
From Raw Girlhood to Rotten Femininity: A Feminist Re-conceptualization of Lévi-Straussian Culinary Modality to read Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*

Arundhati R

PhD Scholar, Dept. of English IEHE

BU Bhopal

Mentor- Dr. Shreeja T Sharma

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Abstract

Anthropology has studied Food beyond its material necessities as a semiotic field, embodiment of myriad complexities of human existence. Lately, it has emerged as a vibrant field of socio-cultural cartographies explicating our communal and cultural dynamics such as identities, social hierarchies and gender dynamics embedded within our socio-cultural milieu. Claude Lévi-Strauss' in his seminal work *Mythologiques* (1964), in the essay *The Raw and the Cooked* posits that cooking and foodways as a total social phenomenon. His theory of *Culinary Triangle* organizes food practices into three symbolic categories of *Raw*, *Cooked* and *Rotten*- delineating transformation from nature into culture. Although, Lévi-Strauss' work implicitly gestures toward gendered distinctions the theory falls short in adequately exploring the relationship of food with the female identity. Thus, this study employs a feminist re-interpretation of the Lévi-Strauss' *Culinary Triangle* to position female fictional characters along the vectors of *Raw*, *Cooked*, and *Rotten* serving as a metaphorical lens within fiction to map the construction and regulation of their gendered identities, revealing how feminist resistance and subversion circulates within the modality. Methodologically, the paper foregrounding the feminist reconceptualization of Lévi-Straussian *Culinary* modality aims to investigate Elaine, protagonist in the Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*- in her natural state, her hegemonic socio-cultural acculturation and the feminist subversion thereof explored through food symbolism embedded within the fictional narrative.

Keywords: Lévi-Strauss' *Culinary Triangle*, Culinary Symbolism, Gender Identities, Margaret Atwood, Feminist Subversion

