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(Fat) *Lady Oracle*

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Introduction

This paper deals with the representations of potentially “monstrous”, “deformed”, “Other” and thus “marginalized” and/or “unwanted” bodies (female in particular) in Margaret Atwood’s *Lady Oracle* (1976). Postmodernism subverts absolute values and criteria; but on the other hand, the perception of the beauty of the body is strictly and dogmatically related to the cult of the Beautiful (Slim) Body.

The main protagonist of Atwood’s novel, Joan Forster, was very fat as a child. On the one hand, her fat body made her feel marginalized; on the other hand it protected her against paedophiles and sexual abuse. Her body is a mirror of the relation to her mother (blackmail, refusal) as well as to herself (refusal, denial). By accepting the traditional cult of the beautiful slim body when she loses weight, she loses her “self” and becomes a victim, constructing multi-identities and multi-appearances. She transforms herself from fat to thin, and her hair from red to mud brown. Joan’s own identity is in fact not simply divided between Joan Forster and Louisa K. Delacourt (her pseudonym as a Costume Gothics writer,) but it is constructed from a multitude of imitated figures ranging from film stars to fairy tale heroines. As Joan Forster rewrites the stories that mirror her bodily transformations, the relation between “body” and “text” is created. Her body is a patchwork of imitations just like the texts she writes.

The Search for a solid "I"

Joan Forster constantly writes and rewrites her stories in parallel to her bodily transformations. Joan's (fat) body is influenced by a cultural process which makes it shrink, physically, literally, and metaphorically. In this sense, Joan's bulimia is a reaction to her mother's wish to have a "normal" daughter and, on the other hand, after losing weight and thus becoming "normal", she has to write in secret, in silence. Joan's overeating is linked with reading escapist romances and her later dieting is in close relation to her writing. The "fat" book, *Lady Oracle*, which is a fictionalised autobiography, becomes a product of her female body. To emphasize this idea it would be worthwhile interpreting it within the framework of Hélène Cixous's seminal essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975), written a year before the novel *Lady Oracle* was published.

Lady Oracle consists of a frame text and a series of interlocking, interwoven texts. The frame text is set in the present and takes place in Italy. Joan Forster's private memories are embedded within this frame narrative – namely, her traumatic childhood experience as a fat girl tormented by her "friends"; her problematic relationship with a demanding and neurotic mother. From fat she becomes thin, from London she returns to Toronto, from an aristocratic lover she escapes to marry a radical husband and becomes confused by her own identities. Joan's life is full of escapes and shocking surprises: after a fake suicide in a lake in Canada she is born again in Italy.

The novel is in the form of a pastiche: it is a literary patchwork¹ formed of pieces put together; it rewrites and imitates traditional Gothic motifs. It parodies elements from fairy tales and contains many allusions to Hollywood films. The coexistence and parody of the reality alongside fantastic, intertextual allusions to classic, escapist Harlequin Romances and traditional fairy-tales produces a non-escapist postmodern patchwork. Joan's life story is completed with parts from her Gothic romances, which mirror her everyday life in a far more exciting and glamorous light. Another parallel plot is her mythic "Lady Oracle" poems, produced, as Joan believes, by Automatic Writing while looking into in a dark mirror.

A Triple Mirror

The dark mirror becomes a central metaphor of this series of escapes, transformations and fantasies. The mirror represents the tension between reality and reflection, reality and fantasy, reality and fiction, reality and deformation. The text functions as a funhouse that multiplies reflections, it is a circus show in which the protagonists enlarge and shrink, become multi-headed or headless, become multiple or deleted. This is one of several images where Joan's mother is transformed into a three-headed monster:

My mother always had a triple mirror, so she could see both sides as well as the front of her head. In the dream, as I watched, I suddenly realized that instead of three reflections she had three actual heads, which rose from her towelled shoulders on three separate necks ... my mother was a monster (66-7).

These transformations, as well as the shifting narrative frames, produce collisions, paradoxes and contradictory versions, but there are no clear boundaries between them. The gaps between Joan's fantasies and transformations are always riddles for the reader. From a fat and unattractive teenage girl she transforms herself into a beautiful *femme fatale*; she adopts thousands of wigs, sunglasses, disguises, names and characters as if to build a protective barrier around her. The gap between a fat body and a thin body has to be filled.

