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# Neurofeminism: Atwood Discusses Neurofeminist Issues of Consumerism and Cannibalism in the Edible Woman

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***Abstract:*** ***As neuroscience grows in its ability to appeal to the masses, it becomes more common to turn to it as an authority on various questions about how people shouldn't and should behave. This is especially evident with the issue of gender roles. The Edible Woman explores women's inability to eat and relationship distress, but was published at a time when the psychology of eating disorders was not often discussed. Margaret Atwood s The Edible Woman tells the story of a young woman struggling with society, her lover and food. It is often discussed as the first work of feminism. The novel's idea of consumption operates on a symbolic level. This novel explores themes of sexuality and consumerism in a layered, somewhat flamboyant style. As for the thematic exploration of the novel, the tendency of self-starvation becomes a way to express the hope of society. She feels constant pressure to conform to her dislikes, which affects her ability to eat and puts her life at risk. At the very least, neurofeminism critiques the portrayal of neuroscience in the popular media through the behaviour of Marian MacAlpin. This article provides an overview of the neurofeminist debate and current approaches to feminist neuroscience. The author concludes her review by calling for a more gender-appropriate research approach that takes into account the location and reflection within a neuroscientific framework, as well as questioning neurofeminist discourse on the use and misuse of the concept of wearing a fake smile and a red dress. Through this character of Marian McAlpin, Atwood cleverly shows that the pressure placed on women by society can have severe negative effects on their bodies and psyches. Our goal here is to examine the phenomena of neurosexism and neurofeminism using a primarily literary approach that incorporates insights from philosophy of mind, ethics, and feminist literature.***

***Keywords: Neurofeminism, Marian MacAlpin, cannibalism, eating disorder, consumerism ,The Edible Woman***

## I. INTRODUCTION

Feminist approaches to neuroscience have evaluated debates about practices of knowledge production in contemporary brain research. Consequently, neurofeminists have critically examined the gendered implications of Neuroliterary research. Feminist neuroliterarists are also developing research approaches for more gendered neuroresearch on several levels. The Edible Woman is a dark comedy set in Toronto in the mid-sixties. This novel was published in 1969. However, thirty years after the novel's publication, consumerism and race wars are raging. The book explores Marian's identity and relationships with others, including her friends, and acquaintances at work. The Edible Woman is Margaret Atwood's first novel, published in 1969. It tells the story of a young woman struggling with society, her lover and food. It is often discussed as the first work of feminism. The novel's idea of consumption operates on a symbolic level. Why can't Marian eat because she's consumed by her relationship? Additionally, The Edible Woman explores women's inability to eat and relationship distress, but was published at a time when the psychology of eating disorders was not often discussed. More recently, critical work in contemporary neuroculturalism has highlighted the societal implications of neuroscientific research and the influence of "neurofacts" on gendered cultural symbols, social practices, and power relations. Marian, the main character of The Edible Woman, is a young woman who works in consumer marketing. The book explores Marian's questions about her identity and relationships with others, including her lovers, friends, and people she meets. Among the characters is Marian's roommate, who wants to get pregnant but doesn't want to get married. At the very least, neurofeminism critiques the portrayal of neuroscience in the popular media through Marian MacAlpin in this novel. This novel explores themes of sexuality and consumerism in a layered, somewhat flamboyant style. Now with the impersonal narrator of the story, people are changing. Marian became obsessed with Duncan and began to have an eating disorder.

She also imagined body parts disappearing. A woman who bakes a cake for Peter, who refuses to participate. Ainsley taught her to wear a fake smile and a gorgeous red dress.

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The author concludes her review by calling for a more gender-appropriate research approach by using red dress which affects the protagonists neurofeminism and a fake smile which deteriorates her freedom. This takes into account the location and reflection within a neuroliterary framework, as well as questioning neurofeminist discourse on the use and misuse of the concept of wearing a fake smile and a red dress. Marian transforms again, rooted to reality, and watches Duncan eat cake. Marian decided to be normal. She rests her head on the shoulder of true love and quietly waits for life. But he did not rely on internal rebellion to shake his work and digestion.



Fig.1. Psychological delusions in a woman

Ainsley–her roommate:

In the novel, Marian lives with her roommate, Ainsley Tewce, an "intellectual" woman interested in the study of the mind and human development. Because of her concerns, the novel contains the true meaning of psychological deterioration, sexual dissatisfaction and identity crisis. The host here is a woman who continues to try to keep their respective places within their limits. She had a funny excuse - she would be wrongly influenced by the "immoral" behaviour of the teenage tenants. In addition, Marian is described as the owner of a food company who falls in love with a young businessman, Peter Wollander. One that defines the anxiety of the work schedule involves seeing Clara Bates, who is married to her always-pregnant friend Joe and therefore has to drop out of high school. In the same situation, Marian, who faced the fate of Clara, always felt frustrated and confused.

