الرؤيــــة

السعي لتحقيق الريادة في النشر العلمي المتميز في المحتوى والمضمون والتأثير والمرجعية في مجالات منطقة الشرق الأوسط وأقطاره .

الرسالــــة

نشر البحوث العلمية الأصيلة والرصينة والمبتكرة في مجالات الشرق الأوسط وأقطاره في مجالات اختصاص المجلة وفق المعايير والقواعد المهنية العالمية المعمول بها في المجلات المُحَكَّمَة دوليًّا.

الأهـــداف

- نشر البحوث العلمية الأصيلة والرصينة والمبتكرة .
- إتاحة المجال أمام العلماء والباحثين في مجالات اختصاص المجلة في التاريخ والجغرافيا والسياسة والاقتصاد والاجتماع والقانون وعلم النفس واللغة العربية وآدابها واللغة الانجليزية وآدابها ، على المستوى المحلى والإقليمي والعالمي لنشر بحوثهم وإنتاجهم العلمي .
- نشر أبحاث كبار الأساتذة وأبحاث الترقية للسادة الأساتذة المساعدين والسادة المدرسين بمختلف الجامعات المصرية والعربية والأجنبية ٠
- تشجيع ونشر مختلف البحوث المتعلقة بالدراسات المستقبلية والشرق الأوسط وأقطاره ٠
- الإسهام في تنمية مجتمع المعرفة في مجالات اختصاص المجلة من خلال نشر البحوث العلمية الرصينة والمتميزة .

شروط النشر بالمجلة

- تُعنى المجلة بنشر البحوث المهتمة بمجالات العلوم الإنسانية والأدبية ؛
- يعتمد النشر على رأي أثنين من المحكمين المتخصصين ويتم التحكيم إلكترونيًا ؛
- تُقبل البحوث باللغة العربية أو بإحدى اللغات الأجنبية، وتُرسل إلى موقع المجلة على بنك المعرفة المصري ويرفق مع البحث ملف بيانات الباحث يحتوي على عنوان البحث باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية واسم الباحث والتابئل والانتماء المؤسسي باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية، ورقم واتساب، وإيميل الباحث الذي تم التسجيل به على موقع المجلة ؛
- يُشار إلى أن الهوامش والمراجع في نهاية البحث وليست أسفل الصفحة ؛
- يكتب الباحث ملخص باللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية للبحث صفحة واحدة لكل ملخص، ومقدمة للبحث؛
- بالنسبة للبحث باللغة العربية يكتب على برنامج 'word' ونمط الخط باللغة العربية "Simplified Arabic" وحجم الخط 14 ولا يزيد عدد الأسطر في الصفحة الواحدة عن 25 سطر والهوامش والمراجع خط Simplified Arabic حجم الخط 12 ؛
- بالنسبة للبحث باللغة الإنجليزية يكتب على برنامج word ونمط الخط Times New Roman وحجم الخط 13 ولا يزيد عدد الأسطر عن 25 سطر في الصفحة الواحدة والهوامش والمراجع خط Times New Roman حجم الخط 1؛
- مواصفات التنسيق على الترويسة (Paper) مقاس الورق (B5) 17.6 × 25 سم، (Margins) الهوامش 2.3 سم يمينًا ويسارًا، 2 سم أعلى وأسفل الصفحة، ليصبح مقاس البحث فعلي (الكلام) 13×21 سم. (Layout) والنسق: (Header) الرأس1.25 سم، (Footer) تذييل 2.5 سم ؛
- مواصفات الفقرة للبحث : بداية الفقرة First Line = 1.27 سم، قبل النص= 0.00، بعد النص = 0.00، تباعد قبل الفقرة = (6pt) تباعد بعد الفقرة = (0pt)، تباعد الفقرات (مفرد single) ؛
- مواصفات الفقرة للهوامش والمراجع : يوضع الرقم بين قوسين هلالي مثل : (1)، بداية الفقرة Hanging = 0.6 سم، قبل النص=0.00، بعد النص = 0.00، تباعد قبل الفقرة 0.00 تباعد بعد الفقرة = 0.00، تباعد الفقرات (مفرد single) ؛
- الجداول والأشكال: يتم وضع الجداول والأشكال إما في صفحات منفصلة أو وسط النص وفقًا لرؤية الباحث، على أن يكون عرض الجدول أو الشكل لا يزيد عن 13.5 سم بأي حال من الأحوال ؛
- مدة التحكيم 15 يوم على الأكثر من قبول المحكمين على الموقع، مدة تعديل البحث بعد التحكيم 15 يوم على الأكثر ؛
- يخضع تسلسل نشر البحوث في أعداد المجلة حسب ما تراه هيئة التحرير من ضرورات علمية وفنية ؛
- المجلة غير ملزمة بإعادة البحوث إلى أصحابها سواء نُشرت أم لم تُنشر ؛
- تُعبر البحوث عن آراء أصحابها وليس عن رأي رئيس التحرير وهيئة التحرير ؛
- رسوم التحكيم للمصريين 650 جنيه، ولغير المصريين 155 دولار ؛
- رسوم النشر عن الصفحة الواحدة للمصريين ٣٣ جنيه، وغير المصريين ١٥ دولار ؛
- رسوم التعديل عن الصفحة الواحدة 2 جنيه ؛
- الباحث المصري يسدد الرسوم بالجنيه المصري (بالفيزا) بمقر المركز(المقيم بمحافظة القاهرة)، أو على حساب حكومي رقم : (9/450/80772/8) بنك مصر (المقيم خارج محافظة القاهرة) ؛
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السيد الدكتور/ مدير مركز بحوث الشرق الأوسط والدراسات المستقبلية، ورئيس تحرير المجلة جامعة عين شمس– العباسية– القاهرة – ج.م.ع (ص. ب 11566) للتواصل والاستفسار عن كل ما يخص الموقع : محمول / واتساب: 01555343797 (2+)

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محتويات العدد (116)

افتتاحية العدد (116)

يسعد مركز بحوث الشرق الأوسط والدراسات المستقبلية أن تطلق بين يدي القارئ الكريم عددها السادس عشر بعد المئة من مجلة بحوث الشرق الأوسط ، وهو عدد يزخر ببحوث علمية متنوّعة تواصل من خلالها المجلة رسالتها في إثراء المعرفة، ودعم مسيرة البحث الأكاديمي الرصين، وتقديم إنتاج علمي يجمع بين الأصالة والتجديد.

