for they ‘touch as though attacking’. It is peculiar that a writer, a female writer is able to establish openly the inner most
personal relationship between the man and the woman. Atwood’s female hero feels alienated and feels disturbed as the title ‘They are hostile nations’. In fact in Atwood’s world the relationship between the male and female acts as a dominant factor, where she tries to prevent the fact that the so called weaker sex is attacked and hence she tries to create a system where human values are respected and she tries to rewrite the power roles by balancing the male and female relationship, and she plans for a cordial relationship between the sexes when the power setup should be changed and it is worthy to note that she is deconstructing the institution of power which is one of the main tents of postmodernism. Hence Atwood tries to create an orderly world through the world of chaos in which equality has a vital role to play. Her well-known collection *The Circle Game* which won the Governor General’s Award in 1966 also highlights the inescapable tension involved in the human relationship because of lack of understanding. For instance the title poem “The Circle Game” deals with personal relationship and here also sexual personal life is politicized and in this poem the relationship between the female persona and her lover are presented by the author through a game. It is important to note that the circle game is often considered as a sexual game which also includes power politics.
The poem starts with the involvement of the children in the circle game and the persona as a detached observer keenly observes their (Children’s) actions and their involvement in the act of singing and dancing. She observes the children dancing and singing indifferently without any interest in the act for while singing they don’t even look at each other. The persona comments,

We can see
the concentration on
their faces, their eyes
fixed on the empty
moving spaces just in
front of them. (Atwood, *The Circle Game* 44)

They ignore their surroundings around them and move like a machine and are away from the world of reality which is around them i.e. the grass, the tress, the lawn, the lake etc. Their involvement is only out of compulsion, for they go round and round just for the sake of it. As Rosemary Sullivan in her article “Breaking the Circle” remarks,

Children are playing ring-around-the-rosie in what seems a whimsical game, but as the poetic image dissolves into
symbol, the game becomes a tranced ritual of exclusion; the children are circumscribing reality, laying foundations for those garrisons of the mind that structure adult perceptions.

(31)

This is the first part of the poem which prepares the reader for the second part which deals with the persona’s relationship with her lover. Here the detached observer (persona) becomes an active participant for both the persona and her lover are together but not together, for the relationship between them

is like groping through a mirror

whose glass has melted
to the consistency

of gelatin (Atwood, *The Circle Game* 44)

Mirror is one of the most powerful images used by Atwood in her poems and her novels. Here in this poem the mirror acts as an agent of separation for it separates them from the world of reality as an image of reflection the persona watches the actions of the male through the mirror. Mirror, glass, and gelatin refer to the man-made world against the natural world. Like the children engaged in the game, the persona is having a
relationship with the male whose involvement in the act is psychologically detached and lacks mental attachment. In this part of the poem the persona presents his actions vividly, she says,

You look past me, listening
to them, perhaps, or
watching
your own reflection some where
behind my head
over my shoulder. (Atwood, *The Circle Game* 46)

Through her observation it is evident that he is not deeply involved in the relationship and at the same time is interested in the world beyond her, for he is interested in listening to the people in the next room arguing, opening and closing the drawer. He is not worried about her, who is beside her, and it is worthy to note that he appears like a narcissist figure and has no empathy for her. Again this poem reflects Atwood’s clear presentation of two disinterested people coming together. The man looks only for his own carnal satisfaction and the woman hers. But there is no real satisfaction, joy and happiness coming together in the Lawrentian sense.
Atwood is of the view that there should 'be some reason' however abstract they at first appear. She also gives a description of the game/battle and its consequences and this part clearly presents the isolation of both from each other. Both are isolated islands, isolated from the existing reality and both concentrate on past events. The female hero, though she is caught up in a critical situation does not want to escape but she tries at one point to understand him through his actions. But she realizes that he is detached. She recollects his childhood days; – 'a memorizer of names' by tracing the maps with a pen or with forefinger. She also urges him like a country's boundary and she expects a world of reply from him but he is silent and hence she feels that she is 'transfixed'.

stuck
down on the outspread map
of this room of your minds continent

[...]
transfixed
by your eyes
cold blue thumb talks  (Atwood, *The Circle Game* 49-50)

The female here is presented by Atwood as frustrated, bored and shocked to face the indifferent man, so her eyes get transfixed. This image
leaves the Indian reader shocked at reading about such indifference and mutual detachment.

