CHAPTER-IV

Claustrophobia of Exposure

BODILY HARM
\textbf{Bodily Harm} is Atwood's best known post-feminist text to-date, published in 1981. Atwood enlarges the woman writer's task and possible subjects for women's writing in \textbf{Bodily Harm}, by writing about the violence perpetrated on the woman's body in institutions such as jails and hospitals. In this novel, the female body becomes the metaphor for the weak and suppressed. For Atwood, "the act of writing" is not a "a mere frill", it is a subversive weapon or a tool which projects the alternative reality. She is critical of the facile optimism of the post-feminist era concerning the state of women's emancipation. She comments: "It would be a mistake to assume that everything has changed ... the goals of the feminist movement have not been changed, and those who claim we're living in post-feminist era are either sadly mistaken or tired of thinking about the same subject."\(^1\) So a novel for Atwood is "a vehicle for looking at society, an interface between language and what we choose to call reality."\(^2\) Thus, in \textbf{Bodily Harm}, Atwood states explicitly the moral
function of writing, which does more than “take what society deals out and makes it visible.”

This novel reveals how the legal, economic, political and social conditions of women are still bleak and how they are still where they were a century ago. Even though women have become conscious of their rights, they are sought to be exploited and oppressed and deprived of their basic human rights like all the weak and powerless in the world. According to Lorna Irvine, *Bodily Harm* illustrates, ironically, “inscription of the female body and, by the female body that results from its confinement.”

In *Bodily Harm*, gender politics are contextualized within “the brutal injustices of modern global politics.” As a member of Amnesty International, Atwood is interested in gender power politics and demonstrates in *Bodily Harm* “how power operates and who has power over whom.” The novel succeeds both as a profoundly humanitarian text and a powerful political feminist novel. Thus, *Bodily Harm* draws our attention to the horrifying status of women in the post-feminist era. *Bodily Harm* deals with the nature of violence, human cruelty and victimization of women and addresses itself to the “violation of human rights.” The
novel presents poignantly the abuse, torture, mutilation and finally the destruction of female body in hospital beds and prison cells for purposes of male sexuality. As John Berger says in his *Ways of Seeing* "A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you. By contrast, a woman's presence.... defines what can and cannot be done to her."³

Renata Wilford, "the camera-narrator"⁶ of *Bodily Harm*, is a Canadian female free-lance journalist as well as a "Life-Tourist" writer. Rennie, as a Journalist always carries with her a camera to take the "Snapshots" of the life around. Hence, it has become a symbol of her tourist vision and identity.⁷ Rennie's travelogue includes all sorts of bodily harm perpetrated on women such as the pornographic violation of women as shown in the Toronto Policemen's pornography museum; Jack, Rennie lover's Sadism and the situation of rape; the humiliations she suffers in the prison, Rennie's mutilation by cancer; Lora's "non-violent" rape by her vicious step-father. The most pathetic of all bodily harms is the brutality, torture, rape and heartless mutilation of Lora, Rennie's fellow prisoner in the Caribbean Jail. As Rubenstein says, *Bodily Harm* is Atwood's most politically feminist novel, immediately
concerned with such issues as body image, female sexuality, male-female relationships and male brutality in a patriarchal society".  

Rennie uses her pen as a "weapon" to let the world know how the female body is sought to be abused, mutilated and destroyed in prison cells and hospital beds.

In order to comprehend the progression of Renata Wilford's career as a free-lance journalist and a "Life-Tourist", writer, it is important to consider her early life in the small town of Griswold, Ontario. Rennie is the child of an irresponsible man, who has abandoned his family for a mistress in Toronto. She is brought up in an unhealthy and narrow, joyless and repressive environment in the "sterile, hypocritical and sexless" Griswold by her grandparents. For Rennie, her grandparent's place is: a subground, something that can't be seen, but is nevertheless there, full of gritty old rocks and buried stumps, worms and bones. 

Rennie's impressionistic years of childhood are suppressed and spoiled by her grandmother's traditional approach. She detests the servile existence in Griswold and leaves the place in order to lead a life of freedom in Toronto. Griswold forms the background to her career of free-lance journalism as well as her travelogue.
Rennie begins her adult life in Toronto as a versatile writer. She gets commissioned to write articles for *Pandora*, a woman-oriented magazine and for *Visor*, a male-oriented journal. These two offer her enough scope to write about both men and women.

