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# ***Adab Al-Rafidayn Journal***



A refereed journal concerned with the publishing of  
scientific researches in the field of arts and humanities  
both in Arabic and English

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## CONTENTS

Title	Page
<b>The Grammatical Roles of the English Articles with Reference to Translation into Arabic</b> Prof. Dr. Abdulrahman Ahmed Abdulrahman Asst. Prof. Dr. Mazin Fawzi Ahmed	1 - 18
<b>A Semantico-Pragmatic Adaptation of English Loanwords in Mosuli Arabic</b> Asst. Prof. Dunia A. Husein & Lect. Dr. Wafaa' M. Ali	19 - 36
<b>Pragmatic Functions of Thinking Verses in the Glorious Qur'an</b> Asst. Prof.Dr. Muhammad Hamza Kan'an	37 - 64
<b>The Translation of the Imperative Mood in Al- Muzzammil Qur'ānic Sūrah into English</b> Asst. prof.Muhammad T.S. Abdul-Aziz	65 - 86
<b>Silence in Harold Pinter's Plays</b> Asst. Lect.Wafa Salim Mahmood*	87 - 116
<b>Questioning Gender Violence and Foucault's Post Structural Subjectivity in Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle</b> Asst. Lect.Huda Al-Hassani	117 - 138
<b>Exploring the Errors Committed by Arab and Kurd Iraqi EFL Learners in Writing Composition</b> Asst. Lect. Sanabil Azher Sulieman Asst. Lect. Huda Kanaan Hamza	139 - 156

# ***Questioning Gender Violence and Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity in Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle***

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## **1. Abstract**

This research challenges gender violence; therefore, it is going to discuss Rosanne Kennedy's (2002) and Chris Weedon's (1995) arguments on the term Patriarchy in the gothic fiction of Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* (1976). Thus, in order to understand patriarchal relations and gender violence in *Lady Oracle*, this research is going to discover the main definitions and characteristics of the gothic assigned by Fred Botting (1996), Gina Wisker (2005) and Helene Meyers (2001). However, depending on Sara Mills' (1995), Teun A. Van Dijk's (2003) and Michelle M. Lazar's (2007) critical modules, this research provides ways to unfold patriarchal relations and resist gender violence in *Lady Oracle*. Thus, this research questions the role of violence in shaping Michel Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity within Atwood's *Lady Oracle*. It concludes that Gothic Fiction can be women's revolution to express their reaction and resistance to gender violence to maintain or disregard their subjectivity and role in society.

## **2. Introduction**

For so long, gender violence against women is an important issue in our world for the impact it has in maintaining or disregarding their subjectivity and role in society. Women writers try to express and critique such violence in Gothic Fiction and feminists provide theories and critical devices to unfold women's roles, experiences and resistance with gender violence. From this, Gothic Fiction can be defined by Juliann Fleenor (1983, 18, 27) as an important tool to represent women and their role in society. However, to understand such representation, it is important to deal with Feminist Literary Theory, which is according to Rosanne

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**Questioning Gender Violence and Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity  
in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* Asst. Lect. Huda Al-Hassani**

Kennedy (2002,306), "a critical form of knowledge which analyses the role that literary forms and practices, together with the discourses of literary criticism and theory, play in perpetuating or challenging hierarchies of gender, class, race and sexuality". Hence, Feminist Literary Theory, Criticism, and Gothic Fiction locate Patriarchy at the centre of their studies. Therefore, Feminist approaches to literature are framed by "the concept of patriarchy – the belief that women as group are universally oppressed by men as group, on the bases of sexual difference" (Kennedy 2002, 306). On the other side, Jerrold E. Hogle (2002, 10) argues that Gothic is mainly concerned with Patriarchy to maintain women's confinement and repression. Thus, Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism can be used to show women's representations and their experiences within Patriarchy in Gothic Fiction and the effect of such experiences on their subjectivity and roles in society. Therefore, Teresa De Lauretis (1994, 7) claims that Feminism conceptualizes "'experience' in relation both to social-material practices and to the formation and process of subjectivity". Such experiences reveal women's reaction against gender violence showing how their subjectivity is constructed with the process of the violent circumstances that can distinguish between oppressive violence and violence that resists oppression. Consequently, this research aims to explore gender violence and its effects in shaping women's Post Structural Subjectivity in Atwood's *Lady Oracle* and women's role in patriarchal society. It deals with Feminist Literary Theory, Criticism, Gothic Fiction, Patriarchy and its resistance and the Politics of Post-Structural Subjectivity in Atwood's *Lady Oracle*. Thus, it consists of three main sections along with abstract, introduction, conclusion and bibliography. Finally this research concludes on how gender violence plays great role in constructing women's Post-Structural Subjectivity in Gothic Fiction thereby they resist gender violence in an attempt to maintain their subjectivity, identity and role in patriarchal society.