لقد دأبت المجلة منذ تأسيسها على أن تكون منبرًا أكاديميًا مفتوحًا أمام الباحثين من مختلف التخصصات، وملتقئ علميًا يضم الرؤى المتعددة التي تعكس حيوية الفكر وتنوع زوايا النظر، ويأتي هذا العدد ليجسد هذه الرؤية، من خلال ما يتضمنه من دراسات سياسية وتاريخية ولغوية، فضلًا عن أبحاث متخصصة في علوم المكتبات والصوتيات واللغات الأجنبية.

في محور الدراسات السياسية، نُشرت بحوث تناقش تأثيرات القرارات السيادية على فاعلية العقوبة، وتتناول مآلات الحركات الاحتجاجية في المنطقة، بالإضافة إلى دراسات ترصد الصورة الذهنية في الإعلام وعلاقتها بصناعة القرار والرأي العام، أما محور الدراسات التاريخية، فيعيد قراءة بعض المراحل الاقتصادية والاجتماعية في تاريخ المدن العربية والإسلامية، كاشفًا عن العلاقة الوثيقة بين تطور البنى الزراعية والمجتمع.

وفي محور الدراسات اللغوية، يتناول الباحثون بالتحليل الأساليب الحجاجية والفكرية في نصوص فلسفية وأدبية خالدة، بما يعكس عمق التراث الفكري العربي وصلته بالخطاب المعاصر، كما يضم العدد في محور المكتبات والمعلومات دراسة متخصصة في نمذجة البيانات الببليوجرافية في ضوء الويب الدلالي، بما يثري المعرفة الحديثة في هذا المجال الحيوي.

أما الدراسات الصوتية، تأتي الأبحاث لتسلط الضوء على التطبيقات العملية للصوتيات الجنائية، مبرزة أبعادها النظرية والميدانية، وفي الدراسات باللغات الأجنبية، فقدمت بحوثًا مقارنة بين العربية ولغات أخرى من منظور ثقافي، بالإضافة إلى أبحاث باللغة الإنجليزية تناولت موضوعات تتعلق بالتراث الفني والثقافي، وتحولات النوع الأدبي في الأدب الغربي الحديث.

إن صدور هذا العدد يرسّخ من جديد الدور العلمي للمجلة باعتبارها فضاءً معرفيًا رحبًا، ويؤكد التزامها بالموضوعية، وبناء جسور للتواصل بين الباحثين العرب والأجانب، بما يعزز التبادل الثقافي والمعرفي، ونأمل أن يكون إضافة نوعية في مجالات المعرفة المتنوعة، وأن يسهم في إغناء الحوار الأكاديمي، وفتح آفاق جديدة أمام الباحثين لمزيد من البحث والتطوير

والله وليّ التوفيق،

رئيس التحرير

د. حاتم العبد

القص الما ورائي، والخيال النظري، وإعادة بناء النوع الأدبي واللغة والواقع في ثلاث قصص قصيرة «لمارجريت أتوود».

Metafiction, Theoretical Fiction and the Reconstruction of Genre, Language, and Reality in Three Selected Flash Fiction Works by Margret Atwood.

ناهد عصام محمد محمد عيسى.

مُدرس بقسم اللغة الإنجليـزية وآدابها.

كلية الآداب- جامعة عين شمس.

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المُلخص:

يعد الحفاظ الساخر على العلاقة بين اللغة والواقع سمة بارزة لأعمال مارجريت أتوود مما يضع هذه الأعمال في إطار مدرسة بعد الحداثة ،وفقا لذلك تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى التحقيق في اللغة والتمثيل الخيالي للواقع في النوع الأدبي المتحول الذي و » النهايات السعيدة « و » الخبز « ابتكرته أتوود، أي القصص القصيرة أو المضغوطة الثلاث التي كتبتها أتوود بعنوان.» الجسد الأنثوي «

تدرس هذه القصص القصيرة كجزء من "المشروع النظري" أو "الخيال النظري الجديد" و ما وراء اقنص لأتوود في إطار الدعوة إلى تشكيل لغة جديدة وأشكال أدبية لإعادة بناء الواقع وتحدي السرديات الكبرى. ككاتبة من كتاب ما بعد الحداثة تقوم

أتوود بمحاولة بتفكيك المركز في كل من الثقافة والقصة وذلك إلى جانب الحفاظ على العلاقة الساخرة بين اللغة والتمثيل المعقد للواقع في هذه القصص الثلاث، وبيان ترابطها الذي ينسج بين عدة أنواع أدبية رئيسية وأنواع فرعية بما في ذلك الحكايات الفولكلورية والخرافية، والأساطير، وغيرها من النصوص القانونية ؛ والخرافات ؛ الأمثال ؛... الرومانسية الشعبية؛ والسيرة الذاتية ؛ والسيرة الذاتية ؛ وعلم اللاهوت ؛ وصفات تخمينية ؛ والمشورة ؛ قصص الإثارة والمغامرات بغرض تفكيك المفاهيم النمطية للذكورة والأنوثة والطبيعة والقصص وتوقعات القراء وكذلك الإشارة لإبدراك القاريء أثناء قراءتها. لا تتضمن كتابات أتوود جماليات مابعد الحداثة فقط ولكنها تتضمن تفكيك الأشكال الأدبية التقليدية والتوقعات والأيديولوجيات المجتمعية أيضا.

