

Elaine Risley's Character Development in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*

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A B S T R A C T

This research explores the character development of Elaine Risley, the main character of the novel *Cat's Eye* by Margaret Atwood (2009), throughout her childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, and adulthood years. The objectives of this research are to explain how the character of Elaine Risley develops in *Cat's Eye* and to examine the factors which affect Elaine Risley's character development. This research employs the objective approach proposed by Abrams (1976) as its theoretical framework and the library research as its method of research. The results show that Elaine Risley always experiences development in her character throughout her life; she develops from a bullied little girl in her childhood, a mean but passionate girl in her adolescence, and an independent young woman in her early adulthood to finally become a woman who struggles to let go of her past in her adulthood. Elaine Risley's character development is affected by several factors, namely, Toronto as her environment, her experiences with bullying, the men and women in the society around her, her own paintings, the cat's eye marble, and the Virgin Mary.

Keywords: *Cat's Eye*, character development, Elaine Risley, Margaret Atwood.

INTRODUCTION

Margaret Atwood is an author and literary critic from Canada. She has written a large number of works and she also has received numerous accolades and awards. According to *The Cambridge Introduction to Margaret Atwood*, Atwood has written more than thirty five books of prose, poetry, and critical essays (Macpherson, 2010). Moreover, she is versatile enough to be able to incorporate her visual skills to create a graphic novel entitled *Angel Catbird*. Atwood also wrote a play script entitled *The Penelopiad* and several children's books as documented on her website *margaretatwood.ca* (Full bibliography, n.d.). In the same website, it is revealed that she has received awards and honorary degrees since 1960 to date (Awards & recognitions"), with some notable mentions of the Arthur C. Clarke Award in 1987 for her novel *The Handmaid's Tale* as well as honorary degrees of Doctor of Letters from University of Oxford in 1998, University of

Cambridge in 2001, and Harvard University in 2004. Specifically in regard to *Cat's Eye* as the subject of this research, the novel was short-listed for The 1988 Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction and The 1989 Booker Prize.

Cat's Eye was published for the first time in 1988 by McClelland & Stewart (Full bibliography, n.d.). The edition of the novel which is used in this research was published in 2009 by Virago Press. Set in Canada, *Cat's Eye* recounts the life of Elaine Risley, a female painter, from the moment of her childhood until the present time of her adult life. The narration of *Cat's Eye* does not always move forward. The timeline of the novel is set in present time and tells the story of Elaine as a middle-aged woman, while the stories of her childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood years are told in flashbacks. In her childhood, Elaine had settled in Toronto, Canada, with her family after spending a period of time in the wilderness and roads of Canada due to Elaine's father's job as

an entomologist. In Toronto, Elaine develops a friendship with girls named Cordelia, Carol, and Grace; a friendship which later turns into bullying. Further along in her adolescence, Elaine gets into a different sort of friendship with Cordelia, although their communication shortly ends when Elaine enters her early adulthood years. Elaine meets Mr. Hrbik and Jon as a young woman; the latter becomes her first husband and also the reason she eventually leaves Toronto, as she and her husband bring their daughter and build their life together in Vancouver. The present tense setting of *Cat's Eye* is focused on Elaine as an adult when she comes back to Toronto to do a retrospective show of her paintings. According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, a retrospective is a show of the work of an artist, which includes all the kinds of work he or she has done (Retrospective, 2001, p. 1546). Elaine indeed has seen the dark parts of her life, but she also has been allowed to witness glimpses of its wonder.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on *Cat's Eye*. To start with, there is a study by Gronewold (2004) examining the representation of three evil women in Atwood's selected novels namely *Lady Oracle*, *Cat's Eye*, and *The Robber Bride*. The theoretical framework that Gronewold uses in the study is Judith Butler's gender constructions, gender performativity, and integration of psychological dynamics with power structures. She found that the representation of an evil woman found in *Cat's Eye* is Cordelia. Gronewold argues that understanding the evil woman and the power she inspires is more important than being subjected to an archetype of a patriarchal ideology that means to inhibit women's power.

Another study by Labudová (2005) examined the problem of the subject in *Cat's Eye*. The study showed that recovery and reconstruction as a subject happens when one accepts one's otherness, multiplicity, and incompleteness. Such is the case that happens to Elaine. Once she has dared to look back and review her past from the point of view of an adult, she no longer sees Cordelia as a bully, but as a child. This signifies that Elaine has accepted her multiplicity. Meanwhile, there are also aspects of

the subject which are analyzed in the paper which include imitation, memory, self-splitting, self-erasure, and doubling. Labudová also found that *Cat's Eye* challenges the mode of autobiography.

