



**Betrayal and Silence: A Study of Moral and Familial Breakdown
In Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin***

Instructor. Raid Jassim Mohammed

jassraed6@gmail.com

Ministry of Education General Directorate of Education / Diyala



الخيانة والصمت: دراسة في الانهيار الأخلاقي والعائلي في رواية القاتل الأعمى لمارجريت أتوود

المدرس / راند جاسم محمد
وزارة التربية المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة ديالى



Abstract

This paper examines Margaret Atwood's novel *The Blind Assassin* from a feminist narratological perspective. It argues that the novel critiques patriarchal control over women's stories and identities. Its complex, multi-layered narrative structure, with interconnected stories, serves as a metaphor for how women's histories are often hidden, altered, or erased by dominant male perspectives. Iris Chase Griffen, whose posthumously published memoir challenges the official narrative of her life, is largely shaped by her husband Richard. Her story is an intentional act of rewriting history from a woman's perspective, which is central to the novel's larger social and philosophical themes: the ongoing fight for voice and independence by women in a society that seeks to silence them. The analysis highlights how the decline of the Chase family reveals the moral and economic fragility of a privileged class built on leverage. *The Blind Assassin* symbolizes resistance—a way for the abused female character to reclaim her history and gain some power, even within a fictional framework. Therefore, this study considers the novel an important contribution to feminist literature. Additionally, the themes of sisterhood and sacrifice critique patriarchal systems that silence female voices and stories. *The Blind Assassin* functions as a double metaphor; the title alludes to the sci-fi story within the novel, which highlights themes of sacrifice and betrayal in the main plot. Simultaneously, it symbolizes the unseen and unacknowledged forces of violence and exploitation within patriarchal society, which harm marginalized or victimized individuals, especially women, without recognition. The "assassin" is not a literal killer but a social and systemic force of oppression.

Key words: Margaret Atwood; silence; blindness; *The Blind Assassin*.

المستخلص

تناول هذه الورقة رواية القاتل الأعمى لمارجريت اتوود من منظور سردي نسوي. وتجادل بان الرواية تنتقد سيطرة النظام الأبوي على قصص النساء وهوياتهن. ان بنيتها السردية المعقدة والمتعددة الطبقات ، والتي تتضمن قصصا مترابطة، تعد استعارة للطريقة التي غالبا ما تخفي او تغير او تمحى بها تواريخ النساء من خلال وجهات النظر الذكورية المهيمنة. تعد مذكرات إيريس تشيس جريفين، التي نشرت بعد وفاتها تتحدى الرواية الرسمية لحياتها والتي تشكلت الى حد كبير بواسطة زوجها ريتشارد، فعلا مقصودا لإعادة كتابة التاريخ من منظور المرأة. وهو أمر محوري في القضايا الاجتماعية والفلسفية الاوسع للرواية: النضال المستمر من اجل الصوت والاستقلال الذي تخوضه في مجتمع يسعى لاسكاتهن. ويبرز التحليل كيف يكشف تدهور عائلة تشيس عن الهشاشة الأخلاقية والاقتصادية لقنة متميزة بنيت على النفوذ. ترمز رواية القاتل الأعمى الى المقاومة حيث تمثل وسيلة للشخصية النسائية المعنفة لاستعادة تاريخها وممارسة شكل من أشكال السلطة، حتى وإن كان ذلك ضمن اطار تخييلي. لذلك، تعتبر هذه الدراسة الرواية اسهاما مهما في الأدب النسوي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن موضوعي الأخوة والتضحية ينتقدان الانظمة الأبوية التي تقمع الأصوات والقصص النسائية. وتعمل رواية القاتل الأعمى كاستعارة مزدوجة. اذ يشير العنوان إلى قصة الخيال العلمي داخل الرواية، والتي تسلط الضوء على موضوعات التضحية والخيانة في الحبكة الرئيسية. وفي الوقت نفسه، فهو يرمز أيضاً إلى القوى الخفية وغير المعترف بها من العنف والاستغلال العاملة في المجتمع الأبوي، والتي تلحق الضرر بالافراد المهمشين أو المستضعفين، لاسيما النساء. دون ان يلاحظ احد ان "القاتل" هنا ليس قاتلاً بالمعنى الحرفي، بل هو قوة اجتماعية ونظامية من القمع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مارجريت اتوود، الصمت، العمى، القاتل الاعمى.

