CHAPTER I
Introduction

Throughout history, and in all civilizations, the identity of woman has been sought to be damaged and distorted. Woman’s status as a human being has been inferiorizing under the overwhelming male-domination. Irrespective of the economic, political and social progress, women are subject to gender discrimination all over the world. Calling for changes in the social, economic, political, and cultural order, to reduce and eventually overcome the discrimination made against women, Feminism, both as a concept and movement, has emerged as a reaction against the atrocities of patriarchy.

The prefix ‘Pro’ in Pro feminism carries the meaning, ‘in favour of’ and ‘supporting’. The word ‘Pro-feminism’ (the hyphenated word) refers to the movement of men began in 1960s in opposition to violence against women. Margaret Atwood, a Canadian writer is Pro-feministic in setting the background of her novels, and pro feminist in fixing the feminist theme in her novels. Thematic analysis of the thesis tries to prove the fact that Atwood is a radical essentialist in her feministic perspective.

In the 1840s, in the United States and in Britain, women’s suffrage movements emerged. But even before the emergence of organized suffrage movements, women had been writing about the inequalities and injustices in women’s social condition and campaigning to change it. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and at the same time in France, women such as Olympe de Gouges and Theroigne de Me’ricourt were fighting for the rights of women. Thus, even before the mid-nineteenth century women cared about their backward social and political condition.

Histories of feminism have talked about the historical appearance of strong feminist movements at different moments as a series of waves. The first-wave feminism
is used to refer to the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century feminist movements which were concerned with gaining equal rights for women, particularly the right of suffrage. The Second-wave feminism refers to the resurgence of feminist activity in the late 1960s and 1970s, when the protest centred on women’s inequality in the areas of politics, family, sexuality and work. But it is more accurate to see feminism not as emerging in waves but as a continuum of thought and action.

The liberal equality feminism is best associated with the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, the pioneering American feminist Betty Friedan, and the American radical feminist Shulamith Firestone. In her book *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir was heavily influenced by existentialism, which denies the existence of a pre-ordained ‘human nature’, and emphasizes the freedom and responsibility of each person to create him or herself as a self-governing individual. Introducing the concepts of ‘transcendence’ and ‘immanence’, she argued that the fulfillment of human potential must be judged, not in terms of happiness, but in terms of liberty. As an anti-essentialist, de Beauvoir argued that sexual difference is a consequence of cultural conditioning, which must be discredited, so that women can achieve their full potential as the equals of men.

The essentialists like the French feminists Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva argued that difference is not something to be overcome, as though it were shameful not to be a man, but something to celebrate. They also reasoned out that equality feminism cured the symptoms of sexual inequality and ignored the disease. The American feminist theologian Mary Daly did not envision liberation in the transcendence of the feminine, but rather in the celebration of its immanence - the inherent connection
of femininity to nature and the body. She advised women to reject the tools of patriarchy, including religion and language, and ‘wildize’ themselves. She further argued that the sisterhood advocated by second wave feminism could be achieved only in isolation. Irigary undermined the masculine binary system of positive/negative, by arguing that the female is not a unified position, but multiple: she is not one, but many. In its combination of philosophy, linguistics, and psychoanalysis, the essentialism challenged and furthered the concerns of second wave feminism.

Pro-feminist stream is triggered off by the second wave feminism. The term, “Pro-feminism is most often used in reference to men who are actively supportive of feminism and involved in the areas of women’s rights and violence against women” (wikiepedia). The activities of pro-feminist men include anti-violence work with boys and young men in schools, offering sexual harassment workshops in work places, running community education campaigns, and counseling male perpetrators of violence. Pro-feminist men are also involved in men’s health, men’s studies, and anti-pornography. They embraced feminist ideas and actively advocated for female equality.

Apart from historical approach, theoretical version would divide feminisms and feminists into three groups: Liberal feminism, Marxist or socialist feminism, and radical feminism. Liberal feminists include all those who campaign for equal rights for women within the framework of the liberal state. Marxist or socialist feminists link gender inequality and women’s oppression in the capitalist system of production and the division of labour consistent in the system. Radical feminists see men’s domination of women as a result of the system of patriarchy. Dual-Systems feminists combine elements of Marxist and radical feminist thinking. Progressively, critics have also introduced
psychoanalytical feminism, postmodern or post structuralist feminism, black feminism, and so on.

Feminists have pointed out the way in which, historically, a natural difference between men and women was given various social, political and economic meanings in different societies and civilizations. Women have been given an inferior or secondary status in societies because of the assumed natural sexual difference. As Sherry Ortner argues, “the secondary status of woman in society is one of the true universals, a pan-cultural fact” (21). She also explains that within the multiplicity of cultural conceptions and symbolizations of women, women are seen as being “closer to nature” and men have been perceived as “closer to culture” (22). Women are closer to nature in their physiology, social role and psyche. Biological differences between men and women are the basis for sexual division of labour in society. Men have more physical strength, and take such roles which require physical strength. Women can bear children and therefore they are associated with activities that are related to the raising of family.

As soon as feminists began to campaign against women’s secondary social status, they began to question the assumed natural differences between men and women. The feminist question has become even more complex and varied with modern, social and scientific developments. The development of effective means of contraception and of new reproductive technologies has meant that women are no longer tied to the biological function of reproduction in the same way as they once were. It signified the opening up of new possibilities for the attainment of equality for women.

To fight for women’s emancipation and for equality for women, feminists identify women as a specific social group with a collective identity that forms a basis for struggle.
Feminists also try to distinguish between physiological sex and social gender. They argue that biological sex is a naturally occurring difference, whereas all the roles and forms of behaviour associated with women have been created historically by different societies. The social roles and modes of behaviour that civilizations have assigned to women have kept them in an inferior position to that of men. Simone de Beauvoir observes: “the liberation of women thus depends on freeing women from the social construct of the ‘eternal feminine’ ” (13).

