



RECONFIGURING SELF THROUGH ARTISTIC DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF THE BLIND ASSASSIN BY MARGARET ATWOOD

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Abstract:

The present paper seeks to delineate how female revisits and reformulates her Image through artistic discourse (Literary) by taking the case study of the female writings in the novel *The Blind Assassin* of Margaret Atwood. It elaborates on the vicissitudes of life of Iris, the female protagonist of Atwood. She appropriates her voice to fight back against the oppressive patriarchal forces that are instrumental in her harassment and subordination. The proposed study is significant as it focuses on how retelling of the history of the 'self' through artistic discourse pushes the 'self' to the centre and in turn, it is recognised as Subject. The methodology applied in the present study is analytical and deconstructive. Extant feminist literary theories have also been contrasted contextually. The study endeavours to show that women have been capable of identifying their unique potential and their writing back can overthrow patriarchal hegemony. Iris, by conquering her body and then writing from it, defeats her silence and deconstructs her identity over the social structure, which prioritizes and propagates binary division of male/female and in which the female is always the 'other'. Atwood destabilizes and deconstructs the gendered identity prevalent for women so far by letting the protagonist write her memoir which paves her way to transcend from the passive, subordinate position of victim to that of assertive, independent subject. The voice that emanates while writing from the body has made explicit so many truths that otherwise would have remained unnoticed, hence reconfiguring Self.

Key Words: Artistic Discourse, Writing, Retelling, Self, History & Identity

Since ages, women's identity is dictated by the patriarchy. She is not her own person but an image adjusting and accommodating as per the image pre-determined by society for her. This identity is not the real but a manifestation of the self, an illusion. Whether it is personal, social or professional, women's image and role have always been fashioned according to the male imagination. At the same time, language has been a patriarchal tool to represent women in a conventional stereotypical manner. Against such prevalent prejudiced backdrop, the present study parallels on the notion of *écriture féminine* (female writing) proposed by French feminist Helen Cixous. In her essay, *The Laugh of Medusa*, Cixous states:

"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 for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. A woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement" (Cixous: 875).

She vouches for the liberation and empowerment of women's identity through writing. The present paper, aligning the theoretical view of Cixous, seeks to delineate how female revisits and reformulates her Image through artistic discourse (Literary) with the case study of the female writings in the novel *The Blind Assassin* (2000) of Margaret Atwood. The study attempts to explore how writing her 'self' and by revisiting her past allows the female to reconfigure her identity and resurface the female experience which, in turn, liberates her from the position of an object and transforms her to the position of the subject. The proposed study also focuses on the fact that it is through the retelling of the history of the 'self' through artistic discourse that 'self' comes to be recognised as Subject.

Iris, the female protagonist, when confronted with acute intimidation and subordination seizes her voice and becomes counteroffensive against the patriarchal tyranny that significantly fabricates her identity. Iris redefines her body and writes her story from this renewed position. This enables her to voice her silence and reclaim her individual identity over the patriarchal norms where female is always relegated as the 'other'. The basic premises of my argument is based on female protagonist's journey of rediscovering the potential of 'Self' as subject through the act of writing novel and memoir. Thus, the paper aims to bring fore the fact that

women by drawing forth their innate potential and by voicing their silence, can overthrow patriarchal hegemony.

Further, to elaborate the argument of the study, I would like to focus on the literal meaning of the terms -Artistic and Discourse as delted in the paper. The Dictionary meaning of the term 'artistic' is defined as "someone who possesses creative qualities that enable him/her to excel at producing creative works like paintings or sculptures"(Oxford Dictionary). 'Artistic' is that requires an exceptional workmanship or art expertise. Discourse is defined by Tauschel as: "stretches of language perceived to be meaningful, unified and purposive"(4). "It investigates into the structural and functional aspects of a language and in its full richness discourse analysis involves all the levels and methods of analysis of language, cognition, interaction, society and culture"(5).It is a way of disposing knowledge, ideas, or experience , rooted in language and its concrete contexts (as history or institutions).

The study explores the term 'artistic' as skilful creative act and 'discourse' as the act of writing or narration. Artistic discourse originates from the inner or the pshyce of the artist. On the other hand, the receiver is engagedwith his/her individual response over the same text. A person's psyche is vital to the meaning of the discourse. The genuine meaning of the discourse relates to an individual's experiences and thoughts. An individual's psyche and corresponding cultural values directly influences the discourse. Thus, it can be said that discourse shapes through personal and social history.

The proposed study discusses ecriture feminine as a form of artistic discourse and hence, tries to scrutinizethesignificance of *ecriture feminine* .In addition to this, the study also explores how writing has served as an avenue for self-assertion of female identity in the novel *The Blind Assassin*. Writing from the body is something writing from the hidden recesses of the mind that finds expressionsas to the miss happenings and maladjustment ofthe protagonists as they are socially trapped. *The Blind Assassin* delineates that woman can rewrite histories and can mould their identity and self- autonomy by writing in their own language. Before I discuss how female writing reconfigures female identityandhow it rectifies the symbolic order, I will very briefly touch upon Cixous's idea of the *ecriture feminine* in order to establish a theoretical ground for the study. Helen Cixous in her political manifesto, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, asserts that ecriture feminine can not be defined as a theory as she feels that to define it is to limit it. Therefore, she prescribes its two objectives: First that *ecriture feminine* is a way to redeem the female body from phallogentric ideology as she says,

[b]y writing herself, woman will return to the body which has more than been confiscated from her, which has been turning into the uncanny stranger on display" and second, it is an urge to voice differences, "[a]n act that will [...] be marked by woman's *seizing* the occasion to *speak*, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based on her suppression (Cixous: 250).

In contrast to the traditional believe that writing is exclusively a privilege of men, to men, and about men, Cixous claims that *ecriture feminine* is bisexual. Emphasizing the coexistence of a pregnant woman and her unborn baby, she is of the view that "*ecriture feminine* is needed to achieve harmony between self and m/other and to acknowledge the differences" (Cixous:254,262).Cixous's conviction of female writing(*ecriture feminine*) has greatly influenced theconstruction of gender identity. Waugh has explained ecriture feminine as:"uniquely feminine style of writing, marked by disruptions in the text, gaps, silences, puns, rhythms and new images"(Waugh:335).

