



## RECLAIMING THE GAZE: FEMINIST RE-VISIONING IN ATWOOD'S AND POLLEY'S *ALIAS GRACE*

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### Abstract

This paper examines the implications of feminist film theory for both Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace* (1996) and Sarah Polley's Netflix miniseries *Alias Grace* (2017), with a focus on the relationship between the gaze, gender, and narrative control. Based on the theoretical frameworks of Laura Mulvey, Bell Hooks, and Judith Butler, this paper challenges the patriarchal modes of spectatorship and the retrieval of the female gaze by aligning cinematic gaze techniques with the consciousness of the protagonist, Grace Marks. The research posits that Polley adapts the metafictional critique of historiography made by Atwood into a visual rhetoric of feminist reclaiming, with the female subject no longer the passive object of interpretation as the writer of her own narrative, comprising fragmented and resistant pieces. In a discussion about visual style, narrative fragmentation, and embodied metaphors like sewing and silence, *Alias Grace* comes out as an intertextual dialogue between the series and the novel that confronts the patriarchal gaze. This work eventually reveals how feminist adaptation challenges the meaning of authorship, spectatorship and historical memory in the modern visual cultural environment.

**Keywords:** *Adaptation Studies, Female Agency, Feminist Film Theory, Narrative Control, The Gaze*

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## 1. Introduction

The novel *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood (1996) and its Netflix adaptation of 2017 fill a very niche intersection of literature, film, and feminist theory. The two works interpret the mysterious criminal case of Grace Marks, a nineteenth-century Irish-Canadian domestic servant convicted of murder, to challenge the cultural discourses that historically defined and delimited women's identities. The novel by Atwood restages the life of Grace by piecing together her testimonies, letters, and archival evidence, which challenge the power of historical records and the gender bias of narration. Polley's screen adaptation, twenty years later, transforms these textual complexities into a visual grammar of resistance by using the cinematic tools to resist patriarchal systems of the gaze, representation and interpretation.

The conceptual basis of the analysis of this adaptation is feminist film theory, which gained prominence in the 1970s when Laura Mulvey wrote a seminal essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). The concept of the male gaze by Mulvey brings about an assumption that traditionally mainstream cinema puts the spectatorship in consideration with the heterosexual male gaze, which makes women appear as subjects of eroticism instead of subjects that control the narrative. The framework of Mulvey was later broadened and criticised by subsequent feminist theorists like bell hooks (1992) and Judith Butler (1990), who showed more focus on the matters of race, spectatorship and performativity in the creation of gender and subjectivity. Their interventions make it possible to have an intersectional and fluid sense of how women are made through visual and narrative structures both on and off the screen.

The very process of telling stories turns out to be the arena of a gendered power game in both Atwood's and Polley's versions of *Alias Grace*. The narration of Grace is carried through several male interpreters: lawyers, doctors, and journalists, who strive to decode and define her. Her own voice is elusive, discontinuous and deliberately ambiguous. Polley dramatises this uncertainty further by using visual effects such as mirrors, sewing and frequent close-up shots, which put the viewer into the inner world of Grace but not into the voyeuristic perspective of the male viewers. By such methods, Polley not only adapts Atwood's novel in the feminist revisionism but also takes it further in critiquing the cinematic authorship per se, reclaiming the gaze as the feminist act of agency.

This paper suggests that Polley, in the Netflix miniseries *Alias Grace*, reinvents both the visual and narrative syntax of the patriarchal gaze. This examination shows how the adaptation changes the politics of gaze to politics of liberation, in which the silence, fragmentation, and work of Grace are turned into a visual and narrative means of resistance. By doing so, the adaptation by Polley goes beyond the limits of text and screen; it is a feminist revision, re-seeing history through the perspective of the oppressed woman.