**3. Feminist Literary Theory, Criticism and Gothic Fiction**

Feminist Literary theory has emerged to challenge patriarchal repressive norms on women and to maintain their role in society. Whereas theory scrutinizes the political and philosophical

interpretive, evaluative and underbidding practices including “literature”, criticism deals with close reading, which is the practical aspect of literary study (Kennedy 2002, 306). As Patriarchy is main theme in Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism, Chris Weedon (1995, 2) uses ‘patriarchal’ to refer to “power relations in which women’s interests are subordinated to the interest of men. These power relations take many forms, from the sexual division of labor and the social organization of procreation and the internalized norms of femininity by which we live.” He states that, such power is mainly relied on the biological sexual difference in social meanings and the nature and social women’s role are defined in association with male’s norm (1995,2). Therefore, for Paulina Palmer, Patriarchy encourages men’s domination on women (1989, 68). So, as Patriarchy is the main cause of women’s sufferings, women’s writers use fiction to rebel and reveal their resistance to it. Nonetheless, the most favorable fiction for feminists’ writers to represent their sufferings, attitudes and rebellions is Gothic Fiction in the sense that they use gothic characteristics, motifs and fantasies to rebel against Patriarchy. From this, Gothic Fiction is a genre that is used to reveal different human issues particularly women’s issues; therefore, Female Gothic Fiction is an important area for women to uncover their sufferings, oppressions and role in patriarchal society. Thus, according to Gina Wisker (2005, (43,147)), with its emphasis on fears of loss of identity, family, security and domestic sphere, the gothic helps in exploring difficult social issues. Therefore, Helene Meyers (2001, 19) claims that the main trait in female gothic fiction is women’s victimization, which is represented by violence against women when fear motivates the violation of women’s bodies and confines their subject. However, Fred Botting (1996,(1-2)) describes gothic atmospheres as tortuous, gloomy and threatened human’s life with horrible images with its mysterious incidents and haunting revealing a sense of violence and menace. Accordingly, Feminist Literary Theory, Criticism and Gothic Fiction deal with Patriarchy whereas the formers unfold and critique the violent oppressive norms of Patriarchy against women; the later can provide substance to resist such oppression. Therefore, it’ll be important to examine patriarchal associations in Gothic Fiction to reveal Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism approaches by showing how women are

**Questioning Gender Violence and Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity  
in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* Asst. Lect. Huda Al-Hassani**

symbolized in this fiction and what roles that may get within patriarchal society. For Feminist Literary Criticism, Johanna Lahikainen (2007, 29) argues that it emphasizes on "the scrutiny of the content and the images of women in fiction". Thus, to analyze literary texts, it would be useful to depend on Sara's Mills' model of Feminist Literary Criticism "Analysis at the Level of Discourse" to examine the patriarchal associations in Gothic Fiction. Such model of analysis focuses on characters' construction in the text, body's description, women's role in the text, and women's role within gender difference ideologies (Mills 1995, 159-160). Further, Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism provide tools not only to unfold and critique the gender violence in Gothic Fiction, but also to reveal how the Gothic resists such violence. Therefore, Van Dijk's model "Critical Discourse Analysis" (CDA) is appropriate to clarify the resistance to the dominant oppressive ideologies (2003, 352). For the author, CDA "is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context[...] such dissident research, [...]ultimately resist social inequality", (2003, 352). Relying on Van Dijk's model of power resistance and from a feminist perspective, Lazar (2007, 145) claims that "the central concern of feminist critical discourse analysts is with critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order – relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group, and disadvantage, exclude, and disempower women as a social group". Hence, the analysis of Patriarchy and its resistance in *Lady Oracle* is going to be examined in the next section.

**4. Patriarchy & its resistance in *Lady Oracle***

Atwood's feminist gothic tale *Lady Oracle* examines patriarchal associations, its resistant and unfold women role within patriarchal violent gender oppressed norms. The novel's analysis is going to reveal Patriarchy and its resistance through two points. The first point is women's objectification through the patriarchal standard feminine body construction; the second point is about women's role in patriarchal domestic institution. However, these patriarchal associations are shown through mother-daughter



associations. As a resistance of the violent gender norms, *Lady Oracle* reveals the gothic figure 'Monstrous-Feminine', which is symbolized by the novel's heroine Joan; therefore, in order to rebel and liberate from Patriarchy, Joan transforms to a 'Monster'. Thus, this is going to be clearly defined in the next sub-sections as follows:

#### 4.1 The Resistance of Women's Objectification

Women's objectification in *Lady Oracle* is discussed through mother-daughter associations to show how Joan challenges the patriarchal standard feminine body construction through being a gothic figure thereby subverts women's objectification. In *Lady Oracle*, Joan dislikes her mother because she treats her as an object, a product by which she invents on; therefore, for Joan, her mother is "monster"<sup>1</sup> (LO, 68) as the patriarchal institution, which according to Marta Cerezo Moreno (2007) regards women as "objects whose value depends on their external appearance". Hence, Joan feels that she is an object by which she and her mother struggle for: "the war between myself and my mother was on in earnest; the disputed territory was my body" (LO, 71). This reveals Paulina Palmer's (1989, 69) notion of women as an object of exchange and property in patriarchal society. The exchange is over Joan's body between the objectified (Joan) and (her mother) who objectifies her. Thus, Joan's mother symbolizes Patriarchy, which objectifies women's body maintaining gender norms in patriarchal society; therefore, according to Moreno (2007), "patriarchal relationship between mother and daughter functions as a pivotal element in a social organization of gender". For this reason, Brigitte Blasweiler argues that Joan's mother is "role model [...] presses heavily on her daughter in order to mould her into femininity" (2007, 45). She wants her to be like screen character when names her after Joan Crawford, which reveals the best model of femininity according to Joan's mother because she "played-beautiful, ambitious, ruthless, and destructive to men [...] successful [...] and [...] Joan Crawford was thin (LO, 40-41; 2009). However, Joan has nothing of these

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<sup>1</sup> *Lady Oracle* (Virago, 2009). All subsequent references are from this edition.

characteristics because she is a fat girl, which makes her weird, and marginalized in patriarchal society as she describes herself: "in short pink skirt, with my waist, arms and legs exposed, I was grotesque" (LO, 44). She also notices, "Fat women are not more noticeable than thin women [...] because people find them distressing and look away" (LO, 84). Thus, Moreno (2007) claims that Joan mother; Frances performs the role of cultural agent by transmitting the patriarchal ideologies of gender norms to her daughter when she learns her that women's beauty is not only associated with marriage, but also to men's violence; therefore the "grotesque obesity" caused in men's negligence. Moreover, for Joan, being fat is a way to defy her mother who considers her an accident "I heard her call me an accident" (LO, 80). This thing terrifies Joan for her sense of non-existence; therefore, Katarina Labudova (2009, 212) claims that Joan rebels against her mother to confirm her being. Allegorically, defying her mother means defying patriarchal gender norms because to Blasweiler (2007, 23), neglecting for social demand of female body boundaries, Joan defies gender ideologies and according to J. Brooks Bouson (1993, 69) rebels "against the social discipline and male control of the female body". This means that Joan resist patriarchal social power by her over eating and obesity. For gothic fiction, being fat means being 'monster' because fat body according to Wisker (2005, 169), is monstrous body; "deformity frightens; anything in human shape deviating from the norm threatens our sense of identity, safety, and wholeness, causing the turn of abjection". Therefore, Joan's image in the text is maintained through her transformation to the gothic figure 'Monstrous-Feminine' to rebel against Patriarchy. In gothic sense, Joan also rejects women's victimization because Moreno (2007) states that as a little girl, her mother taught her that woman are victims for men. In feminist sense, she rejects her mother's authority on her body and then rejects the patriarchal ideology of women's objectification. Henceforth, for Moreno (2007), teaching women victimization is regarded as "patriarchal mechanism" helps in spreading the situations of gender violence. Here, Atwood as feminist writer uses the gothic to critique and rebel against patriarchal gender violence against women.

## 4.2 The Resistance of Women's Role in Patriarchal Domestic Institution

The resistance to women's role in patriarchal domestic institution in *Lady Oracle* is also revealed through mother-daughter associations. From this, Joan mother symbolizes patriarchy in her role as married woman in patriarchal domestic atmosphere who leaves her place tidy and clean to keep her social position. Nevertheless, such position has corrupted by her daughter's obesity, which subverts the demands of good standard feminine (Labudova; 2008, 112). Further, Joan's Mother is also a victim of patriarchy; therefore, she rebels against such victimization when she as Moreno (2007) argues, replaces the patriarchal power role in her domestic atmosphere, which "in patriarchal terms would be defined as the "female domain" and teaching her daughter that the ultimate role for women is domestic role. But such authority is "delusional since female seclusion within the private sphere works as a subtle mechanism of male authority, and her strict domestic supervision symbolises the inert and constraining nature of her socially defined role as a woman" Moreno (2007). Therefore, Joan rejects her mother role and victimization not only by being obese, but also by leaving her room untidy and by "scattering clothes and books and chocolate-bar wrappers over surfaces" (LO, 85), which has tided by her mother so carefully confessing that, for her, "disorder meant you could do what you liked", (LO, 58). Such behavior is shocking for patriarchal gender norms in gothic fiction; therefore, Barbara Creed (1986, 44) argues that 'Monstrous-Feminine' is everything "about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject". In gothic sense, neglecting women's role in patriarchal society, Joan becomes monster because Susanne Becker (1999, (56-58)) claims:

the 'monsters' of the feminine gothic are  
[...] representing forces which are  
among the most challenging to the  
structures [...] of the symbolic order  
[...] It is [...] a gender-role ambiguity  
that produces monstrous-feminine .

However, for female gothic, gender- role ambiguity not only reveals Joan as a 'monster', but also a 'transgressor' because for Becker (1999, 39), transgression is "an alternate world that does not

function according to the laws of the symbolic order and in which the strange becomes possible-which is horrific but also liberating". Consequently, Joan transforms to the gothic figure 'Monstrous-Feminine' to resist both the patriarchal norms of standard femininity regarding her body subverting women's objectification and women's role in patriarchal domestic atmosphere. However, Gender Violence in *Lady Oracle* is not only shaped through Joan's association with her mother, but also with everyone in her life including herself/ selves and violence has an immense influence on Joan's subjectivity. For this reason, the next section is going to show how Joan's subjectivity is affected by gender violence through her association with her mother, teacher, husband and different selves to construct Foucault's Post-Structural approach to subjectivity.

### **5. Post -Structural Subjectivity in *Lady Oracle***

Female subjectivity is an essential part in Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism studies for its important role in shaping women's experiences and their role in society. Janice McLaughlin (2003, 115) argues that feminists adopt Michel Foucault's Post-Structural approach to subjectivity, which is socially constructed and they are mainly concerned with Foucault's notions regarding power, subjectivity and resistance. From this, Christina Hughes (2002, 67) claims that "power is productive rather than repressive" for Foucault and for poststructuralists, Subjectivity is not continuous, but it shifts with different discourse. Therefore, it is contradicted, fragmented and then multiple rather than dual; hence an individual necessarily has a multiple fragmented and discontinuous identities (Hughes 2002, 67). Foucault's approach to subjectivity can be applied to Atwood's *Lady Oracle* where her main character's subjectivity shifts through the process of oppression symbolized by violent gender norms of Patriarchy to create fragmented, discontinuous and multiple identities thereby construct contradicted, fragmented, dual and multiple subjectivity. However, Atwood uses the gothic violent figures, tropes and motifs to construct such difficult subjectivity. Regarding this, Atwood's heroine Joan shapes different identities particularly to resist and escape the repressive gender norms of Patriarchy; therefore,

according to Susanne Becker (1999, (165,172,178)), Joan has multiple identities, personalities, and selves.

Joan foster is not one but many women; she has several selves which, in best gothic fashion, are differently named: Joan Delacourt, the fat and teenager; Joan Foster, the wife of Arthur Foster [...] Joan Foster the cult figure and successful author of 'Lady Oracle', Louisa K. Delacourt, clandestine author of 'Costume Gothics' - to name only the 'conscious ones' (Becker 1999, 158).

Nevertheless, Joan's multiplicity causes the construction of obscured fragmented and discontinuous identities, personalities, and selves. Therefore, the 'Fat' and teenager Joan Delacourt is both 'Monstrous-Feminine' and 'Mothball', the 'Thin' Joan is both Joan Delacourt and Joan Foster (Arthur's wife and successful author of 'Lady Oracle') and Louisa K. Delacourt, the secret author of 'Costume Gothics' is both (the 'Fat' Frances daughter and the 'Thin' Arthur's wife). Having these different named and hidden selves, Joan forms different subjectivities to eventually construct Post-Structural Subjectivity in the next following sub-sections:

### **5.1 Contradicted Subjectivity in *Lady Oracle***

Contradicted Subjectivity in *Lady Oracle* is revealed through Joan's contradicted subjectivity, which is constructed through Joan's fragmented identity Joan Delacourt, the fat and teenager, which is both 'Monstrous-Feminine' and 'Mothball'. Thus, Joan's first identity the 'Fat' Joan Delacourt with her horrific 'Fat' body shapes the 'Monstrous-Feminine' to resist the patriarchal gender norms of standard feminine of body construction and women role in patriarchal domestic atmosphere. From this, Joan does not only overeat intently to remain fat, but also she intently leaves her room unclean and untidy. Therefore, Joan becomes the Other for patriarchal gender norms because for Wisker (2005, (218-219)), the 'Monstrous-Feminine' "is the Other against which to defend itself"; and Others are people who in different ways become threatening, disgusting and differ from the usual. Thus, for Becker (1999, 159), "Joan's subjectivity suggests the aspects of the 'monstrous-