Rennie comes in contact with Jack, in the course of writing a piece called "The Young and the Solvent" for *Visor*. Jack works as a designer for a packaging company. Rennie, who considers herself a product of the post-feminist era, thinks that she can stand up to any crisis, without any harm either to her body or psyche. But, little does she realize that Jack is very clever and a subtle exploiter. In spite of all her intelligence and caution, she allows herself to be trapped in the evil designs of Jack. He tries all his tricks to use and pack her off just as he does other things. Very soon, Rennie realizes that Jack's interest in her is limited to the gratification of his carnal desires. His relationship with Rennie is superficial. As a packager of images for advertising, he shares her taste for the superficial and her distaste for massive involvement. Rennie's relationship with Jack remains as if it were a newly renovated house, without strong bonds. For Jack, love is not an emotional experience, but a crude game intended to hurt women as much as he.
could. He disguises sexual desire as love and weilds love as a weapon rather than bearing it as a gift. Rennie feels that Jack is out to strangle her: "Jack liked to pin her hands down, he liked to hold her so she couldn't move. He liked that, he liked thinking of sex as something he could win at. Sometimes he really hurt her, once he put his arm across her throat and she really did stop breathing."

Emma Parker comments, this strangulation is, "a method of male domination, since by stopping the life-giving flow between brain and body, it physically enforces the ideological dichotomy between mind and body which forms the basis of the hierarchical system of gender polarity which informs the whole of Western metaphysics and culture."

There is a strain of sadism to Jack's love. He imagines love with Rennie as a pretended rape. He enjoys overpowering her sexuality with such prescriptions as, "pretend I just came through the window. Pretend you're being raped". He accuses women of having "the voracious female animalistic desires" and remarks, that "women should be locked in cages". Jack has an exploitative and debased view of the female sex. He does not consider woman as one, who has individuality and a life of her own. For him, she is only an object of sex. Thus Jack is, as Howells says, "the
Toronto interior designer." In Rennie's bedroom, Jack hung two provocative posters, one showing "a brown-skinned woman wound up in a piece of material that held her arms to her sides, but left her breasts and thighs and buttocks exposed". While, the other poster displays a woman lying feet first on the sofa and her head, up at the other end of the sofa, was tiny, featureless and rounded like a doorknob. Thus, Jack's rapist fantasies are very close to the early 1980's feminist antipornography position, which asserted strong links between pornography as misogynist power fantasy and male violence against women. Rennie understands, that Jack would pack her up as he does his things when he no longer needs her. However, on her part, she wants to live with him keeping her options open. Rennie is aware, how her nervousness is attributed to her background. As Rubenstein puts it: "Jack - a man with canine teeth and predatory desires - prefers sex that includes bondage and sadism."

When Rennie is diagnosed of breast cancer by Dr. Daniel Luoma, a male gynaecologist, she gets trapped "in things that are beyond her control. Rennie has to now choose between "sexual mutilation" by the surgeon or "death by cancer" in the hospital bed. She is afraid of death; she does not want to die of cancer. Hence, she agrees
to have an affair with the doctor to “save her life”\textsuperscript{20} by allowing him to touch her “with his life-giving hands”.\textsuperscript{21} Daniel, the surgeon, who has performed a partial mastectomy on her, figures dominantly in her fantasies. She engages in an abortive love affair with her surgeon, who knows something about her she doesn’t know, he know’s what she’s like inside. Taking advantage of his patient’s emotional state, Daniel indulges in sex and thus violates the professional ethics. Rennie begins to look at Daniel as “the man with the knife, the bringer of death”.\textsuperscript{22} To Rennie’s mind, symbolically, her surgeon’s knife is both “the sword of justice and a phallic symbol associated with molestation and sexual violence.”\textsuperscript{23} Rennie experiences the trauma of mastectomy. She is emotionally disturbed by the mark of a scar on her body. She identifies the scar on her breast as a mark of castration. She is almost obsessed with the scar. Cancer destroys Rennie’s trust in appearance. She feels that she has her malignancy uncured. For her, the damaged breast is like a “diseased fruit” and a “cut open melon”. She has nightmares and asks her surgeon anxiously”, Either I’m living or I’m dying”. Daniel evades her question and says: “You’re not dead Yet. Yu’re a lot more alive than many people.”\textsuperscript{24} Daniel as a whimp, who is afraid of “emotional commitment, is unable to offer her anything but platitudes.”\textsuperscript{25} But, Rennie wants the real truth,
something definite, one way or the other. Then she will know what she should do next. It's this suspension, hanging in a void, this half-life she can't bear. She can't bear not knowing." Daniel offers Rennie no assurance of an ultimate cure, except leaving on her breast a scar - the mark of castration. Her affair with the doctor does not confirm to her fantasies of rescue from cancer: "The fact was that he had needed something from her, which she could neither believe nor forgive. She'd been counting on him not to: She was supposed to be the needy one, but it was the other way around.... She felt like a straw that had been clutched.... She felt raped." (238).