الكلمات المفتاحية

القص الماورائي ، القصة القصيرة، جماليات ما بعد الحداثة ، النوع الأدبي، اللغة

Nahed Eissam Mohammed Eissa

Abstract:

The postmodern ironic preservation of the relationship between language and reality is a salient characteristic of Margret Atwood's works. Accordingly, this paper aims at the investigation of language and the fictional representation of reality in the mutant literary genre Atwood has created, i.e., the compressed short stories, short shorts, or flash stories of ""Bread" and "Happy Endings", and "The Female Body". As part of the" theoretical project", or the new Atwood's theoretical fiction and metafiction, these short flashes are examined as a call for forming a new language and literary forms to reconstruct reality.

Decentering of the center in both culture and fiction, the postmodernist writer's experimentation with language, and literary textual form as well as the ironic preservation of the relationship between language and the intricate fictional representation of reality is explored in the above-mentioned three flash fiction works. The flashes in both *Good Bones*, and *Murder in the Dark* illustrate their intertextuality interweaving several genres and subgenres "including antifiction, metafiction, folk and fairy tales, myths, and other canonical texts; fables; parables;… popular romance; biography; autobiography; theology; speculative, …recipes; advice; thriller, and adventure stories" for the purpose of deconstructing stereotypical conceptions of masculinity, femininity, nature, stories and reader's expectations as well as indicate reader's epiphanies while reading them. Atwood's postmodern aesthetics do not only involve the deconstruction of traditional literary forms and societal expectations and ideologies, but also incorporate a reconstruction of them.

Key words:

Metafiction; flash fiction; postmodern aesthetics; genre; language.

Introduction:

The postmodern ironic preservation of the relationship between language and reality is a salient characteristic of Margret Atwood's works. Accordingly, this paper aims at the investigation of language and the fictional representation of reality in the mutant literary genre Atwood has created, i.e., the compressed short stories, short shorts, or flash stories of "Bread" and "Happy Endings", and "The Female Body". The first two flash stories have been initially published in the collection entitled Murder in the Dark (1983). These two short-short works have been published again along with "The Female Body", which is also studied in this paper, in Atwood's collection entitled Good Bones and Simple Murders (1994). As part of the "theoretical project" or " the new writing by women" which regards " fiction as artifice, as language in the making/working/playing, as discourse", Atwood's *Murder in the Dark* coincides with feminism in three points, mainly, "the dismantling of language, which is exposed as another of patriarchy's institutions; the scrutinizing and exploding of both the reality patriarchal language has described and the fictions it has inscribed; the construction of a "feminine language" closely linked to the female body" (Verduyn 124, 125). This "feminine language" is especially evident in the theoretical fiction work entitled "The Female Body". Indeed, Atwood's work "displays a profound distrust of language as a means of communication between people, pro-posing, instead, a non-verbal or meta-language as infinitely superior" type of language" (Clark 1).

The three works under discussion are representative of Atwood's theoretical fiction and metafiction works. As such, they are examined as experimental works attempting to create a new language, new literary forms as well as challenging gender politics and reconstructing reality. According to Patricia Waugh, metafiction is "a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (2).In ' Quilting as Narrative Art: Metafictional Construction in Alias Grace", Sharon R. Wilson explains "feminist metafiction" as a type

of feminist fiction which can uncover the conventional codes involved in the construction of fiction, and that its "feminist intertextual revisions" display "the ideologically determined discourses encoded in traditional tales" (122). It also possesses "a metanarrative function" the meaning of which opposes Jean-François Lyotard's "philosophical usage, where "metanarrative" often refers to "legitimating master discourses, such as science" (Wilson 122). In the Atwoodian usage, however, "metanarrative" refers to "narrative about narrative, as one of its varieties, metafiction, is fiction about fiction" (Wilson 122). A salient characteristic of the three short shorts studied in this paper is that they are works of metafiction. According to the dictionary of *Oxford Languages*, metafiction is fiction in which the author self-consciously refers to the artificiality or literariness of a work by parodying or departing from novelistic conventions and traditional narrative techniques. As such, Atwood's feminist metafiction possesses the potential of restructuring generic codes and revealing the ideological discourses underlying traditional narrative forms.

As a postmodern writer, a significant purpose of Atwood's theoretical fiction is to defy and deconstruct traditional narrative and fiction forms. Theoretical fiction, as such, originated from the French investigations of feminist poetics and ethics of the 1960s and 1970s resulting in the *écriture feminine* movement. This movement has been conveyed to French-speaking North American women writers interested in the issues of gender construction, sexual orientation, maternal relations, and pro/creative metaphors. (Dvořák 164). This is expressed in Canadian French-speaking academic, Nicole Brossard's *L'amèr ou le chapitre effrité* where she announces the writer's focus on the feminist issues in "fiction théorique" which, in turn, has influenced feminist writers and theorists in Canadian Anglophone circles interested in female identity formation (Dvořák 164-165). In her theoretical fiction, Atwood tends to blur "the Boundaries between "history, biography, fiction, and even criticism, notably with the recent emergence of the hybrid forms of theory fiction "(Dvořák 160). Such generic destabilization evident in Atwood's work is emphasized in Coral Ann Howells words that "The poststructuralist emphasis on textuality, intertextuality, reader response, and historical specificity

has led to distinctions between genres becoming radically destabilized" ("Transgressing Genre" 140).

Decentering of the center in both culture and fiction, the postmodern writer's experimentation with language, and literary textual form as well as the ironic preservation of the relationship between language and the intricate fictional representation of reality is explored in the above-mentioned three flash fiction works. According to Sharon Wilson in " Fiction Flashes: Genre and Intertexts in Good Bones", the flashes in both *Good Bones*, and *Murder in the Dark* illustrate their intertextuality interweaving several genres and subgenres "including antifiction, metafiction, revisioned folk and fairy tales, myths, and other canonical texts; fables; parables;… popular romance; biography; autobiography; theology; speculative, …recipes; advice; thriller, and adventure stories" for the purpose of deconstructing stereotypical conceptions of masculinity, femininity, nature, stories and reader's expectations as well as indicate "reader's epiphanies" while reading them (21,23) Atwood's postmodern aesthetics do not only involve the deconstruction of traditional literary forms and societal expectations and ideologies, but also incorporate a reconstruction of them.