**Questioning Gender Violence and Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity  
in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* Asst. Lect. Huda Al-Hassani**

feminine””. However, the fragmentation of identity is revealed when Joan's ballet teacher Miss Flegg forces Joan wear the mothball costume instead of the butterfly because ‘Fat’ girls can't be a butterfly “Now come and hop into your new costume [...] A mothball” (LO, 47). Unlike the ‘Monstrous-Feminine’ that represents Joan's resistance to her mother and Patriarchy, the ‘Mothball’ has been unacceptable for Joan although it shows the rejection of Patriarchal standard feminine of body construction. This clearly reveals the contradiction of Joan's subjectivity because in reality, she never likes the ‘Fat’ Joan Delacourt. Thus, fragmentation of identity can be defined according to what Thomas Fuchs (2006, 380) calls ‘Narrative Identity, which “is essentially based on the capacity of the individual to integrate contradictory aspects and tendencies into a coherent, overarching sense and view of his or her self [...] otherwise the story would splinter into incoherent fragments”’. Therefore, although as a ‘Mothball’, Joan Delacourt has got a “Bravo” (LO, 50) from the audience when she dances to perform a lovely comic show, she hates this role because it reveals her as an object of exchange between Miss Flegg who creates the ‘Mothball’ and the audience who laugh at her. However, Fuchs (2006, 381) states that fragmented identity is mainly affected by ‘Impulsivity’, which is a core symptom of ‘Disorder’ and one common symptom of impulsive is overeating. Therefore, Fuchs (2006, 380) explains the process of discovering the symptom of disorder through what Frankfurt calls the wish of “‘first-order desire’ and the wish not to have this wish a ‘second-order desire’ or ‘second-order volition’ – wanting to want or not to want something”’. For, Joan, she is motivated by her ‘first-order desire’ – defying her mother by being obese; at the same time, she wishes not to be ‘Fat’ and an object of exchange representing a ‘second-order desire’. This is manifested clearly when she according to Labudova (2009, 211) silently rejects the ‘Mothball’ role when she has said: “‘This isn't me’ [...] ‘they are making me do it’ [...] as if this ridiculous dance was the truth about me and everyone could see it” (LO, 49). Thus, Joan's fragmented identity, the ‘Fat’ Joan Delacourt constructs her contradicted subjectivity because she has two personalities ‘Monstrous –Feminine’ and ‘Mothball’ and though she hates the



later she maintains the former. So, according to Helen Cixous's approach to female subjectivity consistent with poststructural approach, Contradict Subjectivity depends on difference, but not the difference found between sexes, but it is the coexist multiple irresolvable mixture of differences within and among subjects:

Pure I, identical to I-self, does not exist.

[...] The difference is in us, in me, [...]

And it is numerous [...] A "myself"

which is the most intimate first name of

You. I will never say often enough that

the difference is not one, that there is

never one without the other. [...] I is

never an individual. I is haunted. I is

always, before knowing anything an I-

love-you. (Cixous, 1994:

xviii)

## 5.2 Dual Subjectivity in *Lady Oracle*

Dual Subjectivity in *Lady Oracle* is shaped because Joan's 'Monstrous –Feminine' and 'Mothball' do not continue because the result of fragmented identity according to Fuchs (2006, 382), is "a *fragmentation of the narrative self*: a shifting view of oneself, with sharp discontinuities, rapidly changing roles and relationships and an underlying feeling of inner emptiness". This discontinuity is revealed when the fragmented 'Fat' Joan's Delacourt identity is interrupted with 'Thin' Joan Delacourt when her shape is shifted to become 'Thin' to fulfill her aunt's Lou wish to get the inheritance she has left her thereby she shapes her dual subjectivity. Becoming 'Thin' means the beginning of other self: "This was the beginning of my double life [...] There was always that shadowy twin, thin when I was fat, fat when I was thin" (LO, 268). According to Becker (1999, 168), "in *Lady Oracle*, the impossibility of separation from m/other comes to structure Joan's life-story in just such doubled-edged way". Therefore, Jeffrey Popke (2003, 302) states that "subjectivity is [...] inscribed through a dualism between self and other". Such dualism and shifts are determined by Atwood's use of the gothic trope 'hunting' because Joan is hunted by the shape of patriarchal standard feminine 'Thin' girl, when she's 'Fat', her mother's was impatient because "she was having trouble with