Further, the concept of *ecriture feminine* is based onLacan's thought that the structure of language is focused by the Phallus and that the language within the Symbolic Order is representational, where a single signifier is related to a single signified. Cixous contends that the subject position of woman or the feminine is on the margins of the Symbolic order and thus is less forcibly moored and controlled by the Phallus. Therefore, thepatriarchal language that represents the realm of symbolic is linear, logical, authoritative and realistic whereas, Cixous differentiated between the 'semiotic'(the pre-symbolic phase) and the 'symbolic' and thus, defined that feminine writing portrays the realm of semiotic and is non linear, incomprehensible and fluid. Critics like Cixous, Krestiva and Irigaray are of the view that the world is structured and interpreted through language, hence, gendered identity is constructed in language and because the language is predominantly masculine, therefore women is positioned at the margin in the symbolic order. Cixous aimed at reconstructing the social structure by deconstructing the language which prioritizes male domination and subjugates women. Helen Cixous challenges the logocentric ideology by proposing a new feminine language which would subvert the patriarchal binary that oppresses and silences women (Moi: 103).Cixous concept of *ecriture feminine* is based on Derrida's theory of 'Difference', where Derrida asserts that, 'meaning is not produced in the static closure of the binary opposition' it is rather 'constructed through the potentially endless process of reoffering to other absent signifiers" (Moi: 104). Unlike the concept of 'bisexuality,' Cixous suggested the idea of 'the other bisexuality' to reclaim women's identity (Cixous and Clement: 84). According to Cixous, " 'the other bisexuality' is multiple, variable and ever-changing, consisting as it does of the non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex" (Moi: 107).

Cixous further states that both men and women can aquire feminine writing. According to her, feminine writing is a forceful tool to subvert the binary scheme of sexual identity. Thus, ecriture feminine is, in

a way celebration of women's difference and marginality. As Moi states, "the other bisexuality doesn't annul differences but stirs them up, pursues them, increases them" (Moi: 107). According to Cixous' *écriture féminine* is, "the passage towards more than self, towards another than self, towards the other" (Cixous and Clement: 112).

Hence, the study based on the concept of *écriture féminine* explores how written realm of the imagination becomes an important outlet for the expression and exploration of self in the novel *The Blind Assassin*. In her essay, "Being a 'Woman Writer,'" Atwood echoes the idea of Cixous, wherein she further explores the idea of writing as a way for women to transcend oppression. Atwood is of the view that women by writing their feelings, thoughts, experiences ultimately forge their individual identity. By offering writing as an outlet to Iris and other female characters in the novel, Atwood allows women to have the power to write their histories and reconstruct their own identities.

The time of the publication of *The Blind Assassin* was a saga of historical and social traumas. The novel mirrors the difficulties of regaining access to the past. Iris, the protagonist, belongs to an industrialist family. She tries to make sense of life-changing events of her past that still resonates in her present. She tries to reconstruct what happened before by recollecting and reformulating her past through her artistic discourse in the form of literary writing (novel and a memoir). Iris's writing differs from official history. Atwood reconfigures science fiction tropes using postmodern narrative strategies to achieve subversive critical objectives. The selected text features stories-within-stories, a technique that foregrounds the transitive relationship between literature, history and reality. They present alternative compositions to show that traditional narratives can be opened to reinterpretation. In addition to using a meta-fictional framework, the text also employs the perspective of a female writer.

During the years of the World War, *The Blind Assassin* chronicles the experiences of two sisters, Iris and Laura Chase, their shared passion for a socialist agitator, and their unhappiness at the mercy of Iris's industrialist husband. In an early discussion of the novel, J. Brooks Bouson confirms that the women are subjected to power politics:

At once an intricately designed literary puzzle featuring a classic Atwoodian narrator - the elderly memoirist Iris Chase-Griffen, who is a master storyteller and illusionist - and an unsettling cautionary tale that, like Atwood's other novels, focuses attention on the power politics of gender relations (251).

Bouson elucidates on the novel as the literary puzzle that reveals a "fictional documentation of the ways in which gender and class expectations shaped and confined women's lives in the first half of the twentieth century" (252). While there is certainly an explicit social critique at work in Iris Chase-Griffen's narrative in the novel, it also presents a 'puzzle' of self as long as it offers a number of versions of the life of Iris and her sister Laura, none of which are complete in themselves. The narrative of *The Blind Assassin*, written by a frail and elderly Iris Chase-Griffen, is confessional and retrospective. This is interrupted by interpolated sections from the novel within the novel, which is titled as '*The Blind Assassin*.' Death notices in newspaper, social announcements, and extracts from gossip columns are also tied with the main narrative to bring in the contrast and interruptions.

The interpolation offers a scrapbook version of the self. Iris's memoir is interrupted by the official version of events, which is revealed to be wildly at odds with the private reality of the Chase-Griffen family. Yet this reality is mediated at every point by self-conscious, intrusive and audaciously unreliable narrator, Iris. Furthermore, the main characters of the novel within the novel are preoccupied with yet another narrative: a science fiction fantasy which makes up a considerable part of the work. The novel actually includes a writer of science fiction, Alex Thomas. It also depicts a woman writer (Iris Chase-Griffen) just as caught up in stealthy manipulations of literary persona with a life reconstructed through art.

Iris's life can be read as a fusion of the interpolated fictions in the novel. The three narrative layers are not mutually exclusive but contain valuable textual clues essential to the development of each narrative strand; they present a 'series of liquid transparencies' as Bouson suggests that the science fiction narrative offers an 'intratextual commentary' (2003, 260) on the primary narrative, and so the rape, sacrifice, and trauma in that story contains echoes of Laura's and Iris's suffering at the hands of Richard Griffen. In fact, the former might be read as a more extreme, explicit dramatization of the latter; Laura and Iris are sacrificial victims on the same spectrum as the brutalised figures who inhabit the science fiction fantasy. Further, the true nature of Iris's relationship with Alex Thomas long before it was officially disclosed is hinted at: "We preferred - or I preferred, and Laura tagged along - those with stories about other lands or even other planets. Spaceships from the future, where women would wear very short skirts made of shiny fabric and everything would gleam" (152).

In the early stages of the novel within the novel, the narrator pauses to consider the fate of sacrificial children in the dystopian Sakiel-Norn. A graphic description of cutting out the tongues of young girls as the ritual of sacrifice and is followed by a meditation on how "tongue less, and swollen with words she could never again pronounce, each girl would be led in procession to the sound of solemn music, wrapped in veils and garlanded with flowers, up the winding steps to the city's ninth door. Nowadays you might say she looked like a pampered society bride" (29). The immediate connection drawn between the ritualized viciousness incurred upon the

conciliatory virgins and Iris's own experience as a part of such a society is the example of how the imaginary story recreates the key events of the main novel.