### 1.1. Research Objectives

- To discuss the issue of Sarah Polley as a feminist challenging the male gaze in her *Alias Grace*
- To discuss the Feminist Film Theory in the context of gender, gaze, and narrative control in *Alias Grace* by Atwood and Polley
- To examine how silence, stitching and domesticity serve as symbols of female agency and resistance

### 1.2. Research Questions

1. What cinematic techniques does Sarah Polley employ to challenge the male gaze in her adaptation of *Alias Grace*?
2. How are the themes of gender and narrative control portrayed in Sarah Polley's *Alias Grace*?
3. What do the repetitive themes of needlework, silence and homemaking signify in the novel and the series?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Feminist Narratives and Historical Revisionism in Atwood's *Alias Grace*

The book *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood (1996) has been widely discussed with regard to its involvement with gendered historiography, fragmentation of narrative and construction of female identity. According to scholars, the piece by Atwood challenges the patriarchal system that suppresses the voices of women both in history and literature. Howells (2005) notes that the narrative approach of Atwood is the one that subjects the authority of a historian to ruination by preempting the existence of multiple truths and the flux of memory. The disjointed voice of Grace, which swings between disclosure and denial, disrupts the anticipation of reader of a well-articulated female subject. Bouson (2010) also argues that the confrontation of female subjectivity and masculine interpretation is presupposed by the narrative of Atwood, where the story of Grace is recurrently mediated to the male authorities, i.e., doctors, judges, and journalists.

Another aspect of the motif of sewing and domestic work in the novel that has received criticism as a metaphor of narrative control is the theme. According to Wisker (2012), the female characters created by Atwood build meaning and identity by creatively manipulating domestic skills and turn the act of confinement into the act of self-expression. On the same note, Corseuil (2001) views the act of stitching by Grace as a subversive authorship, an act that is comparable to the fragmented textual formatting of the novel. The critics, using these interpretations, present *Alias Grace* as a feminist rewriting of history that gives voice to the voice of the working-class woman, who has been silenced.

### 2.2. The Feminist Film Adaptation and the Visual Politics of *Alias Grace*

Sarah Polley (2017) recreates the feminist project developed by Atwood as a film language. Critics point out that the visual strategies developed by Polley are opposed to the voyeurism of patriarchal spectatorship. Wilson (2018) believes that the adaptation redefines the historical female figure in an empathetic instead of an eroticised gaze, through close-ups and contemplative visuals, putting the viewer into the consciousness of Grace. This is in line with the claim of Smelik (1998) that feminist cinema attempts to generate other modes of looking that subvert the domineering scopic regimes.

The non-linear form and narrative gaps in the adaptation reiterate the disjointed narrative of Atwood and project it into space. Hutcheon (2013) treats the concept of adaptation as repetition without replication and stresses that cinematic adaptations do not copy and paste their source texts but rather change them. This change, which Polley makes, is highly feminist: her authorship as a director transforms the textual resistance of Atwood into a visual resistance, changing the perception of women and their own perception.

It has long been argued by feminist film critics like Kaplan (1983) and de Lauretis (1984) that the alteration of representational codes by female authors behind the camera is possible. The work of Polley can be discussed as an example of what Kaplan (1983) calls a woman's cinema, as the images created by female directors deny objectification through the reversal of the cinematic gaze. According to Stam (2000), the nature of adaptation is dialogic, and it interacts with the material source and culture. Polley's *Alias Grace* comes into this discourse as a feminist revision of the textual critique of Atwood transformed into a cinematic reclamation.

### **2.3. Feminist Film Theory: Gaze, Gender, and Performativity**

The feminist film theory was developed in the 1970s as a reaction to the patriarchal system in film representation. The key article in this respect is the essay of Laura Mulvey (1975), *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, where the concept of the male gaze was introduced and which is currently a core of feminist film studies. Mulvey believes that the classical Hollywood cinema arranges the visual language around the male spectators, placing the camera at the centre of the masculine desire and making women the objects of erotic reflection. The cinematic apparatus re-creates the patriarchal power relations through some processes, including scopophilia (pleasure in looking) and voyeurism, which provide the audience with an opportunity to identify with the male protagonist who is the one in charge of both the narrative and the gaze (Mulvey, 1975).

But Mulvey's theory was revised critically because it had little interaction with race, cultural and sexual differences. Bell Hooks (1992), in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, came up with the theory of oppositional gaze, in which she can revive the act of looking back as a form of resistance. Hooks (1992) holds that the gaze has been a prohibited and punished space for Black women, but at the same time, it is a place of agency when used with a critical sense. The oppositional gaze, therefore, questions both

the hierarchies in cinema and society, which enables the marginalised spectators to challenge the centrist visual discourse and redefine themselves through the act of looking.