Rennie has no more hopes of becoming a mother and breast-feeding her future child. The partial mastectomy on her breast leaves her half-dead. As Rubenstein comments: "Some of Rennie's anxieties about invasion and violation can be understood through the cultural attitudes towards both the female flesh and cancer; Rennie is a double victim, of both disease and male exploitation. Men worship the breast, and women internalize the male overvaluation of this aspect their anatomy. Because it is also associated with the actual and symbolic qualities of nurturance, the loss of part or all of a breast affects a woman's
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sense of her procreative capabilities; after her operation, Rennie wonders and worries whether she will be able to bear a child. 27

Jack feels ill-at-ease in the company of Rennie following her mastectomy. He imagines the scar on her breast as "the kiss of death on her"... (201). Daniel abandons her, feeling that life is not enjoyable with a diseased woman. Rennie regrets, how she has been the raw-material, violated and doctored 28 by Daniel.

Rennie also depicts the predicament of a woman, who has undergone Daniel's surgery. Ultimately, Rennie discovers that Dr. Daniel is a victimizer, who directs technological assault on women in the guise of medicine and surgery. The statement reveals how a doctor happens to be an oppressor and a patient, the oppressed in a broad social and historical context. Rennie identifies Daniel with her grandfather, a country physician of violent temperament, whose "Primitive life-saving methods-uncannily resemble torturous mutilation of the body." 29 Although doctors like Daniel are regarded by society as "humane people", they participate in "the structure of power that presides over violence, manipulation of opinion, and life itself." 30 As Rubenstein says, Daniel embodies "the paradoxes of patriarchy: the opposing stances of healing
and destruction as practiced in the characteristically male institutions of medicine and politics. By creating the writer as both a woman and a patient in Bodily Harm, Atwood "confronts and demystifies masculine authority in the figure of the doctor."

Rennie is aware of the fact, that she has been surgically as well as sexually "opened" or violated by Dr. Daniel and Jack. She regrets, that she has allowed herself to be used, manipulated and debased by Jack and Daniel as a kind of "raw-material". Thus, Rennie's maiden encounter in love with Jack and Daniel end abruptly, leaving her bruised and battered physically and emotionally. On the day of Jack's departure and the dead-end relationship with Daniel, there is an attempted crime in Rennie's apartment. An unknown man leaves a coil of rope on her bed in Toronto as a reminder of his visit. Rennie has nightmares and hallucinations of someone in bed with her. But, she does not want to turn into the sort of woman who is afraid of men. The coil of rope left on her bed is a sign, that she has long been confined and fettered by her situation as a woman. In other words, it symbolizes not only bondage and entanglement, but it also seems to be drawing Rennie towards some kind of new awareness.
Later on, Rennie gets involved in love with Paul, a tourist guide in the Caribbean Island, because of his impressive manners and ideals. As Dorothy Jones comments: "Unlike Jack, who tries to make her over into something else, or Daniel who sees her as the answer to his emotional needs, Paul accepts Rennie for what she is." She feels that Paul is a good substitute to Jack, her first lover, who turns out to be an exploiter and seducer. She hopes against hope that she might be able to live with him, while keeping her "Options" open. She is of the view, that she might be able to strike a meaningful relationship with him. Unlike Jack, Paul does not hate or abandon Rennie on the grounds of the scar, "the mark of death" on her body. Rennie gets a new life with the experience from Paul and his touch enlivens her: "He reaches out his hands and Rennie can't remember ever having been touched before... This much is enough. She's open now, she's been opened. She enters her body again and there's a moment of pain, incarnation... She's still here on the earth, She's grateful for his touching her, she can still be touched". (204) She is involved in bouts of sex with him for a brief spell.