The novel is fundamentally concerned with the idea of selfhood as a narrative construction or invention. Iris's daughter, Aimee, reads her aunt's (in fact her mother's) novel as an exposé of a family scandal, particularly in relation to her own origins (she imagines herself to be the daughter of Laura and Alex, who are identified as the fictional lovers), and this knowledge ultimately leads her to her death. On the other hand, Iris makes it clear that the manuscript in progress is intended as a redemptive message for her granddaughter Sabrina, which reveals the unknown origins of her biological father (a refugee orphan from Eastern Europe), thus freeing her from the tainted legacy of the Griffen industrial empire and leaving her at liberty to make up her own life story, "to invent yourself at will" (513). Here, the liberating potential of invention and reinvention through storytelling and narrative is restated, though the same processes are not entirely without trauma. Nevertheless, the redemptive and positive possibilities of self-construction and reconstruction explored are given a new endorsement in the novel. This draws attention to the domestic origins of women's writing and foregrounds a moment of clarity in Atwood's own development as a writer as she admits: "When Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir came my way, like shorebirds heralding land, I read them with much interest. They got a lot right for me, but there was one thing they got wrong. They were assuring me that I didn't have to get married and have children. But what I wanted was someone to tell me I could" (Atwood 1988b: xvi).

The novel opens with Laura Chase's suicide. Laura is sacrificed by the text in order to provide the writing persona that Iris needs in order to publish her work. While the true author of the notorious novel is not revealed until towards the end of the novel *The Blind Assassin*, a series of clues are provided. Laura is described early on as "A tabula rasa, not waiting to write, but to be written on." At the same time, at the moment at which the true identity of the author of the novel within the novel is revealed, Iris explains that "Laura was my left hand, and I was hers. We wrote the book together. It's a left-handed book. That's why one of us is always out of sight, whichever way you look at it" (512-13). Thus, Laura's iconic literary persona serves as Iris's 'slippery double.' Iris, the true author of *The Blind Assassin* (the novel within the novel), hides behind the persona of her dead sister Laura. The novel is published posthumously as the work of a gifted but troubled young woman. Iris comes to think of herself as "Laura's odd, extra hand, attached to nobody - the hand that passed her on to the world" (46; 513; 287). This provides Iris with a release on two fronts as she manages both to execute a risqué literary coup and at the same time make a bold statement of her contravention of social expectations.

The stereotype of the tormented, suicidal woman writer in Laura Chase is evoked perhaps as an ironic footnote to Atwood's own critical interrogation of received stereotypes of the woman writer and artist. Iris, the actual author of the cult classic *The Blind Assassin*, hides behind a fabricated persona, all the better to serve that persona. She positions herself as executor of Laura's estate and curator of Laura's memory as an evolution of her self as *Kunstlerroman*. The hostility of her response to the queries and requests from academics and readers interested in further researching the life and writing of Laura Chase is evident of Iris's need to exert full control over her sister's legacy. On her reply to an academician, seeking access to her sister's manuscripts, she writes: "I have no wish to satisfy your lust for phials of dried blood and the severed fingers of saints. Laura Chase is not your 'project.' She was my sister. She would not have wished to be pawed over after her death. Whatever that pawing over might euphemistically be termed" (287). This careful preservation of a literary mask or persona might be read as a postmodern innovation, but it is also the continuation of a long tradition of slyness on the part of the woman writer. Yet, in spite of Iris's apprehension and anxiety, she shows herself to be capable of narrative trickery on two fronts: she is the secret author of *The Blind Assassin* and manages to sustain this secrecy throughout her current-time memoir. At the same time, she sees herself as being controlled and overpowered by her writing hand: "my hand has taken on a life of its own, and will keep going even if severed from the rest of me [...] Certainly it's been writing down a number of things it wouldn't be allowed to if subject to my better judgement" (373).

On investigating the novel it is observed that it's not only Iris who writes her voice rather, almost all the female characters in the novel possess a piece of writing. Throughout the novel we find female writings in different forms for example Adelia expresses her voice in her scrapbooks and cookbooks, Laura maintains her notebooks, Iris's writes her memoir, and the female hyper textual inscriptions on the wall of a women's washroom. The female characters through these writings define themselves as subjects against the symbolic order. Though, in the novel the domestic compliance of female characters with the symbolic order seems beyond question. For instance Iris's grandmother Adelia is submissive in the house and strictly obeys the Victorian decorum. She performs household chores like nourishing her husband with fine art and skilfully manages every trifle in the household. However, when her cooking and eating habits are analysed it is apparent that beneath her submissive docile personality lies a powerful and mysterious female. The way she maintains her cookbooks and scrapbooks and the way she roguishly eats in her bedroom explains her real self. Despite the fact that Iris never truly meets her grandma, she believes that Adelia, "while avoiding being seen devouring food in public, must have a tray sent up to her room where she eats it with ten fingers" (61).

Here, as opposed to the public image of a peaceful entertainer, Adelia is delineated inhospitable in Iris's imagination. Actually, Iris's offbeat romanticization of her grandma is based on the fact that Adelia's strange scrapbooks and her incantatory cookbook double-cross her eccentric inner self to the readers and is in contrast to the public image of a serene hostess. Adelia's cookbook looks more like an encyclopaedia of witchcraft than a collection of recipes. Instead of describing, "[t]aste and pleasure" (181), it describes the functions of drinks using a weird combination of science and witchcraft, medication and domesticity. Her cookbook begins with an egnamitic epigraph by John Ruskin: "Cookery means the knowledge of Media and of Circe and of Helen and of the Queen of Sheba. [...] It means that you are to be perfect and always women-loaf givers" (181). While readers of this epigraph may gaze bewilderingly at the odd association between those fanciful enchantress and ordinary errands of cooking, the 'loaf givers' with whom Adelia recognizes is really "possessed of arcane and potentially lethal recipes, and capable of inspiring the most incendiary passions in men" (182-83). Strikingly, this 'loaf giver' image reassures Adelia's image as a decent 'angel in the house' as she provides food and care but at the same time it also provides a disturbing image of Adelia as she is also described as witch and the food served by witch can be fatal. Thus in this regard, Adelia, with her "cat-ate-the-canary smile," is actually "the queen of Sheba" (182).