Through these masquerades² she makes the reader doubt whether there is any real Joan who claims her narrative is her life story. Is she preparing another trick in order to escape? Her recognitions of the gaps between reality and fantasy often result in another escape because her own perfect scenarios begin to look "less like a Fellini movie..." (9) The reader together with Joan wonders why "every one of my fantasies turn into a trap" (334)?

One of the interpretations may be offered right here: it is the major motif of the novel, Joan's obsession with self-representation. The fragmented text full of escapes and Joan's continual transformations mirror each other. She also mirrors what she thinks the others want to see, yet she never feels accepted.

"This isn't me"

Joan's pre-occupation with self-representation starts in her childhood. She feels that her mother never truly accepted her, as if she could like her only under certain conditions. Joan's mother expects her to look different (namely to be slim). Moreover, Joan suspects she was an "accident", an unwanted child. She feels like a trap her parents cannot escape from: "What had I done? Had I trapped my father, if he really was my father, had I ruined my mother's life? I didn't dare to ask" (78).

This is probably the crucial point of the story and it leads to Joan's identity crisis and insecurity. It is her mother's critical disavowal that is central in Joan's self-doubts; however, it is paralleled by her ballet teacher's perspective: a fat girl cannot wear the costume of a butterfly, the symbol of fairy-like femininity. Instead of it, Joan is forced to be labelled as "mothball". But now, Joan is not able to accept her position, and she silently rejects the identity she is given by others:

"This isn't me," I kept saying to myself, "they are making me do it", yet even though I was concealed in the teddy-bear suit, which flopped about me and made me sweat, I felt naked and exposed, as if this ridiculous dance was the truth about me and everyone could see it (50).

In the hated costume she produces her dance of rage which is interpreted by the audience as a lovely comic entertainment. Though Joan receives applause ("Bravo Mothball", 50), she is convinced that she creates the wrong image in the eyes of the others, in the eyes of her mother. According to Hilde Staels, from this moment, "Joan starts suffering from 'the Miss Flegg syndrome'"³, the fear that she cannot reveal her desires. Because of the Miss Flegg syndrome, she is not able to confess to her husband, Arthur, that she writes costume Gothics or that she used to be fat in her childhood:

Why did I never tell him? It was fear, mostly. When I first met him he talked a lot about wanting a woman whose mind he could respect, and I knew that if he found out I'd written *The Secret of Morgrave Manor* he wouldn't respect mine (34).

She is afraid of losing his love and admiration as she had never felt accepted by her mother and other figures of authority.

Joan's mother's disapproval, as well as the traumatic betrayal of her friends, who left her to be "possibly" molested by a paedophile, lead to Joan's self-destructive behaviour. In rebellion against her mother's rejection she develops bulimia. She eats to fill the absent space, to fill her self, to confirm her being, she eats to materialize, she eats to punish her mother for not wanting her to be born, and to exist. She multiplies her fat cells to protect her fragile and split self. "I ate to defy her, but I also ate from panic. Sometimes I was afraid I wasn't really there, I was an accident; I'd heard her call me an accident. Did I want to become solid, solid as a stone so she wouldn't be able to get rid of me?" (78).

Joan's overeating can be read as a sign of rejection of the image of her mother and the image of femininity her mother conforms to and represents – proportion and limits: "It was only in relation to my mother that I derived a morose pleasure from my weight; in relation to everyone else, including my father, it made me miserable" (74). Joan identifies herself by producing the negative image of her mother who is beautiful, thin and always controls herself. Joan escapes her mother's will to control her and she shifts all the physical boundaries and fights for more cakes and a bigger body. Her mother's sense of proportion and control represents the common opinion of moral codes as well as the codes of (thin) beauty of the time presented in contemporary Hollywood films: Joan used to enjoy these movies with her aunt. In reaction to the images of female beauties there is "No wonder I [Joan] fell in love with the nineteenth century: back then, according to the dirty postcards of the time, flesh was a virtue" (46).

To her mother who decorates and redecorates her house so that it is not different from anyone else's, the obesity of her own daughter means a failure because Joan is so different from other girls. Hilde Staels states that in her mother's eyes, Joan's obesity means "lack of physical and mental control and decorum, her disobedience, her idleness, her licentious behaviour".⁴ Moreover, the fact that Joan provocatively ignores the importance her mother grants to appearance and ideal beauty representation makes her mother see Joan as "a reproach to her, the embodiment of her own failure and depression, a huge edgeless cloud of inchoate matter which refused to be shaped into anything for which she could get a prize (67).