The distinction between sex and gender has enabled feminists to argue against biological determination and to move the emphasis away from physiological differences between men and women to the social processes that shape masculinity and femininity. Kate Millet in Sexual Politics explains ‘Patriarchal ideology’:

It exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant or ‘masculine’ roles, and women always have the subordinate or ‘feminine’ ones. (84)

To explain this fact in detail, Neeru Tandon in her article, “Ism is for Everybody” tells that from the perspective of some strands of feminism, as well as the men’s movement and queer theory, inequalities and stereotypes based on gender are detrimental to both men and women and both sexes suffer from the expectations of traditional gender roles. Sex and gender are theoretical constructs. Sex is a biological category, whereas gender is a socio-cultural category. To explain feminine gender, from Plato to Freud has been perceived in terms of matter, physics, passion, emotions, and the irrational characteristics traditionally associated with nature. Further Neeru Tandon differentiates masculinity and femininity:
Masculinity and Masculism into man result a kind of essentialist which refers to the unconscious determinants of patriarchal cultures than the conscious reasoning behind them. The term femininity refers to social and cultural construction of women, wherein they are shaped differently not only in terms of representation of body but also in relation to institutionalized role performances, internalization of values and conformity to cultural practices. (180)

The body is a medium of culture. In the sense, human beings take care of the body, maintain it, eat, dress, and adorn themselves, communicate with others and so on. However, the body is not only a text of culture. It is also a locus of social control. So the human beings are not what they want to be but are made through culture. Foucault calls this attitude, the ‘docile body’, which is regulated by the norms of cultural life. Body becomes the site of colonizing power and of contestation between the colonized and the colonizers.

Biological factors programme human behaviour though there may be cultural variations. It is ‘human biogrammer’ and there is some difference in the biogrammer of men and women. Women’s role in the family is expressive, which provides emotional support and warmth necessary for the socialization of the child. Man’s role is instrumental. Both the roles are essential and complement each other. In the primitive societies men and women are fairly similar in strength and intelligence. The civilization progressed the new codes which restricted women from working outside home. Thus sex role allocation is a social phenomenon as well as a learned behaviour.

A woman’s body and sexuality are in any case under the controlling purview of men. It is an assertion not only of patriarchal power but also of social control. Woman is allowed little or no space for an independent, self-perceived articulation, definition or
expression of her sexuality. Her body becomes an instrument and a symbol for the community’s expression of caste, class and communal honour. Woman’s body is often no longer her body but has been taken over by the community, of both men and women, to establish and legitimize its image in society. Woman’s body is the foundation on which gender identity is built, established and legitimized.

When the female body is viewed as communicative body, it is possible to understand the implications of both the social construction of lived experience as well as women’s own perceptions and articulations of their embodiment. The gender is inscribed on woman in everyday life both socially as well as through her life experiences, perceptions, desires, and fantasies. So the gender identity is constructed. The representation of the female body by women appears to be fundamental to the formation of feminine identity.

Socialization practices in different cultures reflect the care and concern that goes into the upbringing of girls so that they are in fact trained to conduct themselves according to social norms, values and practices. Later, women absorb social expectations and experience them as their own, so that the power does not operate coercively but from within. By socialization process, people learn what is expected of men from their parents, peers, and society at large, teaches men and women the norms of conduct for their gender.

Agents of gender socialization include parents, siblings, peers, schools, society, religion and a variety of other institutions. For very young children, parents and family play the central role in shaping gender socialization. Gender identity is established by age two. Sigmund Freud theorized that identification and imitation of same sex parents
leads to effective gender-identity formation. In the latency period (7 to 12), as described by Freud, male and female tend to segregate themselves from each other. It solidifies gender identification and role-specific behaviour. Schools and families continue to influence gender socialization throughout adolescence. During adolescence, peer influence becomes the strongest agent of gender socialization as teens form together in small social groups to facilitate their transition into adulthood and into the larger society. The socializing effects of the mass media also become powerful in teen years. Gender identity and gender socialization have serious ramifications for an individual’s sense of self-esteem.

The world is full of symbols that assign meaning and value to the categories of male and female. Despite several decades of consciousness rising in the United States, advertisements on television and in the print media perpetuate sexual stereotypes. Although ‘house beautiful’ advertisements are less prominent as women are increasingly shown in workplace contexts, body beautiful messages continue to be transmitted. In children’s cartoons, women are still helpless victims whom the fearless male hero must rescue. Toys are targeted either for little boys or little girls and are packed appropriately in colours and materials culturally defined as either masculine or feminine.

The visual and print media largely influences women’s perceptions through the imaging of the female body as the perfect or desirable body. The rules for femininity have come to be culturally transmitted more and more through standardized visual images. So the rules can be learnt directly through bodily discourse. The images tell what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements and behaviour are required. Some of the images are presented through advertisements, fashion displays, beauty
contests, fashion models, magazines particularly women’s magazines, and so on. Woman’s experience of her embodiment in everyday life is undoubtedly linked to her location in different settings and contexts such as the community, the family, the workplace, or other spaces she inhabits or frequents. This is the major axis for the formation of gender identity. Technology, the development of culture, harnesses nature. The culture, which is subjected to human manipulation, is assigned more worth than that which is natural. Hence women and women’s roles are degraded or devalued, explicitly or implicitly.

The categorization of male and female in the society transmits knowledge about gender roles and influences the individuals to define themselves and other in terms of gender and sex roles. The notion, ‘women are inferior to men’ is stressed from the very moment a child is born. Later, it is supported by the behaviour patterns prescribed for girls and women. Hence gender discrimination and gender roles are to a large extent imposed by the society. In many societies, gender roles of each sex to behave are rigidly defined. For instance, men have traditionally been expected to be strong, aggressive, even dominating. Women have been expected to be nurturing, sensitive, emotional and relatively passive. Women for centuries have been socialized into passive roles.

The word ‘female’ is sufficient for men to define a woman. But more than that, a woman is a womb, an ovary. A man is proud of hearing the phrase, ‘You are a male’. But the epithet ‘female’ has the sound of an insult. Man is not ashamed of his animal nature. But woman is ashamed of her animal nature and the term ‘female’ emphasizes her animality. The term is derogatory, and it imprisons woman in her sex. According to Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, ‘‘Female’ seems to man to be contemptible and
inimical even in harmless dumb animals” (5). It stirs up in man, the uneasy hostility towards woman.

At the same time, woman is charming and utterly unselfish. Virginia Woolf defines woman’s role in following words:

A woman is so constituted that she never has a mind or a wish of her own, but prefers to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Her ‘purity’ is supposed to be her chief beauty. (202)

In short, a woman is self-effacing, unselfish, sympathetic, attentive, unseeking and chaste. The credit goes to the man for giving birth to such an agreeable woman.