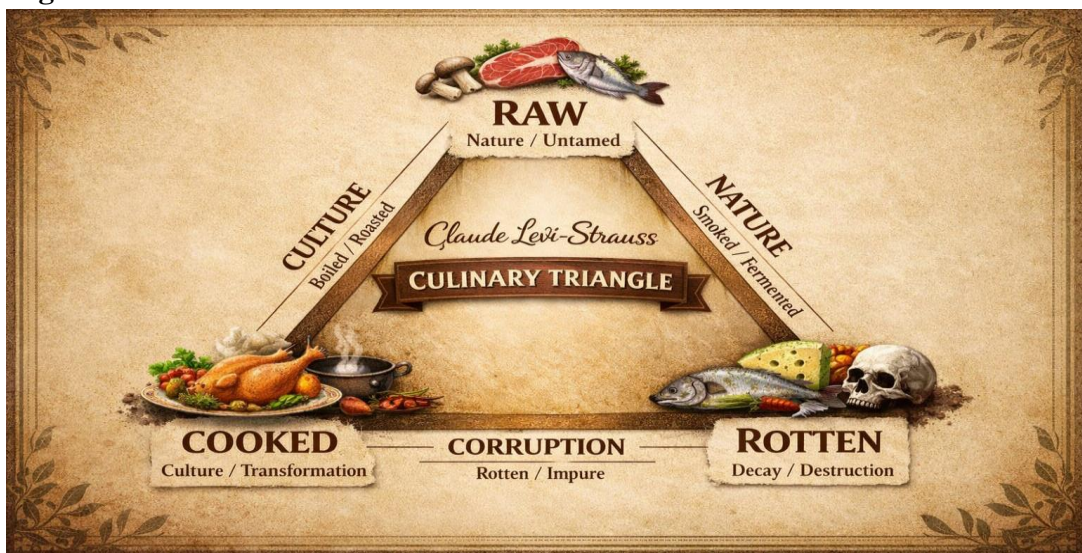
Introduction

“If language is truly universal form of human activity; if there’s no society without a language then there’s no society which does not cook in some manner at least some of its food” (Lévi-Strauss 36). Culture and civilization have long been conceptualized as dynamic constructs, encompassing shared symbols, practices and power relations that define collective identities and social orders. Food and foodways too encompassing production, consumption and ritualism thus become vital cartographies to map terrains of culture that transform ephemeral acts of food preparations, ingestions, ceremonies into significant markers of social and ideological realities. Barthes in *Towards a Psychology of Contemporary Food Consumption* insisted that we think beyond economics and delve deeper into the psychological nuances of food (Counhan 29). Lamenting the trivialization of food as either just a nutritive force or socio-political resource Barthes posited food as “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages and behaviours” (Counihan 29). Structuralists and modern anthropologists evinced a pronounced interest in dissecting food and foodways viewing them as nuanced sites for not only decoding our civilizational values, codes of kinship to comprehend socio-cultural patterns of communal cognition. This paradigm of structurally dissecting and assessing food developed in tandem with the 1960s wave of Culture Studies evolved from anthropology’s functionalist roots. The anthropological domain then, bridging material necessity of food comprehends it as a semiotic system, embodiment of myriad complexities of human existence. “Anthropologists and sociologists from Claude Lévi-Strauss to Claude Fischler have demonstrated that the domain of food is not only that of the appetite, of desire, of pleasure, but also the reflection of a society’s structure and world vision” (Dvorak 17). Food has thus emerged as a vibrant field in itself that is studied not merely as tools of sustenance but as a cultural marker that mediates social and communal identities. Foodways as cultural cartographies that explicate a civilization's complexities by encoding social hierarchies, cultural identities also significantly reveal gender dynamics embedded within our socio-cultural milieu. “Every society has gender roles expectations that

are based on gender stereotypes. The act of eating and drinking are central for human behaviour, whether for physiological needs, for pleasure, or expression... gender differences exist in food choice and preference” (Rodrigues). What is peculiar of our culture and civilization is that they are profoundly engendered; our cultural sphere is entrenched with binaries of masculinity and femininity which is permeated through symbolic orders of everyday life also with the engagement with food.

Claude Lévi-Strauss’ in his seminal work *Mythologiques* (1964), in the essay *The Raw and the Cooked* posits that cooking constitutes a total social phenomenon. His four-volume work *Mythologiques* was originally written in French, the four volumed work was later translated into English by John and Doreen Weightman. As a text of cultural anthropology, it has been significant in intersecting food studies with cultural nuances yielding profound insights into culinary practices that encode and perpetuate socio-cultural norms.

Fig#1



His anthropological theory introduced in his 1966 essay *The Raw and the Cooked* thus developed as “the Culinary Triangle” provides a foundational structuralist framework for an analysis for food and foodways in its aspirational transition from nature (raw) to culture (cooked) through structured oppositions. “Lévi-Strauss postulates that the raw/cooked axis is characteristic of all human culture, with elements falling along the "raw" side of the axis being those of "natural" origin, and

those on the "cooked" side being of "cultural" origin - i.e. products of human creation" (Decameron Web).

"All societies cook in some manner at least some of their food; cooking is the minimal criterion of culture" (Lévi-Strauss 36). In its original formulation, Culinary the triangle organizes food practices into three symbolic categories of *Raw*, *Cooked* and *Rotten*- delineating transformation of nature into culture. The triangle positing a transformation from *Raw*, (nature) to *Cooked* (culture) via processes like roasting defines the masculine intervention whereas reaching the *Cooked* through boiling was feminine. Studying the Lévi-Straussian modality thus unveils our engendered acculturation where masculinities align with robust foods such as red meats, grilling representative of virility and public powers while femininities with light indoor cooking such as salads, baking delineating domesticity and public restrains. Also, a technique reliant on mediations of water, utensils and preservation signifies encoded dependency of the female identity- cooking as a quintessential activity to their identity as a wide, mother, nurturer in the socio-cultural schemata.