Adelia's mystic scrapbooks and bewildering cookbook implies her disproportionate relation to the symbolic order. According to Mary Daly her act of naming of everything according to her desire "explicitly transgresses a privilege usually exclusive to men" (Mary Daly: 8). At the point when Adelia turns into a name-provider she assumes the responsibility to beautify the place like fairly tale of yacht water Nixie with the stone sphinxes by the pond and by placing the faun in the conservatory, the white Victorian angels in the family cemetery, and finally by placing the marble sculpture of Medusa in the library. Thus Adelia in her imagination transforms from a powerless society bride in reality to position of a queen who commands deities. The angels and the Medusa stand in contrast to each other, the eyes of the angels "are blurred now, softened and porous, as if they have cataracts" (45), whereas from those of the Medusa, still darts a lovely impervious gaze, the snakes writhing up out of her head like anguished thoughts" (58).

If the social side of Adelia is like that of angels, soft, submissive and passive than Medusa must be her intuitive side: assertive and powerful. On one hand Adelia's angelic public image helps her to impersonate herself in the symbolic order and on the other hand the mythic image of Medusa and that of Queen Sheba, is her actual self as a 'giver', that reflects Cixous's concept of 'giving' in *The Laugh of Medusa* (Cixous: 259). Adelia changes to a name as, "loaf-giver", who is so strong and fertile that she would love to share her 'gracious largesse' (182). Adelia designs a culinary science through her cookbooks to counter the patriarchal discourse and Reenie, her heiress uses Adelia's cookbooks to remodel the kitchen from domestic space of host and guest to an ideological domain of big eaters and non-eaters. For instance, at the Avilion party, when Reenie serves the dishes cooked as per the recipe of Adelia's cookbook, everyone at the table chews "with such a thoughtfulness and vigour [that m]astication [is] the right name for it not eating" (186). When everyone at the table is eating Reenie, rather than pleasing the guests as a conventional house wife, "[keeps tabs on who ha[s] eaten what" (187). Reenie's reconnaissances of the eaters at the party transforms the act of cooking from an art of taste to a domain of spying.

Artistic presentation of Adelia's character is depicted in Avilion in which she is named as "heavy-lidded, handsome woman", who was smooth as silk and as cool as cucumber, but with a will like a bone saw" (59). Atwood's use of textual language in this section frames Adelia's feminine beauty in an overly masculine light. By calling Adelia 'handsome', an adjective that typically has a masculine connotation, Atwood separates Adelia's character from other prominent feminine characters in the novel. The phrase—'cool as a cucumber' refers to Adelia's socially 'smooth' nature, which is also characteristic of male behaviour. Atwood is referring to Adelia's strength and determination by comparing her will to that of a 'bone saw', a gruesome and powerful tool that is primarily used for amputation. The textual language used here drastically strays from characteristically stereotypical male domination that helps to foster Iris's need for freedom and identity through writing. Adelia's effect on Iris's character becomes more readily apparent towards the end of the chapter when Atwood describes Adelia's influence on her granddaughters. The text reads:

and so Laura and I brought up by her. We grew up inside her house; that is to say, inside her conception of herself. And inside her conception of who we ought to be, but weren't. As she was dead by then, we couldn't argue (62).

Despite the fact that Adelia died before Iris was conceived, her notoriety and heritage stayed unfading. The depiction of Adelia's exquisite 'taste', affinity for culture, well-kept home, and stories as to her strengths as a woman are skilfully presented to shape the character of Iris. Her characteristic traits of freedom and strength are preserved in the hearts of her family and the same values she negotiates in washroom which is another exclusive and private female space along with kitchen. Since the washroom is a private cubical within a public space and exclusive to one female at a time, this private space replicates a domestic space for women. Kitchen, on one hand, serves to be a patriarchal cage for women, the washroom, on the other hand, becomes a crossroad in the network of female communication. As the washroom is situated at a tourist place it

turns out to be a congregation of women's views which are seen inscribed on the washroom wall. The female writings on the washroom wall are not as covert as Adelia's or Reenie's writings. Rather the female writings on the washroom wall are inscribed with the intention to be noticed by other women readers. Hence, whether the inscriptions on the washroom wall are interdiction, proverbs, threats, dogmas or trites, these writings display the varied ways of female thinking (though most of them are nevertheless invested with concepts of phallogocentrism), and the conversation among females through the inscription. Thus the varied perceptions portrayed in these writings features the multiplicity and heterogeneity of *écriture féminine*. Though most of the inscriptions on washroom walls are female writings, still some of them sound oppressed of authoritative law of Father in the symbolic order. Hence, it is questionable that despite the fact that women are permitted to communicate in their little compartments, yet the vast majority of them are conditioned by the phallogocentric rationale that they dumb their voice by strengthening their encased authoritative doctrine on the other women. However, the last sentence, articulated in the name of Laura, retaliates this phallogocentric logic by execrating the Gods. For instance, the first set of the inscription is an argument between eating and killing. The first sentence is in pencil:

"Don't eat anything you aren't prepared to kill".

Then, in green marker: "Don't kill anything you aren't prepared to eat".

Under that, in ballpoint, "Don't kill". Under that, in purple: "Don't eat".

And under that, the last word to date, in bold black lettering: "Fuck Vegetarians- "All Gods are Carnivorous"-Laura Chase.

Thus Laura lives on (84)

Chung-hao Ku in his paper titled "Eating, Cleaning, and Writing: Female Abjection and Subjectivity in Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*" has commented that: "The speaker of the last inscription seems to take the first two lines as a defence of vegetarianism, line three and four could be read more broadly in the light of a spiritual path such as Buddhism (or as parodying such paths)" (Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies, 93-129).

However, the second line of the above quote can be taken as an assertion against the killing of human beings or in other words assertion against flesh eating. Thus the first two sentences can be perused as: *Don't Eat People You aren't Prepared to Kill*, and: *Don't Kill people You Aren't Prepared to Eat*. It is shocking to note that the first assertion when given certain emphasis, advocates slaying and the second assertion can be explained as the practise of human nurturing: "*Let people live till one has to eat them*". It is observed that though both the assertions are anthropophagous yet both of them deals two opposite concepts of death. The first statement accentuates the brutal act of killing before eating where as the second statement approves a conservation of life, regarding killing as apprehensive but inevitable ending of human life. In brief, while the first assertion endorses the act of anthropophagous just for the sake of self gratification, the second statement permits it just when it is important for one's own survival.