After 1960’s, in the late twentieth century an imbalanced relationship between the developed or industrial world and the developing or the Third world exists. Egalitarian gender relationships have been replaced by hierarchical ones. Women have consequently been marginalized, removed from the positions of economics and political decision making that they held in the pre colonial period. Greater female dependency on men has resulted from the process of urbanization; from the shift from household to factory and industry; and from the introduction of cash crops. In some societies, women have lost their traditional rights to land, whereas men continue to rely on women’s traditional assistance, claim the entire income from the cash production export crops for themselves.

Virtually, in all countries among all classes, women have lost ground relative to men. Being the housewives, women value the feeling of autonomy. Just because housewives express their experiences in terms of enjoyment of being their own boss does not mean that their condition of work can be analysed in terms of a high degree of autonomy. The control is exerted by the preferences of the family members. In urban
society, as the impact of industrialization and urbanization, working couples learned to share and cooperate in many ways. Men often cared for children, while their wives worked, and helped in the household chores, but the subtle discrimination between the two sexes continues.

The recent analysis of gender and culture has drawn heavily on literary theory, with the deconstruction of Derrida and also on the discourse analysis of Michel Foucault. The emphasis has shifted from the individual’s learning experience to the creation of texts or representations or discourses which construct the notions of gender. It speaks about the difference between women and men, and also between women. Indeed some of the emphasis on differences between women has problematized the very concept of ‘woman’ as a unitary category. The process of social construction was a principal focus for many classic feminist texts of the 1970s and 1980s. According to Wittig, where ‘sex’ classes will no longer exist,

Freedom for all human beings will be attained ‘beyond the categories of sex’, and both the concept and the real existence of men and women will give way to the advent of individual subjects (20).

Elaine Showalter describes the change in the late 1970s as a shift of attention from androtexts – books by men – to gynotexts – books by women. Gynocriticism is exclusively pre-occupied with production, motivation and analysis of writing by women on women. It concerns with woman as producer of textual meanings with history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women. As writers and critics, women present more authentically their ideas on female creativity, and also on the problems of a female language. The task of the gynocritics is to find a new language, a new way of reading that can integrate their intelligence and experience, their reason and suffering,
their skepticism and vision. Showalter suggests that the gynocritics accept a sexist
differentiation and yield to assimilation. Authors like Dorothy Richardson, Katherine
Mansfield and Virginia Woolf transformed the female code of self-sacrifice into
esteemed self.

Because of the influence of the feminist movement, women writers of various
political hues began looking at the realities of women and thus contributed new
perceptions and perspectives. Women writers of fiction attempted to subvert the
marriage plot of the popular romance. They have been protesting in their novels against
the imposition of legal, economic and social restrictions on women, so as to change the
destiny of women. Nora Johnson views the feminist novel of the 1960s and 70s as “the
story of awakening housewife” (1).

One facet of sexual difference that has been explored by feminists is that of
women’s different moral stance. Men’s moral thinking depends more on notions of
justice and women’s morality is more relational. One of the key issues discussed in this
regard is women’s role as mothers. Motherhood is the central fact of female existence
because it is the most authentic biological experience that differentiates a woman from
man. A woman’s role in the reproduction of human beings far outweighs that of a man.
It is invariably a woman who becomes mother. Motherhood and mothering are usually
perceived as naturally related. This bringing forth of new life and its sustenance is so
essential to human survival. Paradoxically, it becomes instruments of subordination.
Maternal responsibility is used as an alibi to exclude a woman from power, authority,
decision, and a participatory role in public life. Further, motherhood and mothering are
not controlled by her.
The daughter’s sense of self and of gender is identified with her mother’s, whereas the son feels the need to break his attachment to his mother. The boys grow up with competitive values that are necessary for success in public life and the girls grow up to reproduce their mother’s capacity to relate to others, to nurture, and to mother. For some feminists, reproduction and mothering are a burden on women and they see new technologies that will take off the burden of reproduction, as a key to women’s liberation. For others, motherhood is one of the great pleasures of being a woman. They consider motherhood as a rescuer from male control and turn it into a highly positive one for women.

To survive, feminists suggest existing. Existentialism refers not to the state of existence, in which stones or sticks exist but to the development of inner personal being. Every human being is cast into a world not of his own making, but of the perceived, which is referred to as fictitious. From this fictitious, each has to appropriate, assimilate and transcend the given world. To transcend, it is unavoidable for every human being to battle and struggle in day-to-day affairs. Psychologically, the inner spiritual strength decides the physical and social strength of an individual. The inner spiritual strength accomplishes one’s identity.

In post colonialism, identity is rooted in an experience beyond representation. ‘Identity’ yielded its meaning from various terms - ‘individuality’, ‘self’, ‘character’, ‘singularity’ and ‘uniqueness’. It implies the state of being or remaining the same under varying aspects or conditions – the condition of being oneself and not another. Erik Erikson conceptualizes the formation of identity as a kind of psychosocial relativity existing in a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity. He says that:
We cannot separate personal growth and communal change, nor can we separate the identity crisis in individual life and contemporary crisis in historical development because the two help to define each other. (33)

While talking about ‘Identity’ in postmodern literature, Ravichandran, in his book *Postmodern Identity* argues that

The concept of identity is an effort to get away from the principle of fixity of inner stability and sameness. Since the factors that establish the stability have been blurred, identity is perceived as a tentative and illusory image constructed by the self involved in a continuous process of fabrication. (5)

The existing social order exerts the pressure on the inner psychic structure of an individual. The inner character prototype tends to quiver in a disintegrating sociological process of identity formation. In a post war regimented and conformist society, the identity of the postmodern individual becomes anonymous. The individual is manipulated by obscure and collective forces, and dissolved into the collective. The collective attenuate the postmodern personality of a fragmented, polymorphous, fluid individual. For the postmodern writers, the vision of collective identity militates against an interest in detailed characterization. They are interested in depicting the intricacies of personality. The conventional notions of character and personality are invalid for them. Such notions indicate fixity and permanence; whereas, the present stress is upon change and flux. The novelists embody the forces that affect the human beings in their fictional cosmos.

In fiction, names are used as identity markers to observe and indicate human beings who have existence. Infants that die in the womb are not named. In most of the cultures,
newly born children are named only after a month or two of their survival. Only when they acquire their real animatedness they are given names indicating their ancestral backgrounds. They are named by the surrounding society according to their physical appearance or dominant traits. The act of naming a person has got some implications. Naming is what constructs categories. It is done with an intention to reveal or hide some characteristics. And it is part of the masking-process involved in the act of personality or character-formation. If the act of naming has some significance, the act of not naming too has something overt to convey. The best way to maintain the anonymity of one’s identity is by abstaining from the use of any name.