The age-old maxim, that familiarity breeds contempt, seems to influence both Paul and Rennie. Within no time, Rennie realizes
that he is an immature person interested in sporting and wielding a gun needlessly. She begins to detest him, because she is scared of the very sight of the gun. Moreover, Paul is not a person to give up himself totally in love. So Paul remarks: “Don’t expect too much of me”\textsuperscript{34} which totally shatters her hopes in him. To him, she is a sort of house guest. Rennie is gradually disillusioned with him. This marks yet another meaningless relationship with Paul. She feels that involvement in love affairs is like running barefoot along a street covered with broken bottles.\textsuperscript{35} It also signifies yet another meaningless relationship with man. Rennie realizes, that falling in romance with a mysterious stranger like Paul is “the biggest cliche in the book of her life”. Rennie says: “I should take my body and run. I don’t need another man. I’m not supposed to expect anything”. She feels a sense of urgency to run away from all her meaningless and loveless involvements with men. As Coomi S. Vevaina says, “Jack-Daniel-Paul trinity” symbolizes “Rennie’s animus projections”.\textsuperscript{36}

Rennie’s association with Jocasta, a feminist activist, raises her consciousness of herself and helps her understand better the villainous attitude and victimizing nature of the males. She is convinced, that women’s liberation continues to be a distant dream and a lot has to
be done to realize the desired goals. Jocasta's assessment of man-
woman relationship illuminates Rennie's thinking and serves as a
"feminist therapy".37 She begins to assess all her love relationships from
a fresh perspective. In the view of Rennie, Jocasta represents a complete
and complex socio-gender system. Under the influence of Jocasta, she
publishes an article entitled, "Burned out" on the alleged death of the
women's movement. In this work, Rennie reasons why and under what
circumstances women take to odd, mean and degrading vocations like
"bitching" and "trashing"(93). Now Rennie takes writing as a serious and
full-time occupation. She wishes to write about pornography as an art
form, from the woman's angle for Visor. Her research leads Rennie to
the studio of a male porn artist called Frank, who depicts pornography as
an art form, when she visits the studio to interview him. Rennie sees
there life-sized mannequin tables and chairs featuring women muzzled
and locked in demeaning positions. She realizes how art is used to depict
women as ugly creatures meant for violence. She understands about the
social and moral function of writing from Frank's remark: "what art does
is, it takes what society deals out and makes it visible, right"?
The article on “pornography” makes Rennie to visit the Toronto Policemen’s pornography Museum along with Jocasta, her friend, where she witnesses visual evidence of male sadistic fantasies of power and violence against women. She is horrified by the sight of the nude film clips meant for display and exhibition at the museum. Naked forms of women in different postures of brutality are displayed.

Some of the films project women copulating with animals leading to the mutilation of their bodies. The museum films also include women’s nipples being chopped off and a “couple of sex-and-death pieces”. (210) The purpose of all these ugly and horrible films seems to display bodies of women as maps of violence. Looking at the films, Rennie thought that such things could not be real and “it was all done with ketchup”.38

The most horrifying of all the film clips is a scene in which “the head of a rat”39 moves in and out of a woman’s vagina. Rennie is appalled by this sight and her detachment is completely shattered. This seems to have been “deliberately contrived by a film-maker for sexual titillation, which indicates the utter depths of human depravity and cruelty”40 and violation of human rights. It points out the abuse of woman
in the so-called civilized countries, which are primitive as far as brutalizing of a woman’s body is concerned.

Rennie realizes that women are stripped of their identity and are reduced to raw-materials. She also feels that men destroy women’s individuality in a subtle and invisible manner with the help of cultural codes. Rennie realizes, that she too is part of the “raw-material”. The thesis of Rennie’s paper on ‘pornography’, as Robin Morgan says, “pornography is the theory and rape is the practice.” As Howell says: “Bodily Harm” is another version of writing the female body, 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 feminity, medical discourse on breast cancer and, the rhetoric of pornography; this novel is emphatically not about bodily pleasures, but about bodily harm.