In the event the initial two sentences create uncertainty between executing before eating and killing for eating, the following two sentences get through judiciously: precluding women from slaughtering and eating anything. On the off chance that one doesn't execute or eat, how might one survive? Despite the fact that vegetable lovers claim that they don't live on meat yet vegetables are also living things. Thus, the assertion '*Don't Eat*' can be considered sympathetic and at the same time it can be self-immolative, '*Don't Kill*'. While the preclusion of executing resounds with God's order: "you shall not murder", the next sentence mischievously reveals its irrationality. That is to say that, if '*Don't Kill*' is proscription and symbolic of masculine law that gives orders without any explanation, then the following command: '*Don't Eat*' is a pervert, a semiotic counterpart, a feminine voice that questions the rigid and imprudent idea. While the female voice taunts the earlier mentioned manly command, this is not to induce a dualism, but rather to contradict the sovereignty of phallogocentrism. Since to be distinctive does not really mean to be opposite, thus the assertion "*Don't Eat*" counters phallogocentric ideology via an ironic imitation and dethrones the symbolic order by an articulation of difference, hence exemplary of Cixous's *écriture féminine*. Similarly, the last assertion: "*Fuck Vegetarians- 'All Gods are Carnivorous,'*" seems to be a retrained thought vociferating at the monopoly of patriarchal voice. Unlike the earlier assertions, the last statement is completely free from phallogocentric logic, neither does it follow the same structure.

Thus, the female writings on the washroom wall can be seen as a spectrum of female voices. In this spectrum some female voices delineate complete dependability to the symbolic order where as some of the voices show resistance to it. The third assertion '*Don't Kill*' is ostensibly a facsimile of the symbolic order, whereas the last two writings more clearly voice the difference(s). As a part of *écriture féminine*, these female writings inscribed on the wall of washroom are, what Cixous terms as 'The sexts': "a privilege of voice: writing and voice are entwined and interwoven and writing's rhyme take each other's breath away through interchanging, make the text gasp or form it out of suspense's and silences, make it lose its voice or rend it with cries" (*Newly Born Woman* 69, 92). As the quote "All Gods are carnivorous" seems antagonistic towards the

sacrifice of virgins in some religions, the last inscription literally contradicts the duplicity of religious authorities by exposing their anthropophagousness beneath the preachings of 'vegetarianism'.

Thus, the last two female inscriptions sprout the seeds of *the écriture féminine*. The enigma of the last sentence lies in the mysterious signature of Laura found in one of the inscribed writings. Inscription of Laura's signature appears to be mysterious as it seems impractical, for a person to imprint signature on the wall of women's washroom after she has been dead for a considerable length of time. Secondly, if the signature marked in the name of Laura actually belongs to someone else, who is she then? Laura's signature proves that either someone must have associated herself with Laura or she may have surpassed death and appeared in some spiritual form. The first assumption appears to be more credible. Thus whatever the case may be but Laura's signature on the wall proves that she is still alive after her death in the mind of someone. According to Zizek, "if the dead 'were not properly buried, i.e., [if] something went wrong with their obsequies,' they may rise from the graves 'as collectors of some unpaid debt'. In other words, [t]he return of the living dead, then materializes a certain symbolic debt persisting beyond physical expiration" (Slavoj: 23). However, here the 'symbolic debt' what Laura demands is actually what the symbolic order owes to women. By declaring Gods as 'carnivorous,' Laura not just uncovers God's infringement of his own commandment against executing it but, also exposes the falsification of all religion. However physically dead yet profoundly more capable, Laura now turns into the incorporeal 'Name of the Mother'. She becomes alive once again: she rises above death since she can't die. Blaming the ruthless religious framework, Laura has been revered and has transformed into a feminine symbol parallel to the 'carnivorous Gods.' (Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies, 93-129).

Further, in the exploration of female writing(s) in the novel it seems that "Silenced women becomes a motif in the homonym story within the novel whose authorship has been attributed to Laura Chase. There "Girl children had their throats cut and their blood drained out to replenish the five waning moons, so they would not fade and disappear forever." (30). Also "(...) it became the practice to cut out the tongues of the girls three months before they were due to be sacrificed. This was not mutilation, said the priests, but an improvement, what could be more fitting for the servants of the Goddess of Silence?" (31). Thus, the message underlying this abhorrent practice can be read as: The desired aim of a civilized culture is to have women without voice of their own. It is a message which goes hand in hand with Cixous's idea that women need to create a language of their own in order to liberate from men's control and manipulation which is subtly exercised through the patriarchal use of language.

Similar to the girls in the story, neither Laura nor Iris had a voice of their own throughout their life. Richard physically abused both the sisters but their voice remained unheard. However, Laura has managed to communicate symbolically through her notebooks as Iris points out:

History was blank, except for the photograph Laura had glued into it: herself and Alex Thomas at the button factory picnic, both of them now coloured light yellow, with my detached blue hand crawling towards them across the lawn (...). French had had all the French removed from it. Instead, it held the list of odd words Alex Thomas had left behind him in our attic, and that: I now discovered Laura had not burned after all. *Anchoryne, berel, carchineal, diamite, ebonort...* A foreign language, true, but one I'd learned to understand, better than I ever understood French.

Mathematics had a long column of numbers, with words opposite some of them. It took me a few minutes to realize what kinds of a number they were. They were dates. The first date coincided with my return from Europe; the last was three months or so before Laura's departure for Bella Vista (516).

Iris, in this context, realizes the fact that Richard has raped her sister several times: "How could I have been so blind?" (517). Laura communicated with her sister through messages that need deecodification. For example, on the occasion when Iris meets Reenie at Betty's Luncheonette to talk about Laura's whereabouts, Reenie says:

"(...) she wanted me to say she left you a message."

"A message?"

"She left it before they took her off to that place. You'd know where to find it, she said" (459).

Laura might have used this method because Iris does not trust Laura completely: "Laura could be fabricating(...). Laura could be suffering from delusions" (458). It might be Laura need to discover the truth by herself, otherwise she would have never understood her sister:

How did it happen?" I whispered. 'Who was the father?' Such a thing called for whispering. 'If you don't already know, I don't think I can tell you,' said Laura" (501).

Iris has also found Laura's messages 'although not in words' (464), (but in pictures) while reading her sister's notebooks Iris seemed to have decode the message hidden in the pictures. Iris learns that Laura manipulates photographs in order to express herself. As previously stated, Laura has found this method of communication more efficient in the long term since Iris tends not to believe her because when Laura tells Iris the fact that Mr Erskine "only wants to put his hand up my blouse (...) or under my shirt. What he likes are panties" (169) and Iris suspects her: "she must have made it up, or misunderstood" (169).