Another study by Lloyd (2012) dealing with *Cat's Eye* focuses on Cordelia's reasons for bullying Elaine in the novel. For this purpose, Lloyd (2012) uses John Bowlby's attachment theory, Susan Goldberg's concept of the disorganized attachment, and ego-defenses theory. She found the character of Cordelia as a bully and a perpetrator. Lloyd argues that such a case happens because of Cordelia's disorganized attachment pattern which is evoked mainly by Cordelia's family and home environment. In turn, Lloyd states that Cordelia uses her peer group as an outlet to express feelings of being maltreated; she uses ego-defenses such as displacement and projection.

Jafni and Yahya (2014) also investigated *Cat's Eye*. They explore the sense of belonging in the novel. For this purpose, They adopted Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and William Glasser's choice theory as the study's theoretical framework. Jafni and Yahya argue that Elaine's longing of her childhood friends and home in Toronto makes her unable to really make peace with her past. They further explain that this happens because Elaine has considered Toronto as her home or in other words as a place she belongs to. Elaine fears detachment from home; thus, she clings to her memories tightly (p. 49).

Finally, Clausen (2016) examined the feminine differences of female characters in *Cat's Eye* in their relation to psychological struggles by using the psychoanalytic approach. In analyzing these feminine differences, Clausen employs Jacques Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage and Helena Michie's theory of sororophobia. The findings suggest that in *Cat's Eye*, Elaine Riskey's character shows complexity. There are feminine differences within Elaine herself as well as between her and other female characters; these differences disrupt female stereotypes. In addition, Clausen also examined how female characters challenge patriarchal norms in the socially constructed power roles. In analyzing this, Clausen employs Jacques Lacan's concept of gaze

to explain the power roles between men and women in a patriarchal society. The findings showed that female characters in *Cat's Eye* challenge the patriarchal norms by being in control of the gaze. Finally, Clausen attempted to examine how female characters in *Cat's Eye* manages to challenge the patriarchal norms in the context of identity as a social construction by using a post-structuralist approach. For this, Clausen employs Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity. According to Butler's performativity, since gender is socially constructed, an individual has an agency by performing gender in accordance to the individual's exploration of roles instead of conforming to stereotypes. The findings showed that in *Cat's Eye*, Elaine does challenge the patriarchal norms by her performativity, but Cordelia does not challenge the norms because she does not have an agency in performing her gender roles.

Unlike the previous studies discussed above, which tend to focus on the feminist and psychological issues of Elaine Risley or the novel in general by using various theories from the respective fields of feminism and psychology, the present paper explores the character development of Elaine Risley and the reasons behind her development. *Cat's Eye* shows how Elaine Risley's life is complex as there are many difficult circumstances surrounding her. It is interesting to explore how Elaine Risley deals with these complexities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present research applies an objective approach proposed by Abrams (1976). Abrams (1976, p. 26) argues:

All types of the theory described so far, in their practical applications, get down to dealing with the work of art itself, in its parts and their mutual relations, whether the premises on which these elements are discriminated and evaluated relate them primarily to the spectator, the artist or the world without, but there is also a fourth procedure, the 'objective orientation,' which on

principle regards the work of art in isolation from all these external points of reference, analyzes it as a self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations, and sets out to judge it solely by criteria intrinsic to its own mode of being.

Abrams (1999) elaborates on the objective approach as an approach which treats a literary work as "a self-sufficient and autonomous object, or else as a world-in-itself" (p. 52). Consequently, an analysis of a literary work using the objective approach focuses on the work's intrinsic criteria. The present study considers this approach as suitable in analyzing Elaine Risley's character development because in analyzing a character of a novel, relevant textual evidence of the character's development is most adequately found within the work.

Griffith (2011) has laid out several elements of fiction which include theme, point of view, plot, characterization, setting, irony, symbolism (pp. 40-79). In examining Elaine Risley's character development, the elements of fiction which are analyzed here are limited to character, plot, and setting. That is because these three elements, character, plot, and setting, are related closely in regards to character development: the changes in a character occur in the dimension of space and time in the setting, and they can be seen through the novel's plot.

To further support the analysis on Elaine Risley's character development, various theories and concepts on character, characterization, plot, setting, and character development were adopted. The theories and concepts were used because they were necessary in analyzing Elaine Risley's character development.