Transformation plays a dominant role in the poems of Margaret Atwood and in this poem it occurs in each part, where the persona’s view about the male is presented and her disturbed mind is highlighted.

In the next part, the children and the lovers enter a museum and as Rosemary Sullivan in her article “Breaking the Circle” argues,

The children are juxtaposed to lovers who are playing the circle game, withdrawing into a private fantasy or projecting a private reality. The circle game is a game involving barriers. The players set up artificial enclosures, fortresses, to guard a familiar world and exclude alien or inconvenient emissaries from other worlds. (31)

The children are engaged in selecting a gun which they like very much, though they are dangerous weapon and this reflects the relationship between the lovers. Though the relationship is dangerous weapons like guns they are protected by glass and all are related to artificiality. (31)
In this part the persona feels that she is unable to understand him, and hence she feels isolated and she thinks that she is engaged in an “orphan game” for she is totally neglected. She understands him after realizing the fact,

He’s glad

to be left

out by himself

in the cold (Atwood, The Circle Game 52)

This part also represents the inner mind of the persona who longs for a cordial relationship with him which should arise from both ends; from her and from him, but the latter is not interested in the game inside but is interested in the happenings outside, where happy families are enjoying. This situation is crucial in Atwood for the man who can see happy families outside through the glass is not able to be happy with his partner inside his room, the glass, so, being encaved within the glass walls has reduced man to the level of a moron. As in other works like Power Politics here also Atwood’s persona is trapped and suffers with in the circles like a victim.

The concluding part of the poem relates the game of the children with that of the lovers explicitly and the circle is kept unbroken. She observes,
as we lie
arm in arm, neither
joined nor separate
(your observations change me
to a spineless woman in
a case of bones, obsolete fort
pulled inside out),
our lips moving
almost in time to their singing. (Atwood, *The Circle Game* 54)

While relating her relationship with him with the children’s game
the persona realizes that she is caged in circles. The children are also
moving in a circle which they form not only through their actions but
through their inhuman voices. There is a slow transformation in the
children from the human to the inhuman just as the relationship between the
man and the woman move on from the real to the artificial and the human
to the inhuman.

from the warm air
with their thread-thin
insect voices) (Atwood, *The Circle Game* 54)
The woman in the poem feels that she is transformed by her lover into a spineless woman in a cage of bones. Sherrill Grace in her foreword rightly points out in the book *The Circle Game* “Images of rooms mirrors and circles create the sense of claustrophobic entrapment”.

The ‘entrapment’ is made by artificial settings and it also implies the fact that all kinds of entrapment are artificial and after realizing the fact that she is trapped in world of nothingness and meaninglessness, she wants to come out of the circle and she orders.

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erase all maps

crack the protecting

eggshell of your turning

singing children: (Atwood, *The Circle Game* 55)
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She wants to change the whole atmosphere, for it is one sided where mutual understanding has no role to play. Rosemary Sullivan in her article “Breaking the Circle” rightly observes, 

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[...] circle game is a game of ritual exclusion, it can be played with psychological barriers, with language and with cultural myths. Atwood, of course, rejects the theory that language is the only key to the articulations and conduct of the mind, or
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the only instrument of knowledge. In cultural terms, the circle game defines the garrison mentality that preoccupies Atwood, and the modern concept for the natural world. The circle game sets up a counter impulse throughout her work— an impulse to break out of the circle. This means unleashing the anarchic impulse to crack open all form, formula and language. (31)

Hence she wants to break the cage for it is the only possible way to lead a good life. She says,

I want the circle
broken. (Atwood, The Circle Game 55)

Here the image seems to be negative, but is a positive one. Atwood wants the circle of nothingness, materialism, meaningfulness and indifference to be broken paying a heavy price. Like the persona in this poem women in India are trapped. They are struggling a lot to come out, but India is known for its rigid rules which are prescribed by the patriarchal setup. Linda Hutcheon rightly observes,

The static (product) pole of the paradox set forth in Double Persephone reappears here in the claustrophobic and
narcissistic images of enclosed forms and mirrors, be they the images of self-obsessed children’s circle games or of the entwining arms of lovers. Games are structures we create, with “closed rules”. (New 20)

It appears in this context that Atwood tries to break the old rigid circle, having “closed rules” which keep women struggling in a chaotic condition and she tries to instill confidence in her persona and makes her persona realize her own position and she tries to build up a new order which will evolve from mutual understanding in which both male and female have an unavoidable role to play where no body is neglected and it will remain a place of cordial relationship.