As a philosophical lexicon, "postmodernism" is first used in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) by Jean-François Lyotard. Emerging as a challenge to liberal humanism, postmodern Western thought aims at decentering the center. It is a product of a "crisis in the representation of reality, hence, its denial of "the possibility of a stable, knowable truth." (Hutcheon, Canadian Postmodernism 3) In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard defines postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv). He also explains the nature of the postmodern artist/author's literary output as a production of new formS which establishes new artistic rules during the same process of their production:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the

unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but m order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining Judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done. Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an event; hence also, they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realization (mise en oeuvre) always begin too soon. Post modern would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (modo). (Lyotard 81)

In a culture of reproduction which denies the possibility of producing fixed forms and ideas in art, the postmodern artist appropriates, and rearranges existing literary forms and devices. According to Linda Hutchen in The Poetics of Modernism, the postmodern artist/author's skeptical attitude toward the existence of reality, objective knowledge, or universal truth results in the production of an experimental text in language and form which proves that reality is multiple, and that it is a mental construct. Postmodernism is also characterized by a heterogenous identity "that is asserted in the face of that totalizing (yet pluralizing) culture" (Hutcheon, Poetics of Modernism 59). Stressing its metafictional nature, Hutcheon also argues that postmodern novels, in general, draw attention to the fact "that all our systems of understanding are deliberate and historically specific human constructs (not natural and eternal givens). . . These are novels that admit openly they are fiction but suggest that fiction is just another means by which we make sense of our world (past and present)" (Hutcheon, Politics of Postmodernism 43). Hutchen adds that postmodern art and fiction is also politically engaged since its experimentation with, and deconstruction of established form and language is an acknowledgement of the existence of power relations in any social

activity including art (Politics of Postmodernism 203). Indeed, Margret Atwood employs defamiliarization in order to deconstruct traditional literary forms and language in her flash fiction works.

(1)   The Constructed Nature of Atwood's Short Shorts

Utilizing a wide range of narrative strategies that foreground the constructed nature of Margret Atwood's short shorts, and the relationship between fiction and the multiple realities established by cultural metanarratives. Atwood employs narrative strategies to turn the focal point of the text to the fictional nature of the work as framed "narrated, constructed and mediated" (Waugh 14). As such, she writes her own metanarrative. The emphasis on the fictionality of the literary work, pinpoints "the relationship between the language and represented world of fiction with the real world outside" (Nicol xvii). By extensively employing metafiction, imagery, parody, and word play in her fiction, Atwood does not only manage to defamiliarize, and deconstruct traditional literary forms and literary language, but also to do so to the reader's habitual interpretations of the literary text, and their habitual perceptions of and convictions about reality. Applying Atwood's postmodern aesthetics, the literary text and reality are mediated, formed and constructed in her short shorts, or flash fiction stories. Because we inhabit a virtual world rather than the real world from a postmodern perspective, or a Baudrillardian simulated version of the world, meaning in postmodern fiction is generated from the relations among the elements in the system and not from their capacity to refer to something outside it (Nicol 7). Postmodern fiction, therefore, views realism with incredulity. The following words by Roland Barthes provide a detailed explanation of the distrust of realism in literature:

Claims regarding the 'realism' of narrative are therefore to be discounted. . . . The function of the narrative is not to 'represent', it is to constitute a spectacle still very enigmatic for us but in any case, not of a Postmodern fiction: theory and practice mimetic order. . . . Narrative does not show, does not imitate; the passion which may excite us in reading a novel is not that of a 'vision' (in actual fact, we do not 'see' anything). Rather it is that of meaning, that of a higher

order of relation which also has its emotions, its hopes, its dangers, its triumphs. 'What takes place' in a narrative is from the referential (reality) point of view literally nothing; 'what happens' is language alone, the adventure of language, the unceasing celebration of its coming. (123–24)

In spite of the denial of the referential function of language evident in Barthes' words (i.e., that language does not refer to reality), postmodern literature examines contemporary reality. This implies that it does not totally abandon the referential function of language, but preserves it ironically by continually examining "the complex nature of the represented world and the narrative in fiction" (Nicol 30). Writing in an anti-realist form, and creating her own feminine language, Atwood's three short-short stories under discussion draw on and explore issues relevant to her contemporary culture (Nicol 141). By laying stress upon process rather than merely presenting a finished product, and criticising power structures, Atwood's writing illustrates several major characteristics of postmodern aesthetics and is an important example of Canadian postmodernism (Hutcheon *Canadian Postmodern* 188). According to Hutcheon, postmodern fiction employs irony extensively enabling itself to be both referential to the world and self-reflexive or self-conscious (*Poetics of Postmodernism* xi, 11). Atwood's focus on process is a major characteristic of postmodernism which favours experimentation, and analysis over the attainment of a definite meaning in fiction (Hutcheon *Canadian Postmodern* 182).