To analyze character and characterization, several theories and concepts were employed. Baldick (2001) offers two concepts regarding the word character, which are "a personage in a narrative or dramatic work" and "a kind of prose sketch briefly describing some recognizable type of person" (p. 37). Thus, according to Baldick, character refers to both a person and description of him which makes him recognized.

Forster (1927) provides further insight into character. He divides characters into two types: flat and round (p. 65). According to Forster, a flat character is “constructed around a single idea or quality” (p. 65). On the other hand, Forster states that a round character “can function all round” and is “ready for an extended life” (Forster, 1927, pp. 72-73). It can be inferred that a round character is complex, and even though a plot in a book may have finished, readers will get the impression that it does not necessarily mean the character’s life is finished, too; he or she is still dealing with his or her life unbeknownst to the readers. The difference between flat and round characters are established by Forster in which the readers can experience it themselves: round characters “give us a slightly new pleasure each time they come in”, while flat characters offer “merely repetitive pleasure” (Forster, 1927, p. 72). One way to test whether a character is flat or round is by judging whether it is able to surprise the readers “in a convincing way”: because if it fails, then the character is flat and if it cannot surprise the readers convincingly then it is a flat character “pretending to be round” (Forster, 1927, p. 75).

These theories and concepts about analyzing character complement one another. Taking the key points from these theories and concepts into account, thus a character can be described as a multifaceted person in a narrative work with a particular set of personality, intelligence, and emotions.

Meanwhile, Griffith (2011) includes two concepts of characterization, which are the author’s presentation of the characters and the development of the characters’ traits (p. 60). A clear and concise example of a characterization is further explained by Barnet, Burto & Cain (2008). The example uses the text from Aesop’s fable, in which a fox sneers at a lioness because the lioness only has a cub and in which the lioness gives precise comeback; the fox embodies baseness which is “effectively communicated through the verb “sneered” and through her taunt while the lioness embodies nobility because “it is effectively communicated through the brevity and decisiveness of her reply” (Barnet, Burto & Cain 2008, pp. 94-95). The effectiveness of the

character’s representation—whether it is able to give a distinct quality compared to other characters or not—seems to be the foundation of Griffith’s judgment on deciding if a characterization works well enough. Hence, it can be said that a characterization is an effective representation of a character in a fictional work, in which the author gives the character particular traits and development of those traits.

However, even though the basis of characterization is already formulated out of the previous theories and concepts, the applicable steps of characterization are not adequate nor clear yet. A detailed instruction on doing characterization is needed in order to analyze a character completely. In this case, an elaboration of characterization found in Murphy (1972) is helpful. Murphy (1972) offers nine criteria in analyzing the characterization of a particular character which include the character’s personal description from the author, the character as seen by another, the character’s speech, the character’s past life, conversation by others about the character, the character’s reactions, the author’s direct comment towards the character, the character’s thoughts, and the character’s mannerisms (pp. 161-173). This research endeavors to use these nine categories optimally to analyze Elaine Risley should the textual evidences prove it possible to do so. Murphy’s categories of characterization are chosen because they are comprehensive and can cover a large area to understand Elaine Risley’s character.

In regard to plot, several theories and concepts are employed. Forster proposes that the core element of a plot is the causal relationships of events and situations within the novel (Forster, 1927, pp. 82-83). Baldick (2001) has also put an emphasis on causality as the same core element of plot in order to engage the readers. Baldick (2001) states that, “the pattern of events and situations in a narrative or dramatic work, as selected and arranged both to emphasize relationships—usually of cause and effect—between incidents and to elicit a particular kind of interest in the reader or audience, such as surprise or suspense” (p. 95).

Bennett and Royle (2009) also offer a definition of plot. They highlight plot in

opposition to story which “simply lists two events” as such: “The logical or causal connections between one event and another constitute fundamental aspects of every narrative” (Bennett & Royle, 2009, p. 56). Thus according to Bennett and Royle (2009), a novel’s backbone lies in the causality of its events.

Taylor (1981) contributes to the discussion by stating that if within a construction of plot a happening from the past is set forth in present time line or, in other word, a flashback incurs, then it might be possible that the author intends to introduce some relevant information regarding the character or character’s motive (Taylor, 1981, pp. 50-51).