To add to the critique, a wider philosophical approach to the concept of identity construction in cinema provided by Judith Butler (1990) is the theory of gender performativity. Butler states that gender is not a natural possession but a repetitive act that is informed by the rules of culture and discursive authority. Gender is a performative illusion and not a biological reality through repetition, gestures and social scripts. When projected on the film industry, the theory of Butler shows the way the filmic representation constructs and destabilises gender identity. In the example of *Alias Grace*, Grace Marks acts out multiple personas: victim, servant, criminal, and storyteller; all of them display the instability of the patriarchal category of femininity.

Collectively, these theorists formulate a holistic approach to the interpretation of the functioning of visibility, spectatorship, and identity in the feminist discourse. Mulvey reveals the male-based principles of cinematic pleasure; Hooks radicalises the gaze as a means to struggle; and Butler makes gender itself a player and unstable process. Improving these frameworks on *Alias Grace* is possible so as to better comprehend how both Atwood and Polley are able to turn the apparatuses of representation into tools of feminist criticism. Specifically, Polley adapts the concept of the male gaze by Mulvey in her adaptation by being visually on par with the subjectivity of Grace, oppositional in its gaze, as Hooks theorises, and demonstrating the performative nature of gender as theorised by Butler.

#### **2.4. Synthesis of Scholarship**

In the academic writing of both literature and film, *Alias Grace* is perceived as a complex feminist endeavour that doubts the nexus of gender, gaze, and power. Atwood uses textual fragmentation, and Polley uses visual poetics to meet at the core of revealing the mechanisms that suppress women, as well as providing means of resistance. This feminist literary and film criticism makes *Alias Grace* a part of a greater discussion of adaptation as feminist intervention. The critical approaches of Mulvey, hooks, and Butler are therefore fruitful in conjunction with the current theory of adaptation, and the critique of the gaze as an element of domination may be utilised to create a feminist authorship, a feminist re-visioning of history.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The emergence of feminist film theory in the 1970s responded to patriarchal structures in cinematic representation. Laura Mulvey's influential essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) introduced the concept of the male gaze, arguing that classical Hollywood cinema positions viewers to identify with a controlling male protagonist, turning women into erotic objects through mechanisms such as scopophilia and voyeurism (Mulvey, 1975).

However, Mulvey's framework was later criticised for overlooking issues of race and cultural difference. Bell Hooks addressed this gap through her notion of the oppositional gaze, which frames looking as an act of resistance for Black women who have historically been denied agency in spectatorship (Hooks, 1992). The oppositional gaze creates an opportunity where the marginalised viewers are empowered to disrupt hegemonic visual structures and reconstruct them (hooks, 1992).

Moving on to this further, the gender performativity theory by Judith Butler holds that gender is not biologically predetermined but rather culturally performed in a repetition of cultural scripts (Butler, 1990). This theory can be applied to film and demonstrates the way in which the concept of gender is created and destabilised in film. Once again, in *Alias Grace*, the switching nature of femininity and its instability and performance are depicted by the various personas of Grace Marks: victim, servant, criminal, and storyteller (Butler, 1990).

Together, these theorists provide a comprehensive framework for analysing visuality, spectatorship, and identity in feminist discourse. In *Alias Grace*, Polley's adaptation engages with Mulvey's critique of the male gaze, incorporates Hooks' oppositional gaze, and highlights Butler's performative gender, transforming cinematic representation into a tool of feminist critique.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

The research is based on a qualitative, interpretive research design based on critical theory, feminist epistemology, and cultural analysis. The main aim of the study is not to gauge the audience reaction or authorial purpose but to question how *Alias Grace*, whether in Margaret Atwood's novel (1996) or in Sarah Polley's Netflix miniseries (2017), constructs, negotiates, and challenges patriarchal structures of representation by means of narrative and image. The qualitative methodology is not only acceptable, but it is also essential in view of the fact that the study deals with ideology, subjectivity, and meaning-making. Symbolic, aesthetic, and discursive strategies to represent the feminist resistance would not be captured by a quantitative or empirical approach.