Fat Joan, who does not want to conform to the feminine ideal, is perceived by her mother and by the society her mother's voice represents "as violating socially prescribed sexual roles, and that violation is a threat to existing power structures"⁵ (Hartley 64-65). In a similar way, Brooks Bouson sees Joan's obesity as a rebellion against social control and discipline.⁶

Joan, when fat, finds herself untouchable. Joan believes that "fat women are not more noticeable than thin women; they're less noticeable, because people find them distressing and look away" (82). Fat Joan feels unheard, invisible and non-existent for the others, she fights for her identity and being by performing a "fashion show in reverse" (71) for her mother. She wears colourful clothes that make her look even bigger and she repeatedly invades her mother's kitchen to grab some food. Joan actively protests against her mother's control, she refuses to be invisible. Cecilia Hartley observes that "we now recognize that the idealized female body has been culturally encoded to mark a woman as physically passive, taking up little space, and non-self-nurturing".⁷ Food satisfies not only Joan's need to rebel against her mother but it also satisfies her need to be fulfilled and indulged with the love and understanding her demanding mother never gives her. Food gives Joan fulfilment under no condition and without critique. Joan, when fat, was forced by her mother to hide herself in the kitchen or some other marginal area (Joan's bedroom, for example), on the periphery of her mother's civilised world.⁸ She treats her daughter as a monster that ignores the physical and cultural borders and transgresses moral norms. Joan's mother's behaviour parallels Cecilia Hartley's observations that: "fat has become a moral issue unlike any other type of deviation from what society considers normal".⁹ Joan's stubborn disobedience of her mother is a territorial war in which "the disputed territory was my body" (69), for Joan "wasn't going to be diminished or neutralized" and she happily asserts: "I had defeated her; I wouldn't ever let her make me over her image, thin and beautiful" (88).

Ironically, she defeats her mother totally when she eventually loses weight to fulfil the conditions of her Aunt Louisa's will: to inherit the money and buy her freedom from her mother, she is bound to lose one hundred pounds, and she does,

despite her mother's last attempt to "neutralize" Joan by stabbing her in the arm. And Joan, transformed into a slim, red haired woman, escapes to England.

However, the change of Joan's shape and the fact that she was extremely fat leads to the first gap between her identities: she must learn to be a different person. Her fat used to isolate her from the "usual female fears":

fear of intruders, fear of the dark, fear of gasping noises over the phone, fear of bus stops and slowing cars, fears of anyone or anything outside whatever magic circle defines safety. I wasn't whistled at or pinched on elevators, I was never followed down lonely streets...It would have been like molesting a giant basketball, and secretly, though I treasured images of myself exuding melting femininity and soft surrender, I knew I would be able to squash any potential molester against a wall merely by breathing out (140).

Joan's obesity is thus ironic in several ways: the prevalent "images of femininity" that construct women as victims are simultaneously what Joan herself sees as "treasured images". This is to confirm that Joan cannot escape the influence of the mother's codes and stereotypical cultural conventions. And the gap between her former self and the new "thin" identity broadens and deepens. Joan, who strictly rejects her mother's conviction that Joan is deviant, not "normal", continually tries to please her mother and others, to make her social identity and her appearance conform to the roles and expectations of being a "good woman".¹⁰ Thus, on the one hand she refuses to be the image they - her lovers, her friends, her readers - expect her to be and she defines herself in opposition to this; on the other hand, she wants to be the one, the right one, the perfect woman who would please everyone, who would be loved and admired. Joan longs to have her own identity, body and life under the control:

I planned my death carefully; unlike my life, which meandered along from one thing to another, despite my feeble attempts to control it. My life had a tendency to spread, to get flabby, to scroll and festoon like the frame of a baroque mirror, which came from following the line of least resistance. I wanted my death, by contrast, to be neat and simple, understated, even a little severe (7).

She wants the gap between her fantasy of what she should be and what she is to be filled perfectly. Joan's desire to be someone is in contrast with the one she is expected to be. This can be illustrated by her taste for clothes and her husband's disapproval

of them. "He didn't like me spending money on them [clothes] because he thought he couldn't afford it, so at first he said they clashed with my hair or they made me look too fat" (22).