The plot construction can be explained using a pyramid structure as proposed by Gustav Freytag (1894). The plot construction consists of five main parts, namely, the introduction, the rise, the climax, the fall, and the catastrophe (Freytag, 1894). Meanwhile, Baldick (2001) provides the definition of flashback which can be an element to construct plot as follows:

analepsis (plural -pses), a form of anachrony by which some of the events of a story are related at a point in the narrative after later events of the story have already been recounted. Commonly referred to as retrospection or flashback, analepsis enables a storyteller to fill in background information about characters and events. A narrative that begins *in medias res* will include an analeptic account of events preceding the point at which the tale began. See also prolepsis (p. 10).

Taking into consideration the previous theories on plot, it can be inferred that plot is the ordering of events within a novel which stresses on the causality between events. It also can be inferred that a plot is an author’s choice of event construction in which, sometimes, the said construction does not follow a linear path in regards to time but can also ‘go back’ or ‘go forth’ by the usage of literary devices such as flashback and foreshadow. An author chooses construction of events based on what he wants to achieve with

his plot. This was used to analyze the plot of *Cat’s Eye*. Moreover, Freytag’s pyramid was used to analyze the plot construction of *Cat’s Eye*.

To analyze setting, Griffith’s definition of setting will be used. According to Griffith, there are three kinds of setting, which include the physical setting, the time setting, and the social environment of the novel (Griffith, 2011). The physical setting is the place where the plot of the novel happens or the geographical location. The time setting encompasses when and how long the plot happens. The social environment tells the readers about the social situation and the society experienced by the characters in the novel (Griffith, 2011, p. 68). Meanwhile, Griffith gives further definition about atmosphere, saying that it “refers to the emotional reaction that we—and usually—the characters have to the setting of a work” (Griffith, 2011, p. 71). Hence, the atmosphere leans more towards being the outcome of the three aforementioned kinds of setting, which is felt by the characters of the novel as well as the readers of the novel.

In the case of this study, the time setting of *Cat’s Eye* would be analyzed in relation to the chronology of Elaine’s character development. Furthermore, the physical setting and social environment of *Cat’s Eye* would be analyzed in relation to their contribution in affecting Elaine’s character development.

In regard to character development, this study refers to the concept proposed by Taylor (1981). Taylor refers to character development as “a question of change or growth of personality and awareness” (1981, p. 66). Hence, an important aspect of a character development is a change in a character. Furthermore, Taylor in his discussion of the degree of character development proposes that “one particular plot and theme may require a certain combination of character development and degree of self revelation or change” (1981, p. 66). In other words, Taylor argues that different means serve different purposes, which is that not all characters need a certain degree of character development, because some characters may serve their purposes which do not require character development. Taylor elaborates further that “the more fully developed characters” will make fine

materials to analyze “inner conflict and psychological complexities”, but “the flatter creations” are effective in directing readers’ attention to focus on “the ideas and forces at work in that particular fiction” (1981, p. 67).

In the case of *Cat's Eye*, Elaine Risley's character was analyzed through her characterization to see how she changes or grows in the terms of personality and awareness. Other aspects of Elaine's character development that were analyzed are the factors which affect her character development.

METHODS

The method used in this study is library research. The data in the form of textual evidence were collected from the novel *Cat's Eye*. After the data were collected, they were analyzed in several steps.

The data of this research were obtained from two kinds of data sources: a primary data source and secondary data sources. The primary data source was the novel *Cat's Eye* written by Margaret Atwood and published in 2009 by Virago Press. From this source, the primary data were obtained. The primary data consisted of narration, description, conversation, and all written materials from the novel which are related to Elaine Risley and relevant to the study. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources are other books, journals, and online sources which provide information to support the theories and concepts of the study.

For the primary data collection, the novel *Cat's Eye* was read closely several times to understand the character, plot, and setting. After that, notes were made about the plot. Notes were also made about the setting and the parts that display Elaine Risley's character. Then, textual evidence corresponding to Elaine Risley's character development was collected. Meanwhile, in terms of the secondary data collection, other books, journals, and online sources which provided information to support the theories, and concepts of the study were consulted.