costumes" (LO, 43), Joan says and "She started to regret sending me to dancing school. For one thing, I wasn't getting any slimmer" (LO, 43). Regarding this, Becker (1999, 171) argues that Joan's image as a 'Fat' lady "functions as another hunting reminder of the dark views of femininity highlighted in gothic form, exploring how woman makes women feel like freaks or monsters". Therefore, for Joan, she is a "duplicious monster" (LO, 99). Nonetheless, when she is 'Thin', the ghost of her 'Fat' appearance hunts her constantly "When I looked at myself in the mirror, [...] The outline of my former body still surrounded me, like a mist, like a phantom moon" (LO, 233). Continuously, her duality is revealed through things that she has not experienced before when she is 'Fat' revealing her feeling of inner emptiness: "I've never developed the usual female fears: [...] fear of anyone or anything outside whatever [...] defines safety" (LO, 150). However, when she becomes 'Thin', she also cannot feel such fears; therefore, she invented them artificially "So when I shrank to normal size I had none of these fears, and I had to develop them artificially" (LO, 151). In gothic sense, pretending things she never feels, Joan confronts her 'Doppelgangers', which is according to Wisker (2005, 168), "the Other of the restrained, conformist, socialized self". Thus, Joan's discontinuous identity causes in shaping her dual subjectivity and makes her Double.

### **5.3 Fragmented Subjectivity in *Lady Oracle***

The Fragmented Subjectivity in *Lady Oracle* is clearly defined through Joan's subjectivity because she has dual named identities in the sense that she is not just Joan Delacourt, but also Louisa K. Delacourt, an author for Costume Gothic, which is "the formal beginning of [...] second self" (LO, 147) for her. According to Lynne Layton (2008, 61), "'what divides the subject?' depends in large measure on how one conceptualizes the relation between self and other". Thus, she creates such other identity to escape the oppression of her husband who represents Patriarchy. From this, divided subjectivity appears to challenge cultural hierarchies of sexism, heterosexism, classism and racism that maintain objectification (Layton 2008, 66-67). However,

Such hierarchies tend not only to  
idealize certain subject positions and



devalue others, but also to do so by  
splitting human capacities and attributes  
and giving them class or race or sex or  
gender assignments. (Layton, 2008, 67)

Hence, as a patriarchal man, Arthur convinces that the ultimate role for women is in the domestic atmosphere; therefore, he can't accept his wife's role of being an independent writer. This can be manifested when Joan says "I couldn't write Costume Gothic when Arthur was depressed [...] when he wasn't doing anything he didn't want me to do anything either" (LO, 231). Regarding this, Joan says, "He wanted me to be inept and vulnerable" (LO, 96), which indicates that Arthur symbolizes the patriarchal gender norms that locates women as passive, objects and others because 'Feminine' according to many men's theorists is a metaphor "symbolizes the Other of male subjectivity" (McLaughlin; 2003, 97). From this, according to Layton (2008, (63, 68)) divided subjectivity is "a subjectivity that can acknowledge both destructiveness and vulnerability [...] begins and develops in antagonism toward the other [...] that tends to pathologize dependence and vulnerability". Accordingly, Joan escapes the objectification of Arthur through writing because for Joan, "Life had been hard [...] Escape wasn't a luxury [...] it was a necessity" (LO, 33). However, Escape, in terms of "escape literature", is an escape from cultural and house repression in the form of quest, flight, journey or escape (Becker; 1999, (29, 33-34)). Continuously, because Joan is afraid of losing Arthur and because according to Moreno (2007), she wishes to be as he wants her to be, she has never confessed to Arthur that she is Louisa K. Delacourt, an author of Costume Gothics:

Arthur never found out that I wrote  
Costume Gothic [...] Why did I never  
tell him? It was fear, mostly [...] I knew  
that if he found out I'd written *The  
Secret of Morgrave Manor* he wouldn't  
respect mine (LO, 32-33)

For this reason, Jessica Benjamin (1988), states that girl's subjectivity is submissively related to the other. Therefore, in order to be separated from the Other (Arthur's patriarchal wife), Joan's tries to hide her identity as a writer because for Becker (1999,

**Questioning Gender Violence and Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity  
in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* Asst. Lect. Huda Al-Hassani**

(158,179)), Joan's separation between her 'professional' and 'private' self is the neatest because she intently tries to separate her two personalities when she tries to keep her "two names and identities as separate as possible" (LO, 32). Thus, Layton (2008, 67) argues that:

Because cultural hierarchies split and categorize human attributes and capacities, subjectivity is marked by unceasing conflict between those unconscious processes that seek to maintain the splits and those that refuse them.