Exploring the postmodern characteristics of Margaret Atwood's writing, Hutcheon contends in *The Canadian Postmodern* that the former's work manifests the tendencies of postmodern aesthetics through its focus on process rather than product, self-reflexivity of the work, and its political and social critique (184). Hutcheon also maintains that Atwood's writing frequently draws attention to itself and often refers to other texts and genres. This self-consciousness and intertextual play are also common features of postmodernism (*Canadian Postmodern* 184). Additionally, Hutcheon holds that Atwood often criticises oppressive power structures in society especially those that negatively affect women. Such political

commitment is a significant feature of postmodernism, which reveals an inherent concern with questions of power and oppression. (*Canadian Postmodern* 186)

As a major twentieth century figure of Canadian postmodern fiction and poetry, Atwood's three flash fiction stories examined in this paper are mainly works of metafiction and theoretical fiction displaying a number of postmodern techniques and features. Besides its self-referential nature, metafiction explores how this form of writing challenges our comprehension of "the world outside the literary fictional text" by calling forth questions about representation and identity : "If our knowledge of this world is now seen to be mediated through language, then literary fiction (worlds constructed entirely out of language) becomes a useful model for learning about the constructions of 'reality' itself" (Waugh 3). By creating an original, compressed literary form dependent entirely on language , Atwood analyses themes of identity, power relations, and narrative strategy in the three short stories under discussion in this paper As a postmodern feminist writer, Atwood employs imagery such as metaphors and symbols as well as the discursive techniques of parody, irony and self-reflexivity - devices particularly well suited to the compressed form of her short stories, as weapons in the arsenal of denaturalizing the so-called 'natural' and 'neutral' in culture
(Hutcheon, Politics of Postmodernism 174).In so doing, Atwood utilizes strategies to deconstruct the language and generic form of the text and to reconstruct a new literary form , a new literary language, and a new reality.

A salient characteristic of Atwood's writing is her technique of inversion which is especially evident in the three short fiction works discussed in this paper. Such technique is employed to debunk, and subvert patriarchal cultural attitudes and values, its discourse, and its language in order to create a parodic and satiric representation of the dominant culture, and render a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations. The hybrid forms and the intertextual nature that Atwood creates in the small space of her theoretical fiction highlights

the technique of inversion. As Reingard M. Nischik puts it in "Murder in the Dark: Margret Atwood's Inverse Poetics of Intertextual Minuteness":

Atwood's "poetics of inversion": her technique of undermining conventional thought patterns, attitudes, values, or textual norms by turning them on their heads. The result is a multifaceted interplay between explicit and implicit meaning or, to put it another way, a prismatic multiplication of sense. Since this technique is used in a very restricted space, it almost inevitably results in strongly delineated, suggestive, and highly intensified representations, thus providing a possible explanation for the satirical and parodic tendencies discernible in many of the texts (6).

(2)   Techniques of Deconstruction as an Acknowledgement of Power Relations

Margaret Atwood's "Happy Endings" is a typical illustration of metafiction. It is a self-conscious short narrative which recreates a different and unfamiliar knowledge of reality through form and language. "Happy Endings" has first appeared in the 1983 Canadian collection, *Murder in the Dark.* In 1994, it appears again in *Good Bones and Simple Murders: Short Fiction and Prose Poems.* Satirizing and subverting the traditional plot structure of romantic stories, Atwood presents six different scenarios of the same story, and archetypal characters of "John" and "Mary" (Wilson "Fiction Flashes" 20). "Happy Endings" manifests Atwood's experimentation with plot structure, especially evident in employing narrative discontinuity and undermining narrative closure. Offering the reader instructions about how to write a story, "Happy Endings" is an original "and oft-anthologized story that demonstrates the arbitrariness of any author's choice of an ending" (Mambrol 25). Its six different scenarios have the same ending, which is death , with the authorial voice intruding in the narrative at the end of the six scenarios to suggest to the reader the possibility of writing their own versions of the middle of the stories. Hence, Atwood preserves (as she does in other stories studied in this paper) the narrator's voice as the one who awakens the reader to a new awareness about both the

fallacies of Western culture concerning the reality of gender relationships and sex politics and the possibility of breaking up with traditional plot structures. In the words of Reingard M. Nischik, Atwood assumes the role of "a chronicler of our times, exposing and warning, disturbing and comforting, opening up chasms of meaning as soon as she closes them, and challenging us to question conventions and face up to hitherto unarticulated truths" ("Margaret Atwood's Short Storie" 159). Consequently, the narrator announces at the end of "Happy Endings" that what is more important in a plot structure are " how" it is constructed and "why" the action" takes place in this or that way which is a final reminder of the metafictional nature of the story.

Atwood also defies generic definitions as she describes the form of "Happy Endings" as a product of the "mutation" of literary forms in the following words: "This is the way such a mutant literary form unsettles us. We know what is expected, in a given arrangement of words; we know what is supposed to come next. And then it doesn't. It was a little disappointing to learn that other people had a name for such aberrations, and had already made up rules" (qt in *Textual* 22). In this manner, arbitrariness of storytelling choices, and the constructed nature of traditional plotlines are exposed in "Happy Endings". With six different scenarios labelled with different letters (A, B, C, etc.), Each scenario presents a different version of a marital relationship having the same ending. As such, Atwood deliberately disrupts the linear progression of events by jumping between scenarios and repeating certain incidents. Such a deconstructionist approach emphasizes the multiplicity of interpretations and rejects the idea of a singular, fixed narrative structure; the fragmented structure of this flash fiction work challenges the traditional notion of a cohesive plot, questions the idea of a linear, predictable narrative and emphasizes her satirical attitude of both gender relationships.

"Happy Endings" parodies traditional fairy tale and romance narratives, and satirizes them, especially, in their obsession with happy endings, and the unrealistic portrayals of love and relationships disclosing how such narratives reinforce prevailing cultural norms of

gender roles and relationships, and limit female agency. The structure of this flash fiction work presents various outcomes, exposes the role of gender power relations and the arbitrary nature of endings. Thence, "Happy Endings" displays the inadequacy of traditional narrative plot structures which overlook the complexity of human relationships, offering an oversimplified, limited perception of reality. This work, nonetheless, maintains an ironic space between the fictional representation of marital relationships and their reality through its self-reflexive form.