As Erikson observes, “the development of psychosocial intimacy is not possible without a firm sense of identity” (186). To have this firm sense of identity, interaction is required. The characters believe that a symbolic sense of integrity is necessary for the formulation of a self. Having realized the absence of an inner formula for the making of a self, they start to search it outside. They look for clues, connections and interpret them to work out a formula for their identity. According to Norman Holland, “interpretation is a human act and is a major function of identity” (820). The post modern women writers question validity of reality through their characters since it is also a perceived fact. Subsequently, the characters gain multiple perceptions resulting in the reception of a fluid identity.

Self-questioning and an unwillingness to settle in a single location are characteristics of feminist literary theories. Feminist literary theories are thus the theories of feminists struggling against masculine and among themselves over the meanings of literature reading and feminism. According to Rooney, the struggle takes two forms:
“The interrogation of tradition and the revaluation of the aesthetic” (7). Interrogating the tradition is done by proposing counter canons of radically distinct traditions. Revaluation of the aesthetic is a critique of hegemonic aesthetic assumptions. A critique of the aesthetic may involve turning toward once-belittled forms, such as autobiography, slave narrative, diaries and testimonies, in order to disclose the substantial but overlooked aesthetic value. The female writers excel in the range and quality of perception when they write on the problems. They present, more authentically, their ideas on female creativity and also on the problems of female language. The rehabilitation, in terms of social crisis is represented as a post colonial value in women’s fictions.

Canadian Literature is a literary output arising out of a confluence of two main streams in the English language – British and American. It gained a unique identity of its own transcending cultural and racial barriers. It has a much longer history, a long phase of ‘invisibility’. It took decades of struggle and persistent efforts to come into ‘visibility’ in stages. It was first recognized politically as an area to enquire into the value system of the land or to study the distinctive features of cultural nationalism.

French Canadians feel surrounded by their English speaking neighbours. They have made a determined effort to preserve their own institutions and culture. English Canadians also have the similar feeling of being surrounded by the people and culture of the United States. Canada’s literature, whether written in English or French, reflects three main parts of Canadian experience – Effects of climate and geography on life, Frontier’s life, and Canada’s position in the world. With reference to various regions of Canada like the Maritime Provinces, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British

In Prairie Literature, though landscape is a setting and an element of interest, it is a secondary feature of the literature itself. It is the metaphor that the writer has used to express himself. In *Commentaries on Canadian Literature*, Ramaswamy comments:

> Some of the characteristics of Prairie literature can be identified as the shift from rural to the urban, leaving land for the city, western alienation, the effect of the great depression, etc. The farmer remains the symbol of the Prairies. The literature of the Prairies reflects a positive image of the farmer and his hard work is a part of it. (165)

The writers who have written about the prairies are relating human responses to a particular environment. Though the experiences root in a particular region, they embody the whole experience of entire Canada, and make the Prairie experience a universal in the global context.

The 1960’s is the time of an upsurge in Canadian nationalist politics and of the rise of the women’s movement. Many accomplished women have emerged since the 1950s and they were dealing with issues ranging from national identity to gender politics. They have pointed to the shared themes of powerlessness, victimization and alienation as well as to a certain ambivalence or ambiguity. In the 1960s the women novelists tend to write more as women than as patriots.

In the 70’s and the 80’s, Canadian writing was stimulated by a renaissance of interest in literature and culture. The quest for definition of a Canadian identity became a national obsession, particularly after the Second World War. The Twentieth century has seen Canada’s plenty in fiction writing. Sinclair Ross, Ethel Wilson, Margaret Laurence,
Margaret Atwood, Margaret Clarke, Hugh Maclenan, Mordecai Richler, Alice Munro, M.G. Vassanji, Marian Engel, Gabrielle Roy, Anne Herbert, Adle Wiseman, Aritha VanHerk, Sheila Watson, Jeanette Armstrong and Rudy Wiebe are the major fiction writers, who in their works portray the multi-culturalism and the multi-ethnicity of Canada.

Pluralism, heterogeneity and minority cultures, and attempts to look for regional identities as an alternative to the goal of seeking a homogenous national identity are some of the salient features of the Twentieth century Canadian fiction. The American literature is based on Freudian concept, and the Canadian literature is on Jungian. In its self exploration, Canadian literature becomes Jungian. Northrop Frye in his “Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada”, observes that Canadians have an identity crisis with a difference for they are less perplexed by the existential question “Who am I?” than by some such riddle as “Where is here?” (220).

According to feminist Canadian women writers, women must define their subjectivity before they can question it, they must first assert the selfhood they have been denied by the dominant culture. In the words of Howells, Canadian women writers are, engaged in a struggle with language and inherited conventions to find more adequate ways of telling about women’s experiences, fighting their way out of silence to project more authentic images of how women feel and what they do. (5)

In their novels, their focus is on the inner world of feeling and sensibility, and the social documentaries voicing the cause of women suppression. Canadian women writers of fiction are concerned with a woman’s struggle to discover her ‘self’ and find self affirmation. According to Coral Ann Howells, the aim of the Canadian women’s fiction
is to make women, “critically conscious of their own roles in conventional social structures” (4).

The outstanding Canadian women writers are Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Gibson, Susan Musgrave, Marian Engel, Mavis Gallant and Boverley Simons. Every one of them excels in every genre: Munro, Marian Engel, Mavis Gallant, Margaret Laurence, and Margaret Gibson in fiction; Susan Musgrave in poetry; Beverley Simons in Drama; and Margaret Atwood in both poetry and fiction. Out of them Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, and Alice Munro are the established veterans of the Canadian Women’s Writing. The Women’s movement has provided these writers with the courage and motivation to break out of traditional patriarchal forms to depict how women have been abused, exploited and oppressed. Their stories move towards the discovery of the self, and deal with the woman’s encounter with the prejudiced world. They are concerned with exploration and survival and tend to project the image of a woman who is confident, intelligent and assertive.