Further, in The Circle Game Atwood reveals a close affinity towards nature from her childhood days, her father’s life as an entomologist, his influence finding an unavoidable place in her poems for, instance while dealing with the happiness of the Immigrants when they first landed, she says they ‘danced like sandflies’ (Atwood, Journals 12). From the natural world Atwood keenly observed the transformation including bodily transformations which finds a place in her poetry collection like Power Politics. While answering to a question regarding transformation in an interview with Linda Sandler, Atwood says
You could also link it with my childhood reading; most fairy tales and religious stories involve miraculous changes of shape. Grimm’s tales, Greek and Celtic legends have them. North American Indian legends have people who are animals in one incarnation, or who can take on the shape of a bird at will. I would say that Grimm’s Fairy Tales was the most influential book I ever read (Ingersoll 46)

The influence of Grimm’s Fairy tales occupies the major place in her poems especially in her collection Power Politics. “He is a strange biological phenomenon” is one of the most important poems in this collection where, as the title suggests, the lover is reduced to a biological phenomenon and is inhuman in nature,

Like eggs and snails you have a shell

You are widespread

and bad for the garden,

hard to eradicate (Atwood, Power Politics 8)

These lines show his character as well as his appearance. He is dangerous, for it is too difficult to eradicate him and he takes food from the dead meat. He lives like a worm and his movements are inhuman. He
pollutes the environment i.e. the garden in which he lives. The persona as a detached observer keenly watches his movement and describes his physical appearances. She says,

Your flesh by now

is pure protein,

smooth as gelatin

or the slick bellies of leeches (Atwood, *Power Politics* 8)

Like worms he has no bones but he is dangerous, she continues “Your tongue leaves tiny scars / the ashy texture of mildewed flowers” (Atwood, *Power Politics* 8)

He is a strange biological phenomenon, he does not have chlorophyll but his movement spoils the environment.

you move

from place to place like a disease (Atwood, *Power Politics* 8)

she also observes,

Like mushrooms you live in closets

and come out only at night (8)
He protects himself but spoils the area in which he lives. This poem recollects Atwood’s early childhood days, which she had spent with her father and the description of the poem reflects the interest she had developed in observing insects and worms from her father’s laboratory. It is very queer to see that Atwood makes the male a strange character. He resembles a huge insect, a worm, bad weed and a dangerous disease. Strange images are taken from the world of her father’s entomology laboratory.

This poem clearly depicts the self-oriented narcissist man who always lives like a worm and is harmful to others and not bothered about others but lives happily in his ‘closet’. Most of Atwood’s poems deal with male characters as agents of violence and poems like these reduce man to the level of an inhuman being associating him with a dangerous worm. It is worthy to note that Atwood reduces him to deconstruct the power of the male. Atwood tries to expose the character of males and through this picture, she makes them understand their own monstrosity and their domination over the environment in which they live. Eco-feminists always feel that man pollutes his environment and violate nature. Here the male is violent and at the same time spoils nature, his environment and women also—equating nature and women.
It is highly interesting to see that in this poem Atwood highlights the woman through man's domination. Both creative spirits are violated which make the readers identify the role played by seeing the narcissist feeling, for a narcissist uses the environment for his own need with out thinking about the future. Atwood tries to create a healthy atmosphere where all are equal in all respects including power. She redefines power roles to remove the chaotic condition that prevails in man woman relationship where the females are treated as slaves because of the dominance of men. While dealing with the operation of power Marilyn French rightly observes,

To become dominant men had to splinter women's power in three ways: they had to break the bond of mutual affection between men and women and substitute a bond of power; to break the bond of unity among women; and to break the bond of love between woman and children, substituting a bond of power between men and children. (qtd. in Hengen 27-28)

In Atwood's poems power ill-treats the powerless treating them as slaves. By deconstructing the power roles Atwood tries to create a world where male and female can live an orderly life where happiness plays a vital role. Another important aspect in Atwood's works is the conflict
between the natural and the artificial and their existence in daily life. While dealing with this Atwood uses dualism.