Laura's main concern, then, in altering the colours of the pictures, is to attach a transcendent signification to what photographs merely depict, especially to make Iris open her eyes to reality. She adds

different colours to the pictures she takes in order to show real self and the soul of the people represented in them. As Michelle Hoefhan Lin has written:

In *The Blind Assassin*, the photograph does not reflect memory and reality: instead, it alters both. In other words, the photo can become detached and independent from reality, or independent from a reality, supposing there is a pre-existing reality. Through these alterations, the novel challenge the photographic medium as a reliable imitation of the world (16).

Laura has altered two photographs of Iris's wedding: one was clicked at the wedding party and another is the formal click of bride and groom. In the first photograph, Winifred and Richard "had been coloured a lurid green: (464) symbolizing their shared greed and their conspiracy against Richard in the rape of Laura, Iris had been given 'a wash of aqua blue' (464) signifying her blindness to what has been taking place in front of her eyes (i.e. Winifred and Richard's evil deeds) and Laura is painted 'a brilliant yellow' (464), representing her innocence and untouched nature. However, on seeing the transformed photographs Iris fails to interpret those added colours: "what did it mean this radiance? For radiance, it was as if Laura was glowing within, like glass lamp or a girl made of phosphorous"(464). In this respect, Hoefhan Lin also explains:

Since colour refers to, an opposed of conferring, meaning, it runs the risk of being misinterpreted because it can represent a multiplicity of meanings. Iris does not interpret yellow as innocence. Iris's failure to decode this message is not simply an indication of her blindness, but it is also indicative of the failure of the visual medium alone as a vehicle to convey messages, to convey any set of codes, to represent the truth. This failure also demonstrates the subjective process of vision: what one person sees in the photo, the other may not. (23)

In the second photograph where only Iris and Richard appear, "Richard's face had been painted grey, such a grey that the features were all obliterated. "The hands were red, as were the flames that shot up from around and somehow from inside the head, as if the skull itself were burning" (464). The picture carries many symbolic features which can be decoded. For instance considering Laura's attachment to religion, the flames can be related to Richard's evil nature and the fact that the flames come from the skull; it may describe how deep is Richard's evilness rooted in. His grey face and features might mean Richard's dark nature and his red hands tell about his crimes. As Iris wisely writes: "Laura had strange but very definite ideas about which colours were required (...). If there was a picture of someone she disapproved she'd do the face purple or dark grey to obliterate the features" (161). Although Iris here seems closer to an accurate interpretation of colours, she still seems not in full control of her comprehension about the colours.

Another photograph taken by Elwood Murray at the button factory picnias prominent message to bear upon. It describes Laura, Iris and Alex "sitting under a tree" (6), Alex being in the middle of both sisters. Later in the novel, the photograph is deconstructed by Laura, attaching different meanings to it. It becomes fragmented: one with Alex and Laura and the other one with Iris and Alex. The only remaining body part of the missing sister in each of these fragmented pictures is the intruding hand: "The sight of Laura's light yellow hand, creeping towards Alex across the grass like an incandescent crab, gave me a chill down the back of my spine" (225). Both sisters' intruding hands marks the triangle among the three characters, i.e. Laura is implicitly present between Alex and Iris, and Iris is too, interfering between Laura and Alex, even though Laura's Love for Alex is apparently nonreciprocal. Here, the Photographs are symbolic of female voice and the female secrets. Otherwise, it could not have been transmitted succinctly as the female voice has not been taken into account.

The novel is loaded with varied forms of female writing such as, Adelia's scrapbooks and cookbook, Laura's notebooks and the hypertextual inscriptions on the wall of women's washroom and Iris' memoir. The most dominating aspect in the exploration of female writing(s) in the novel is the memoir of Iris Chase. Her memoir, is actually a confessional diary which according to Frank chin, "celebrate[s] the process of conversion from an object of contempt to an object of acceptance" (qtd. in Cheung: 238). The majority of Iris's physical abuse even with Richard's sexual savagery and her shame as a mother who forsakes her little girl are sublimated and solidified into her language. Unlike the romance that she published earlier in the disguise of Laura's name, this diary conveys all the licentious stories of Iris' family: her issue with Alex, her illegitimate child, and her husband's interbreeding with Laura, all of which are excessively cozy for a self-defensive subject to uncover. Through her memoir, she is able to voice her silenced experiences. Iris by writing her memoir unburdens herself from the lies, and thus, reclaiming her 'Self'.

The diary recalls and re-examines Iris's past and present: her youth days, her family history, the depiction of her grandparents: Benjamin Chase and Adelia, and guardians: Norval Chase and Liliana. Iris' recollections keeps moving in her present and past readdressing passionate mishaps like the suicide which actually uncovers all those factors which are responsible for women's making, conditioning and becoming marginalized, mute and passive objects. By rewriting the events Iris, "appropriates her voice and writes her untold story, thus becoming a subject that shapes instead of remaining an object that has been shaped by patriarchal assumptions" (14). Atwood subverts the binary of oppressor/oppressed and subject/object that places women to the secondary position in the patriarchal society. She empowers her protagonists with some artistic skill to rebound against the dominating powers. Fiona Tolan argues that the novel is "profoundly concerned

with representations of female body, female victimization and female power. where women are presented as the product of the patriarchal culture dominant in the first half of the twentieth century in Canada" (78).

Furthermore, since Iris refers to Laura as her co-partner in writing the romance *The Blind Assassin*, both of them seems to be mirror image of each other. Laura ciphers her predictions and Iris decodes them. From this perspective, Laura's death seems to be a blessing in disguise for Iris as it provided her the opportunity to manipulate words to know the truth. Though, Laura is physically not present, yet she is never absent in Iris's memoir. As Iris says: "what I remembered, and also what I imagined, which is also the truth. I thought of myself as recording. A bodiless hand, scrawling across a wall" (512). Iris feels that she is not only writing with her hand but also with Laura's hand, just like doughnut. Iris often mentions, "[Laura]'s the round O, the zero at the bone. A space that defines itself by not being there at all" (409). By acknowledging Laura's contribution in her writing, Iris not only authorize herself to be the embouchure of Laura but also indirectly engages in a dialogue with Laura as the other. By writing, Iris starts to reconfigure and rediscover her relation with the other.