The aim of women writing in Canada is to bring about remarkable changes in the lives of Canadian women and society. They want gender equality in Canadian society. In their works, Canadian feminists attempt to focus on the ‘New Woman’ – a woman who is self-aware, independent, seeking to evolve an identity of her own. Their writing challenges cultural and psychological limit and glimpses new prospects. In Malashri Lal’s words, Canadian women fiction writers set many radical ideas in women’s individuality, through,

their own language, body-determined experiences, and their own strategies of rebellion through tropes of madness, silence, illness and guile. (180)
Their altitude just depicts the revolutionary mind of their protagonists. Canadian feminist novelists are improving women’s life-chances and have the sense that women can contribute to the building of a major peaceful caring world.

By and large, all Canadian contemporary women novelists present visions of alternate worlds that examine the multiple ironies of contemporary society. They portray the barriers to women’s power, individuality and autonomy. They also attempt to surmount them through the narrative devices of irony and fantasy. Pervasive use of irony and fantasy as narrative devices in the contemporary novels by Canadian women novelists question the conventional assumptions about identity, gender relationships and women’s potentials and achievements. The novels, generally, reflect the change in the fundamental aspects of women’s lives.

The contemporary Canadian writer is Alice Munro, an author of short fiction. She questions masculine and feminine stereotypes. In her fictions, she questions the society’s expectations about the traditional role of women both in the past and the present. Her *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) and *The Progress of Love* (1986) explore the feminist struggle against the male authority established and fostered by christianity. *The Progress of Love* is the touchstone of human experience and the record of cultural dimensions of female sexuality. In her collected volume of short stories, *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), she questions and challenges the dependency of women. In an interview with Barbara Frum, she says, “this emotional dependency I feel in myself. I don’t know where it comes from. I don’t know if it is a conditional thing in women and I don’t think we’ll know for another generation” (38). Munro emphasizes the freedom of choice for women and evokes strong emotions thereby voicing her own vision of the world in art.
In Snitow’s opinion Munro begins with “the traditional female concerns with personal relationships and the details of daily life and expands these concerns to include a wider and swath of human experience” (174).

Margaret Laurence’s greatest literary achievements are the Manawaka novels. The series of four novels, *The Stone Angel, A Test of God, The Fire Dwellers* and *The Diviners* published between 1964 and 1974 form ‘the Manawaka Cycle’. The novels explore the lives of several generations, who have come to build and settle in the town of Manawaka. The fictional town of Manawaka is a private world of Laurence rather than a physical, actual, geographical entity. Laurence is not an exclusivist or essentialist. As a modern feminist she writes within a humanist tradition and advocates a more balanced view of man-woman relationship. Laurence is an equal-rights feminist, who pleads for individual freedom with both men and women. Laurence herself says in an interview with Clara Thomas, “the theme of human freedom, which has increasingly come to mean an inner freedom without which any external freedom is meaningless” (337). Thus Laurence pleads for inner freedom for women.

Like her contemporary writers Margaret Atwood, is an internationally known, feminist and humanist writer, leading Canadian poet, short story writer, novelist and critic. George Woodcock praises her in the following manner:

No other writer in Canada of Margaret Atwood’s generation has so wide a command of the resources of literature, so telling a restraint in their use as Margaret Atwood. (327)
Atwood systematically thematizes the personal quest for fulfillment as inextricably involved in a communal quest for cultural identity.

In the words of Shirin Kudchedkar, Atwood deconstructs the “traditional cultural dependencies in the quest for physical and metaphysical freedom” (104). Atwood is concerned with the theme of struggle to find self-fulfillment. Kudchedkar remarks, Atwood’s writing throws “the story line open to question”, the disarrangements demand “new judgments and solutions” (177). Atwood confronts the dilemmas of allegiance which facilitates the co-existence of multiple cultures within oneself, all of which are maintained as different from one another. Thus, post-coloniality, the multiplicity of influences and tradition make Canadian women’s writing simultaneously feminist and post modernist. Atwood’s novels turn into open-ended, split-level discourses which sustain indeterminacies and ambiguities.

Born in 1939 in Ottawa, Atwood grew up in northern Ontario, Quebec, and Toronto. As a daughter of a forest entomologist Atwood spent a large part of her childhood in the Canadian wilderness which led to her metaphorical use of wilderness and animals in her literary works. At the age of six she began to write poems, morality plays, comic books, and an unfinished novel about an ant. At the age of sixteen she found that writing was suddenly the only thing, she wanted to do. She received her undergraduate degree from Victoria College at the University of Toronto and her master’s degree from Redcliffe College in 1962. She has held a variety of academic posts and has been a writer-in-residence of numerous Canadian and American Universities. Her affinity to Canadian soil is vital to understand her writings. She boldly portrays the gender victimization in Canada. Discussing the role of the writer in society,
Atwood remarks in her *Second Words* that the woman writer “tends to concentrate more on life, not as it ought to be, but as it is, as the writer feels it, experiences it. Writers are eye-witnesses, I-witnesses” (203).

Margaret Atwood has been writing for four decades with the intent of making the world a better place; and making her readers think more and feel more. She is a visionary philosopher and uses the twin tools of poetry and prose to shape and articulate her vision. Her enriched prolific outpourings and enlightened philosophical musings made her readers feel more. Atwood burst into the Canadian Literary Firmament with her poetry in the early 1960s. Atwood communicated to the world that her writing is going to poke roughly rather than to strike gently.

As a long time champion of writer’s rights, she is exceptionally intelligent and interspersed with a ready and infectious laugh. She is the former President of ‘Pen Canada’, and the winner of Dan David prize with million dollars. An unusual and isolated childhood circumstances, with not many ‘material’ things, fostered her reading and writing. She wrote poetry, fiction, non-fiction, did puppet shows, high-school skits, enacted in Ben Jonson’s *The Silent Woman*, designed the programme, and printed the posters.

As a writer, Atwood made her debut with *Double Persephone* (1961), a collection of poems, at the age of 19. Another early collection, *The Circle Game* (1964) received the Canadian Governor General’s Award for poetry in 1966. In *The Circle Game*, she examined the ways by which people invent convenient versions of them, using stereotypes and conventions of the language and a belief to exclude from their consideration whatever is uncertain, unknown or threatening. It is considered as an
aspect of colonialism – the coloniser’s refusal to recognize the virtues in a society
different from their own.