Introduction

The novel sheds light on the death of a young woman amid a series of deaths caused by harassment, marginalization, betrayal, sorrow, and remorse. Margaret focuses on societal problems, especially those affecting women. While she does not provide solutions, she aims to raise awareness through her novels, emphasizing women's struggles. She seeks to convey that woman should pursue freedom to break free from male oppression, with their primary goals being freedom and autonomy. The characters move within the same circle; sometimes they are oppressed, and at other times, they are the oppressors. It is a novel about futility—the futility within souls, bodies, and morals that affects both relatives and strangers alike. The story depicts the disintegration of families, especially Chase's family. It also explores the confiscation of women's rights and how women are coerced into silence and submission under male dominance, as well as how women can attain the same rights as men and change their societal status. Their capacity for independent action was limited by the challenges Margaret faced throughout her life and the circumstances she experienced in her youth and marriage. The paper highlights the novel's critical view of the masculine system that restricts women's roles and voices. It relies on a thematic study focused on analyzing, discussing, and explaining. Margaret Atwood is a renowned feminist author of her time. She is a well-known novelist in Canada today. Born in November 1939 in Ottawa, she began writing at the age of six. She studied and graduated with honors in English and Arts from Victoria College at the University of Toronto in 1961. Subsequently, she earned a Master's degree from Harvard University in 1961. In 1962, she planned to pursue a doctoral project, which she did not complete.

Her father, Carl Edmund Atwood, was an entomologist, and her mother, Margaret Dorothy, worked as a nutritionist (Margaret and Bouson, 2019, p. Introduction). This paper argues that *The Blind Assassin* critiques patriarchal structures by exploring themes of betrayal, silence, and blindness. The novel can be considered a "feminist memoir." Iris, the narrator and author, offers readers not only facts about the story but also insights into the causes and consequences of her silence and submission. The protagonists are portrayed as victims of society, often due to their backgrounds or upbringing. The novel highlights how power is exercised in all areas of life, especially within relationships. People tend to victimize each other for personal gain and because of who holds power, described as "who eats what" (Tomanová, 2016, p. 7). Atwood emphasizes that men are more visible than women in the power struggle, as women remain "connected to their bodies and [...] their role," while men try to stop feeling like "machines." They tend to blame others (Tomanová, 2016, p. 12). Atwood states that "The hardest form of power to acquire is power over oneself,

What had she been thinking of as the car sailed off the bridge? They hung suspended in the afternoon sunlight, glinting like a dragonfly, for that one instant of held breath before the plummet? Of Alex, of Richard, of bad faith, of our father and his wreckage, of God, perhaps, and her fatal, triangular bargain. (Pengal and Venkateswaran, p.478)

The novel reveals the downfall of two bourgeois families. The "old money" Norval Chase family, who settled in Port Ticonderoga, Ontario, Canada, and the newer Griffens from Toronto. Various factors contribute to the destruction, disintegration, and collapse of wealthy dynasties, including

misdeeds, impulses, evil, intrigues, the pursuit of power, and fame. The only remaining family member is Iris's rebellious granddaughter, Sabrina. The grandmother, a widow nearing the end of her life, feeling ill, on the verge of death, has documented these memoirs as she prepares to write her will, so Sabrina knows what happened to her family in the past. Iris believes these stories might free Sabrina and help her change her life. (Wilson, 2003, p. 138). The core motive behind the characters' actions in the novel centers on concealment and revelation, speech and silence, sight and blindness. The two sisters alternate between these states until they adjust to their circumstances. The novel employs various symbols, such as angels and devils, fire and ice, to represent women, men, and sensuality. After fifty years of silence, Iris begins to speak again. At eighty-three, her conscience starts to reproach her for being indirectly responsible for three suicides in her family: her father's, her sister's, and her husband's. As a result, she begins to reveal their hidden secrets (Ryan, 2012, p.37). Iris witnesses the disaster that has struck her family, and she shares the truth with the literary audience by referencing a snippet from the Book of Job. She feels bitterness as she reconstructs the truth together, because "the living bird is not its labelled bones":