This research is performed as the critical textual analysis of the novel and the critical visual analysis of the screen adaptation. Such methods are reading between the lines and not describing them using a ruler; these methods read the texts as culturally and politically situated artefacts and not aesthetic objects in their own right. The methodology presupposes that meaning is created with the help of language, images, and narrative forms, which are historically specific and ideologically loaded. Based on this, the study is situated within poststructuralist and feminist traditions that do not accept fixed meanings and instead underline the importance of plurality, instability and contestation.

The methodological framework is structured in the form of three paradigms that are closely connected: feminist textual analysis, adaptation analysis, and visual semiotics.

These paradigms are not considered as independent tools but as intersecting ways of inquiry that can be combined to make a transmedia feminist reading of *Alias Grace*.

#### 4.1. Feminist Textual Analysis

This article is based on the main methodological principles of the feminist textual analysis that is governed by the feminist film theory, Black feminist thinking, and poststructuralist feminism. With references to the works by Laura Mulvey, who criticised the male gaze (1975); bell hooks, who formulated the oppositional gaze (1992); and Judith Butler, who theorised gender performativity (1990), the analysis of the objects and subject of the construction, discipline and challenge of gendered identities and power relations in the narrative patterns of the novel and the miniseries is conducted.

This method poses an inquiry into representation as a political action. Instead of the question of whether *Alias Grace* is feminist thematically or authorially, the inquiry is how the feminist meaning is created through the narrative form, focalisation, silence, fragmentation and perspective. Special emphasis is placed on how Grace Marks is placed in patriarchal epistemologies, medicine, law, religion, and historiography and how these discourses are trying to stabilise her identity by classifying and surveilling her.

In this research, feminist textual analysis does not consider silence as a lack of narrative but as a significant strategy. The discriminatory nature of the speech that Grace chooses to withhold, the refusal to offer a coherent confession, and the changeability of self-narration are interpreted as means of opposition to the demand of patriarchy to remain transparent. This approach to methodology opposes reductive readings in search of a psychological solution or moral certitude. Rather, it anticipates ambiguity as a feminist epistemological position that bodes masculine forms of knowledge production.

#### 4.2. Adaptation Analysis

The second paradigm of methodology is the adaptation analysis, which is based on the conceptualisation of the adaptation offered by Linda Hutcheon, which presupposes the repetition without replication (2013). This model dismisses fidelity-based models, which only measure adaptations in their proximity to the source text. The theoretical constraints of such models are theorised, and the model is politically conservative, as it presupposes the literary text to be primary and the film or series to be secondary or derivative.

Rather, this paper takes Polley's *Alias Grace* as a feminist text which engages in a conversation with the novel by Atwood. Adaptation can be seen as a process of reinterpretation and recontextualisation, as well as ideological reframing. It analyses the changes of narrative strategies, thematic interests and representational politics between the screen version and the print version of the story, especially in the scope of gaze, spectatorship and embodiment.

The given methodology implies locating the points of narrative equivalence and divergence that can include the alterations of focalisation, pacing, characterisation, and

emphasis. Notably, such changes are not assessed according to the criteria of loss or gain but according to the feminist meaning. The research question is: In what ways is the textual silence of Atwood redefined in Polley's text as visual strategies, and how is cinematic form a permissive or restrictive technology of feminism in comparison with literary form?

The adaptation analysis in this study is clearly ideological. It analyses the way in which Polley, as a woman filmmaker, redefines the politics of looking and narration. The miniseries is interpreted as a feminist reading instead of a neutral translation that is actively interfering in the visual economy of historical drama and true-crime stories.

#### **4.3. Visual Semiotics**

Visual semiotics is the third methodological paradigm, which is guided by the theory of signification advanced by Roland Barthes and feminist film theory. This practice views the cinematic aspects as sign systems of meaning production as opposed to aesthetic decisions. The *mise-en-scène*, framing, light, costume, camera movement, and common visual images like stitches, mirrors, captivity, and the female body have been examined.

Visual semiotics can help the study decipher the articulation of agency and resistance through visual means, especially where there is no or limited dialogue. To give an example, the protracted close-ups, limited framing, and applying shadows are examined as some strategies that oppose objectification and put the spectator in the subjective state of Grace. The series often disrupts spectatorship rather than placing the viewer as a voyeur, and creates uneasiness and moral ambiguity.