Atwood continued to dazzle in the 70s with her prose pieces. In the early 1970s,
her *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* is emerged as enduring reference
text for the Canadian literature and Canada itself. While working as an editor at the
Toronto Publishing House, Anansi in the early 1970, Atwood published her controversial
study *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) in which she stated the
key pattern in Canadian writing is that of victimization. It is often described as her
‘literary history’, ‘the victim survival thesis’, and ‘Layman’s guide’. Survival is keyword
for Atwood and she wants her protagonists to refuse to be victims and demand equal
space as man. In her *Survival*, Atwood says,

> Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, geography of the mind.
> Canadian Literature is one such map, as the product of who and where we
> have been. For the members of a country or culture, shared knowledge of
> their place, their here, is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that
> knowledge we will not survive. (10)

Her Second work of criticism is *Second Words* (1984), in which she describes
Canadian Poetry and a contemporary woman’s writing to Feminism and international
*Power Politics* (1973) and *You Are Happy* (1974) she considers women’s lives as
submissive territories colonized by men. Her short stories collection *Dancing Girls*
(1977), attracted more positive notice, winning the City of Toronto Book Award, the
Canadian Booksellers Association Award and the periodical Distributions of Canada
Short Fiction Award. Her collection of short stories *Bluebeard’s Egg* (1983) explores the

From penning television dramas to entertaining children with her stories, writing poetry and prose fuelled by her leaning towards Civil Rights, the writer in her was at the height of her prowess. *Murder in the Dark* (1983) is a collection of postmodern prose poems and short fictions, which excited critical attention in new circles. Atwood continued to alternate prose with poetry in *Interlunar* (1984) followed by *Selected Poems* (1986). *For the Birds* (1990), and *Princess Prunella and the Purple and peanut* (1995) exhibit her delight in word play.

*Wilderness Tips* (1991) is the collection of stories with Gothic overtones about women facing middle age. The stories are narrated to emphasize the confrontations with the wilderness. It is followed by *Good Bones* (1992) which is about female body parts and social constraints. It is written with devastating wit. In 1995, Margaret Atwood published *Morning in the Burned House*, her collection of poems included a sequence of elegiac poems, demonstrating a new emotional range in her work.

Atwood advocates the demolition of gender system that oppresses women, in all her novels. Her literary career as a novelist begins with her maiden novel, *The Edible Woman* (1969). It echoes the theme of women’s alienation. It is an early feministic treatise, both funny and terrifying story about a young woman, who works for a consumer company. *Surfacing* (1972) is Atwood’s most remarkable novelistic achievement in
which the technology – nature conflict is cast in political terms. It serves to illuminate Atwood’s strong nationalist as well as feminist ideologies. The protagonist goes through an archetypal retreat to the irrational wilderness where she undergoes transformation through contact with native and Quebec cultures before reintegrating into society.

*The Edible Woman* pleads for the radical changes in the gender relations in the society and carries the message that women are not mere objects of beauty meant for carnal consumption of men. In the novel Atwood’s concern is about men’s consumerist attitude towards women. Marian Mac Alpin a consumer research analyst takes a challenge to look in the face of consumerist society. Men treat her as a product and she is used variously according to their whims and fancies. Her femininity and beauty is exposed in advertisements for commercial success.

In her identity crisis she realizes the root causes of her exploitation and oppression. In her working spot she cannot even choose the layer to posit herself and finally settles in the middle layer. Her company considers marriage and pregnancy as acts of disloyalty to its authority. Even if she discards marriage and continues her job she can’t be provided with adequate pension after a lifetime of dedicated work. Hence, she feels insecure both in marriage and her profession. To lead a meaningful life and to realize her ‘self’ she looks for choices. Ainsley who accepts the traditional role of a wife and mother for the sake of her child cannot be her role model. She is consumed and has become edible in the marriage market against her desire. Marian rejects Ainsley and probes Clara’s lifestyle and rejects it too because she is a child-bearing machine who is fully dependent socially and economically upon her husband. She is not attracted by her office virgins too who are nothing but victims in the patriarchal society for fear of losing
the advantages that they enjoy – safety and stability. Marian never wants to be fickle-minded as Ainsley, submissive like Clara and self-destructive like her office virgins.

Marian discovers that her identity can never be safe and secure in the event of her marriage with Peter. Peter enjoys shooting and killing of rabbits and other animals mercilessly as a matter of pleasure and pride. She is annoyed with his excessive drinking and unsavoury attitude and begins to distance herself from him. Peter’s camera frightens her, as it directs technological assaults on her. She hence tries to avoid Peter’s camera which exploits her femininity. She hopes to find some kind of safety and shelter with Duncan but becomes a helpless victim to his lust. She, thus, decides to reject all female and male alternatives.

She revolts against this violence committed upon her ‘self’. Men are not prone to love either women or any living beings. Peter is not aware of the living organisms present in food and consume food as casually as he consumes women. When she is made aware that there is life in every food item she stops taking vegetarian food first and also non-vegetarian later. This is how she begins her protest against male arrogance and resolves to reject Peter as well as marriage. She expresses her absolute refusal through baking a cake and eating it herself. She makes it in the image of herself from fresh ingredients. She offers the cake to Peter as substitute for herself. But, being embarrassed by her act, Peter realizes that he can no longer play a game of deceit with her. He leaves the place without eating the cake but, she eats it herself. She feels that she is able to gather her strength which was lost. Her freed ‘self’, relieved from conflict and inhibition makes her active and she engages herself in cleaning and pruning. Symbolically it
represents her freedom from male chauvinism and exploitation. Finally she resigns her job and plans her future which she hopes to be better.

Atwood uses the theme of awareness about one’s self as the first step towards quest for self identity and patriotism as the first step towards cultural identity in *Surfacing*. The novel exposes the exploitation and oppression of the nameless protagonist by her husband, an art teacher. The protagonist’s artistic skills are exploited by him and she is also robbed of her privilege of motherhood. Through this novel, Atwood questions and challenges woman’s role as wife and mother in the family and artist in the society. The heroine of the novel correlates the destruction of wilderness in her hometown with the violation of her motherhood. She becomes aware that she is anti-nature, as she has aborted her baby. In her attempt to search for her self identity and cultural identity, she drowns into the lake and surfaces. Her childhood memories give her the message that she should become a mother which will retain her natural creative power. She discards her wedding ring and her old paintings which were dictated by her husband. Now she feels free to use her creative power both in paintings and in giving birth to a child through a non-American. She leaves for Quebec where she can enjoy her freedom.