The book of Job begins with a series of catastrophes, but for each there is a survivor. Storytelling at its most drastic is the story of the disaster, which is the world; it is done by Job's messengers, whom God saved alive because someone had to tell the story. I only have escaped to tell thee. When a story, 'true' or not, begins like this, we must listen. (Barthet, 2009, p. 288)

Ultimately, Iris reveals that she is the author of *The Blind Assassin's* novel and the woman whose name was not given, but some details suggest that the two sisters could be Alex's mistress.

Margaret introduces content to the academic reader, and Iris introduces it to the everyday reader: “Laura was my left hand and I was her hand.” “We wrote the book together.” The two sisters spend their youth in a decaying Avilion, a merchant’s estate, and live like princesses in a fairy tale. Their grandmother has named her house after an island valley where King Arthur is said to have died. Their grandfather is a wealthy industrialist whose wealth and losses depend on the circumstances of the land (Barthet, 2009, p.288). Iris writes her memoirs to amplify women's voices, using this work to give a voice to their lifetime of silence and suppression:

A 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 [...] Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history by her own involvement. (Verma and Kumar, 2024, p.2)

1-1 Silence as a Tool of Oppression

Silence is the central theme in the novel; silence serves as a means of oppression and control, especially for the sisters, Iris and Laura Chase. The story exposes how social and family pressures create a pervasive silence that ultimately shapes and crushes their lives. Iris's silence at the start of the story is a survival tactic—a cautious conformity within her oppressive marriage to Richard—prompting her to turn a blind eye and suppress doubts about his exploitative, coercive, and pernicious nature. This passive silence is a deep, ingrained obsession that consumes Iris, as she remains blind to the impending tragedy. Meanwhile, Laura’s silence reflects her isolation and the ongoing invalidation of her truth. Her first efforts to speak out about sexual harassment by a mentor during her girlhood are rejected,

teaching her that her voice is untrustworthy and ineffectual. The housekeeper warns the two sisters about harassers, saying, "Reenie didn't waste any sleep on my account, but Laura, in her opinion, was too confiding, too cozy with strangers. The white slavers were always on the prowl, and Laura was their target" (Fazili and Hafez Kermani, 2012, p.57). This acquired silence makes Laura susceptible to Richard's future mistreatment, as she is coerced into submission because she lacks the constituted credibility needed to be believed. Ultimately, Iris must break her long-standing silence by writing Laura's true story, highlighting the academic perspective: suppression is continuous not only through direct violence, but also through the powerful force of silence that isolates victims and renders their truths socially unacceptable. Laura is a victim of intimate assault by Alex Thomas and is being raped and silenced by Richard. All these violations came from: -

The silence in the novel and its ramifications stem from Norval's actions, or lack thereof, driven by his foolish and blind behavior, as reflected by his unavailability, vulnerability, and the legacy of pecuniary ruin. Richard and Winfred compel Laura to be taken to a mental institution, and she is coerced into having an abortion to protect their reputation, as they embody the capitalist upper class. Richard and Winfred suppress both her voice and body. In the name of silence, Laura became a beacon for women of the early twenty-first century, as her story is considered an indictment of patriarchal structures that prefer appearances over women's safety and freedom. Chase, as a businessman, lacks the foresight to consider a small detail about their daughter's future—the danger from their mentor, Mr. Erskine, and later from Richard. A hidden visitor to the Norval Chase button factory, he is rootless, an orphan of unknown origin. He visited the factory