Joan lives in between her mother's expectations (that represent the cultural norm) and her own stereotypical image of the perfect, solid and unified identity of an ideal woman. Her fat, grotesque and indecent body represents her non-fixed identity. It signals a lack of control, the mess and chaos she wants to get rid of. When Joan meets her childhood tormentor, Marlene, who is thin and blonde, her trauma of chaos and fatness is back around her: "My hair needed washing, my fingernails were dirty, my shoelaces felt untied, although I wasn't wearing any. Wads of fat sprouted on my thighs and shoulders, my belly bulged out ..." (229). In Joan's eyes, Marlene's identity is fixed and unified in contrast to her own fluid and heterogeneous, "messy" identity, which she fears to acknowledge. Joan thinks that in contrast to Marlene, she is not able to maintain control over the boundaries of her body. In this relation, her feelings are illustrated by the statements of Cecilia Hartley that women who allow their bodies "to grow, become large and 'unfeminine', are treated with derision in our society and that derision is tied inextricably to the personal freedom of women. Women who are fat are said to have 'let themselves go'. The very phrase connotes a loosening of restrictions. Women in our society are bound".¹¹

"I wasn't able to make him happy, no matter how badly I cooked..."

Joan desires to be represented only as the perfect image in the eyes of others, however, she only manages to live in between. She never feels accepted and she is never able to completely reject the expectations of the others: for example, she cannot refuse to perform as a Mothball although she really hates the very idea.

The rules of her mother¹² she has to follow, the coded stereotypes at Brownies which the girls are supposed to identify with, the voice of her publisher and the authoritative voice of the public all sound analogous and, as she thinks she is never able to meet these frames, she feels she is a failure. Throughout the story she repeatedly gives up unwanted fragments of herself, she constantly rewrites them, imitating what she reads in the eyes of others. Joan buries parts of herself in order

not to show what she really is: an accident, a failure, a pastiche. Again and again she materializes as someone else to find the one right identity to please everyone. However, she is trapped in a circle of hatred, guilt and distrust towards herself and the others because she fears being “exposed...as a fraud, liar and impostor” (199).

The idea of hiding unwanted aspects of herself is paralleled in her dieting. In her childhood she used to indulge herself with food, cakes and sandwiches – substitutes for her mother’s tenderness and acceptance. To escape her sad life as an unwanted daughter and unpopular girl she reads love romances. Both eating and reading provided her with satisfaction and this “fake satisfaction” became an obsessive necessity for young Joan. According to Jennifer Maher:

Overeating and romance reading are ways to satisfy the self when one is exhausted by constantly satisfying others – especially loved ones such as husbands and children. That women see their primary emotive responsibilities to be towards others first and to the self second, is testament to the endemic nature of cultural conceptions of the feminine role. In eating and reading romances, the woman, sometimes under great duress, temporarily puts the care of the self above the care of others.¹³

As far as Joan’s case is concerned, as a girl she constantly tries to please her mother by helping her with house chores (and is rejected) and later, as a teenager, she adopts the role of a caring friend always there for the other (thin and attractive) girls: “I played kindly aunt and wise woman to a number of the pancake-madeup, cashmere-sweatered, pointy-breasted girls in the class” (93). Behind Joan’s compassionate smile was a set of tightly clenched teeth: “What about me? What about my own pain? When is it my turn?” (92).

After Joan loses her unwanted weight by dieting (and also by vomiting), in parallel she is getting rid of Harlequin Romances she used to read and she becomes a secret Costume Gothic writer herself. When Joan stops overeating, she begins writing and this makes a link between “body” and “text”. Joan’s fat is transformed into written text. However, these Gothic bodice-ripper fantasies she produces represent a trap for Joan. In Italy, as she constantly changes her appearance (cuts and dyes her hair, wears sunglasses, and a scarf), she also compulsively re-writes her latest novel in imitation of classical Gothic romances. Each of her disguises is a new attempt to

produce a new self, to write a new self. In this sense, Joan's body can be seen as a kind of pastiche¹⁴: she is a patchwork of styles and texts.¹⁵ And this produces an explosion Joan has always been afraid of: "if I brought the separate parts of my life together (like uranium, like plutonium, harmless to the naked eye, but charged with lethal energies) surely there would be an explosion" (217). The pastiche effect can be seen in all kinds of masks and disguises which the text offers. When Joan's mother puts on her make up, her lips show through the lipstick. Joan's mother imitates the fashionable makeup of Hollywood stars but this imitation turns into a parody: she looks like a monster, a scary clown: "Sit there quietly, Joan, and watch Mother put on her face ... Instead of making her happier, these sessions appeared to make her sadder, as if she saw behind or within the mirror some fleeting image she was unable to capture or duplicate" (66).