This approach of methodology relies on the feminist critiques against the classical cinema realism that claim that, in most cases, the traditional language of cinema tends to naturalise patriarchal relations of power. The paper is able to show how Polley breaks these conventions and builds what can be termed a feminist visual grammar by applying visual semiotics. Also analysed in the analysis are the historical costumes and spatial designs that are primarily used not as markers of period, but as symbolic markers of control, confinement and resistance.

#### **4.4. Scope and Limitations**

The analysis is confined to a close study of the novels by Atwood in 1996 and Polley in 2017. It does not concern itself with the study of audience reception, production ethnography, and comparative historical analysis, other than that needed to obtain a textual interpretation. This is not an accidental limitation but is instead a methodological limitation: the study is focused on depth of analysis and not breadth, and views the texts as being adequate points of analysis when discussing feminist epistemology and representation.

The study does not attempt to find out the historical truth of the case of Grace Marks. Rather, it explores the very construction, withholding, and disputation of truth through narrative and visual means. Such methodological denial corresponds to the

feminist critique of positivist historiography and supports the theoretical consistency of the study.

#### 4.5. Data

The primary data includes:

- *Aliases Grace* by Margaret Atwood (1996).
- The Netflix miniseries *Alias Grace* (2017) by Sarah Polley.

#### 4.6. Analysis

##### 4.6.1. Challenging the Male Gaze: Polley's Feminist Cinematic Intervention

Sarah Polley's adaptation of *Alias Grace* consistently resists the patriarchal structures that Laura Mulvey associates with classical cinematic pleasure. Mulvey argues that Hollywood positions the camera to "bear the male gaze" and transform women into "objects of erotic spectacle" (Mulvey 1975: 11). Polley, however, uses point of view, framing, and editing to reposition Grace Marks as the narrative subject rather than an erotic object.

A clear example appears in Episode 1 (00:07:13–00:07:40) during Dr Jordan's first interview with Grace. Rather than framing Grace through the male investigator's gaze, Polley reverses the visual hierarchy. The camera cuts to an extreme close-up of Grace's eyes, then holds the shot as she looks directly back at Jordan. The choice of gaze-return directly embodies bell hooks' concept of the "oppositional gaze", which hooks describes as a "site of resistance" where marginalised women reclaim the power of looking (hooks 1992: 116). Grace's silent, steady look forces the viewer into her subject position rather than Jordan's.

The visual resistance is conceptually supported in Atwood's novel. In the story Grace is telling, she says that she must be mindful of what she says. They will make it what it pleases them to be; they will make it whatever they want it to be. She admits she is imposed upon by the doctors, judges, and jailers to interpret her the way they wish (Atwood 1996, p. 28). Polley uses this dynamic literally by not allowing her to verify the fantasies or assumptions of Dr Jordan to be true. This is seen in one of the episodes (Episode 3, 00:14:00-00:15:20) when Jordan fantasises about Grace as being a seductress, where the scene is shot through his distorted imagination with soft lighting and idealised framing. But Polley switches back to the present with a startling sound effect, revealing the actual look of Grace: blank, inexpressible, unimpressed. This chop reveals the male fantasy to be a fake, and it does not luxuriate in the male gaze.

Polley does not eroticise the body of Grace as well. In the second episode (00:31:40-00:32:55), the prison matron is investigating whether Grace has a womanly temperament. The camera does not hover over her body as it remains close to her face, revealing only the discomfort and humiliation with Grace. It removes scopophilia

enjoyment and changes the focus to the systemic violence inherent in medical and judicial examination of women.

#### **4.7. Narrative Control, Gender and Oppositional Spectatorship**

According to Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, gender is not predetermined but is constructed in terms of repetitive practices that are embedded within cultural expectations (Butler 1990: 25). Atwood and Polley depict Grace as a character who has been influenced by these expectations but can twist them.

In the novel, Grace thinks, 'If I could just tell my story, that would be something.' (Atwood 1996, p. 55). The desire to have control over the narratives is a central theme in both texts.

Polley reconfigures this by letting the story told by Grace break the flow of the narrative. The scene in episode 4 (00:02:20-00:05:00), which starts with Grace telling her story of emigration, is edited using the elliptical cuts of the flash of the ship, the death of her mother, and violent men, reflective of the disintegration of trauma. Such structural fragmentation disrupts authoritative masculine narratives by indicating that truth is produced, superimposed and challenged.