From the beginning of her literary career Atwood uses dualism in her poetry. In fact from her first book of poems Double Persephone published in 1961, and Two Headed Poems and in her recent poetry collection dualism plays a very significant role. In Atwood’s life also dualism played a vital role. When she was a child, her family had to spend their life in Ottawa and in the Northern Ontario, where her father was involved in entomological research. This developed a dual tendency in her mind; she reflects this tendency in all her poems and it is remarkable that through her persona Atwood presents dualism. In her well known collection The Journals of Susanna Moodie Atwood employs dualism explicitly; particularly in poems like “The Double Voice”. As the title suggests, the poem deals with dualism where the persona (Moodie) is divided and is double. In the beginning of the poem ‘The Double Voice’ the persona says:

Two voices

took turns using my eyes: (Atwood, Journals 42)
Voices are personified by Atwood and she gives shape to the voices. It is significant that while dealing with the role played by voices in Atwood’s poetry Stefan Haag says,

Atwood’s concern for the “texture of sound” provides an auditory key that can unlock an eco-ontological reading of her work in that it allows for an amplification of the ecological dimension implied in an ontologically understood aurality.

(15)

Here in this poem the voices are capable of using the visual image ‘eye’ in which the voice takes a turn. The eyes are powerful images used by Atwood in her poems and they are capable of absorbing the world outside and at the same time bringing out the inner feelings also. The two voices have different characteristics for,

One had manners,
painted in watercolours,
used hushed tones while speaking
of mountains or Niagara Falls,
composed uplifting verse
and expended sentiment upon the poor (Atwood, *Journals 42*)
The first voice is cultured and is creative for it is natural and speaks to the mountains or to Niagara Falls and is able to create ‘uplifting’ verse and hence is able to express the sentiments of the poor. This part reminds the reader of Moodie’s voice which is natural and creative which also reminds us of the author’s voice which is creative and

The other voice
had other knowledge:
that men sweat
always and drink often,
that pigs are pigs
but must be eaten
any way, that unborn babies
fester like wounds in the body,
that there is nothing to be done
about mosquitoes; (Atwood, Journals 42)

Contrary to the first voice the second voice, i.e. the other voice is artificial where men are juxtaposed with pigs and the unborn babies create pain and fester like wounds in the body. Then the focus of the persona goes back to the first one. She says,
One saw through my
bleared and gradually
bleaching eyes, red leaves,
the rituals of seasons and rivers. (Atwood, *Journals* 42)

The first voice is always concerned with the ecology of Canada,
which includes the rituals of seasons and rivers, and in contrast to the first
voice again the persona describes the other voice with its artificiality and
states,

The other found a dead dog
jubilant with maggots
half-buried among the sweet peas. (Atwood, *Journals* 42)

The ‘dead dog’ and ‘maggots’ are jubilant and the former is jubilant
in death and is half-buried and the latter is happy on the dead one. In the
Canadian situation death is incidental and this poem also suggests the
jubilance in death and brings out the horror in living.

The persona recognizes the natural and artificial worlds; the former
is creative and the latter is artificial and while talking about the turns Jacqui
Smyth says. “The taking of “turns” suggests that one voice can only exist
by repressing the other; they cannot exist simultaneously”. (158-159)
Atwood acknowledges the existence of the natural and artificial and presents Moodie's dilemma, for the land is new to her. Atwood, through her persona (Moodie) presents the world of chaos and also presents the persona's urge for a livable world which will evolve from the natural world.

In the Canadian natural world death is incidental and here death is associated with happiness, for in Canadian set up survival is difficult for the harsh reality frightens and it threatens the existence of human beings and it also denotes that the dog becomes one with the soil after its death and maggots live on it and the sweet pea is also enjoying its life. It is worthy to note that death and life in the Canadian setup are paradoxical and this reveals the pioneers experience which were filled with horror and confusion particularly the Moodies. This shows that she wants to lead an eco-friendly life and it is fine that she opines that in a natural world everything will go on smoothly. Though Moodie is dead she longs for an orderly life where everything would live happily.

Atwood often goes deep into the psyche of the persona she creates and sometimes enact the role. This attitude finds a place in her collection The Journals of Susanna Moodie where the reader can easily identify the author's role. Atwood says in an interview with Linda Sandler.
I read her two books, *Roughing It in the Bush* and *Life in the Clearings*, after dreaming I had written an opera about her.