According to Sangidu (1996), the analytic process in the study of literature is conducted in the steps of data reduction, data presentation, data

verification and conclusion, and data interpretation and inference (p. 76). Thus, the following steps were observed in analyzing Elaine Risley's character development in *Cat's Eye*. In the data reduction, the data that does not contribute to the analysis of Elaine Risley's character development are reduced out. In the data presentation, elaboration was made to the collected data which is Elaine Risley's character development followed with textual evidence. The data presentation was done in accordance with the chronological time setting of the novel. It is also in this step that factors affecting Elaine Risley's character development were attempted. Next, in the data verification and conclusion, the presented data were verified and a temporary conclusion of the analysis was drawn. Then, a temporary conclusion in regards to Elaine Risley's character development and the factors affecting her development was drawn. Finally, in data interpretation and inference, the relation between Elaine Risley's character development and factors which affect her development was observed. This was then followed by the interpretation of Elaine Risley's character development to observe its meaning on a larger scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis begins with a plot construction of the novel which functions as a framework in tracking Elaine Risley's character development. Then, it is followed by the chronological elaboration of Elaine Risley's character development throughout the novel. The second part of the analysis consists of the factors which affect Elaine Risley's character development.

The Plot of *Cat's Eye*

In the introduction of *Cat's Eye*, the characters and settings are introduced to the readers. Elaine Risley and her family are first shown on the roads and wilderness of Canada, after World War II. Then, they move and settle in Toronto. Other characters are introduced which include Carol Campbell and the Campbells, Grace Smeath and the Smeaths, Cordelia and her family, and also several teachers at school.

Elaine is bullied and left alone in the ravine.

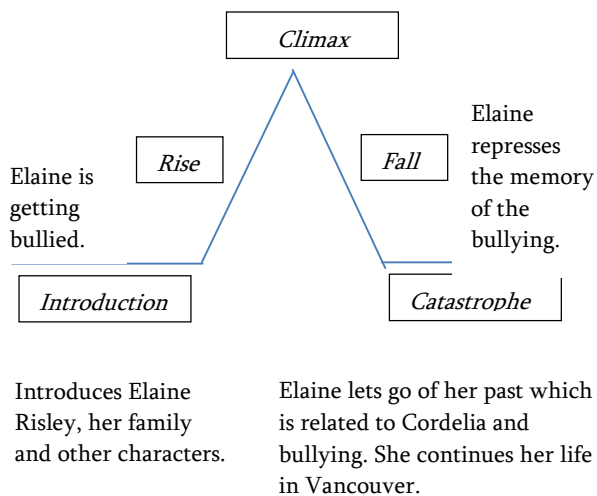


Fig. 1. The plot of *Cat's Eye* modeled after Freytag (1900)

Afterwards, the rise of *Cat's Eye* consists of several rising actions, which are provoked by an exciting moment. This particular moment is the first time that Elaine gets bullied, which is when she is left on the hole in Cordelia's backyard. This moment propels a series of actions which take shape of various acts of bullying by her three friends: Cordelia, Grace, and Carol.

The climax comes after the rise. It occurs when Elaine is bullied and left alone on the ravine by Cordelia, Grace, and Carol until she almost freezes to death.

Further along in the novel, the falling actions occur since the ravine incident. Elaine is able to endure the bullying that she experiences at the time, and then she transitions into adolescence and early adulthood by utilizing a certain coping mechanism which is forgetting the bullying. Further into her life she also displays less emotion, a mean streak, a new passion, indifference, a little bit of cruelty, and independence. Yet she cannot truly let go of the past, especially concerning Cordelia and the bullying. Moments of last suspense occur when Elaine examines her own paintings in retrospect and realizes that she cannot always hold on to her past.

Finally, in the catastrophe part of *Cat's Eye*, Elaine lets go of her past of Cordelia and the bullying by going to the bridge over the ravine.

After that, she comes back to Vancouver to continue her life.

Elaboration on Elaine Risley's Character Development

Elaine Risley during Her Childhood

Elaine Risley's childhood refers to the period of time which occurred from the time she was born until she was around ten years old. It took place from the year of 1937 to 1948.

Elaine Risley during her childhood begins as an observant girl who gets along very well with her brother. Elaine's observant characteristics are shown from her mannerisms and thoughts. She observes how her father is doing his job, memorizing every detail that she could see. She recounts vividly the equipment that her father carries, his environmental surrounding when he works, until the caterpillars that he collects. She also compares the caterpillars to muzzles of dogs, proving that she is observant enough to find similarity between them (Atwood, 2009, pp. 24-25). She also gets along very well with her brother. It is shown from her mannerisms. She knows that Stephen gets carsick, they help their father together collecting the caterpillars, and they even inspect flush toilets together. They spend time playing war or go hunting in the forest to see what they could find.