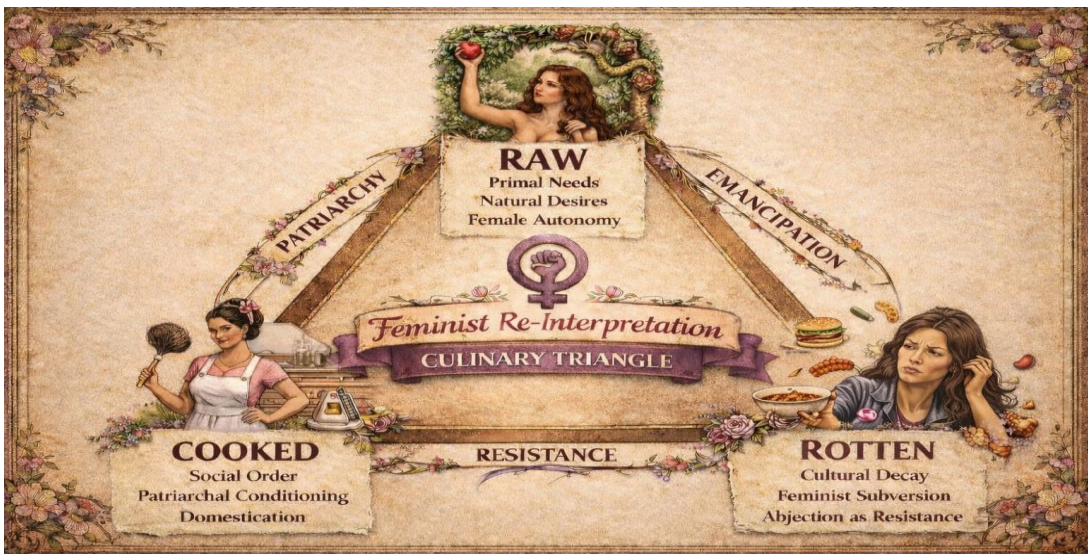
Lévi-Strauss' structuralist anthropology, including the problematic nature/culture distinction, has been appropriated by some feminist theorists to support and elucidate the sex/gender distinction: the position that there is a natural or biological female who is subsequently transformed into a socially subordinate "woman," with the consequence that "sex" is to nature or "the raw" as gender is to culture or "the cooked. (Butler 47)

Although Lévi-Strauss' *Culinary Triangle* implicitly gestures toward gendered distinctions of boiling as evoking domestic intimacy or roasting as a public spectacle of cooking; theory falls short in inadequately exploring women's relationship with food, dietary practices and domestic labor. Most interpretations fixate on symbolic oppositions between nature and culture, overlooking gendered dynamics of who performs the transformative work mediating these realms. Despite cooking's historical gendering as women's domain within reproductive labour, scholarly attention has failed to adopt a feminist lens. A gender-conscious re-reading of the theory would be significant in revealing how women's culinary labour working as the invisible mechanism of converting the raw into a family's sustenance significant in the social order.

Thus, the triangle encodes not just culinary processes but patriarchal divisions, positioning women as domestic custodians while marginalizing them from

symbolic authority. This study proffers a feminist re-reading of the Lévi-Strauss' *Culinary Triangle* by positioning the female characters along the vectors of *Raw*, *Cooked*, and *Rotten* to serve as a metaphorical lens within fiction to map the construction and regulation of gendered identities and to reveal how feminist resistance and subversion circulates within the modality.

Feminist Re-conceptualization of Lévi-Straussian Culinary Modality:



Fig#2

In literary texts, fictional narratives social structures, communal identities and gender dynamics frequently refract themselves through metaphors of cooking eating and consumption. Food thus becomes a language in literary narratives and cooking becomes social conditioning whereas the imagery of decay or rotten is often employed by authors to denote a character's resistance to hegemonic norms. In Atwoodian narratives such a narration stands true wherein regulating the eating and consumption aligns with social acculturation and disciplining of the female bodies. A feminist reconceptualization of Lévi-Straussian modality exposes gendered hierarchies in food transformation wherein The *Raw* vertex signifies primal desires and nutritive needs as female bodily autonomy- a life-affirming force embodying uninhibited feminine sexuality. The shift from *Raw* to *Cooked* denotes cultural transformation: primal drives disciplined by social institutions and patriarchal domestication. *Cooked* thus emblemizes acculturation, ideological conditioning of

instinctual femininity under male hegemony, rendering gender hierarchies normative. This framework thus reveals how gendered identities are *cooked* into culturally regulated forms, exposing engendered hierarchies, marginalized subjectivities, and modalities of female resistance in narratives. Rooted in the feminized domestic realm, the alchemy of *Raw-to-Cooked* emblemizes cultural discipline over primal impulses reinforcing hegemonic norms that reduce women to reproductive tools or consumable entities within patriarchal and capitalist socio-cultural schemes.