They were very disappointing, but *she* interested me. I wrote poems about her, and I thought that was that. But six months later the other poems started happening. These things are always unpredictable. (Ingersoll 48)

Moodies presence was always hovering around Atwood. Poems like ‘Looking in a Mirror’ evince the Atwoodian vision of Susanna Moodie. In fact Atwood gives rebirth to Moodie through her poems. Here the persona (Moodie) identifies her present situation as she says.

> It was as if I woke
> after a sleep of seven years
> to find stiff lace, religious
> black rotted
> off by earth and the strong waters
> and instead my skin thickened
> with bark and the white hairs of roots. (Atwood, *Journals* 24)
The persona is surprised to see the changes in her body. While dealing with the seven years of sleep Nita Ramaiya in her article entitled “A Female Non-Being Emerging Into A Being: A Feminist Approach to The Journals of Susanna Moodie” opines that “The first two lines in “Looking in a Mirror” read like the expression of Rip Van Winkle after waking up from twenty years of inertia”. (117)

Moodie feels isolated but at the same time she can realize the truth that she is in a new land and that the external world has affected her very much. The new land is unknown to her and has changed her physical appearance. She says,

My heirloom face I brought
with me a crushed eggshell
among other debris:
the china plate shattered
on the forest road, the shawl
from India decayed, pieces of letters. (Atwood, Journals 24)

She is unable to forget the past and the things, which she had brought with her, remind her of her past life. The things she brought from
her homeland are not in a good condition and she cannot rely on nature
because

    the sun here had stained

    me its barbarous colour. (Atwood, *Journals* 24)

She acknowledges the changes occurring in her and around her and at
the same time these changes are new to her. The environment is new i.e.
Canadian environment especially the weather affects her very much, for as
she reveals, her

    Hands grown stiff, the fingers
    brittle as twigs
    eyes bewildered after
    seven years, and almost
    blind/buds, which can see
    only the wind

    the mouth cracking
    open like a rock in fire
    trying to say

    what is this (Atwood, *Journals* 25)
The persona is unable to cope with the new land and is unable to accept the transformation. Transformation occurs in her mindscape also. She has lost her expectation in the new reality and hence her mouth tries to say. "What is this" (25)

This question can be associated with Northrop Frye's question 'Where is here?' (Bush Garden 220) for the persona is caught up in a chaotic situation where everything is new to her and is not understandable. Her mind oscillates between the civilized past (British) and the unknown present (Canada). This reveals that time plays a significant role in this poem as an agent of transformation.

(you find only
the shape you already are
but what
if you have forgotten that
or discover you
have never known) (Atwood, Journals 25)

This poem also leads to self-analysis and self-realization. This poem makes the readers identify the position of the pioneers and their sufferings before adopting the new land, and here being a pioneer the persona is
unable to cope with the land for the past has inherited her and it is worthy to note that the present frightens her. Like all her personae, Moodie also tries to overcome the situation.

She has already led a civilized life and the present land is full of unknown elements and it is implied that she wants to lead an orderly life where everything is understandable.

Margaret Atwood’s poems focus mainly on the interior of her personae and through her personae she presents the existing world as it is. The Atwoodian world includes chaos and her female heroes in her novels and poetry collections suffer a lot to live. It is worthy to note that they don’t want to escape from the world of reality though it is threatening their existence. The tension created in each poem brings out the psyche of her female heroes who often undergo suffering. Mostly the unavoidable ‘I’ i.e the persona’s suffering is highlighted with visual sensibility which is very rare in post modern poets. They live in a confused state where order has no place and hence her persona longs for an orderly life where everything finds a place. The Atwoodian poetic world concentrates also on the environment in which her female heroes are not passive listeners but active participants for they try to change the existing atmosphere which lacks viability.
Atwood wants to change the prevailing patriarchal set up which is responsible for the existence of rootlessness and chaos and hence she wants to change the world not pointing out that the males are enemies but inviting them for a good relationship. Hence she aims at an orderly world where everything finds a place and everybody is equally respected.

There is a continuous strain of thought from Chapter-1 onward about Margaret Atwood’s concern for the chaos existing in the present day society, the loss of values that she focuses on, in her poems. From this chapter onwards Atwood’s goes into a fresh preoccupation with the relationship between the terrain and the homo sapiens and tries to establish that normal life, values and existence depends much on man’s personal contact with the ecosystem.