Clara Bates: her friend

Marian McAlpine's friend is Clara Bates and she found her always pregnant and she is being consumed slowly. When the book begins, she is pregnant with her third child and has dropped out of college for her first pregnancy. It represents traditional motherhood and sacrifice for her children. Marian finds Clara very boring and believes she needs to be rescued.

Peter

Peter was afraid of being caught by a woman and losing his freedom. Marian began to hunt her, grabbed her eyes; in the end she even confessed to his camera and a gun. All the characters seem to be the hunter and then the prey, the master and then the slave ? Marian's real deterioration began after the affair, as she wanted her husband to control her and change her. Meanwhile, Ainsley finds herself in trouble when her boyfriend, Len Slank, finds himself in a useless relationship for the sake of a child born out of lovelessness. Being forced into an emotionally unbalanced and unsatisfying relationship makes him feel more anxious and worried. Later in the novel, she meets a spoiled, self-absorbed graduate student named Duncan, but she wishes up from her brief relationship with a classic narcissist.

Cannibalism

Maria's diet started at dinner with Peter, a steak "knocked on the head" and standing in line like "someone waiting for a tram." She feels that eating meat is the same as cannibalism. As for the thematic exploration of the novel, the tendency of self-starvation becomes a way to express the hope of society. She feels constant pressure to conform to her dislikes, which affects her ability to eat and puts her life at risk. Marian knows that it is not harmful to health and tries to maintain hygiene. However, she didn't know why she didn't want to live in the first place. She doesn't like nutrition, she doesn't want to be the ideal image of a woman.

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Ultimately, Marian is free to accept that she should not be defined by the stereotypical standard of 'x'. You don't have to understand it, or participate in something you don't feel. She also abandoned relying on Duncan as Option B for love, left Ainsley and Lenny to their own devices, and stopped caring for her host. She even wants a better job without feeling inadequate, feminine, or guilty. Here controversies related to the feminist approach to delusions in head, the practice of knowledge production, and the findings of contemporary feminine research are also assessed to analyse the changed behaviour of Marian.

Major Theme of The Edible Woman

Margaret Atwood's layered, rather dramatic style in The Edible Woman explores themes of sexuality and consumerism.The novel's idea of consumption operates on a symbolic level.Why can't Marian eat because she's consumed by her relationship? The main theme of this novel should be Sex identity. Marian wanted to find out for herself and look to others to get a general idea of what to expect. Peter creates delusions in his head about what Maria is.

Cake Symbolise:- woman who eats and drinks in the form of cake is a symbolic line in Atwood's metaphor of food in the novel, which represents Maria's threat to Peter's autonomy and amelioration of agency.

Reason for Marian stopped consuming

In Margaret Atwood's The Edible Woman, Marian stops eating after accepting Peter's marriage proposal. His body resembles the crisis expressed by Shiva; it threatens patriarchal self-degradation and loses the ability to protect itself accordingly. At the end of the book, Marian presents herself to Peter as food in the form of a cake. Since Marian had just regained her strength, Peter couldn't eat the cake and Marian ate it for him. "Food is one of the resources available to women," Parker said.

Self identity is found in major part of the story.Maria's roommate Ainsley, her friend Claire, and finally the "office virgins" help Marian understand her dilemma. First, Marian ditches meat, then eggs, vegetables, and even pumpkin seeds. She Compares Duncan's unnatural thinness and desire to be "amoeba" with her lack of appetite.

Climax of the book The Edible Woman?

However, the climax of the novel comes when Marian makes a cake in the shape of a woman's body and Peter tries to eat it. This is the moment that decides whether Maria will stay with Peter or go alone. The novel is still relevant today because of its consistent presentation of important socio-cultural issues such as racism, male privilege, as well as the idealization of the female body and gender roles. Marian understands that Duncan can act strange because he is a man who is not responsible for anything. She also realizes that Peter is surrounded by himself and his personal problems because that is what society expects. Ainsley's mothering and Clara's upbringing are almost two sides of the same coin. One for research purposes and the other to achieve a false sense of unity. When the woman in question also denies herself attention, care, and especially self-esteem, both must fail. Rich in metaphors, sweetly funny, and wittily brilliant, the story chronicles the fantastic and dramatic splits of Marian McAlpin's ego, who appeared as a perfectly normal young woman as her friend, a successful and attractive man in her life, a good enough job to work for a market research company. Everything in her life seems to be spiraling out of control with her relationship, just as Marian is ready to fulfill "every woman's" dream of trading in her difficult marriage and starting a new marriage at home with her children. The way it unfolds and the shocking ending often makes for hilarious reading. Thus, Neurofeminists have critically examined the gender implications of neuroscientific research and developed research approaches at several levels for more gender-responsive neuroliterary research. This brilliant and intelligent early work by one of the most fascinating writers of our times covers the beautiful themes that led Vogue magazine to call Atwood "one of the most intelligent and gifted writers ever to undertake the task of defining life."