Satirizing common literary tropes, the cultural myth of marital relationships or gender politics, "Happy Endings" provides an alternative textual model about human reality and human relationships. This flash fiction work undermines cultural fallacies about relationships, and in specific, marriage. In addition, it satirizes the common obsession with happy endings in stories with traditional plot structures. As a self-referential flash fiction work, "Happy Endings" calls attention to itself discussing different narrative choices, character archetypes, and plot outcomes. The plot line of the story is described as follows: "one thing after another, a what and a what and a what" ("Happy Endings"). On the whole, this self-reflexivity which highlights the artificiality of storytelling, invites readers to reflect on the constructed nature of narratives and the role of authorship as well.

(3) "Bread" as a Metaphor of Injustices Against Humanity

In his analysis of "Bread", Stuart Chipman claims that through Atwood's "artful" literary technique which highlights the writing process, the readers are led to an awareness of their role in instigating the tragedy of hunger. Contending that Margaret Atwood's "Bread" is an accusation that intends "to shame those who facilitate suffering and tragedy through their indifference" (2). He adds that Atwood's "argument is surreptitious and emotive. Her language is initially sly and goes down smooth, but later renders her unaware reader intoxicated with empathy" (2). Chipman also adds:

The essay utilizes artful literary techniques to accuse her reader of inhumanity, of caring too little about other human beings. She presents her logic slowly and strategically, leading her readers—comfortable and unaware—to self-incrimination... Atwood's

accusation addresses the heart of contemporary global conflict, illustrating that the relationship between the affluent and the impoverished instigates and shapes all war in this era of globalization. Atwood's logical argument and the steps she takes to invite the reader into taking part in …   gradually moves the reader from comfort to guilt … without provoking the reader to adopt a defensive position and reject that which is true. (2)

In this process, the word "bread" is not merely the staple food that millions consume all over the world, but it is a metaphor of a life -giving material, of want , of have nots, of weakness, of abundance, of power of the affluent, and of unattainable dreams from the past. Throughout the five stories in "Bread", the narrator addresses the reader using the second person "you" inviting the reader to question the linear flow of events in traditional plot structures. Indeed, the first story upsets the comfort of the readers, and unsettle their complacent expectations as the narrator invites them to use their imagination (an element used by both the writer in the creative process, and the reader) to conjure up a piece of bread. Because of its abundance in affluent societies, bread is taken for granted, and the idea of baking bread, in itself, is conceived of by the haves as "something relaxing to do with your hands" ("Bread"). In the second story, however, the reader once more is invited to "imagine a famine" where two poverty-stricken sisters only have one piece of bread. Bread, in this story, is conceived of as a food for survival. In spite of being stale or even rotten, the possession of bread for the weak and the impoverished represents life or death. The questions posed by the narrator to the reader, at the end of the second story render the metaphor of bread pertinent to a tool of survival, or even self-preservation at the expense of other human beings facing the same predicament.

Conversely, the word "bread", in the third story, "does not mean life" ("Bread"). Bread, here, represents an agonizing memory of happy past times to the readers if they "imagine" themselves as prisoners. In prison, happiness is totally unattainable to the prisoner. On the other hand, the metaphor of bread in the fourth story of "Bread" is described as "subversive" and "treacherous"; it is a murder

tool that can actually kill. It stands for death or the denial of food, and all other means of sustenance by the rich and powerful to the destitute of the world. In the fifth story, Atwood ties all the strings of the different stories in "Bread" to each other by emphasizing the reality of the piece of bread the reader has been invited to imagine throughout. In fact, the bread metaphor is an embodiment of reality in the sense that it is an indication of the oppression and the injustices the global structure of power subjects the weak and the poor to on earth. Thereupon, the metaphor of "bread" utilized throughout this self-conscious story establishes a similar structure of the five stories which provokes a consciousness of reality although it is suggested, at the beginning of the story, that the stories and the "bread" are all imaginary.

As a postmodern writer, Atwood employs the discursive techniques of parody, irony and self- reflexivity as weapons in the arsenal of denaturalizing the so-called 'natural' and 'neutral' in culture (Verduyn 17,19). This is evident in the gradual process of raising the awareness of the readers and calling their attention to the intricate connection between bread, on the one hand, and life and death, on the other. Bread is also a metaphor of the injustices committed against the destitute and needy of the world. In this sense, "Bread" is a self-referential story, and a work of metafiction highlighting the process of writing. In the repetitive use of the word "bread", the narrative structure of the story is condensed, emphasising the creative process and accelerating the pace of the reader's apprehension of the political message of the story. Thereupon, the experimental plot structure of "Bread" is purposively employed to lay emphasis on the process of writing, and the language used (Verduyn 19). This experimental plot structure is also instrumental to the process of instigating the awareness of the reader of the significance of bread to humanity at large, and to the political injustices that the readers might be participants in unknowingly.

(4) Hybridity of Meaning and the Emphasis on the Fictionality of Atwood's Theoretical Fiction.

Seeking to manipulate the genre of flash fiction, and create a " 'feminine language" closely linked to the female body" , Atwood parodies the established narrative forms of storytelling in "The Female Body" to dismantle patriarchy , its language, the reality it "has described and the fictions it has inscribed" (Verduyn 124.). To accomplish this task, she situates her examination of the female body within a broader historical and cultural framework. In this theoretical short piece of fiction, cultural and historical narratives that have sustained the objectification of the female body are mocked and deconstructed (Wilson "Fiction Flashes" 19). The unique generic nature of "The Female Body" becomes evident in the evocative metaphors employed throughout the essay to illustrate the societal treatment of the female body as a locus of control. For instance, Atwood describes the female body as a "cultural archaeological site," highlighting the layers of history and ideological meaning embedded within it (Female Body"). Metaphors such as "the body as text" and "the body as prison" further emphasize the complex ways in which the female body is perceived and constrained by sexual politics of patriarchal society ("Female Body").