Thus, analysing fiction through the *Culinary Triangle* yields potent critical insights into gender identity and social hierarchies inscribed in culture, as food in literature transcends mere nourishment to function as "a symbolic system through which societies organize meanings" (Lévi-Strauss). The study foregrounding the feminist reconceptualization of Lévi-Straussian Culinary Triangle aims to investigate Elaine, protagonist in the *Cat's Eye*- her natural state, patriarchal acculturation and her feminist subversion of gendered norms through food symbolism.

Methodologically, the study employs an interpretive paradigm of Lévi-Strauss' *Culinary Triangle* reconfigured through the feminist optics to critically read Margaret Atwood's fiction name *Cat's Eye* serving as primary text for analysing how culinary semiotics encode women's subjectivity, agency, marginalization and resistance. This methodology aims to analyse Atwoodian heroines superimposing representations onto the triangle's feminist axes with supplementary insights from feminist theorists Susan Bordo, Judith Butler and Julia Kristeva to further situate the Atwoodian characters examining their socio-cultural positionality within the patriarchal order to examine the social hegemonies embedded within the narratives. The vector of *Cooked* stands to emblemize patriarchy-imposed domesticity as acculturation for women akin to Butler's "Gender Performativity" (Butler xv) while the *Raw* contextualizes Susan Bordo's argument of female resistance for bodily autonomy (Bordo7) whereas the *Rotten* signifies Abjection (Kristeva 2) as subversion owing to a psychic rupture from socio-cultural norms delineating feminist resistance of the gender performative order that attempts to *cook* female agency into socially expected subservience. By fusing structuralism with feminist critique, such an analysis unveils Atwood's culinary metaphors as subversive narrative apparatuses that interrogate patriarchy induced form of femininity while illuminating women's culturally imperative identities. The paper shall henceforth argue how Atwood

delineates the female body, consumption, appetite in connection with gender and social norms in her 1988 novel *Cat's Eye* wherein Food, Hunger, Eating and motifs of Cannibalism become symbolic tools promulgating acculturation and or engendered social regulation that works to reveal tensions between natural urges and culturally constructed bodies; that “are not born... in fact made by culture” (Bordo 288).

Elaine: *Raw* in Existence, *Cooked* in norms and *Rotten* in her Resistance

“In *Cat's Eye*, the motif of food is an undercurrent. The images of concrete food illustrate and symbolise Elaine's feelings of misery, depression and displacedness” (Lahikainen 178).

Elaine's early childhood, is situated in the Canadian wilderness, corresponds to her *Raw* identity, her pre-social phase, food is neither moralised nor encoded with social stratification- it is *raw*; existing outside the symbolic regimes of class and gender dynamics that later come to define her psyche. Elaine's family dwell in close harmony with nature- subsisting on berries and fruits they use to prepare puddings and sauces (Atwood 118). For them, food serves merely as a nutritive element devoid of any culinary indulgences or the performative assertion of social class or status. Elaine's childhood in Toronto's urbane society is linked to feminine subservience and self-abnegation. Contextualizing her entry into urban girlhood through the engendered frameworks maps her transition into gender codification as part of her acculturation wherein ingestion becomes a highly regulated field defined by rigid norms of propriety and bodily etiquettes. She's introduced to her childhood bully Cordelia under an apple tree “There's dog poop on your shoes”, says Cordelia. I look down. “It's only a rotten apple. It's the same colour though, isn't it? Not the hard kind but soft squooshy like peanut butter” (Atwood 68). In their first exchange, the rotten becomes a condensed field of hegemonic dynamics between them, Elaine is not merely teased but positioned as waste, outside the boundaries of the desired feminine subject whereas Cordelia self assumes the position of the judging, norm-enforcing subject. These troublesome dynamics persist throughout Elaine's relationship with Cordelia and Elaine is seen carrying the scars of this childhood aggression into her adulthood in which Elaine is repeatedly cast as *rotten*, an abject outside the boundaries. In this context, Food imagery through the novel reveals how it is deeply implicated in the regulation of female bodies (Bordo 186). Elaine's interaction with edibles thus functions not merely as a marker of urbanity but as a

mechanism of social exclusion and how her pre-teen female body becomes a practical, direct locus of social control.

At school, in Toronto Cordelia acquaints her with a class consciousness that further unsettles her sense of self. Drinking milk with straws (Atwood 48) and eggs served in eggcups (Atwood 52) leads to Elaine internalizing Cordelia's derogatory public remarks for Elaine's family; "It's as if she's reporting on the antics of some primitive tribe: true, but incredible" (Atwood 62).