However, subverting women's role in Patriarchal society by being a writer, Joan's escape represents Layton's argument about divided subjectivity which represents the "version of independence that emerges from split-off dependence takes an extreme, even monstrous form, for example, omnipotent assertion" (2008,68). Further, the dualism of one's identity can cause both the fragmented subjectivity and stabilization because when Joan is Louisa, she says:

I was all right, I was patient and forbearing [...] But if I was cut off, if I couldn't work at my current Costume Gothic, I would become mean and irritable, drink too much and start to cry.  
(LO, 232)

From this, Joan's need to writing belongs to Heinz Kohut's theory (1971, (27, 40-43)) of 'self object needs', who claims that even infants use their energy in order to fulfill their narcissistic needs of self-promotion and self-expression. But according to Layton (2008, 63) "these are objects used in the service of stabilizing the self, and are not subjects in their own right".

**5.4 Multiple Subjectivity in *Lady Oracle***

Multiple Subjectivity in *Lady Oracle* is revealed through Joan's multiplicity because Joan does not only have double identities, personalities or selves but multiple ones "I was more than double, I was triple, multiple" (LO, 268). From this, Joan is not only Joan the 'Fat' Joan Delacourt (Monstrous-Feminine and Mothball),

'Thin' Joan Delacourt, Louisa K. Delacourt, but also 'Thin' Joan Foster (Arthur's wife and successful author of 'Lady Oracle'). Therefore, Sherry Turkle (1997, (74, 77)) argues that multiple subjectivity is formed through the 'self' as fragmented and multiple playing with multiple roles and characters of different personalities and attitudes. Thus, Joan does not only have dual named identities Joan Delacourt and Louisa K. Delacourt , but also as a 'Thin' beautiful lady, Joan shifts to another, identity, personality and self when she has married Arthur Foster to be Joan Foster thereby she maintains her multiple fragmented and contradicted subjectivities. In her association with Arthur, Joan's multiplicity is revealed when she becomes another person away from her other personalities to fit his need "I was someone else. People used to say to me, you don't look at all like your photographs" (LO, 23). Such multiplicity leads to Joan's contradiction because she is afraid that Arthur may discover her 'Fat' personality and stop loving her. For this reason, she deceits him when he asks her about the girl in the picture with her aunt Lou and she has denied herself and says "My aunt Deirdre [...] was a bitch" (LO, 95). Denying and disregarding herself, Joan says, "It hurt me a little to betray myself like that" (LO, 96). However, she does so because she has said, "I didn't think he would be able to handle it" (LO, 96). Thus, according to Diana Fuss (1989, 102-103), one's identity or multiple identities can be maintained by "the exclusion of the Other, the repression or repudiation of non-identity". Accordingly, Joan denies her former selves, which are the Others to maintain Joan Foster because 'Fat' Joan Delacourt , the Other for the construction of standard feminine , 'Thin' Joan Delacourt, the Other for the socialized self, and Louisa K. Delacourt , the Other for male subjectivity. Thus, the exclusion of the Other(s) causes in Joan's fragmentation because for Becker (1999,160), "Joan's separating of her 'large' self occurs largely for the benefit of husband Arthur [...] such fragmentation of the other is one of the violent, destructive aspects of amorous discourse". Consequently, Joan's subjectivity can fit the Post-Structural approach to subjectivity because she has named and hidden different discontinuous, fragmented, dual and multiple identities which shift through different discourses. Eventually, Joan constructs discontinuous, contradicted, fragmented, dual and multiple

**Questioning Gender Violence and Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity  
in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* Asst. Lect. Huda Al-Hassani**

subjectivity, which is Post-Structural Subjectivity. As a result, in her gothic novel *Lady Oracle*, Atwood reveals Post-Structural Subjectivity through her heroine Joan to maintain her rejection of female oppression and neglected gender role in patriarchal culture and by using the gothic, Atwood is trying to find an active role for women that maintain their subjectivity and identity.