It is clear that Joan is able to acknowledge the duality of the others, namely her mother, father, her husband Arthur, her aristocratic lover Paul. However, she seems to be rejecting her own multiplicity.

Pastiche. "A Sorry Assemblage of Lies"

Madelaine Davies in her essay, "Margaret Atwood's female bodies", discusses Atwood's female writers or artists and suggests a link between Hélène Cixous's seminal essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" and Margaret Atwood's writing: "Atwood's strategies and those advocated by Cixous may not be as far removed as it may at first seem since both forge profound connections between body and text".¹⁶ I would like to develop some of her suggestions and focus on *Lady Oracle's* protagonist.

In a resolute statement "Text: my body"¹⁷, Cixous suggests that women produce a female form and female texts capable of challenging existing linguistic, historical and cultural conventions only when women write from the perspective of their bodies: "Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth". Cixous challenges women to write and become heard: "Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be connected with accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem".¹⁸ In this

parallel, for Joan, who writes her Costume Gothic in secret, her writing turns into a trap because she understands it as “trash” and looks at it through her husband’s disapproving eyes. Her writing is more original when Joan experiments with automatic writing and this results in her celebrated Lady Oracle poems. She becomes heard and visible, but still unnoticed by her husband:

Perhaps I shouldn’t have used my own name, Arthur’s name rather; then I wouldn’t have had to show him the book. More and more I dreaded this. He hadn’t mentioned the book since I’d first told him about it, and neither had I (233).

However, her text is again a product of “the language of men and their grammar”¹⁹ as it is revised and edited by men: “Poor Colin Harper had been over the manuscript several times, scratching things out and writing *delete* in the margins” (227). Only when Joan starts narrating her life story, at this point she should be able to write her body accurately. Only if she removes her disguises and accepts her body, her retrospective texts, and her former selves, would she be able to “write herself”.²⁰ As we know, Joan’s life story, again, contains a lie. She is again preparing a trap for herself instead of an escape. And thus the gap between reality and fantasy is even wider. Although this life narrative emerges from a lifetime of enforced silence and erasure, Atwood’s protagonist’s fictive autobiography is an example of Cixous’s “guilty” woman’s writing: “Guilty of everything, guilty at every turn”.²¹

When Joan (mirrored by the heroine of her Costume Gothic *Stalked with Love*) confronts her other selves (including the Fat Lady) she is still not able to read her “text” accurately and she is simultaneously unable to remove her costumes, masks and disguises, she is unable to accept her life and her body, her imitations and her self. Joan, haunted by the fear of her monstrous mother and her monstrous fat body, still tries to give form to her ideal complete body, her ideal representation, the ideal text. However, she is not able to recognize that her body is what Cixous defines as “body without end, without appendage, without ‘principle parts’”. Joan is so scared of fragmentation that when she is told that she has the body of a Goddess, it makes her uneasy. She does not want to be identified with the many-breasted or even amputated bodies. On the other hand, Cixous suggests that woman’s body is

a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble, a cosmos traversed by Eros, an

immense astral space not organized around any one sun that's any more of a star than the others.²²

Clearly, the materiality and the fragmentation of Joan's body remain a constant source of self-doubt.

Conclusion

Some critics²³ think that Joan returns to Toronto to clear her friends who are charged with Joan's murder; but I think Joan is still unable to accept her former self and thus she is preparing another escape, suggested by her decision to start writing SF: "I won't write any more Costume gothics, though; I think they were bad for me" (345) and she considers writing Science Fiction. Joan says she would return to Toronto but can we rely on this? Joan is an obsessive liar and throughout her novel she admits that the story she narrates to the reporter does not contain "very many lies". In her novel she is represented as a "compulsive and romantic" liar who has fabricated her own life. I agree with Sherill Grace that "there is no way for the reader to be certain that anything has changed by the end of Joan's narration".²⁴ Both the reader and the narrator are entrapped in a maze with only fake escapes.