Employing these metaphors, Atwood invites readers to engage with the subject matter on a deeper, more symbolic level. In this sense, the connection between societal beliefs, patriarchal systems, and the construction of female identity becomes evident, illustrating how these factors have determined the societal perceptions and expectations of female bodies. In experimenting with different fictional devices, Atwood theorizes about language and literary forms, attacks patriarchy, and makes use of the body to envision "a new reality and a new language" (Verduyn.124). Since Atwood's work is characterized by "poetic hybridity", it is not only confined to "formal ambiguity", but it also reverberates the opposition pervading her fiction and poetry between "various dominant icons such as the male and female turning "violence", into an "agent of violence",   and the latter into a "passive and unverbalized being" (Delville 138. 144, 145). The consequence of such hybridity of meanings is ambiguity of form (Delville 145). Furthermore, such hybridity of meaning

highlights the fictionality of this piece of theoretical fiction. In spite of the cliches of the feminine and masculine accentuated in this short piece of fiction, "the very concentrated 'self '-centered (rather than plot-centered) forms of short fiction " result in "condensations, plurality of genre, multiplicity of perspective." -a strong indication of the tendency to deconstruct all categories which is a central concern of all Atwood's work (Sturgess 95). Above all, the concentred self-centered forms of Atwood's short fiction evident in "The Female Body" pinpoint a preference for experimentation over the attainment of a distinct meaning in fiction.

(5) The Body as a Metaphor for Culture

Atwood draws upon ancient mythology, religious texts, and literary texts to illustrate the diverse ways in which the female body has been revered and demonized. In her examination of how the social idea of femininity is formed in Western culture, Susan Bordo states that the body operates as a text of culture since the latter is responsible for the establishment of the female body : "What we eat, how we dress, the daily rituals through which we attend to the body-is a medium of culture. The body, as an anthropologist Mary Douglas has argued, is a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body. The body may also operate as a metaphor for culture; the body is not only a text of culture, but also the locus of social control" (267).

Atwood explores the historical and cultural narratives that sustain the objectification of the female body by deconstructing and mocking fairy tales, myths, and Biblical stories in "The Female Body" In "Fiction Flashes: Genre and Intertexts in Good Bones", Sharon Rose Wilson points out the adept allusions to various fairy tales, and the intertextuality in this flash fiction as follows: "The Female Body", an especially clever and rhythmical flash, beginning in first person and shifting to an impersonal third, uses a number of familiar Atwood images, motifs, and themes. Atwood's work is full of power politics linked to eating and being eaten; and here is the hungry female body… modesty panel (also BH), and a head as accessories. A doll, here a Barbie, is thrown down the stairs" (32). The "highly

intertextual nature'' of Atwood' s work used in the limited space of flash fiction alongside what Reingard calls "poetic inversion" which undermines conventional patterns of thought, values, and textual norms leads to "a multifaceted interplay between explicit and implicit meaning or, to put it another way, a prismatic multiplication of sense" (Nischik " Murder in the Dark''6).

As a matter of fact, Atwood foregrounds the subject matter of this fiction flash in sexual politics. Atwood herself points out in " Notes on Power Politics", "that power is our environment. ....We would all like to have a private life that is sealed off from the public life … where there are no rulers and no ruled, no hierarchies, no politicians, only equals, free people. But because any culture is a closed system …and fed on power this is impossible,. . . So many of the things we do in what we sadly think of as our personal lives are simply duplications of the external world of power games, power struggles" (7). What Atwood calls "power games, power struggles", or the lack of equity and gender equality is a primary theme of "The Female Body"; even the narrator, seems to be a female. Additionally, the first-person narrative mode of narration ("I" and "my") is employed which foregrounds the narrator 's subjective involvement in the "topic" of this theoretical piece (Howels 53-55). Furthermore, Atwood playfully subverts religious and mythological stories and "gender scripts inherited from fairy tales, myth, ("Rapunzel," "Fitcher's Bird," the Bible, Aphrodite myth), literature" and the biblical tale of Adam and Eve, by reinterpreting them from a feminist perspective (Wilson "Fiction Flashes" 32). "The Female Body", abounds with allusions to a range of literary works that reflect the historical and cultural treatment of the female body. For instance, the social position of the female in Victorian literature discussed in Charlotte Pekins Gilman's classic short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" is referred to as a manifestation of the manner in which women's bodies have been idealized, or condemned based on societal expectations of femininity. Atwood also explores the influence of literary tropes and stereotypes such as the "fallen woman", and the "angel in the house" on the perception of the female body in different

time periods:" She came whizzing down the stairs, thrown like a dart. She was stark naked. Her hair had been chopped of" ("Female Body").

   Parody is also utilized in "The Female Body" to expose the biases and inherent patriarchal social structures within these narratives and encourage a critical examination of them. Through her satirical approach, Atwood highlights the absurdity of female stereotypes, such as the "angel in the house" and the "fallen woman". Employing parody and satire in "The Female Body," Atwood uncovers the contradictions inherent in sex politics, challenges deeply ingrained beliefs, and prompts readers to question the treatment and social perception of the female body. Thus, advertising is parodied in the following: "Is this the face that launched a thousand products?" ("Female Body"). The female body can be a "door knocker or something to hold up lampshades …;it sells and is sold" (Sharon "Fiction Flashes" 32). In addition, the use of humour and irony provides a unique lens through which readers can critically foster a more nuanced understanding of power dynamics, and the complex nature of gender identity. Atwood's parodic and satiric treatment of the objectification of the female body emphasizes the extensive impact of the male gaze; women are reduced to objects of desire and pursued solely for their physical attributes. In fact, Atwood ridicules the objectifying male gaze and criticizes its social normalization. Besides, her satirical approach highlights the disparities inherent in power politics leading to the objectification of women. If the connections between the two halves of the female brain mean that women listen in to their internal conversations, then the brains of men contribute to their "objectivity," "Aloneness," and the mythologizing of the female body, which thus must be trapped, leashed, chained ("Female Body").In her analysis of "The female Body" as a manifestation of patriarchal repression of the female and her body, Madeleine Davies writes:

   Atwood demonstrates the extent to which the female subject and her body are contained and closely watched within a patriarchy that considers their very existence an attack or departure waiting to happen. The idea is made explicit in Atwood's short piece, 'The

Female Body,' where the speaker advises: 'Quick, stick a leash on it, a lock, a chain, some pain, settle it down, so it can never get away from you again. (62)

In contrast to such restrictions on the female and her body, Atwood's writing practice in general as well as her writing about the female body, in particular, celebrate womanhood, their body and sexuality which have all been repressed for centuries by patriarchy. Such writing practice also intersects with Hélène Cixous's l'´ecriture feminine, or Female Discourse (Davies 59). According to Helene Cixous, the female discourse is "a specifically female discourse in which the female body and female difference are inscribed in language and text" (Davies59). This idea is explored in "The Laugh of Medusa" (1975) in which Cixous "calls on women to reject male, rigid language in favor of "a language connecting body with text" (Davies 59). In this essay, she argues that women should write in a special female language. As Cixous puts it: "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies" (875).

Likewise, Hutcheon contends that Margaret Atwood's fiction embodies the Canadian feminist type of postmodernism. Atwood's fiction has all the self-consciousness of the politically engaged artist, where "gender and national politics have been joined to a strong concern for human rights" (*Canadian Postmodern* 139). Nevertheless, it foregrounds aesthetic concerns like modes of narration and attention to the figural resources of language. Parodying patriarchal discourse on women and its language, Atwood makes an extensive use of the figural resources of language in "The Female Body". In the epigraph to this short theoretical piece, Atwood plays on the word "subject" which ambiguously stands for both the meanings of a topic and the female subject as dominated by the male: "… entirely devoted to the subject of 'The Female Body.' Knowing how well you have written on this topic … this capacious topic …" ("Female Body") Maggie Humm also suggests that "it is in feminist fiction . . . that new accounts of the female body, and its potential cultural representations,

amount to a feminist rewriting of culture" (124). This suggestion bears a strong relevance to Atwood's "The Female Body" which could be deemed an attempt on Atwood's part to rewrite culture.

"The Female Body", therefore, defamiliarizes historical narratives and challenges contemporary societal perceptions of the female body. By rewriting her own, distinct cultural account of the female body, Atwood offers a feminist version of culture and its stereotypical representations of women. To achieve this, the author takes advantage of the figural resources of language including metaphors, similes and analogies to enhance the essay's descriptive power. To Atwood, the objectification of the female is caused by the culture which commodifies women: " It sells cars, beer, shaving lotion, cigarettes, hard liquor; it sells diet, plans, and diamonds, and desire in tiny crystal bottles. Is this the face that launched a thousand products?....It does not sell, it is sold." ("Female Body"). In the process of using the self as a "textual construct", the female body is also described as a domestic convenience (Delville 1). Atwood writes that the "female body is made of transparent plastic and lights up when you plug it in. You press a button to illuminate the different systems" ("Female Body") Thus, a connection is made between consumerism and objectification, rendering the idea of the commodification and dehumanization of the female body, and representing the political engagement of Atwood as a feminist and postmodern writer.

Conclusion

Overall, Margaret Atwood's three flash fiction stories studied in this paper demonstrate her skillful manipulation of language and figural resources while preserving the postmodern ironic relationship between language and reality. Through the strategies of imagery, metaphor, parody, and linguistic play, the essential role of language in literary and cultural formation is emphasized. Experimenting with literary form and language, Atwood writes her own versions of metafiction and theoretical fiction displaying a concern with analysis rather than meaning in fiction which is not only a salient feature of her short fiction, but also of all her work. She utilises parody, irony and word play to reveal the contradictions inherent in sex politics,
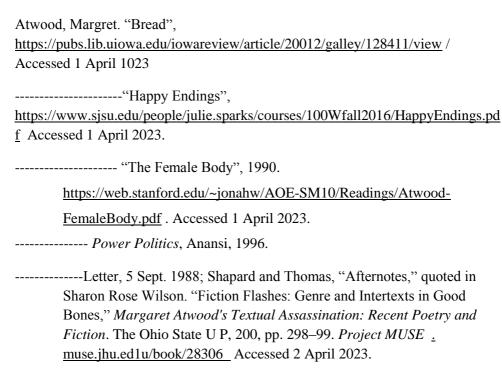
challenge deeply ingrained beliefs, and prompt readers to question the stereotypical social perception of the female body. Atwood not only exposes the various socio-linguistic assumptions underlying diverse literary and nonliterary narratives, but she highlights its power to sustain, shape, and transform our understanding of the world as well. By doing so, she invites readers to reflect on the ways in which language constructs and influences human experiences and interpretations of reality.

Informed by a feminist ideology, Atwood employs metafiction to produce self-reflexive short shorts that explore the themes of love, gender relationships, and social justice, and deconstruct traditional narrative structures. Through her use of the inversion technique, language, and figurative resources as well as the condensed form of these flash fiction pieces, Atwood offers a critical commentary on the conventions and expectations of storytelling, and plot structure offering various narrative choices such as, character archetypes and plot endings. Consequently, her theoretical fiction subverts narrative conventions and societal expectations, lays emphasis on its fictionality, and rejects the idea of a singular, fixed narrative. Its utilisation of intertextuality also invites readers to reinterpret previous narratives in a new light as well as deny the thematic originality of literary texts.

On the other hand, the discussion of gender and sex politics, as well as social injustice in the three flashes discussed in this paper, indicates Atwood's engagement with contemporary political and social issues. Non the less, as a postmodern writer, Margret Atwood conceives of power and knowledge as intertwined. As such, she deconstructs stereotypes in literature and culture to construct her flash fiction works creating her own language and literary forms. Of the same importance is Atwood's deconstruction of traditional narrative forms, and the creation of innovative metafictional or self-conscious ones. In this sense, Atwood preserves the postmodern ironic relationship between language and reality throwing the referential concept of both language and literature into a sharp relief.

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