## **6. Conclusion**

To conclude, this research explores the effects of gender violence in constructing women's Post-Structural Subjectivity and role in society Atwood's *Lady Oracle*. It defines both Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism and scrutinizes Mill's (1995), Van Dijk's (2003) and Lazar's (2007) critical devices to unfold the patriarchal associations, gender violence and its resistance in Atwood's *Lady Oracle*. From this, patriarchal associations are revealed in *Lady Oracle* through Joan's relations to her mother; therefore, with her mother, Joan resists the standard feminine construction of her body and the domestic patriarchal role by being fat (Monstrous-Feminine) and untidy (Monstrous-Feminine and Transgressor). Thus, Feminist Literary Theory, Criticism and Gothic Fiction question women's gender roles in patriarchal society and their effects on women's attitudes towards violent gender norms and inequality. Moreover, it is within Post-Structural Subjectivity, Joan in *Lady Oracle* reveal different reactions towards gender violence. As a consequence of gender violence, Atwood's heroine constructs multiple identities, personalities and selves that shape multiple, contradicted and fragmented subjectivities. Firstly, Joan's contradicted subjectivity is constructed as a result of her first fragmented identity, Joan Delacourt, which is both 'Fat' and 'Thin' Joan. As 'Fat', Joan is both a 'Mothball' and 'Monstrous – Feminine'; whereas the former represents the rejected image for woman in patriarchal society, the latter represents Joan's rejection for standard femininity in gender patriarchal norms showing the contradiction in Joan's subjectivity. On the other side, the 'Thin' Joan Delacourt represents the discontinuous identity of 'Fat' Joan Delacourt to finally shape the dual contradicted subjectivity of Joan. Further, Joan's fragmented subjectivity is clearly defined through Joan's dual identity when she creates another personality to escape

from the oppressiveness of her husband when she becomes the secret writer of the 'Costume Gothics', Louisa K. Delacourt. Nonetheless, as Joan's 'Fat' personality is interrupted by her transforming to 'Thin' beautiful woman and as her previous shape hunts her frequently, and because of her fear from it, she constructs different identities in an attempt to find her right being and thereby she constructs dual, multiple, fragmented and contradicted subjectivities. Therefore, Joan gets another identity that is, Joan Foster, Arthur's wife and then a famous author of 'Lady Oracle'. With this identity, Joan's multiplicity is shown because it represents her separation from her large self thereby she constructs her contradicted subjectivity. From this, Joan's "creation of various personae [...] resulting multiple subjectivity" (Becker 1999, 160) to eventually shape Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity. Thus, with such approach to subjectivity, Atwood's heroine reacts positively and passively against gender violence because Joan has resisted it not only by getting an important role in society as a writer and a wife, but also by being a violent gothic figure 'Monstrous-Feminine', 'Double' and 'Other'. However, as Atwood's heroine has used violence to resist violence and oppression, the questions here are, to what extent it is allowable to confront oppressive violence with violence? How far do gender roles in patriarchal society affect in spreading violence and conflicts in society? What is the remedy for women to heal from gender violence without being violent? What does women's resistance to patriarchy provide to society? Is it helping in its prosper and does it make balance for gender relations? Whatever the answers are violence, victimization and women's resistance to them help in shaping their subjectivity in gothic fiction and open an area for discussion for women's writer and feminists in their different attitudes and reaction against violence.

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**Questioning Gender Violence and Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity  
in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*** **Asst. Lect. Huda Al-Hassani**

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**Questioning Gender Violence and Foucault's Post-Structural Subjectivity  
in Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle** **Asst. Lect. Huda Al-Hassani**

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إستفهام العنف ضد المرأة و الذاتية مابعد البنيوية لميشيل فوكو في رواية

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المستخلص

يتحدى هذا البحث العنف ضد المرأة، وبالتالي، فإنه يتبنى حجج كلا من روزان كنيدى (٢٠٠٢) و كريس ويدون (١٩٩٥) على مصطلح البطيركية في رواية الخيال القومي لمارغريت أتوود "سيدة أوراكل" (١٩٧٦). لذا من أجل فهم العلاقات الأبوية والعنف بين الجنسين في "سيدة أوراكل"، هذا البحث يناقش تعاريف و خصائص الخيال القومي من وجهة نظر كل من فريد بوتتك (١٩٩٦)، جينا وسكر (٢٠٠٥)، و هلين مير (٢٠٠١). من ناحية أخرى، هذا البحث يقدم طرق لاستخراج العلاقات الابوية و مقاومة العنف ضد المرأة في "سيدة أوراكل" بالاعتماد على المناهج النقدية لكلا من سارة مل (٢٠٠٧)، تن فان دجك (٢٠٠٣)، و ميشيل لازار (٢٠٠٧). و هكذا من خلال الصراعات المتمثلة بالعنف ضد المرأة في رواية في "سيدة أوراكل"، هذا البحث يسائل دور هذا النوع من العنف في تكوين ما يسمى بالذاتية مابعد البنيوية المقترحة من الناقد ميشيل فوكو. و أخيرا هذا البحث يستنتج و يوضح كيف يمكن ان يكون الخيال القومي ثورة النساء للتعبير عن ردة فعلهم، رفضهم و مقاومتهم للعنف ضد المرأة لتثبيت او تهميش ذاتيتهم و دورهم في المجتمع الابوي.