In telling her story, what Cixous calls Atwood's "I-woman, escapee"²⁵ looks into a dark mirror/text to look at the invisible and the unnoticeable. Joan's text and body are definitely interlocked although it is doubtful if "her flesh speaks true".²⁶ When Joan gives up imitating what she sees in the eyes of others, she will be able to write 'true', to write her painful story, not a parody. "Joan is nothing if not a self-caricaturist as well as a parodist of Gothic romance conventions, as she switches between real life and fantasy roles in a continual process of double coding" (Howells 66).²⁷ Only when she acknowledges the fact that she is hurt and she also hurts people and when she is able to forgive herself as well as her mother, will she be able to find a way out of the maze of lies she has created around herself.

NOTES

¹ Pastiche is in literature, “a text made up of material from other texts. Traditionally a disparaging term designed to characterize a work as derivative, pastiche has assumed a more respectable status with the advent of postmodernism. Pastiche is now seen, along with parody, as an acknowledgement of intertextuality” (E. Quinn, *Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, 2nd ed. New York: Checkmark Books, 2006, p. 315).

² In his observations of the body in art, Nicholas Mirzoeff states that the body, in the performative sense of identity – namely, transforming the body through masquerade (wigs, make-up, beauty patches) – is “not a natural, changeless resource but a malleable tool”, which responds to “individual desires for self-fashioning” (Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Bodyscape. Art, Modernity and the Ideal Figure*, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 28).

³ Hilde Staels, *Margaret Atwood's Novels. A Study of Narrative Discourse*. Tübingen and Basel: Francke Verlag, 1995, p. 71.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Cecilia Hartley, “Letting Ourselves Go”, in Evan Braziel, Jana and LeBesco, Kathleen (eds.) *Bodies Out Of Bounds. Fatness and Transgression*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, p. 64-65.

⁶ Bouson J. Brooks, “Lady Oracle’s Plot against the Gothic Romance Plot,” in *Brutal Choreographies. Oppositional Strategies and Narrative Design in the Novels of Margaret Atwood*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993, p. 68-69.

⁷ Hartley, p. 70-71.

⁸ Paul Groetsch in his *Monsters in English Literature from the Romantic Age to the First World War*, Frankfurt am Main, 2002, observes that “older stories locate monsters at the periphery of the civilized world” (p. 12).

⁹ Hartley, p. 65.

¹⁰ “I wasn’t able to make him happy, no matter how badly I cooked. Therefore I was not a good woman” (212).

¹¹ Hartley, p.63.

¹² Joan’s mother’s rules copy social and cultural inscription according to which “The fat woman is often dismissed as sloppy, careless, lazy, and self-indulgent” (Hartley, p. 65).

¹³ Jennifer Maher, “Ripping the bodice: Eating, reading, and revolt”, in *College Literature* 28.1 (Winter 2001), 68.

¹⁴ It is pasta, “paste”, a patchwork of words, sentences or complete passages from various authors or one author. It is, therefore, a kind of imitation and, when intentional, may be a form of parody” (J. A. Cuddon, ed., *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Oxford and Massachusetts, 1998, p. 644).

¹⁵ In her study “Margaret Atwood’s female bodies” Madelaine Davies suggests a term palimpsest to depict Joan’s body. In my paper I am focusing on emphasizing Joan’s inability to acknowledge her fragmentation and multiplicity. The fact that she tries hard to imitate what she reads in the eyes of others to become the perfect one, signalizes that she is constructed of pieces that produce a kind of parody.

¹⁶ Madelaine Davies, “Margaret Atwood’s Female Bodies,” in Coral Ann Howells (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 60.

¹⁷ Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of Medusa,” in Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Herndl Price (eds.), *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997, p. 339.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 350.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 356.

²⁰ Ibid., p.346.

²¹ Ibid., p. 351.

²² Ibid., p. 357.

²³ According to Brooks Bouson's research those are for example Cathy and Arnold Davidson in "Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*. The Artist as Escapist and Lier," in *Studies in Canadian Literature* 3 (1978): 166-177.

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²⁴ Sherrill Grace, *Violent Duality. A Study of Margaret Atwood*, Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1980, p. 127.

²⁵ Cixous, p. 350.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 351.

²⁷ Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood*, Houndmills, Basingtoke, and London: Macmillan Press, 1996, p. 66.

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