She then begins to engage more with a new culture as her family moves to Toronto and Elaine attends the Queen Mary Public School. This development in her character is shown by the means of her reactions and thoughts. Elaine struggles with wearing skirts and "sitting still at a desk" (Atwood, 2009, p. 52). She is amazed by drinking-straws. She is befriended by girls named Carol Campbell and Grace Smeath.

A third girl named Cordelia gets into Elaine's friendship. However, Cordelia ends up bullying her, aided by Grace and Carol, under the disguise that they only want to improve Elaine. As a result, Elaine becomes powerless. She is also anxious, conflicted, and full of fear, to the point that she becomes suicidal. Elaine entertains various suicidal thoughts afterwards, which include eating the poisonous nightshade berries,

drinking Javex, and jumping off the bridge (Atwood, 2009, pp. 184-185).

She begins to be hateful when she discovers that Mrs. Smeath and Aunt Mildred—who are Grace's mother and aunt, respectively—know that she is bullied yet does nothing to help her. In fact, they think she deserves it. As a result, Elaine loses her faith in God and decides to pray to the Virgin Mary instead. When Elaine is left, almost frozen, in the ravine by Cordelia in the peak of the bullying, she sees the vision of the Virgin Mary. Because of this vision, Elaine is able to come home. After this, Elaine becomes tough. She disentangles herself from Cordelia, Grace, and Carol.

Elaine Risley during Her Adolescence

Elaine Risley's adolescence refers to the period of time which occurs from the time she is eleven years old until she is around seventeen years old. It happened from around the year of 1948 to 1954.

Elaine Risley during her adolescence is a teenage girl who copes with her trauma from the past by forgetting it. It is shown clearly through her reaction. When her mother reminds her of the bullying, she becomes confused. Her mother refers to the bullying as "That bad time you had" (Atwood, 2009, p. 237); yet Elaine feels that it is impossible: she believes she is happy all the time. Elaine is also noticeably less emotional than she is supposed to be. As opposed to her friends of the same age who are "caught in a whirlwind of teenage emotions", she is calm and she regards her fellow students who display such emotions "with a combination of scientific curiosity and almost matronly indulgence" (Atwood, 2009, p. 245).

She then develops into a teenage girl who is mean. At this time, Elaine has gotten into a friendship with Cordelia, with their roles reserved: Elaine is the one who constantly taunts Cordelia verbally (Atwood, 2009, p. 277), while Cordelia is almost helpless.

Elaine is also passionate about her own dream, being able to figure out that she wants to be a painter by the end of high school (Atwood,

2009, p. 301). However, she is indifferent towards the well-being of Cordelia; when Cordelia once more fails her school year Elaine does not help her (Atwood, 2009, p. 306).

Elaine Risley during Her Early Adulthood

Elaine Risley's early adulthood refers to the period of time which occurs from the time she is seventeen years old until around thirty years old. It happened from the year of 1954 until around the year of 1966.

Elaine Risley during her early adulthood is a young woman who is free-spirited and independent. It is shown from her mannerism and thought as she keeps two ongoing love affairs at the same time. Her lovers are her teacher from Life Drawing Class, Mr. Josef Hrbik, and her fellow student named Jon. Eventually Elaine and Mr. Hrbik break up, but Elaine keeps dating Jon until they get married. Elaine is also independent because she is able to earn a living and rent an apartment by herself.

Obstacles in her life inflict further developments in her character. Her unresolved issue with the bullying in her childhood which is paired with her coping mechanism by forgetting that she nurtures in her adolescence makes her unable to let go of the past. Elaine paints several pictures of Mrs. Smeath which embody her hatred towards the woman (Atwood, 2009, p. 412). She also hallucinates and thinks that Mrs. Smeath comes to see her exhibition of artworks, even though the person turns out to be a complete stranger (Atwood, 2009, p. 413). At one point in her early adulthood years, Elaine visits Cordelia in a rest-home and she acknowledges soon afterwards that she is not free from Cordelia (Atwood, 2009, p. 421).

Meanwhile, problems that she has mostly with her then-husband Jon drives her to be suicidal once more; she attempts suicide by slashing her wrist by an Exacto knife, believing a voice of a little child urges her (Atwood, 2009, pp. 439-440). After this incident, Elaine takes her daughter, Sarah, to Vancouver. She rebuilds her life there with her second husband, Ben.

Elaine Risley during Her Adulthood

Elaine Risley's adulthood refers to the time setting which occurs in the present timeline of the novel. Atwood never specifies the time setting in the novel, but it is assumed that the year is between late 1980s or early 1990s from the textual evidence. As many as three times Elaine refers herself to be in the middle age, with middle age being around fifty years old (Atwood, 2009, pp. 103, 136, 455).

