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**Literary Theories**

### **Exploring Intertextuality and Cultural Hybridization in Margaret Atwood's Novels: A Digital Humanities Perspective**

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The paper emphasizes the shift from text to context in modern literary studies by examining intertextuality and cultural hybridization in Margaret Atwood's books via the prism of digital humanities. Atwood is a significant character in Canadian and international literature, and her works are intricately entwined with biblical stories, myth, history, dystopian traditions, and global cultural discourses. By placing Atwood's novels within international and interdisciplinary literary networks, the study explores how these intertextual allusions support cultural hybridization. The study uses corpus-based text analysis to find recurrent motifs, thematic patterns, and intertextual markers in a few chosen works, such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *Alias Grace*, by fusing traditional literary analysis with cutting-edge digital approaches. Atwood's storytelling techniques are shaped by cross-cultural influences and textual echoes, which are tracked using digital technologies like concordance mapping, keyword frequency analysis, and thematic clustering. These techniques allow for a more comprehensive, data-driven viewpoint that enhances close reading by exposing intertextuality patterns that might not be as apparent using traditional methods alone. According to the research, Atwood's books serve as places of cultural hybridity where many literary traditions, historical accounts, and global issues—like gender politics, ecological crises, and power structures—intersect. The study shows how digital humanities approaches enable fresh perspectives on the dynamic link between texts and their cultural surroundings by placing Atwood's work within a broader framework of world literature. In the end, this study makes the case that incorporating digital technologies into literary analysis redefines methodological practices in the humanities and improves the study of intertextuality and cultural hybridization. The study adds to the current conversations on how digital humanities may be used to rethink literary analysis and broaden the range of possible interpretations of contemporary fiction.

**Keywords:** Digital Humanities; Intertextuality; Cultural Hybridization; Margaret Atwood; Canadian Novel; World Literature.

## Introduction

Close reading, historical context, and theoretical interpretation have long been the cornerstones of literary study. However, the creation, dissemination, and analysis of literary texts have been profoundly altered by the quick development of digital technology during the last few decades. Digital Humanities (DH), a crucial multidisciplinary discipline that combines computer techniques with humanistic inquiry, has evolved within this changing scholarly landscape. It allows researchers to analyse literary works at scales and from viewpoints that were previously unreachable. The investigation of intertextuality and cultural hybridization, especially in the context of world literature, is one of the most fruitful areas where digital humanities and literary studies converge. This study adopts a digital humanities framework to examine Margaret Atwood's novels, combining computational analysis with literary interpretation in order to uncover patterns of intertextual exchange and cultural hybridity that are not always visible through close reading alone.

The idea of intertextuality, which was made popular by Julia Kristeva and has its roots in Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic ideas, highlights how literary texts are influenced by and react to other texts, discourses, and cultural systems rather than existing in a vacuum. Intertextuality in modern literary studies now encompasses mythical, historical, ideological, and media-based influences in addition to direct textual allusions. The idea of cultural hybridization, which describes the blending and interplay of several cultural traditions, narratives, and epistemologies within a single work, is closely related to this. These ideas are essential to the study of world literature because literary works often represent transnational interactions and hybrid identities in an increasingly globalized world.

Margaret Atwood is a particularly interesting writer for this kind of analysis. Atwood is one of Canada's most well-known and important authors, and her books transcend national boundaries while delving deeply into global issues. Classical mythology, biblical stories, historical records, feminist philosophy, dystopian and speculative traditions, and current political discourse are just a few of the many intertexts that she incorporates into her novels. *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *Alias Grace* are just a few of the novels that demonstrate her unique talent for fusing many textual and cultural sources to create stories that are both internationally relevant and locally grounded. As a result, Atwood's writing holds a prominent place in international literature and provides a rich environment for exploring the ways in which intertextuality and cultural hybridization function across literary traditions.