Elaine's act of distributing candy to her own bullies and tormenters especially Cordelia who continuously attempts to subjugate and marginalize her becomes a disturbing sight for the readers. Elaine's act is not merely a personal choice rather an engendered social performance of sharing candy - expected acts from a feminine identity suggesting Elaine has internalized these social norms indicating her as *cooked* to social conformity.

I buy liquorice whips, jelly beans, many-layered blackballs with the seed in the middle, packages of fizzy sherbet you suck up through a straw. I dole them out equally, these offerings, these atonements, into the waiting hands of my friends. In the moment just before giving, I am loved (Atwood 145).

Although her act has a momentary value, in the larger societal schemata it is a "stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 179) as her girlhood demands she perform her gender instituted in exterior space through acts of caregiving and sharing. It functions as social ingestion that binds Elaine to her female peers who also happen to be her harassers. This gesture, ostensibly communal, in fact reveals the extent to which women are conditioned to performative femininity and to participate in their own erasure self-sabotage to the extent of erasure of selfhood.

The *Cooked* signifies not merely a cultural formation but an internalisation of social structures that demand compliance and subservience from a female identity- "gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character" (Butler 180). Elaine realises that food becomes currency within a patriarchal economy of acceptance, where the female subject must offer herself metonymically through food in order to be liked and loved.

I know that muffins have to be baked right away, right after they've been ladled out, or they'll be flat and ruined. I can't afford the distraction of comfort. If I give in to it, what little backbone I have left will crumble away to nothing. I pull away from her. (Atwood 168).

This erasure of self is further exemplified in the scene involving Elaine baking with her mother who suspects her daughter's intimidating peer dynamics and intervenes by asking her to stand up for herself; "Don't let them push you around. Don't be spineless. You have to have more backbone" (Atwood 149). Elaine interprets it as an accusation of spinelessness or insufficient assertiveness and her comprehension is already filtered through entrenched social acculturation, pre conceived notions of femininity and her mother's evaluative comments, all of which culminates into an internalized sense of low self-worth. Thus, she continues to persist in tolerating Cordelia's obnoxious and demeaning behaviour, "they need to go to into oven" (ibid.) says Elaine, implying that she would continue to *cook* herself and endure the grilling of bullies not as submission but as resilience and in a way of resistance. "As a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences...those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (Butler 178).

The Christmas dinner scene involving Mr. Banerji foregrounds the *Cooked* as a site of ideological enforcement where cultural performance is the key. The meal, emblematic of western domestic order, imposes a normative structure of consumption that renders the outsider uncomfortable. However, the main dish Turkey's visceral materiality disrupts the sanitized illusion of culinary culture-exposing the violence underlying culinary practices. "The turkey resembles a trussed, headless baby. It has thrown off its disguise as a meal and has revealed itself to me for what it is (...) I'm eating a wing (...) of a tame turkey, the stupidest bird in the world, so stupid it can't even fly anymore. I am eating lost flight." (Atwood 140). Elaine's alignment with Mr. Banerji's aversion signals a momentary rupture in her assimilation as a *Cooked* subject of social order. If *Cooked* represents the imposition of a certain order, then *Rotten* emerges as its undoing. The turkey, once recognised as a dead animal, becomes abject: it collapses the boundary between food and corpse, culture and nature. Crucially, within a feminist framework, the *Rotten* is not merely degenerative but also generative- a site where dominant codes collapse and new meanings emerge as abject such that which must be expelled to maintain the integrity

of the subject, yet it persistently returns, unsettling boundaries and provoking disgust (Kristeva 30). The scene is significant in breaking Elaine's perception of social conformity as social inclusion. Elaine's abhorrence of the normative framework of extended performance denotes the beginning of a subversive shift that is manifested through the imagery of grotesque in the novel. This rupture is abjection that disturbs identity, system and order (ibid.).

In *Cat's Eye*, the proliferation of images of decay, poison and grotesque fall apposite to Lévi-Straussian vector of Rotten. For Lévi-Strauss *Cooked* is the product of cultural processes (such as the application of heat or tools), whereas the *Rotten* is inadvertent by product of natural temporal process which symbolically represents cultural excesses or decay. The same can be critiqued in the laboratory scene with Elaine's brother Stephen and his girlfriend Carol. At their father's laboratory Carol exaggerates disgust at jarred animal appendages that Stephen mimics as foods is not instinctual but performed, signalling the internalisation of patriarchal codes that associate femininity with restraint and passive behavioural codes.