This is evidenced by the unspoken smile shown by Grace in Episode 5 (00:16:10–00:19:00) when she is talking with Dr Jordan, telling her it is weird to be complimented on lying. The quote is borrowed in the book: 'It is weird being complimented about lying... and being criticised about telling the truth' (Atwood 1996, p. 203). The series contextualises this scene with a sluggish zoom on the face of Grace, who is an expert in performative femininity. Politeness, storytelling, and domestic modesty are some of the strategic manoeuvres through which Grace attempts to manipulate the manner in which men view her, which is to say that her performance of femininity is more about acting than an innate truth.

#### **4.8. Silence as Agency and Narrative Power**

1. In *Alias Grace*, silence is not submissiveness, but it is an intellectual strategy. In the novel, Grace tells us, 'I have learnt to be silent when I have nothing to say' (Atwood 1996, p. 37). However, the silence of Grace is nothing; it is denial. Polley focuses on this through cinematic rhythm. The use of long pauses in the replies by Grace brings narrative tension and brings out the imbalance of power between Grace and Dr Jordan. An instance would be that in the first episode (00:10:20-00:12:00) Jordan enquires of Grace whether she recalls the murders. She does not respond instantly. Rather, the camera is on her face for 14 seconds, which is a very long take by the standards of television today, compelling the viewer to become a part of the discomfort created by her silence.

2. The silence turns into opposition, which is also the notion of hooks that the silence in a domination context can disrupt the systems of looking (hooks 1992: 122). The

silence of Grace deprives Dr Jordan, the courts, and even the viewer of her interior truth that requires women to make themselves legible to the male authority.

#### 4.9. Stitching and Domesticity as Feminist Counter-Narratives

1. Atwood refers to needlework and storytelling more than once: a quilt is a narrative that is made up of pieces. (Atwood 1996, p. 245). Grace, in her quilts, *Tree of Paradise*, *Pandora's Box*, and *Broken Dishes*, encodes her experience in housework, making it a coded language.
2. Polley employs visual motifs such as patterns of quilts to put stories together. Episode 6 (00:38:00-00:40:00) is a shot where the camera gradually moves across a completed quilt as Grace makes a voice-over narration. All these patterns are associated with another aspect of her life. This montage is symbolic, as it sews together these pieces of a story that are put together by the series in six episodes. The needle piercing cloth turns into a visual beat: a heartbeat of action as opposed to servitude.
3. Grace is also given power by domestic spaces. During episode two (00:08:40-00:10:00) in the Parkinson household, Grace is watching the atmosphere in the house, servants gossiping, and relationships in the household. In the novel, she tells Dr Jordan: 'A servant knows how to listen between the lines' (Atwood 1996, p. 67). Polley proves this by placing Grace in doorways and behind staircases, positioning her as a silent observer. The domestic work becomes an intelligence-gathering, and the home becomes the place of imprisonment, turning into the place of tactical knowledge.
4. This reminds Butler that gendered work is an act that has social effects. The domestic deeds of Grace, stitching, cleaning, and arranging, are not only presented as implementations of femininity but also as survival techniques.

#### 5. Findings and Conclusion

In this article, we have explored the novel *Alias Grace* (Margaret Atwood, 1996) and its film adaptation by Sarah Polley (2017) as a form of long-term feminist intervention that exists in both literary and cinematic media. The novel and the miniseries, when read together, serve as a transmedia feminist project actively reclaiming the gaze, deconstructing patriarchal narration, and reinstating the female subjectivity itself by using techniques of silence, fragmentation and narrative interruption. Using the feminist film theory, the so-called oppositional gaze, and the theories of gender performativity, the discussion proves that both Atwood and Polley reveal the very notion of representation as a disputable ideological space, instead of an unbiased aesthetic practice.

In her book, *Alias Grace*, Atwood places Grace Marks in the context of strict patriarchal epistemologies controlled by men – medicine, law, religion and historiography – all of which seek to stabilise her identity, whether by diagnostic, moral, or criminal

means. Grace is also recurrently seen, discerned, and talked about, but seldom allowed narrative sovereignty. More to the point, this marginalisation is not merely described in the novel but structurally rebuilt. The disjointed story, the differing accounts, and the factual incompleteness of the murder deny the reader the ecstasy of the epistemic finish. The silence of Grace, commonly misunderstood as passivity or even opaqueness, turns out to be a tactical resistance to the masculinist requirement of being confessed, transparent and legible. In this respect, silence is no longer a non-existence but a form of resistance.