Man-woman relationship is distorted and marital bond loses its meaning. She understands how the married life of Anna and David is not one of fulfillment. The marital bond between them is loveless and artificial. David commoditises Anna’s anatomy and misuses the institution of marriage. Anna lives with David for the sake of their profession. As a model Anna helps David to boost the sale of his advertisement
boards. David exploits Anna’s beauty for commercial success. This male chauvinistic attitude of David makes the heroine hate the artificial marital bond.

The heroine moves to and stay in Quebec countryside her place of birth enables her to have clarity about life. Her quest for identity becomes complete with her staying back in her hometown. She eliminates all her old paintings dictated by her husband. She takes with her only the painting done purely by herself and leaves all others behind. One particular painting drawn by her as a child is noteworthy. In the painting she had drawn horns to men, standing beside a pregnant mother. The men with horns on are Gods the protective agents of nature - motherhood. This childhood painting of hers teaches her that motherhood is a rich experience of any woman which accomplishes her life.

By principle, at one stage, she starts eating only natural food – fruits and vegetables associating herself with nature. She becomes one with nature and opts to live a life in the midst of nature. Her mind and spirit are no more disturbed and she enjoys the beauty and power of nature. She cherishes her natural capability of becoming a mother. The heroine surfaces from the lake as a whole woman. The novel emphasizes women’s need to recognize and empower themselves. She decides to become a mother to fulfill her life as a woman. She succeeds in realizing her self identity as a countryside woman refusing to be a victim of pastiche people. She hopes to become a mother fulfilling her life as a complete woman. She won’t let her child also be a victim of pastiche Americans. She drowns into the lake and comes out as an independent - empowered - woman drowning all her fear, doubt etc. When she surfaces from the lake she restores her trust in her lover Joe and she prefers to mother the child of Joe, a non-American. She imagines her future child, to which Joe will be the father, in the form of jelly fish which
surfaces from the lake. Her journey towards self identity comes to an end bringing her salvation.

Atwood’s third novel *Lady Oracle* (1976) is a gothic romance. As a feminist Atwood uses parody in the novel to deconstruct male discursive form of writing. It won the 1977 City of Toronto Book Award and a Canadian Booksellers Award. *Life Before Man* (1979) is her most domestic novel with its triangular plot. This novel has brought international recognition for Atwood. *Bodily Harm* (1981) focuses on the contrast between affluent thinking and the brutal reality of power and sexual politics.

*The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) received the Governor General’s Award, the Los Angeles Times Prize, and short-listed for the Booker prize. It is a dystopian novel, a tale of bleak future portraying a time where women are prized only for their reproductive gift. Although the novel is shocking, there are moments of lyrical comfort and wit. *Cat’s Eye* (1988) focuses on the issues of women through art for the first time in history. It exposes male prejudices against women’s creativity and talent and shows how art can be used as a weapon against tyranny in all its manifestations. *The Robber Bride* (1993) is a feminist thought provoking novel. It examines Toronto lifestyle and women’s friendships.

*Alias Grace* (1996), is a fictional biography of a notorious real life murderer, Grace Marks, who lived in the mid nineteenth century. It mixed and matched a fictional first person narrative with actual journalistic accounts to weave a complex and engaging tale of perception versus actual reality. With her subversive writing, Atwood raised pertinent questions about the nature of truth and how it gets contaminated by issues of power, culture and identity. The novel is Atwood’s most sophisticated articulation of longstanding philosophical and political concerns. It was nominated for the Booker Prize
and short-listed for the Governor General’s Award. *The Blind Assassin* (2000) brought Atwood the Booker prize. It is a meta-fictional fairy tale. Atwood proved her intellectual rigour in telling a complex tale of hurt and loss through the simple device of multiple narrations that repeatedly meet and fork.

In 2003, *Oryx and Crake*, her Sci-Fi novel came out. It is Atwood’s vision of mankind’s uncompromisingly bleak future. The recently published other two Sci-Fi novels of the trilogy are *The Year of the Flood*, and *Madd Addam*. The three novels are multifaceted, complex and satirical. Atwood explains the origin of a corporative world with the post-human species of Crackers, naked and childlike beings frolicking in sexual freedom, eating only plants while the human survivors visualize them residing in a futuristic Garden of Eden. Atwood exaggerates a new ‘reality’ about human. They are made out to consider themselves heroes in a world and refused to realize its demise. Though the signs of hope glimmer at the end, it is difficult to imagine a future where the existing Homo sapiens will survive. By mixing memory and desire, Atwood creates a surreal future coloured with magic realism. In a Huxleyian manner, Atwood projects a brave new world of the post-apocalyptic human. The remarkable conclusion to Atwood’s sci-fi trilogy has both adventure and musings on man-made disasters. In an interview, Atwood says, “Like preachers, I sell vision, like perfume ads, desire or its facsimile. Like jokes or war, it’s all in the timing” (Nair 3). According to Margaret Atwood, novels are about human behaviour, and the sense of right and wrong.

*Bildungsroman* is the central concern of women’s writing in Canadian Literature. The theme of survival reiterates the importance of the universal quest for self-realization and self-expression. The feminine *Bildungsroman* written by women writers in the
twentieth century believe that “experience of a young girl may stand as a paradigm for that of the whole human race every bit as much as the boy’s can” (Miles *The Female Form: Women Writers and the Conquest of the Novel* 102). Atwood’s Bildungsromans, moreover, identify the quest for selfhood with the artists’ quest for artistic integrity, and this belongs to the subdivision of the Bildungsroman tradition, the Kunstlerroman, which deals with the development of the artist. The question regarding the connection between life and art is one of the fundamental themes of Kunstlerroman, which is explored in its examination of the growth and development of the woman-as-artist/artist-as-woman in a society where both roles are marginalized. The female protagonist of the Kunstlerroman has to choose between her artistic instincts and patriarchal norms of femininity, and in communicating her confrontation with these usually opposing forces she has also revealed the relationship between the artist and the society.