Stephen tries Carol out on the jars of lizards and ox eyeballs. "Ew", she says. "What if they put one down your back?" My brother says how would she like some for dinner? He makes chewing and slurping noises. "Ew," says Carol, screwing up her face and wriggling all over. I can't pretend to be shocked and disgusted too (Atwood 53).

Carol's exaggerated disgust in the laboratory atypical act of her performativity exemplifies her own *cooked* feminine identity. Her reaction "indicating female appetites require containment and control, whereas male indulgence is legitimated and encouraged" (Bordo 14). Consequentially, it maybe conceived that her performative abhorrence is more citational as she's reiterating cultural script that relegates female consumption within the binary of delicacy/aversion. Elaine, caught between these competing paradigms, is rendered silent- her inability to participate marks a critical disjuncture from her cooked acculturation- an estrangement- neither subject nor object, it is neither here nor there but it is everywhere because it is incorporated in the self until self becomes aware of its presence or absence (Kristeva 60). Her hesitation and eventual silence allegorize her resistance to participate in this regulatory regime where the masculine and feminine can never overlap. Instead, she finds herself incapable of either role- neither was she amused nor entirely disgusted with the jarred appendage of critters and thus

she appears to be in liminal space of womanhood where “looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside” (ibid.).

Elaine comes to associate birthday cakes with a sense of shame and self-contempt. Rather than signifying pleasure, cakes are inextricably linked with pain and emotional violence for Elaine.

There must have been a cake, with candles and wishes (...) the only trace they've left on me has been a vague horror of birthday parties, not other people's, my own. I think of pastel icing, pink candles burning in the pale November afternoon light, and there is a sense of shame and failure. (Atwood 113).

She develops difficulties with her breakfast when the harassment within her peer group reaches an intensifying magnitude; “shame over our bodies self loathing... often manifests itself after an episode of sexual abuse or humiliation, can be seen as a punishment of bodily desires” (Bordo 8). To Elaine, the porridge symbolizes the torment that the day ahead will inflict upon her thus, consuming it is disgusting and painful; “The porridge is like boiling mud. I know that when it comes time to eat the porridge, I will have trouble: my stomach will contract, my hands will get cold, it will be difficult to swallow” (Atwood 126). However, countering her own revulsions she forces herself to swallow the meal, indulging in object of her own abjection as an act of resistance against the impending intimidation by her peers.

Cordelia's harassment and coercion have perpetually impaired Elaine's sense of self-worth and exacerbated her adulthood anxieties; “I've started to chew my fingers again. There's blood, a taste I remember. It tastes of orange popsicles, penny gumballs, red licorice, gnawed hair, dirty ice” (Atwood 9). As an adult, she resorts to borderline self-harm dissolving boundaries between the eater and the eaten. There's suggested cannibalism in Elaine's acts of biting her lips, chewing her fingers delineating her as both subject and object of consumption, enacting upon her own body the predatory logic imposed by her social environment manifesting as self-harm. This self-cannibalisation exposes the mechanisms through which femininity is constructed as consumable; the “coding of repulsion in relation to the other as an effort to autonomize the self” as the body in its wounded materiality becomes a site of subversion unsettling and challenging the hierarchical order (Kristeva 82).

Elaine develops a fraught relationship with food, particularly in her ability to sustain a clean organic *raw* diet; “I will buy oranges, yogurt without the jam. I will have a positive attitude, take care of myself, I’ll feed myself enzymes, and friendly bacteria. These good thoughts carry me” (Atwood 117). However, her eating habits are regulated by Ben; “When I’m with Ben I eat at regular times because he does, I eat regular things, but when I’m alone I indulge in junk food and scavenging (...) It’s bad for me, but I need to remember what bad for me is like” (Atwood 189). Although, Elaine describes him as someone “uncomplicated and easily pleased” Ben has a controlling presence in Elaine’s life, suggesting of a compulsive need to be bossed around; to have her raw desires such as hunger guided and controlled by an external force (Atwood 212). Her comparison of Ben to a fruit “he is like an apple, after a prolonged and gluttonous binge” while reveals his nurturing presence also underscores Elaine’s lack of self-regulation, loss of self-sovereignty and unresolved trauma (Atwood 403).