Elaine Risley during her adulthood begins as a woman who is haunted by her past; who cannot let go of her past. This characteristic of her is affected by events from her childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood years. Coming back to Toronto triggers all bad memories that Elaine has with her hometown. She keeps comparing Toronto from her childhood with the present day Toronto (Atwood, 2009, pp. 9-10). Her thought also always refers to Cordelia, to the point that she repeatedly mistakes other person as Cordelia (Atwood, 2009, pp. 51, 82).

Elaine lets go of her past, slowly, starting with Jon. Jon visits Elaine and they go out to eat several times. In one occasion, they end up making love. After making love, Elaine makes her decision of letting go of her past which concerns Jon. She labels their act as something she will never do again, "it's the last look, before turning away, at some once-visited, once-extravagant place you know you won't go back to" (Atwood, 2009, p. 433) and she reacts calmly to him even though he refuses to come at her retrospective. Elaine is decidedly in peace with letting him go starting at that moment.

Afterwards, she acknowledges that all this time in her life she has always been trapped with her past, a never-ending battle with herself who is always growing older and with Cordelia who stays in her facet as a bully in Elaine's unconscious mind forever. As a result, Elaine is able to let go of her past and of Cordelia thoroughly (Atwood, 2009, pp. 495-496). This act of letting go ultimately makes her feel sad of a future that she could never have with Cordelia, because Cordelia is both her bully and her best friend.

The Factors Affecting Elaine Risley's Character Development

Based on all the evidence in the novel, several factors affect Elaine Risley's character development.

Elaine Risley's Environment in Toronto

Elaine's environment in Toronto affects her character development greatly in two ways. First, the social environment of Toronto changes her to be more cultured as a child. Second, the physical setting of Toronto triggers all the bad memories when she comes back again to that city as an adult. Elaine's environment in Toronto is considered as an external factor to her character development.

Elaine Risley's Experience with Bullying

Elaine's experience with bullying, considered as an external factor, has a significant role in her character development. The bullying affects her character to the point that it is a major reason behind Elaine's character development. If Elaine had not been bullied, she would not have developed a coping mechanism which makes her repress the memories she has about the bullying and she would not have grown into an adult who cannot let go of the past.

Men in the Society around Elaine Risley

There are three kinds of men in Elaine's life. They are categorized based on what they do to her and their impact on her character development in relation to her social environment. The first kind are those who simply exist alongside Elaine, allowing her to be the truest version of herself. The men of the first kind include Elaine's father, Elaine's brother Stephen, boys that Elaine encounter in her childhood, Mr. Smeath, Cordelia's father, and boys that Elaine goes out with during her adolescence. What these men have in common is that they simply exist alongside Elaine instead of purposely trying to change or shape her character. In a way, they do not force Elaine to fit the society's manners, customs, or moral values. By doing so, these men have allowed Elaine to be the truest version of herself.

The second kind are those who force her into submission, turning her into a contemptuous and suicidal person. The men of the second kind in Elaine's life include Mr. Josef Hrbik and Jon. Mr. Hrbik is Elaine's teacher in Life Drawing class who has a temporary love-affair with her. Meanwhile, Jon is Elaine's fellow student in Life Drawing class who is also her lover and later, her first husband. Both of them force Elaine into submission within their respective relationships despite having different methods of treating Elaine. It can also be said that both of them represent the patriarchal society at that time. As a consequence of their action in Elaine's character development, they affect her to become cruel and suicidal.

And the third kind is the one who pleases her, giving Elaine stability in her life. The men in society around Elaine Risley are considered as external factors to her character development. The man of the third kind includes one notable example of Ben, Elaine's second and current husband. They meet after Elaine moves to Vancouver. Ben's treatment pleases Elaine. She is affected positively by him, as she functions like normal again after her previous suicide attempt. He brings stability in her life, making sure that she eats regularly and properly (Atwood, 2009, 209). He also does not try to change Elaine into anything else other than herself, but simply accepts her. He brings freedom to Elaine just like her father does and he encourages the best in Elaine. He supports Elaine's work, regards Elaine's paintings with both wonder and apprehension, and sets an accounting system for her. He also takes an active caring role too in their household (Atwood, 2009, 448-449). Ben gives Elaine a non-turbulent, idyllic life in their home in Vancouver.

