

Article

Social Comparison of Women in The Short Stories of Salomat Vafo and Margaret Atwood

Khasanova Kamola

Lecturer of “History and Philology Department” at The Asia International University

Article information:

Manuscript received: 15 January 2026; **Accepted:** 31 January 2026; **Published:** 14 February 2026

Abstract: This essay explores how the representation of female characters in the short tales of Canadian author Margaret Atwood and Uzbek author Salomat Vafo reflects the idea of social comparison. Both authors portray women who assess their identities, positions, and self-worth by contrasting them with those of other people and with societal norms, despite the cultural, historical, and social settings being different. The study uses a comparative literary analysis to show how women's psychological experiences are shaped by patriarchal systems, gender roles, and social conventions. The results demonstrate that Atwood emphasizes critical awareness and resistance, highlighting both culturally particular and universal aspects of women's social experiences, whereas Vafo stresses internalized comparison and silent persistence.

Keywords: Social Comparison, Women's Identity, Gender Roles, Short Stories, Salomat Vafo, Margaret Atwood

1. Introduction

In contemporary literary studies, the representation of women and their relationship with society has become a significant area of analysis. One of the key psychological and social mechanisms shaping female identity in literature is **social comparison**, a process through which individuals evaluate themselves in relation to others and to socially constructed norms. For women, this process is often intensified by rigid expectations regarding marriage, motherhood, appearance, obedience, and moral behavior.

Salomat Vafo and Margaret Atwood, writing in different cultural and ideological environments, both place women at the center of their narratives. Their short stories portray female characters who continuously measure their lives against social ideals imposed by family, community, or institutional power. This article aims to analyze how social comparison functions in their works and how it influences women's inner conflicts, self-perception, and responses to social pressure.

Social Comparison and Female Identity in Salomat Vafo's Short Stories

In Salomat Vafo's short stories, women are predominantly depicted within a **traditional and patriarchal social structure**. Female characters often compare themselves to socially approved models such as the “ideal wife,” the “patient mother,” or the “self-sacrificing woman.” These comparisons are rarely expressed openly; instead, they occur internally through silence, memory, and psychological reflection.

Vafo's protagonists tend to internalize social expectations, which leads to feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and suppressed desire. The process of social comparison does not usually result in open rebellion but rather in emotional restraint and quiet suffering. Through subtle narrative techniques—inner monologue, symbolic details, and everyday

domestic situations—the author reveals how women judge themselves according to standards set by society rather than personal fulfillment.

However, this internal comparison also serves as a space for self-awareness. Even when outward resistance is absent, Vafo's female characters gradually recognize the injustice of their circumstances, suggesting a latent critique of gender inequality.

Social Comparison and Resistance in Margaret Atwood's Short Stories

Margaret Atwood's short stories present social comparison as a more **explicit and critical process**. Her female characters frequently compare themselves not only to other women but also to men and to institutionalized systems of power. These comparisons highlight inequalities related to autonomy, sexuality, labor, and bodily control.

Atwood portrays social comparison as a tool used by society to discipline women, reinforcing conformity through shame, surveillance, and normalization. Unlike Vafo's characters, Atwood's protagonists often respond with irony, skepticism, or direct resistance. Their awareness of social comparison enables them to question dominant narratives about femininity and to challenge imposed identities.

The author employs satire, dystopian elements, and sharp psychological insight to expose how patriarchal ideologies manipulate comparison to maintain control. As a result, social comparison becomes both a source of conflict and a catalyst for empowerment.

Comparative Analysis

Although Salomat Vafo and Margaret Atwood operate within different cultural frameworks, their portrayals of social comparison reveal striking similarities. In both cases, women experience identity formation as a constrained process shaped by external judgments. The key difference lies in **the mode of response**: Vafo emphasizes inward reflection and emotional endurance, while Atwood highlights intellectual resistance and social critique.

Vafo's narratives reflect a society where conformity is maintained through tradition and moral expectation, whereas Atwood depicts modern systems of power that function through ideology and surveillance. Nevertheless, both authors demonstrate that social comparison is a central mechanism through which women's lives are regulated and their self-perception shaped.