Richard sexually abuses Iris and Laura and thus, epitomizes the hegemonic masculinity and exhibits a sexist and misogynist attitude of a patriarchal set up. Iris writes in her memoir, "When he married me he figured he'd got a bargain- two for the price of one"(617). Thus, women are looked upon as the objects that can be bought, sold and browbeaten just for the sexual gratification of the male. In marrying him Iris feels as, "beautiful trophy groomed wife" (Stein: 142). Richard uses her to sexually entertain him self, "to his night-time activities," (454). According to Greer, "woman has been conditioned to believe that her identity exists in her body. She is exploited and oppressed by man on account of her sexuality; she is the 'showcase of wealth and caste.' Richard slips 'into relative anonymity, as "handsome is as handsome does" (64). Iris recalls her marriage as, "a decorous and sanctioned violence"(44) as Richard inflicted her body with, "bruises, purple, then blue, then yellow" (44). He enjoys his physical abuse to Iris stating, "how easily I bruised....prefer[ing] conquest to cooperation, in every area of life... He favoured thighs, where it wouldn't show" (454-455).

Richard downgrades Iris to the position of a docile animal and expects her to be submissive and passive. As she confesses, " my job was to open my legs and shut my mouth" (407). In this regard Catherine Mckinnon writes:

it is through the social objectification of women that socialisation of gender takes place where women are seen as sexual objects meant to satisfy men's needs. This socialisation of gender creates gendered spaces for women where, women come to identify themselves as sexual beings, as beings that exist for men...and internalise a male image of their sexuality and as their identity as women (Mackinnon: 531). Thus, "the method that is used to subjugate women is the objectification of women in sexual terms; the male perspective on society is dominant one... the relationship is founded on gender hierarchy in which men are dominant and woman are subordinate, socially, economically, politically and sexually"(Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon: 121).

Richard relegates women to the position of object to such an extent that he associates Iris and Laura to fruits in order to convey that women are just an object of consumption. He says, "women could be divided into apples and pears, according to the shapes of their bottoms. I [Iris] was a pear, he said, but an unripe one"(390) as she states: "that was what he liked about me, my greenness my hardness" (390). Throughout the novel women is compared to physical objects as, "Boats...busted car engines and broken lamps and radio's, items of any kind that can be fiddled with by men adroit with gadgetry, and restored to a condition as good as new" (83). Germaine Greer emphasises Richards perception of woman as he writes, "if a woman is a food, her sex organ is for consumption also, in the form of honeypot, hair- pie, and cake or jelly-roll" (297).

After Laura's death, Iris back-pedals to Avilion with her daughter Aimee leaving Richard forever. Iris reaffirms her self as independent and assertive. She subverts the subscribed binary of subject/object which positions women as inferior and other to men. She stands up financial independent not only, "from Richard and from...Laura's estate", rather she starts her own business in second-hand artefacts, in a modest way... with few pieces of animal jewellery from Richard" (620). Thus by setting up the business Iris transforms from submissive, docile, victimized object to an assertive, independent creative non-victim subject.

Thus, Iris recasts and redefines her position as an independent identity. She challenges the status quo of women in the patriarchal society. Iris empowers her self by writing her memoir. Writing serves as an expedient means for Iris to reclaim her identity. Thus, she subverts the patriarchal order by writing herself through her body, which promotes, "male discourse of power in contrast to the female discourse of moral superiority, but physical weakness and fragility" (Stein:137). She resists being a puppet of patriarchal discourse rather now she prefers to be the creator of her own discourse as she says, "I was sand, I was snow-written on, rewritten, smoothed over" (455) and at other place, "A tabula rasa, not waiting to write, but to be written on" (57) she further states, "my hand has taken a life of its own" (457) and then, "assumes power within the culture that has silenced her and manipulated her social identity"(457). Bouson echoes this fact as he says, "for asserting her identity, Iris presents herself as more multidimensional than she was assumed to be by her culture" (Bouson: 69).

Iris writes her memoir under the camouflage and acquired character of Laura to shield herself from decency and tenets of high society that represses and confines the writing and publication of such stories. Her memoir is all about her illicit relationship with a lower class offender and criminal, she covers her character with that of Laura. Therefore, she masks her identity with that of Laura. The publication of the novel brings dishonour to Richard and ruins his personal, social and professional life. He is forced to retire and there after he dies due to a brain haemorrhage. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson notes, " 'women's autobiography' presents 'visible formerly invisible subjects' and women speaking from this position [of universal man] proffers authority, legitimacy and readability" (Smith Sidonie and Julia Watson: 433).

Iris's memoir becomes a replica of Helen Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine*. According to Davies the heroines in Atwood's fiction are believed to be "coded bodies" (Davies 60). He further says that the protagonists(bodies) display the torture and abuse inflicted on them because of their deformed existence merely as bodies. Iris confirms Davies's view when she recognizes the wounds engraved on her body by her husband's sexual enmity as, "a kind of code, which blossomed, then faded like invisible ink held to a candle. But if they were a code, who held the key to it?" (BA 455). Atwood portrays Iris's body as an object which can be moulded and used as per the prerogative of patriarchy. She lives on the desires and directions of others. She has no right to corporeal autarchy and hence, she enables herself and her body to be defined by others. It is only by, "seizing the occasion to speak"(Cixous 250) that Iris renounces her, "shattering entry into history, which has always been based on her suppression" (Medusa 250). Cixous contended that women can resist and overthrow patriarchal abuses by their writings. According to Cixous female writing is, "the passage towards more than self, towards the other (Cixous 112). Cixous, Krestiva and Irigaray are of the view that language lays the foundation for gendered identity and language is predominately masculine and represents the patriarchal order and law. Therefore, women by breaking their silence and expressing themselves through writing can liberate themselves from the confines of patriarchy. As Davies also emphasises this when he says, "women can, produce a female language and female texts capable of challenging historical and political constructions of subverting the dominant linguistic order, and of representing themselves" (Davies 59). In *The Laugh of Medusa* Cixous highlights this notion and writes that woman must write in order to liberate themselves from the subordinated position of the *other*:

woman must write herself: must write about woman and bring woman to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies...woman must put herself into the text- as into the world and into history by her own movement " (Cixous: 245).