Further unbalancing the patriarchal assertion of objectivity, Atwood has used black humour, irony, and metafiction. Medical diagnoses, courtroom testimonies, and historical documents are brought out as highly subjective, as opposed to objective, narratives. Comparing these authoritative discourses to the interior monologues of Grace and the speech that she is denied reveals both the way female subjectivity is created through surveillance and interpretation. Grace is not only dumb; she is misconstrued. The novel refuses to decide whether she was guilty or not and thereby turns out to be the most radical feminist act, depriving the reader, and therefore by extension, the patriarchal culture, of the ability to wholly own her narrative.

This narrative opposition is not watered down but is instead reconstructed (Sarah Polley, 2003). The miniseries transfers the textual strategies employed by Atwood in her text into a visual grammar that actively plays with the male gaze. Based on the feminist film theory, the analysis demonstrates that Polley interferes with the traditional cinematic spectatorship by using framing, pacing, and point-of-view shots that emphasise the perceptual experience of Grace. The camera often shares the gaze of Grace instead of objectifying or eroticising her own body, as the viewer is often left looking as Grace does and not at her. The re-orientation of vision is what may be called an oppositional gaze; it is not an anti-voyeuristic gaze but rather an ethical spectatorship.

Adaptation by Polley is especially good at imagining silence. Prolonged silences, missing reaction shots, and hanging close-ups of Grace's face turn emptiness into a tense visual area. Contrasting the traditional cinematic silence that has a tendency to serve as a narrative silence, in this case, the silence has become expressive, suggestive, and resistant. This is because the viewer is repeatedly deprived of interpretive mastery, which reflects the epistemological uncertainty in the novel. Through this, the adaptation denies the requirement of psychological candour, which frequently dictates onscreen images of women.

Gender performativity also comes out as another main axis where both texts explore the female identity. The changing way of self-presentation of Grace, as an obedient servant, delicate patient, and eloquent narrator, is an example of how femininity is produced by the patriarchal structures. Such acts do not represent acts of deceit but means of survival in repressive social systems. Atwood and Polley both oppose the interpretation

of reading performance as deception, but how do we interpret reading performance as a way of regulating, rehearsing, and enforcing gender? The changeability of the identity of Grace is a criticism of the cultural desire to force women into fixed moral or mental lifestyles.

A similar thing about the novel and the miniseries is that they both insist on the fact that the process of representation is also a battlefield. Although language and images are not active reflections of reality, they are dynamic processes that determine historical memory and cultural meaning. Atwood and Polley reclaim narrative authority by revising Grace Marks into history, without resolving her, redeeming her, or condemning her, institutions historically speaking on behalf of women. This is not just a purely aesthetic reclamation, but it is political. It reveals the production of histories of women by exclusion, distortion, and spectacle, and also provides other modes of seeing and telling.

The reclaiming of the gaze in *Alias Grace* is, therefore, a feminist intervention of epistemology. The two pieces of text disrespect the patriarchal systems which have traditionally determined who is allowed to look, who is allowed to talk, and who is allowed to be heard. The silence is turned into an authorship, disintegration into opposition and gazing into freedom. Most importantly, this feminist intervention is not anchored on empowerment discourses that heal the trauma or confirm the coherence. Rather, it demands ambiguity, discomfort and uncertainty as moral imperatives.

The study reveals the relevance of *Alias Grace* to the feminist debate of the present in literature, cinema, and cultural memory by placing it outside of the nineteenth century in which it is set. Nevertheless, in a period when visual consumption and narrative manipulation are still the norm, the work of Atwood and Polley makes the audience question their role as readers and spectators themselves. The writings are held to task: to acknowledge the condescending participation of gazing in domination, and in refusing to explicate, women can themselves be radical actors.

After all, *Alias Grace* is a work of art and political commentary. It claims that women are not just reclaiming history when they get written into history; they are reclaiming themselves by writing. Atwood and Polley do not bring solutions in their fight against the patriarchal narrative closure; they bring an approach. It is that approach that is in feminist re-seeing: an endless conflict over control of meaning, memory, and the gaze itself.

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