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, the short stories of Salomat Vafo and Margaret Atwood illustrate that social comparison plays a crucial role in shaping women's psychological and social identities. Despite cultural differences, female characters in both authors' works confront similar pressures arising from gender norms and societal expectations.

While Vafo's stories emphasize internal struggle and silent awareness, Atwood's narratives foreground conscious resistance and critique. Together, these perspectives offer a comprehensive understanding of how social comparison operates across cultures, revealing its profound impact on women's self-understanding and agency. The comparative study of these authors contributes to broader discussions on gender, identity, and power in world literature.

REFERENCES

- Atwood, M. (1996). *Good Bones and Simple Murders*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- Atwood, M. (2006). *The Tent*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- Vafo, S. Selected Short Stories. Tashkent: Uzbek Literature Publishing House.
- Beauvoir, S. de. (2011). *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Tyson, L. (2015). *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. New York: Routledge. 38
- Khalilova, K. (2023). ACADEMIC VOCABULARY: HOW TO TEACH AND STUDY IT. *Modern Science and Research*, 2(9), 79-83.
- Khalilova, K. (2023). MASTERING READING COMPREHENSION: A VITAL SKILL FOR

- ACADEMIC SUCCESS. Академические исследования в современной науке, 2(23), 83-89.
- Khalilova, K. (2024). CREATING A SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS. *Modern Science and Research*, 3(1), 251–258.
- Khalilova, K. (2024). INCORPORATING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY IN TEACHING ENGLISH. *Modern Science and Research*, 3(2).
- Kamola, K. (2023). THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE. *Science and Research*, 2(12), 284–2
- Kamola, K. (2025). COMPARATIVE LITERARY ANALYSIS OF SALOMAT VAFO'S "QAYTMAS YO'L" AND MARGARET ATWOODS "HAPPY ENDINGS". *SHOKH LIBRARY*, 1(12).
- Khalilova, K. (2025). MISMATCHED METHODOLOGIES: THE PITFALLS OF IGNORING STUDENTS' TEMPERAMENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING. *Modern Science and Research*, 4(6), 486-488.
- Khalilova, K. (2025). TAILORING LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS TO STUDENTS' TEMPERAMENTS: IS COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) UNIVERSALLY SUITABLE. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences and Innovations*, 1(2), 205-207.
- Khalilova, K. (2025). THE INFLUENCE OF TEMPERAMENT CHARACTERISTICS ON CHOOSING LANGUAGE LEARNING METHODS IN ENGLISH CLASSES. *Journal of Applied Science and Social Science*, 1(1), 336-339.
- Kamola, K. (2025). The Influence of Temperament Characteristics on Language Learning Strategies in Online Speaking Courses. *Spanish Journal of Innovation and Integrity*, 39, 36-39.
- Khalilova, K. (2025). TAILORING LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS TO STUDENTS' TEMPERAMENTS: IS COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) UNIVERSALLY SUITABLE. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences and Innovations*, 1(2), 205-207.
- Khalilova, K. (2025). THE INFLUENCE OF TEMPERAMENT CHARACTERISTICS ON CHOOSING LANGUAGE LEARNING METHODS IN ENGLISH CLASSES. *Journal of Applied Science and Social Science*, 1(1), 336-339.
- Khalilova, K. (2024). INCORPORATING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY IN TEACHING ENGLISH. *Modern Science and Research*, 3(2).
- Khalilova, K. (2024). CREATING A SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS. *Modern Science and Research*, 3(1), 251-258.
- Axmedova A.K. Poetika va obraz poetikasi / "Umumiy Tilshunoslik va Antropotsentrik Tilshunoslik hamda Lingvoadabiyotshunoslikning dolzarb muammolari" mavzusidagi Xalqaro ilmiy-amaliy anjuman. Mirzo Ulug'bek nomidagi O'zbekiston Milliy universiteti. – Toshkent, 2023. 23-may. – B. 346-348.