Rennie visits Caribbean island, as she is commissioned to do a travel piece for visor. For the next six days, she travels around the island meeting people, where she lives in the actual world. She finds her tragedy reflected in the tragedy of mute and innocent masses, all over the world. She discovers that all human principles and
issues like democracy, liberalism, individual dignity and even love are used as pretexts to get "rid of people you don't like". 43

Rennie tries to probe beyond what is visible, while touring on the Caribbean island. Rennie finds out, that the voters list on the island contains names of the dead, while the names of the many living are excluded from it. Floods are like a boon to the rulers, because these fetch charity and aid, which are used for purchasing votes. Thus, the political scene on the Caribbean island has no room for love, decency and humanity, where women are treated as non-entities. They are tortured and even sliced off into pieces. So Rennie discovers different victims in the Caribbean island. She understands that women are not different from common people, because both of them are powerless and hence are abused. Rennie's travel piece expands and extends the implications of the term "woman" to cover all the exploited and abused people in the world.

As Jaidev says: "woman becomes a metaphor for all those, who are damaged and abused, only because they are powerless." 44 Rennie finds out, that women on the island are still where they were a century ago. She realizes, that people enjoy torturing
women. The much-spoken-about freedom and identity of women are only delusions. In the Caribbean island, Marsdon, the campaign manager of elections for prince of peace, beats, tortures and keeps his woman tied to a tree for several hours and yet he goes unpunished. Whereas the islanders look at the cruelty on the women as mere silent spectators. Rennie narrates the same in the following statement: ".... he made her take off all her clothes,... and then he covered her with cow-itch... Then he tied her to a tree in the back yard, right near an ant hill, the stinking kind. He stayed in the house, drinking rum and listened to her screams. He left her there five hours, till she was all swollen up like a balloon. A lot of people heard her, but nobody tried to untie her .... She recognizes that the Caribbean is essentially as bad as Canada, the representative of the civilized world. Rennie points out, that women everywhere are abused, just as the helpless poor. In this way, she equates women with the poor throughout the world. But Rennie does not mean that all husbands, everywhere, are brutal.

Rennie visits women prisoners in the Caribbean prison along with Dr. Minnow, who is known for his rebellion against the tyranny of the government. Soon Rennie is accused of massive involvement in
the island’s current revolution and in the political affairs. Rennie is arrested and she is accused of being an outraged tourist, due to the outbreak of violent disturbances on the island. In a Central American prison, she suffers incarceration for about two weeks, where she comes in contact with Lora Lucas, a fellow prisoner. They share the same cell together.

In her travelogue, Rennie includes the tales, which Lora narrates in the prison. Lora’s tale of woe and brutality completely shatter Rennie’s over-confidence in women’s liberation. Lora narrates the story of her “non-violent” rape by her vicious step-father, with whom she used to live in a cellar. She leads a life of terror, under the gross exploitation of her step-father. Lora’s mother is so helplessly dependent on her husband, that she cannot go to the rescue of Lora, even when her husband used to threaten his step-daughter with sexual assault. Lora remarks: “He hit me because he could get away with it and nobody could stop him”. Ultimately, Rennie stabs him, as he tries to rape her and leaves the place for good. Lora’s account of her childhood brings home to Rennie, the vulnerability of the female which is evident.
Following her escape from home, Lora is hired to work on a boat. Her experience at this place of work turns out to be worse still. She is shocked to know, that all the men around, expect her to sleep with them. Either she has to comply with them or lose the job. The very assumption, that a woman is meant for rent, smacks of male arrogance. Thus, slavery which affects women is forced prostitution, according to human rights perceptive. Referring to the fellow worker's attitude towards women, Lora says, "They think if they're renting the boat, they're renting everything on it. May be I'm for sale, I'd tell them... I'm not for rent." The tales of Lora convince Rennie that sexual exploitation is everywhere - be it "civilized" Canada or the rustic Caribbean. The difference is in degree, not in kind. The pathetic tales of Lora's experiences in Canada and in the Caribbean shock Rennie's feminist sensibility.