under the alias of a worker activist. His name is associated with the symbolism of fire and is implicated in Laura's suicide, as he was her lover; he participated in the Norval Chase button factory fire, so the police are searching for him. He is Alex Thomas, a European involved in Bolshevik violence who evades the law. He meets Laura and Iris as an adolescent at a party in their button factory. Laura Chase lures Alex Thomas into the cellar, and then she takes him up to the attic of her house. Laura offers Alex a sanctuary, while her sister Iris's role is to facilitate. This incident occurred when she was eighteen years old (Wilson, 2003, p.142). The two sisters act like teenagers after their little experiment in life. They fall in love with Alex, and this makes them so blind that they do not realize they are also betraying their father's trust. They want to prove their power in any way they can and use their roles, even if it means defying their father's authority. In *The Blind Assassin*, blindness and sight serve as metaphors; the families of the bourgeois are playing a game of "hide-and-see". Sometimes the protagonists are blind to themselves, other times they are seen by others. The main question is: What do people want to see? The answer is the truth. And what do people want to hide? The answer is: secrets. They do not need to see what is behind the scenes. To continue with life, people choose what they want to see, what they must confront, and what should be hidden. Norval is the father of Iris and Laura. He is seen as a bourgeois businessman and planned to pass his work to his son someday, but his older child was a girl, just like his second child, Laura. As long as their father prefers a boy over a girl, she should behave like a soldier—following rules of order, obedience, silence, and discipline. His wife Lilianna died from an abortion during her third pregnancy, when Iris was nine (Jin, 2025, p.1083). His desire to have a son gives Iris the impression that her father is focused on

gender. Class conflict between aristocratic families in the novel, along with their pursuit of wealth and elimination of rivals by any means, suggests to the reader that the story resembles a battlefield; in this setting, the protagonists try to overthrow the dominance of one couple or partner over another by pushing towards self-destruction (Fazili and Hafez Kermani, 2012, p. Introduction).

١-2 Pecuniary Ruin as Restriction

The first loss in this novel was a part of Norval Chase due to war traumas. When he lost an eye in the war and became half-blind, he also had a bad leg after completing his military service in the First World War, and he lost two brothers. The consequences of the war caused his health to deteriorate, leading him to lose his religious faith, making him look shattered, and resulting in alcoholism. This prevents him from making the right decisions. His business and personal life took a tragic turn because of the post-war depression after he was unable to maintain his button factory. This makes him the first victim of blindness in the novel. Norval Chase and Richard, the new capitalist. It was seen as the dehumanized mouthpiece of the aristocratic class. He always strictly represented the reactionary philosophy of the bourgeoisie. They arranged a meeting at a luxury hotel. The result is a deal in which he sold his daughter to a man she did not love and his button factory to him. She agreed to sell herself to a diabolical wolf and fell into the swamp of blindness when she told her father, "Do whatever you will with me" (Ingersol, 2007, p. 1٠٢). Iris plays the role of the obedient and sacrificial daughter herself. She enters into an arranged marriage with the wealthy, Byronic, and pompous businessman Richard Griffen, who brought misfortune to the two sisters, and this is pivotal. Her father persuades her to marry Richard to strengthen the family's

financial stability. Norval Chase, egoistically, wants his daughter Iris to sacrifice herself, and utilizes her younger sister Laura to persuade Iris: “Laura’s future, in particular. I don’t want it all to have been for nothing. Your grandfather, and then...Fifty, sixty years of hard work, down the drain” (Jin, 2025, p. 1083). He sacrifices his elder daughter to save the family's reputation and secure her future from bankruptcy, but this deal comes at a high cost. Iris accepts the deal to save the factory and its workers, but her sacrifices prove futile, as Richard closes the factory instead of rebuilding it. (Wilson, 2003, p. 145). Eventually, the two sisters discover that they have been thrown into the fossa of the serpents. Iris’s father commits suicide after Richard Griffen betrays the “gentleman's agreement” to exclude the workers at the Chase factory in a merger with another company associated with Griffen (Ingresol, 2007, p. 102).