Years into adulthood, Elaine as a successful artist she imagines a chance confrontation with Cordelia where Elaine is self-assured and composed, holding a glass of wine, too meticulously, “without spilling a drop” she’d greet Cordelia (Atwood 21). This is an imagined rehearsal of her triumph: Elaine, now an accomplished adult envisions cementing her own value through the precise of handling of the wine glass. Elaine’s image of not spilling a drop of wine can be read as a subtle enactment of Butler’s performativity turned into Kristevan abjection-rooted in resistance and subversion. Elaine while performing the normative script of femininity, weaponizes it: the gracefully balanced wine becomes a counter-performance of her accultured femininity. Her poise elevates from compelling submission to gender performativity to a potent subversive re-enactment: that performs femininity with excessive control, whereby Elaine cements her hegemonic value by performing flawless containment. Once cast as *rotten*-shamed through seemingly minor but deeply humiliating exchanges by Cordelia, Elaine subverts her self-abnegation by carefully avoiding the abject of wine stains and jittery chaos in her gallery fantasy.

Conclusion

Within the Lévi-Straussian modality this abjection harbors subversive potential, rupturing the regulatory logic of the *Cooked* vertex and exposing the fragility of normative consumption. Elaine's self-harm biting, chewing, peeling

literalizes internalization of a disciplinary hegemony that portends to analysing her female subjectivity and identity to unveil her transmutation from vertex of *Raw* tenderness of childhood to the *Cooked* girlhood- a process designed to acculturate her into a socially expendable womanhood. Her encounters with *the Rotten* then- the poisonous flows, the boiling mud, and the incapacity to consume the organic become symbolic of her subversive psychic rupture that attempts to contest the hegemonic gender code that dehumanizes her female subjectivity and strips of her organic female agency. Elaine's statement of "Until I moved to Toronto I was happy" (Atwood 22) is "a metaphor for anxiety about internal processes out of control uncontained desire, unrestrained hunger, uncontrolled impulse" (Bordo 189). She enters the urban-scape of Toronto as an unsocialized child, who experiences a cultural shock of eating etiquettes that equate gender identity with rigid social order. Elaine's movement "between the bush and Toronto is visible in terms of food" (Lahikainen 179) on the vector from *Raw to Cooked* signals her organic corruption and a breakdown of her cultural order; rendering her evolution into young girlhood in a perpetual liminality (Kristeva), suspended between exclusion and assimilation.

As a girl she's unable to socialize with peers "Playing with girls is different and at first I feel strange as I do it, self-conscious, as if I'm only doing an imitation of a girl." (Atwood 55). Further, harassment, coercion and intimidation by Cordelia exacerbates her liminal flux along with having had a lasting and detrimental effect on Elaine that severely impacts her dietary patterns substantiating Bordo's claim of "eating disorders, far from being "bizarre" and anomalous, are utterly continuous with a dominant element of the experience of being female in this culture (Bordo 57). The *Rotten* vertex emerges as Elaine's performative script gets disrupted- when Edible foods and drinks turn unpalatable the "red jars of chokecherry jelly appear to Elaine as "filled with blood, like the bodies of blackflies" (Atwood 155). She does "not experience repulsion, but only imagines it" delineating the grotesque as resistive force against the social excess that impose containment upon her free spirit (Kristeva 144).

Concluding in this context, Atwood's narrative and Elaine's character transforms structuralist culinary modality into food symbolism that proffers a potent critique of how internalized socio-cultural norms *cook* a female agency and the *Rotten* stands to denote Elaine's subversion as she's seen enjoying a "thick, jolting, poisonous coffee" (Atwood 18) as a reclamation of her organic female agency

whereby “nourishment becomes deathly drive to devouring the other” (Kristeva 118). The Culinary Triangle thus, reconceptualized as feminist modality transcends structuralist food mapping to chart social hegemonic operations in *Cat's Eye* of how norms surrounding hierarchies, female bodies and eating etiquettes circulate to denote the triangle vertices- *Raw* as primal female autonomy; *Cooked* as social acculturation and *Rotten* as Abject Resistance.

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