Rennie watches from the prison cell, with impotent rage the barbaric killings of people, who oppose the rulers. Rennie is a witness to some riots in the prison cells following which the male prisoners have been tortured and their heads shaved off with bayonets.
Yet another victim, Rennie finds in the prison is an islander, a deaf and dumb man, who has a voice, but no words and whom Rennie encounters several times. Once she feels frightened as he ran after her to shake hands with her. He is the homeless, penniless and victimized beggar. Once she sees him being beaten by the police in the street. He is brought to the prison in a bad shape. He is a crusader for human rights and civil liberties. He represents "the vast mass of people in the world crippled by poverty, whom ignorance and political tyranny have deprived of their capacity to proclaim the suffering and injustice of their plight". Rennie recollects the ugly, obscene, and nauseating film clips, which she thought was a kind of "ketchup". But, she finds that such horrible deeds are not enacted in the prison cell as the police have not thought about them.

Rennie discovers, that woman is at the mercy of a whole host of oppressors in any society. She witnesses, how Lora very reluctantly obliges the prison guards for sex in return for news about the prince of peace, her lover. Lora is sexually assaulted and beaten, mutilated and killed by the very custodians of law and order - namely policemen. Rubenstein aptly comments: "the violence of pornography
linked with the pornography of violence; both are society’s cancerous growth. Rennie, the naive heroine is finally radicalized. By the, end of her journey, Rennie has become a sadder, but wiser person. Hence, Rennie proclaims that detachment, neutrality, and non-involvement are no longer possible for her, to think in terms of some kind of positive action against atrocities on women. Rennie has solved “the riddle” of the faceless stranger, at the end of the rope, when she sees the brutality of the policemen in the prison yard. Thus, the one who left the coiled rope on her bed was none other than the policemen themselves.

The sight of the neglected and uncared dead body of Lora touches the very core of Rennie’s being. She feels a sense of empathy with her. Lora is no longer an individual, but she becomes a symbol of the weak and helpless mass of humanity. Lora’s face is not “a face any more, its a bruise, blood is still oozing from the cuts... the mouth looks like a piece of fruit that’s been run over by a car, pulp.... its the face of a stranger, someone, without a name, the word Lora has come unhooked and is hovering in the air, apart from this ruin... face off with, all the cloth in this room is filthy, sceptic, every face is someone’s it has a name”, (298-99) Rennie feels, touches and finally licks the dead face of
Lora as the animals do to their newly born offspring. As Coomi S. Vevaina says: "Rennie mothers Lora and helps her back to life.... She finds the symbolic mother within herself."\(^5\) This is how, she identifies herself with the tragedy of Lora. Feeling the hand of Lora, Rennie imagines the possible resurrection of the dead. She mutters: "Something will move and live again, something will get born." (299) This, precisely, is the feminist consciousness of Rennie. Lora is none other than the mutilated self of Rennie. Lora's death is symbolic of the death of the helpless and weak self of Rennie. Hence, the former's death is rebirth for the latter. Rennie is committed to immortalize Lora in the form of a book she wants to do as per Lora's death-wish. Lora tells Rennie: "The story of my life, you could put it in a book".

Rennie and Lora, in their prison cells symbolize how women in all walks of life are victimized and oppressed by the unbridled male power and authority. The merciless and heartless mutilation of Lora is a symbolic evidence of the gender-oppression of women in a male chauvinistic society, which finally leads to the realization of Rennie that cancer or partial mastectomy of her breast has no significance and it is no more than a minor accident of her life.
Rennie feels an enlightenment in her. She refuses to be a victim, although she has "her scar, her disability, her nibbled flesh, the little teeth marks on her". Thus, Rennie's body which has been maimed, dismembered, altered and fragmented stands as a testimonial to the depravity and decadence of the society, that is predominantly patriarchal. Rennie awakens to the fact, that human malice is as dangerous as cancer. Fear of death by a disease like cancer is weighed against those threats of life, "which result from human malice-poverty, malnutrition and political violence." In the words of Rubenstein: "In Rennie's case, cancer of her body is a disease not only of the breast, but of the chest - the heart; and not only of her body, but of the social body."