Richard Griffen, considered a tyrannical husband, was older than Iris; he is twice her age, thirty-five years old, while Iris is eighteen years old. He completely subjugated Iris and controlled her. During their honeymoon, her father died, but Laura tried to contact her several times, sending five telegrams and making multiple phone calls. Her husband, Richard, deliberately concealed these attempts. Iris (Chase) Griffen discovered her father's death after returning from her honeymoon. Richard told her, “I know I ought to have, but I wanted to spare you the worry, darling...I guess I was selfish, too—I wanted you all to myself”. A tragic death, but on the other hand, a silent reaction from Laura and concealments from Richard (Jin, 2025, p. 1084). Norval Chase throws his elder daughter, Iris, into the den of wolves: Richard and his sister Winfred. She behaves like the wicked witch. The first one, Richard, who eats her flesh and shatters her bones, the second, Winfred, shatters her soul; all their behaviors

are a reaction to the filtering of an ancient reckoning. Iris' mother is the first female character to be sacrificed in the novel. When she agrees to the proposal of marriage, she "did not reply ... This meant yes." Iris also silently sacrifices herself to Richard in the same way, as she recalls: "I didn't say much. I just smiled and agreed". Finally, Laura sacrifices herself when Richard rapes her and she cannot tell anyone (Tolan, 2007, P. 263). Laura settled down with Iris after Iris was married to Richard, which meant that the two sisters were subject to Richard's authority, so he forced both sisters to have sexual relations with him. The result is an illicit affair with Laura. She becomes pregnant. Iris says, "I suppose when he married me, he figured he'd got a bargain - two for the price of one" (Tolan, 2007, p. 265). An important extract from the memoirs, which contains the list of dates on which Richard attempted to force Laura to have sex, which he eventually succeeded in doing, was recorded in Laura's clipping note (Tolan, 2007, p. 78). This refers to the existence of more than one lover. In *The Blind Assassin's* patriarchal order, which is embodied in Richard's power, his strategies, and the social aristocracy, the unruly woman is the object of abjection. Laura, the idiosyncratic, sensitive, and non-conforming girl, cannot fully participate in the social contract of "proper" femininity: marriage, silence, and social grace. Her visceral reaction and moral integrity make her unfit for. The triad of Symbolic Order: language, law, and culture. It is crucial for The Subject formation, but it failed abysmally for Laura. Laura's relentless silence throughout the novel shows that she did not express her pain using the dominant language. The Symbolic is not a space where her experience can remain. Her incapacity to speak or be heard reflects the mute virgin or sacrificial lass in the inner sci-fi story. Her suicide is a physical, non-verbal act of shock that challenges

speech. Laura's suicide symbolizes her ultimate rejection of the law that muted her, leading her into her persecution. She opts to connect with the maternal body rather than the oppressive Symbolic.

Before Richard became part of the Norval Chase family as the son-in-law, he was their main rival. After the marriage was arranged, his attitude subtly shifted, and he began to take over the Chase family business. Chase was blindsided when he made this deal with his rival, and Norval experienced a fleeting moment of conscience and remorse, which gave him a faint vision. However, it was too late. Norval decided to end his life by drinking excessively after locking himself in the attic (Zhang and Xanxun, 2025, p. 298).

The disintegration of the families started with Richard's betrayal and abuse of Iris, which Iris only discovered after her marriage. The breakup between Iris and Richard is followed by the estrangement between Iris and her daughter, Aimee. The war destroys the Chase family, while the second war is a disaster for Richard. He is unable to continue his business with the Germans and is found dead in a sailboat, thirty days after Laura committed suicide, and Alex Thomas, Laura's lover, is killed in battle. His death also drives Laura to her own death: "a war is a huge fire; the ashes from it drift far and settle slowly" (Sundaram, 2011, p. 38).

Iris (Chase) Griffin wants to free herself from obligations to her sister, Laura Chase, as her protector by telling her that she had an affair with Alex Thomas, who was Laura's beloved: "My fingers itched with spite. I knew what had happened next. I'd pushed her off" (Tolan, 2007, P. 265). The youthful energy of Chase's daughters shows in their mother's waning affection and the distant, detached authority of their damaged father. They are not

cared for or treated with paternal concern. Instead, they are emotionally neglected, and a pattern develops where they feel a strong urge to save and rescue others — first their father, then their lover, Alex.