Women in the Society around Elaine Risley

There are two kinds of women in Elaine's life. They are categorized based on what they do to her and their impact on her character development in relation to her social environment. The first kind of women are those who force her to fit into the society's standards. The second kind of women are those who exist

alongside Elaine, allowing her to grow and develop by herself. The women in society around Elaine Risley are considered as external factors to her character development.

The women of the first kind in Elaine's life include Carol Campbell, Grace Smeath, Mrs. Smeath, Aunt Mildred, and the women at gatherings in Vancouver. What these girls and women have in common is that they actively force Elaine to fit into a particular social environment's manners, customs, or moral values. By doing so, these girls and women have turned Elaine powerless and eventually hateful.

The women of the second kind in Elaine's life include Elaine's mother, Susie, the women at gathering in Toronto. Unlike the women of the first kind, they do not actively force Elaine to follow any kind of norms. On the whole, they merely exist alongside her. Yet they still affect Elaine's character indirectly by empowering her. Because of them, Elaine becomes independent and more passionate for arts.

Elaine Risley's Paintings

In her adulthood, Elaine Risley is a reputable painter. She is famous enough "to generate envy among other painters" (Atwood, 2009, p. 16). She is also established enough to hold a retrospective and be represented by a gallery named Sub-Versions in Toronto, her hometown. Her paintings affect Elaine in the terms of her character development as outlets of conveying moments and a way of letting go of her past. Elaine's paintings are considered as internal factors to her character development because they are created by Elaine herself and in turn affect her.

The Cat's Eye Marble and the Virgin Mary

The cat's eye marble and the Virgin Mary both act as guides for Elaine in the difficult situations. They are both considered as internal factors which affect Elaine's character development, because Elaine's trust and belief upon them are what truly affect her character development.

Out of the other marbles that Elaine knows in her childhood—the ordinary marbles, the puries marble which resemble colored water or precious gemstones, the water babies which have undersea colors, the metal bowlies, the aggies which are like marbles but bigger—Elaine's favorite is the blue cat's eye marble. A cat's eye marble is made of clear glass with colored petals in its centre. These colored petals give impression of eyes (Atwood, 2009, p. 73).

Just like a cat's eye which guides people on the road, the cat's eye marble also guides Elaine in the novel. However, it is important to note that this guidance is possible only because Elaine has a degree of trust towards the cat's eye, instead of the marble literally guides her, so in a sense this guidance is psychological. First, it guides Elaine to be able to see people from a distance at her own free will, free from imposition of Cordelia or anyone. Second, the cat's eye marble guides Elaine to remember the bullying in her childhood which she represses.

According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, salvation has two meanings. The first meaning is the state of being saved from evil or death in the Christian religion, while the second meaning is something that prevents danger, loss, or failure (Salvation, 2001, p. 1594). Based on these definitions, the present writer argues that Elaine's faith in the Virgin Mary affects her character development by guiding her from death and danger.

Elaine puts her reverent faith in the Virgin Mary initially as an act of opposition to Mrs. Smeath after she finds out that Mrs. Smeath knows about the bullying and lets it happen. Mrs. Smeath is an active church-goer, so Elaine begins to think that "Mrs. Smeath has God all sewed up" and that God is "on her side" (Atwood, 2009, p. 214); she begins to have the impression that, like Mrs. Smeath, God also knows about the bullying and lets it happen. She then decides to stop praying to God and starts praying to the Virgin Mary instead, an act which she considers rebellious. Her faith in the Virgin Mary flames from this moment onward. Elaine believes that the Virgin Mary understands how severe her suffering is (Atwood, 2009, p. 217).

CONCLUSION

Cat's Eye chronicles Elaine Risley's life from her childhood until her adulthood. Along the course of the novel it is seen that Elaine's character develops. She begins a bullied little girl in her childhood, a mean but passionate girl in her adolescence, and an independent young woman in her early adulthood, to finally become a woman who struggles to let go of her past in her adulthood. The character development of Elaine Risley is affected by several things which include Toronto as her environment, her experiences with bullying in the hand of Cordelia, the men and women in the society around her, her own paintings, the cat's eye marble, and the Virgin Mary.

Cat's Eye presents Elaine's development in rich complexities. Elaine Risley experiences a character development which is affected by both external and internal factors. She provides various responses accordingly, making her a round character. Her ways of overcoming obstacles in her life, which are proven to be quite large as her problems deal with trauma and also suicidal intention, are inspiring. Elaine's character development can serve as an example of how a person's development is susceptible to various surrounding factors.

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