Further, women are urged to "break out the snare of silence" (Cixous: 251) and to voice their subjugation. According to her, "it is only through 'speech' that woman can refuse to be confined, into accepted a domain which, is the margin or harem" (Cixous:251). Moi further highlights the context saying: "the speaking woman is entirely her voice; she physically materialises what she is thinking; she signifies it with her body" (112). Substantiating that women can empower themselves by voicing their experiences and can thus emancipate from the clutches of patriarchal norms of society. Women's social conditioning as the 'other' drives them to a life of silence and Her social construction as woman: and the 'other' relegates her to the existence of silence and passivity. Women can embark her subjective and dynamic identity only by realizing her potential and exercising her corporeal autonomy.

Iris leaves her memoir as a message to her granddaughter. By narrating her own life story Iris not only liberates herself but also intends to set the ground for Sabrina to explore her identity. She writes, "the story of how" Sabrina "came to be" (521) so that, "she[Sabrina] can construct her own identity -since for both women the production of a more liberating and multifaceted identity requires the unearthing of aspects of their lives silenced by socially sanctioned representations of them" (Michael: 102). She further reveals for Sabrina: "your real grandfather was Alex Thomas, and as to who his father was, well sky is the limit...your legacy from him is the realm of infinite speculation. You are free to reinvent yourself at will" (513). Thus, by leaving her memoir to Sabrina, Iris paves the avenue for her to reclaim and redefine her identity independently as per her choice.

Iris memoir voices feminine experiences and redefines the status of women in the male-cantered social system. As Cixous exclaims at the very beginning of *The Laugh of the Medusa*, when "[w]oman [does] put herself into the text- as into the world and into history- by her own movement, female subjectivity will emerge through those very realms of domesticity, crystallize through women's own writing" (Cixous :243). Resonating Cixous view Iris says, "the urge to write is often provoked by a lack of witnesses: " At the very least we want a witness. We can't stand the idea of our own voices falling silently finally, like a radio running down" (95). Iris's memoir *isécriture féminine*, that eliminate the backbone of the symbolic order in the novel *The Blind Assassin*. The act of writing helps Iris to overcome her conflict between self and other.. Moreover her writing has paved the way for Sabrina to create her own identity rather than being an object to be defined by male gaze. Iris by writing crosses the border between phallogocentrism and *écriture féminine*, redefining herself as a "giver"(Medusa 259). that celebrates the differences.

Atwood in the novel *The Blind Assassin* not only portray the kitchen and the women's lavatory as domestic confinements for women's chores but she also portrays them as the crucible where silence is voiced. It

is witnessed from the analysis of the text that Iris, has no identity without writing. As a child, Laura defined her. She was Laura's sister. As a wife Richard defined her. She is Richard's wife. However, in her old age after the death of Laura and Richard, Iris could create her own identity. By writing her identity without Laura and Richard in her life, Iris is able to form her own perception of herself and of her family. Iris exclaims :

writing is not for the enjoyment of others. Writing is personal; it is a part of you. The only way you can write the truth is to assume that what you set down will never be read. Not by any other person and not even by yourself...you must see the writing as emerging like a long scroll of ink from the index finger of your right hand; you must see your left hand erasing it. (92).

This imagery of 'the index finger' suggests that writing is a part of body just as the blood running through veins. The metaphor also suggests that writing is a painful process that draws out what is necessary for life. Through writing the memoir Iris proves capable of both defying female silence and controlling her own subjectivity. Writing enables her to create her existential space as she exclaims: "By the time you read this last page, that-if anywhere-is the only place I will be" (538). No one can repress or silence her anymore; her text has made her free. She is thus able to claim subjectivity through the writing of her book, her own literature: "then, I'll tell you a story. I'll tell you this story: the story of how you came to be here, sitting in my kitchen, listening to the story I've been telling you" (537). Iris now has learned the fact that self is continuously made and re-made, and this is what she wishes to transmit to Sabrina; this is the other legacy to her granddaughter: "you're free to reinvent yourself at will" (530). By liberating herself through her autobiography Iris also encourages Sabrina to explore her identity by reconstructing herself independently.

Iris's memoir is not just an account of her and her sister Laura's life it is much more than that, her memoir is a collective voice of women to reconstruct their identity. Memoir no more remains the personal experience of Iris as she pen's down the inscriptions on the washroom wall in the memoir. The memoir has abstractly turned into a choir where women voice their desire and wrath and voice their disparities out of the rigid phallogocentrism. Iris's memoir is an ensemble that voices women's distinction, it additionally engraves femininity into the male-centered symbolic order. In spite of the fact that the objective of *écriture féminine* is not to mutilate men, but rather to exist together with them, we don't see a genuine fellowship amongst man and woman toward the end of the novel *The Blind Assassin*. Iris's joint efforts with Laura and her sacrifice for Sabrina may foresee another kind of self-persuasion to restriction. In this manner, when she relinquish subject in *The Blind Assassin* is reshaped it's apparent that despite the fact that "[t]here is a history of female sacrifice in the Chase Family" (Stein 146), Iris is the one who sacrifices herself for another woman (Sabrina) rather than for a man (Benjamin, Norval, Richard, and Alex). As per Cixous concept of 'feminine economy', "she doesn't try to 'recover her expenses.' She is able not to return to herself, never settling down, pouring out, and going everywhere to the other" (Newly Born Woman 87). This concept 'feminine economy' propose by Cixous is reflected in Iris's sacrifice for Sabrina. Her sacrifice is selfless. On the other hand the men (Benjamin, Norval, Richard and Alex) in Iris's life are selfish as they demand sacrifice under the dominance of phallogocentrism. For example in the name of marital relationship, familial responsibility. They actually ask sacrifice as a submission to patriarchy and hence they don't deserve it.

Thus the textual analysis of *The Blind Assassin* shows that Atwood's female characters are engaged in acts of self-representation. Adelia's eccentric scrapbooks and cookbook, Reenie's inheritance of Adelia's cookbooks, Laura's romance fiction and notebooks, the various inscriptions on the wall of women's washroom and Iris's confessional memoir, all are the means through which the female characters in the novel write and rewrite their own life stories and thus, construct and deconstruct their individualities. Writing serves as an avenue in the process of empowerment of female self. They also provide a renewed sense of their selves through the self-quest performed during each writing process. The analytical investigation in the light of *écriture féminine* portrays that artistic discourse (literary writing) by the female protagonist shapes and reconfigures the identity of women that not only draws a line against man but also negotiate with it. Hence, the concept of *écriture féminine* given by Cixous is translated into reality as memoir, though fictitious, yet it serves plausibly as a mirror to reflect the innate potential of female self. Iris through writing her life story elevates and transforms her individual self and attains the subject position. It's by voicing her experiences that women can unlock her potential and reconfigure herself.

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