Iris has no interest in a love affair with Richard. She assumes that it is something to be endured; she did not enjoy it. After they returned from their honeymoon, Iris entered their bedroom and said: **“This, then, was where I was to grin and bear it- the bed I hadn’t made, but now must lie in it. And this is the ceiling I would be staring up at from now on, through the muslin fog, while earthly matters went on below my throat.”** (Fazili and Hafez Kermani, 2012, p. 59). Iris says about her marriage that, “Beautiful trophy groomed wife”. Richard regarded her only as a doll that could be bought and sold like a commodity, “To his nighttime activities, even repelled by them” (Irshad, 2013, P. 2). Greer explains that some women believe their personality resides in their body. So, Richard saw Iris as “The showcase for wealth and caste,”. Richard uses violence on Iris’s body; she suffers from “bruises, purple, then blue, then yellow”. He took pleasure in doing this, saying, “how easily I bruised ...prefer[ing] conquest to cooperation, in every area of life.” “He favored thighs, where it wouldn’t show”. All she had to do was, “the Job was to open my legs and shut my mouth”. In his view, Richard describes women using fruit symbolism and views them as objects of consumption; he explains, “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. That was what he liked about me—my greenness, my hardness” (Irshad, 2013, p. 2). Greer elaborates that, “if a woman is food, her sex organ is for consumption also, in the form of honey pot, hair-pie, and cake— or jelly-roll” (Irshad, 2013, p. 2). One night, Laura

meets Alex, and Iris casts them furtive glances. While she overhears them, Iris learns some details about Alex's personality: "... who I really am, a person who doesn't need to know who he really is, in the usual sense" (Sundaram, 2011, p. 40). Laura suffers from Richard's oppression and rape, which is why she is institutionalized to suffer a miscarriage. After her release, the sisters reconnect, and problems begin between them as they hurt each other by revealing each other's secrets.

1-3 Doomed Love

The novel does not portray a happy couple; instead, it illustrates how love is doomed to fail due to social constraints, sexual discrimination, mutual betrayal among husbands, and separation caused by war and death. Iris informs Laura about an illicit affair with Alex. Laura commits suicide because her sister Iris pushes her to do so. After all, Iris has received a message about Alex's death and not Laura's. The main suicide in *The Blind Assassin* is Laura's; the other suicides in the novel are linked to these tragic events and serve as a confession, a reinterpretation of the small details that occurred in the story, and a signal to involve Iris in Laura's death through her silence and desire. Earth is Satan's kingdom, but God exists in heaven to deliver justice to Laura after her death, with a stroke to Richard that destroys his political ambitions (Sundaram, 2011, p. 38). Iris quietly and obediently holds onto her marriage, even though she has the chance to escape this unauthorized situation. After her sister's suicide, it is too late (Borrell, 2005, p. 23). Laura's apperception of Iris's betrayal, having a relationship with Thomas, and then receiving the shocking news. Shatters her last ties to hope and trust. Laura had nothing personal besides her soul, which she took to the sky when she committed suicide, and her body, which she shared with others—sometimes with her consent, sometimes by force or

blackmail. Molten and purity are two phenomena that affected Laura's soul and body after she drove a car off a bridge. After the flames consumed her physical body due to betrayal by her sister Iris and rape by her brother-in-law Richard, she was then pushed aside and felt like an outcast due to filth and waste within the Symbolic Order.

1-4 Betrayal in Family Dynamics

After Iris realizes she is failing in her marriage, she feels compelled to seek solace from her first friend, whom she first saw at her father's factory (Jin, 2025, p. 1084). Iris turns to Alex Thomas for emotional comfort because her husband is not fulfilling her needs as a wife. Due to Richard's indifference, he tells her, "I do not have time to like you. I cannot concentrate on it" (Jin, 2025, p. 1084). Iris attempts to escape her trauma by temporarily immersing herself in another person's space, seeking "Immolation [...], however briefly." She forgets that she is sacrificing her dignity and freedom for a "leash around [her] neck" (Tomanová, 2016, p. 32). In this moment, she feels paralyzed, blind, deaf, and resigned, accepting the reality: "I agreed but did not listen. Not listening was the only way I had during those months to keep my balance. [...] like a tightrope walker crossing Niagara Falls, I could not afford to look around, for fear of slipping" (Tomanová, 2016, p. 32). After the disappointment Iris (Chase) Griffen has experienced in her marriage and with her husband, she turns to Alex Thomas. Iris clandestinely meets Alex. On the other hand, her husband, Richard Griffen, frequently raped Laura. Richard knows about the illicit affair between Laura (Chase) and Alex and exploits this vice to blackmail Laura into submission (Lin, 2005, p. 3). Richard tries

to make a deal with Laura so that his business is: “Let’s make a deal! You submit to my raping you, and I will not reveal the whereabouts of your lover-boy, Alex Thomas.” (Ingresol, 2007, p. 102). This situation refers to a kind of revenge by Richard against Iris and jealousy by Iris because her sister is having an affair with Alex.