Rennie exposes, what society deals out and makes it visible through her writing. She recognizes to figure out the "bodily harm" done to Lora and other modes of harm, which might be done to other bodies in future. She says: "This is what will happen." Rennie, in her travel piece, encompasses a reality of "bodily harm", which merges past with present-future. As Howell says: "Rennie's effort to tell the story is, like her effort to save Lora, an exercise of the moral imagination, being both reportage and invention.... As she is a reporter she determines to
'report', offering her interpretation of contemporary lifestyles in two different countries, but now with an edge of moral engagement... She does more than report; she tries to imagine things differently and better than they are ....\textsuperscript{56} She has begun to imagine a future, which will be different from the present.

Rennie asserts that “bodily harm” is everywhere, both inside and outside the prison, both in civilized and uncivilized countries, and both in political fields and personal lives. Thus, there are no hard boundaries to “bodily harm”. Like Rennie, who is a free-lance journalist and never leaves the cells, as the rulers will ensure her continued imprisonment. She also never leaves the “harm” done to the weak and women, because “the only voices and words left will be those of the ones in power”.\textsuperscript{57} As writer Rennie cannot “deny anything inhuman”.\textsuperscript{58}

Rennie is set free at the instance of a Canadian diplomat. However, she continues to be a living witness to “the variously hued bodies beside the beaches and blue-green sea are now perceived as serving, being served, and serviced and associated with Lora’s ‘bodily harm’\textsuperscript{59} Rennie rejects her submissive role as a woman. She is prepared to speak out the truth, the disturbing truth, both about all the exploited
people and women in particular. Rennie becomes subversive and bold enough to narrate and publish her experiences in the form of a travelogue called *Bodily Harm*. Rennie tries to discover her identity through her newly assumed "subversive role" as a free-lance journalist. She uses her pen as a weapon to depict her experiences in her travelogue. She takes a pledge to devote her life in the service of the weak and women. According to Helene Cixous, Rennie puts women "into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement of travelogue."

*Bodily Harm* is what Rennie projects to the world as her novel. Rennie envisions an "organized society", where human beings are united and organized in a common cause. At last, Rennie ends up as an activist.

The name "Renata Wilford" implies "born again". She takes in her strides all her ugly and unpleasant encounters of her life. In this process, Rennie is born anew and lives in the present with a meaningful message for the future.

In an address, Atwood delivers that Rennie is reborn or she is struggling into a new awareness of herself as a morally responsible human being. She also looks forward to a day of better and healthy relationships between men and women. Thus, Rennie's
writing as exposure of Bodily Harm conducts us through a journey of the imagination to contemplate both the fact of individual mortality and the conditions under which the great mass of the world’s population have to live, so that through the exercise of imagination we may be lead to a more aware, more compassionate, politically committed view of life.\textsuperscript{63}

Thus, Bodily Harm drives home the message, which is embodied in Atwood’s address of the world meeting of Amnesty International: “oppression involves a failure of the imagination: the failure to imagine the full humanity of other human beings. If the imagination were a negligible thing and the act of writing a mere frill, as many in this society would like to believe, regimes all over the world would not be at such pains to exterminate them”.\textsuperscript{64}
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29. Rubenstein, 264.

30. Rubenstein, 264.


32. Hansen, 14.

33. Jones, 93.
34. Margaret Atwood, Bodily Harm (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981).
35. Ibid.
36. Vevaina, 185.
37. Hanseen, 15.
39. Ibid.
40. Jones, 96.
42. Howells, 106.
43. Margaret Atwood, Bodily Harm (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981).
45. Margaret Atwood, Bodily Harm (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981).
46. Ibid.
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47. Ibid.


50. Howells, 124.

51. Vevaina, 191.

52. Margaret Atwood, Bodily Harm (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1981).


54. Robenstein, 274.


56. Howells, 125.

57. Margaret Atwood, An End to Audience 1980, Second Words 350.

58. Atwood, 349.

59. Wilson, 144.


62. Quoted from Atwood’s Address Delivered at a Conference, *Imagined Realities in Contemporary Women’s Writing* held at Dyffryn House near Cardiff (Oct. 1982).


64. Margaret Atwood, *Amnesty International: An Address*, *Second Words* 397.