Fig. 2 Margaret Atwood

## II. DEFINITION OF PROBLEM

Neurofeminism takes that as a theme:

1) The relationship between feminism and psychological deterioration.
2) The relationship between feminism and literature.

Attitudes and changes in the behavior of women before and after entering into a relationship, doubts about their freedom and independence. Why can't Marian eat because she's consumed by her relationship?

## III. OBJECTIVES

1) **To** analyse that the novel's idea of consumption operates on a symbolic level
2) To explore themes of sexuality and consumerism
3) To express the hope of society
4) To examine the phenomena of neurofeminism using a literary approach.
5) To understand how several authors have included feministic aspects in their literary texts.
6) To analyse how authors have looked at the relationship between brain and feministic thoughts.

About this Author

Margaret Atwood was born in Ottawa in 1939 and grew up in northern Ontario, Quebec and Toronto. She received a bachelor's degree from Victoria College, University of Toronto, and a master's degree from Radcliffe College.The daughter of a forest entomologist, Atwood spent much of her childhood in the Canadian wilderness.At the age of six, she began writing "songs, moral plays, comic books, and an unfinished novel about an ant."

At the age of sixteen, she discovered that writing was "suddenly what I wanted to do".Margaret Atwood received many awards and honors throughout her career, including the Governor General of Canada Award, Le Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France, and the National Arts Club Medal of Honor for Literature. She is the author of more than thirty volumes of poetry, fiction and nonfiction, including children's books and short stories.Her most recent works has been published in more than twenty-five countries.She travelled extensively and lived in Boston, Vancouver, Montreal, London, Provence, Berlin and Edinburgh. Margaret Atwood currently lives in Toronto with writer Graeme Gibson and her daughter. The notable works of Atwood are Surfacing (1972), The Handmaid's Tale (1985), Cat's Eye (1988), Alias Grace(1996), The Blind Assassin(2000), Oryx and Crake(2003), The Testaments(2019).

## IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Neurosexism generally seek to elaborate the relation between gender and the brain beyond biological determinism but still engaging with the materiality of the brain . They aim at a more diffentiated set up of categories and experimental designs,getting more transparency in the constructive processes of result presentations and interpretations.( Schmitz,S.,2014). Socio-structural factors are a source of influence at all levels of society, including laws, policies and practices, economic characteristics, occupations, and familial organization. (Duchesne,A.,Trujillo,K.A.,2021). Do women and men have significantly different brains? Do women empathize, while men systematize? Is there a 'feminine' ethics? What does brain research on intersex conditions tell us about sex and gender?(Macmillan,P.,2012).

Feminist research cannot claim to speak for all women, but can provide new knowledge grounded in the realities of women's experiences and actively enact structural changes in the social world. (Brayton ,J., Ollivier, M.,Robbins, W.,2000)**.** We delineate how neuroscientific studies purporting to show sex brain differences may be prone to bias at a number of methodological levels – including the choice of categories to be studied, and the choice of tools for data gathering, analysis, and presentation. Then, we show how interpretations of such studies may wrongly assume the notion of 'hard-wiring'. Furthermore, lack of attention to distinctions within philosophy of mind may result in a mistaken supposition that brain differences lead to mental and/or psychological and/or behavioral ones.

It is not difficult to see how these forms of neurosexism, leading to claims of 'hard-wired' gender differences that map onto traditional and harmful gender stereotypes, raise ethical questions. (Hoffman,A.G.,Bluhm,R.2016).

One field in which especially feminist scholars request more caution is the neuroscientific examination of sex or gender differences. Feminist scholars have described various ways in which sexist bias might be present in neuroscientific research on sex or gender differences. In this context, they coined the term "neurosexism" to describe the entanglement between neuroscientific work and sexist ideology, and "neurofeminism" as a response to that.( Kassandr a,F.,Philipp, K.,2022)

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## V. FUTURE SCOPE

At the time The Edible Woman was written in 1965, food, nutrition, and weight were gaining widespread attention as feminist issues. Three decades later, in The Beauty Myth, writer Naomi Wolf observed that in the 1920s, thin women became a serious national problem for America, coinciding with women's suffrage; Studies show that nearly half of young American women today have an eating disorder at some point. How does the symbolic meaning of food change over time, and why are they the focus of such attention?

