
The Image of Women in the Short Stories of Salomat Vafo and Margaret Atwood: The Conflict Between Tradition and Modernity

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Abstract: Through the prism of the struggle between tradition and modernity, this essay explores how women are portrayed in the short tales of Margaret Atwood and Salomat Vafo. Both authors emphasize women's inner lives, societal roles, and psychological challenges while coming from diverse literary and cultural backgrounds. While Atwood depicts women battling and rejecting contemporary patriarchal norms, the study emphasizes how traditional values create female identity in Salomat Vafo's stories. The article's comparative analysis highlights similarities between Eastern and Western worldviews as well as shared themes like female oppression, self-awareness, and resistance. The results show that both writers employ female characters to question social conventions and examine how women's roles are changing in modern society.

Keywords: female image, tradition, modernity, gender roles, Salomat Vafo, Margaret Atwood, short stories

Introduction

The image of women has always occupied a central place in world literature, reflecting social values, cultural norms, and historical changes. In contemporary literary studies, particular attention is paid to how female characters are portrayed within the tension between tradition and modernity. This conflict often reveals deep-rooted gender inequalities and the gradual transformation of women's roles in society.

Salomat Vafo, a representative of modern Uzbek literature, and Margaret Atwood, a prominent figure in contemporary Canadian literature, both explore women's experiences in patriarchal societies. Although their cultural backgrounds differ significantly, both writers focus on women's inner struggles, social limitations, and search for identity. This article aims to analyze and compare the image of women in their short stories, emphasizing how traditional values and modern ideas shape female characters and their destinies.

Women and Tradition in Salomat Vafo's Short Stories

Women are frequently portrayed in Salomat Vafo's short stories within the framework of traditional Eastern civilization, where social expectations, family, and rituals are crucial. Female characters are typically constrained by social conventions, patriarchal authority, and moral obligations. Family respect, obedience, and selflessness are central to their existence.

Instead of being overtly rebellious, Vafo's women frequently engage in quiet, internal resistance. The author conveys the emotional suffering, repressed aspirations, and unmet dreams of her female characters through inner monologues and psychological descriptions. In Vafo's writings, tradition is portrayed as a strong force that restricts women's freedom but also molds their patience and moral fortitude. As a result, the representation of women in a conventional social structure reflects both hardship and resiliency.

Modernity and Female Resistance in Margaret Atwood's Short Stories

Margaret Atwood's portrayal of women is closely connected with modernity and its challenges. Her female characters live in societies that appear progressive on the surface but still maintain subtle forms of patriarchal dominance. Unlike Vafo's characters, Atwood's women are often more vocal, self-aware, and critical of their social environment.

Modernity in Atwood's stories is associated with individualism, freedom of choice, and self-expression. However, it also brings new forms of oppression, such as objectification, psychological manipulation, and social alienation. Atwood's female characters frequently question traditional gender roles and attempt to redefine their identities. Their struggle is not only against men but also against social systems and ideologies that restrict women's autonomy.

Tradition versus Modernity: A Comparative Perspective

The female character in the writings of both authors revolves around the struggle between tradition and modernity. Women internalize their challenges in Salomat Vafo's stories because tradition predominates and contemporary concepts seem weak or unapproachable. Atwood, on the other hand, depicts a society in which modernity gives women means of resistance but does not ensure full equality. Despite these distinctions, women are portrayed by both authors as complicated people rather than helpless victims. Gender inequality and societal issues are mirrored by female characters. Vafo and Atwood highlight women's aspirations for self-realization and dignity while exposing the constraints placed on them through psychological depth and symbolic themes.

In conclusion, the image of women in the short stories of Salomat Vafo and Margaret Atwood reflects a profound conflict between tradition and modernity. Despite differences in cultural background and literary context, both writers portray women as individuals struggling against social constraints and gender-based limitations. Salomat Vafo emphasizes the emotional endurance and silent resistance of women shaped by traditional Eastern values, while Margaret Atwood highlights women's active confrontation with modern forms of patriarchal power.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that tradition often restricts women through customs and moral expectations, whereas modernity, although promising freedom, introduces new and complex challenges. Nevertheless, both authors use female characters to question social norms and expose inequality. Through psychological depth and symbolic representation, Vafo and Atwood present women not merely as victims, but as conscious individuals seeking identity, dignity, and self-realization. Thus, the female image becomes a powerful literary tool for criticizing society and advocating for change.

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