Iris reveals that she has been sexually abused by her husband Richard, at the same time, she is panting towards an illicit affair with Alex, even though Alex is the molester and abuser who also contemptuously treats her. He tells her, “You will get thin, and then your lovely tits and ass will waste away to nothing. You will be no good to anybody then.” (Fazili and Hafez Kermani, 2012, p. 60). And a sort of acceptance from Laura when Richard rapes her to protect her lover, Alex, from Richard. Because Richard has threatened that Laura must obey him, or he will turn over her lover, Alex, to the authorities.

Richard and his sister Winifred are predatory figures; they play a central role in the novel's events. They manipulate others through their wealth and power, and in Richard’s case, this manipulation involves sexual tactics. Their victims include the Chase family, and Iris often describes them as animal predators such as cats, wolves, and reptiles. “I thought I could cope with Richard, with Winifred, I thought I could live like a mouse in the castle of the tigers, by creeping around out of sight ... No: I give myself too much credit, I didn't see the danger. I didn't even know they were tigers.” :(Rodríguez, 2022, p. 9)

I like my stories to be true to life, which means there have to be wolves in them. Wolves in one form or another ... All stories are about wolves ... There's escaping from the wolves, fighting the wolves, capturing the wolves, taming the wolves. Being thrown to the wolves, or throwing others to the wolves, so the wolves

will eat them instead of you. Running with the wolf pack. Turning into a wolf. (Borrell, 2005, p. 24)

Richard and Alex infiltrated Iris's body in different ways; one through legal means and the other via an illegal affair, both exposing her to the idea of the phallogocentric. Iris also infiltrated her own body by writing from within it. She is transforming herself into an active subject by telling their scandalous story; she essentially created a lasting literary record of women's oppression and resistance, thereby deconstructing the phallogocentric myth that had silenced both her and Laura.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that the novel's complex narrative structure interweaves Iris's memoirs, the sci-fi story, and built-in news reports; it is not only an aesthetic but also a thematic choice, disclosing the fluid and often manipulative nature of personal and public history. The novel criticizes patriarchal marginalization by showing how female agency is systematically repressed, while demonstrating how women can reclaim their power through oppositional acts of art and storytelling. Remembering is a powerful form of self-creation and resistance, a way to seize control of one's own legacy in a world where dominant narratives often attempt to erase marginalized voices. Creativity can be a revolutionary style. The novel affirms that even when women are denied physical or social freedom, they can find liberation and an enduring form of power by constructing their own worlds and telling their own stories. Iris's marriage becomes a form of imprisonment, whereas Laura's "suicide" is a final, tragic affirmation of control over her own narrative. However, in creating the fictional world of the "blind assassin" novel, both

sisters got a space for agency. Iris, as the narrator, recaptures her own story by disclosing the truth of Laura's death; simultaneously, Laura, via her authorship of the original sci-fi story, finds a way to express her forbidden love and critique the social constraints that bound her. By exposing silence as both survival and complicity, Atwood's novel insists on feminist resistance to patriarchal violence.

The bottom line is that the moral collapse is not related to the inherent nature of an individual's predation, but is rooted in a specific social structure that can turn anyone into a predator. The protagonists prioritize loyalty and silence over justice, and they accept reality instead of resisting the repressive violence. Family ties must be maintained to prevent the family from falling apart and losing its identity; otherwise, they become easy targets for evil forces and darkness, which exploit their silence and submission. Essentially, the novel is not just a story about individual characters but also an explanation of the social forces that control life and sustain the cycle of destruction, driven by the same systems and oppression that have shaped it.