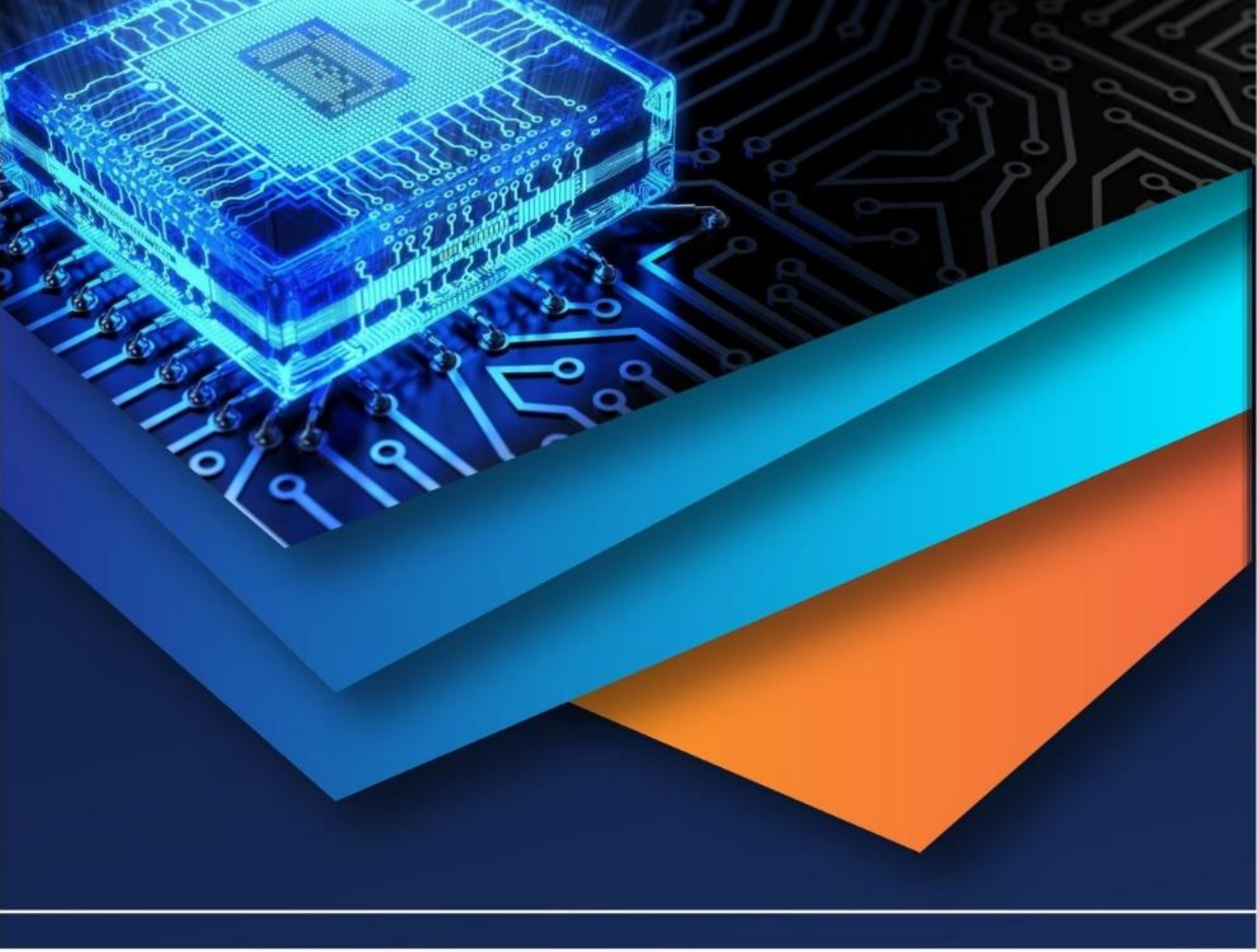
## VI. CONCLUSION

When the woman in question also denies herself attention, care, and especially self-esteem, both must fail. The Edible Woman explores themes of sexuality and consumerism. The novel's idea of consumption operates on a symbolic level. Through this character of Marian McAlpin, Atwood cleverly shows that the pressure placed on women by society can have severe negative effects on their bodies and psyches. Although it was written in the late 60s, it is considered a classic today in terms of its compositional style and the complex and mentally heavy protagonist. The speech here is a clear rebuke to the fact that the public mind tends to "eat" women, figuratively. Marian cannot trust Ainsley, Clara, Peter or Duncan and faces years of disappointment. She also saw Peter taking advantage of being passive and judging him for the most mundane things imaginable. While she doesn't always have a clear answer, when she's ready to get one at the end, it's shocking, visceral, and almost worth watching. This novel is a great read for young adults and mature audiences alike as it explores issues that our subconscious must avoid: the sense of alienation inherent in nervous disorders, eating disorders, and mental illness. The Edible Woman is a book of its time that resonates even today because of the relevance of the successful story it describes. Here controversies related to the feminist approach to neuroscience, the practice of knowledge production, and the findings of contemporary feminine research are also assessed to analyse the changed behaviour of Marian.

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