The feminists have recognized the value of archetypes in understanding women’s experience. They claim that the concept of the archetype could be in the hands of feminists a way of recovering and revaluing women’s experience. Northrop Frye, the quintessential Canadian critic and the pioneer of archetypal criticism sees literature as displaced mythology. If myth is related to narrative, archetype is related to theme and character. Feminists reify the archetypes and see them as a reflection of cultural taboos and fears showing how psyches battle with socially constructed images of women and men. According to Northrop Frye, journey and quest are the archetypal narratives of literature and rebirth, an archetypal theme. In women’s writing, they are rewritten as women’s journeys into their deep selves and their discovery of a new authentic identity. They are heroines not in the sense of supporting characters to heroes. As Carol Pearson
and Katherine Pope have said, “It is misleading to call them heroines; they are female heroes” (50). Atwood’s protagonists are such female heroes, who struggle to redefine the cultural definitions forced on them, and affirm their own renovation in the new era.

Atwood sees herself neither a feminist nor an activist. In an interview, she opines that,

Society is a pyramid – people at the top do better: Men and Women both. In the 1960s and 1970s any woman who had done anything was thought to be a feminist. I don’t think people really know what they mean by ‘feminist’. I’m not really an ‘activist’. I prefer a quite life in a cosy burrow. But I get dragged in because things that seem extreme to others often just look like common sense to me. (Lahiri 1)

Thus Atwood tries to explore the existential attitude of normal human beings.

All the novels of Atwood expose various problems of women such as male’s attack on women in matters of profession, marriage and motherhood and hence marginalization of women. Each novel focuses an individual problem of the female protagonist. Atwood also represents the intelligence and individuality of women artists in her novels. She attempts to focus on the new-woman as self-aware, independent seeking to evolve an identity of her own. She systematically thematizes the personal quest for fulfillment as inextricably involved in a communal quest for cultural identity. Though the problem differs in each novel all novels are thematically related. Each protagonist struggles to identify her ‘self’. Self identity eventually gives self confidence to her protagonists.

Atwood has not overestimated the problems of women but holds a mirror to actual social status of women through her female characters who are true to life. She
pleads for a healthy, harmonious and balanced man-woman relationship in which two sexes are viewed as complementary, not as a battle of sexes in a winning or losing game. Atwood’s novels create awareness that no gods from above but women themselves have to raise their inner self and make an effort to find their freedom. Atwood proposes image of woman not just a ‘two legged womb’ but a dynamic human, different from male but no less significant in any manner. Feminist protest in Atwood’s novels reveals an intense awareness of the relationship between bonding and bondage, i.e. between a woman’s need for connection with others and her equally strong need for freedom.

Atwood was recognized as a versatile writer by various critics in the criticism of her fiction and non-fiction. In Margaret Atwood: Language, Text and System (1983), edited by Sherill E. Grace and Lorraine Weir, the authors examined her ‘system’ or ‘set codes’ from various critical perspectives. The book demonstrated the overall consistence of Atwood’s work. Margaret Atwood’s Fairy-Tale Sexual Politics (1993), authored by Sharon Rose Wilson is a feminist, and structuralist analysis of Atwood’s texts. Wilson describes the motifs, catalogues, analyses and interprets the fairy tale parallels in her fiction.

Margaret Atwood, The Shape Shifter (1998) edited by Coomi S. Vevaina and Coral Ann Howells, regards Atwood a multifaceted writer. The articles show that there are hundreds of possibilities for changing shape in Atwood’s writing and her fictive world is one of continual metamorphosis. Critical Essays on Margaret Atwood (1988), by Judith Mc Comb focuses on themes and patterns of social criticism, feminism and women’s literature. The book also describes Gothic, popular genres, and folklore in
Atwood’s fiction. *Violent Duality* (1980) by Sherill E. Grace argues that Atwood’s work is a violent duality.


*Margaret Atwood: A Feminist Poetics* (1984) authored by Prof. Frank Davey offers a male perspective. It is a misinterpretation of Margaret Atwood’s progressive protagonists. In this study, Davey argues that all Atwood’s protagonists are against the reconstruction and unity of the world and they refused the doctrine of liberalism and desired to be ‘whole’. Davey blames Atwood of exaggerating the problems of women in her fiction. In the counter argument, Neeru Tandon and Anshul Chandra prove in *Margaret Atwood: A Jewel in Canadian Writing* (2009) that Atwood has described the portraits of realistic protagonists. As a writer of realistic fiction, Atwood can not claim for her characters greater autonomy than actual women can reasonably claim.

The thesis entitled, “Pro Feminism in the novels of Atwood” analyses the aspects and perspectives of pro feminism in the novels of Margaret Atwood, and tries to find out Atwood as a radical essentialist. In Particular, the focus is stressed on the four novels – *Lady Oracle, Cat’s Eye, Bodily Harm*, and *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The thematic aspect in the above four novels is the protagonists’ quest and realization of self identity. Joan
Foster, the protagonist of *Lady Oracle* vicariously alludes the obstacles that a woman writer faces in phallocentric culture. Thereby Atwood opposes commoditization of women in marriage and exposes the shallowness and hypocrisy of pseudo-radicals among men. In *Cat’s Eye*, Elaine Risley used art as a weapon against tyranny. The male centered order in art practices is displaced by the women oriented paintings of Elaine, which also expand the possibilities of better and healthy relationships between men and women. Renata Wilford, the camera narrator of *Bodily Harm* writes her travelogue in the prison cell and it includes all sorts of bodily harm penetrated on women by men. She envisions an organized society where human beings are united and organized in a common cause. Offred, the narrator-protagonist of *The Handmaid’s Tale* is the victim of a prohibition ordinance. She explicitly connects sexuality and textuality to tell her tale of victimization and endorses a holistic, anti-militaristic and life-affirming commitment to life.

The thesis is structured on six chapters. Chapter I ‘Introduction’, throws light on the principles and theories of Pro feminism, Margaret Atwood and her assertion of self identity as the seminal themes of her novels. Chapter II ‘Autonomy through Creativity’ points out Atwood’s affirmation of woman writer’s autonomy and individuality in *Lady Oracle*. Chapter III ‘Androgyny, a tool for Feminity’ focuses on Atwood’s opposition of male chauvinism, patriarchal ideology and authoritarianism in *Cat’s Eye*. Chapter IV ‘Self-discovery in sexual gender power politics’ presents the gender victimization of women in local political activities in *Bodily Harm*. Chapter V ‘Identity against misogynistic attitudes’ shows how *The Handmaid’s Tale* dramatizes a futuristic, bleak,
totalitarian society where women are denied and deprived of the basic rights. Chapter VI ‘Summing Up’ summarises the pro feminist views of Atwood in her novels.