The novel highlights how women may use silence and obedience to survive in a male-dominated society. Ultimately, this approach sustains violence and exploitation. The content of *The Blind Assassin*, particularly its examination of gender relations from a feminist perspective, conveys a message to women that they have several options. One of the most important choices is for women to reject sexual slavery, even when faced with material temptations. *The Blind Assassin* is not a person (man or woman), but a harmful behavior that some individuals may overlook, and it has the potential to destroy someone without leaving any evidence behind.

Recommendations:

Future critics can examine *The Blind Assassin* from multiple perspectives, particularly the feminist perspective, considering both its historical context and future implications.

Future critics have the opportunity to expand their writings by examining the evolution of feminist discourse in literature.

Researchers should focus on marginalized characters, especially women's voices in the text. These writings could help expand the representation and voice of women in literature.

Researchers should focus on psychoanalysis to identify psychological trauma in the protagonists, particularly Iris and Laura.

References

- Atwood, M., & Bouson, J. B. (2019). Biography. Margaret Atwood.
- Barthet, S. B. (Ed.). (2009). *A Sea for Encounters: Essays Towards a Postcolonial Commonwealth* (Vol. 117). Rodopi.
- Borrell, S. R. (2005). Atwood's Animals: Triangular Identification in *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin*.
- Fazli, R., & Hafezi kermani, E. (2012). Power and Truth in Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*. *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. <https://jhss-khazar.org/wp>
- Ingersoll, E. (2003). Waiting for the end: closure in Margaret Atwood's "The blind assassin". *Studies in the Novel*, 35(4), 543-558. *The Johns Hopkins University Press*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29533604>
- Ingersoll, E. (2007). Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* as a Spiritual Adventure. *Adventures of the Spirit*. 105-25. The Ohio State University Press, Columbus. <https://core.ac.uk/download>
- Irshad, S. (2013). Writing with the Bodies: Women's Voice in Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*. *Galaxy International multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 2. *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*. www.galaxymrj.com.
- Jin, S. (2025). An Interpretation of *The Blind Assassin* from the Perspective of Existentialist Feminism. *Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science*, 9(6). 1082-1086. <https://www.hillpublisher.com/Journals/jhass>

Lin, M. H. (2005). Only the blind are free: Sight and Blindness in Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*. Master's thesis. Faculty of North Carolina State University. United States of America. <https://repository.lib.ncsu.edu/items/dd40bbe7-8ff6-4634-9f12-bea93622d433>

Pengal, A. S., and Venkateswaran, S. Feminist Concerns in Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*. Volume x, Issue 3, pp. *Literary Endeavour*. www.literaryendeavour.org

Rodríguez, L. P. (2022). The Female Companion in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, Alias Grace and *The Blind Assassin*. *Journal of Artistic Creation & Literary Research*, 10(2). <https://openurl.ebsco.com/>

Ryan, J. (2012). *The Novel After Theory*. Columbia University Press.

Sundaram, C. B. (2011). Memory as a Process of Restructuring the Past: A Study of Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*. *DEVANGA ARTS COLLEGE MANAS*.

Tandon, N., and Chandra, A. (2009). *Margaret Atwood: A Jewel in Canadian Writing*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist.

Tolan, F. (2007). *Margaret Atwood: feminism and fiction* (Vol. 170). Rodopi.

Tomanová, M. (2016). Victimization in Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*. Charles University in Prague. Bachelor's Thesis. <https://dspace.cuni.cz/bitstream/handle>

Verma, H., & Kumar, A. (Eds.). (2024). *Gynocritics and the Traversals of Women's Writing: Intersections of Diverse Critical Essays*. *Cambridge Scholars Publishing*.

Wilson, Sharon Rose. (2003) *Margaret Atwood's Textual Assassinations: Recent Poetry and Fiction*. The Ohio State University.

Zhang, L., Xu, H., & Liu, X. (2025). The Otherization of Collective Identities of Both Sexes in the *Blind Assassin* Under the Camera Focalization. *Saudi J. Humanities Soc Sci*, 10(6), 294-299. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjhss.2025.v10i06.003>