Although Atwood's thematic concerns—such as gender, power, identity, ecology, and authority—have been richly illuminated by traditional literary criticism, these analyses have frequently depended solely on close reading and theoretical interpretation. Large-scale patterns of repetition, theme clustering, and cross-textual links that span an author's body of work may be missed by such approaches, despite their indispensability. Computational methods become particularly valuable in this context, as they enable scholars to trace large-scale linguistic and thematic patterns across multiple texts. Through the use of computer tools like concordance analysis, keyword frequency mapping, and corpus analysis, researchers can find recurrent themes and intertextual markers in a variety of texts, adding empirical support to interpretive reading. The goal of incorporating digital techniques is to enhance and expand traditional literary analysis rather than to replace it. A "both/and" approach, in which quantitative analysis bolsters qualitative interpretation, is promoted by digital humanities. Digital techniques enable the tracing of linguistic patterns, symbolism, and thematic focus in Atwood's works that indicate intertextual connection with larger literary and cultural traditions. For example, recurring vocabulary clusters pertaining to science, religion, mythology, and governance might demonstrate how Atwood's stories concurrently draw from various cultural sources, adding to their hybrid character.

In addition, the objectives of world literature studies, which place a strong emphasis on circulation, translation, reception, and cross-cultural interaction, are strongly aligned with those of digital humanities. According to theorists like David Damrosch and Franco Moretti, world literature frequently necessitates methodological innovation to examine literature that transcends linguistic and national boundaries. Literary connections can be visualized and texts can be contextualized within global systems of influence using digital methodologies, especially distant reading and network analysis. Using this lens to analyse Atwood's books reveals how her writing engages with global concerns about social injustice, environmental degradation, authoritarianism, and technological supremacy. The article examines how intertextuality and cultural hybridization work in a few of Margaret Atwood's works from the standpoint of digital humanities. The study demonstrates how Atwood's fiction reflects complex textual inheritances and hybrid cultural forms by moving from text to context through the combination of computer analysis and contextual literary interpretation. The digital analysis focusses on finding linguistic patterns, intertextual cues, and thematic repeats that indicate the confluence of several cultural narratives in her works. These results are then evaluated in the context of larger literary and cultural frameworks, connecting textual evidence to global, ideological, and historical settings.

By doing this, the paper advances current debates over methodological innovation in literary studies. It emphasizes how important digital humanities are for reconsidering well-known ideas like intertextuality, which have hitherto only been investigated through interpretive reading. The paper makes the case for a more integrated research technique that connects computational analysis with humanistic inquiry by demonstrating how digital technologies may make intertextual networks more apparent and analyzable. In due course, this opening section lays the groundwork for a multidisciplinary analysis of Margaret Atwood's books as instances of cultural hybridity and intertextual convergence in world literature. It presents digital humanities as a transformative framework that allows for new questions, new approaches, and new insights into modern fiction rather than just as a technological supplement. By using this strategy, the study aims to show how shifting from text to context—aided by digital methodologies—opens up more interpretive options for comprehending literature in an era of globalization and digital mediation.

### **Scripture, Power, and Cultural Hybridization in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale***

*The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (1985) is a potent illustration of how intertextuality and cultural hybridization function in modern dystopian fiction. Through a complex web of literary allusions taken from biblical scripture, Puritan history, feminist discourse, and prior dystopian traditions, the novel creates the totalitarian Republic of Gilead. These intertexts are ideological instruments that legitimize, challenge, and reinterpret authority; they are not just allusions. By using this multi-layered textual technique, Atwood crafts a culturally hybrid story that addresses particular historical and global concerns while placing the book within the context of international literature.

The Bible, especially the Old Testament, is one of the most prevalent intertextual frameworks in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Selective biblical interpretation—most notably the narrative of Rachel and Leah—explicitly justifies Gilead's social and reproductive structure. Genesis 30:1-3, where Rachel offers her maid Bilhah to Jacob to have children on her behalf, is where the Handmaids' duty originates. Offred's experience reflects this biblical story: "We are for breeding purposes: we aren't concubines, geisha girls, courtesans." On the contrary: everything possible has been done to remove us from that category." (Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, 1985, p. 136). This quotation underscores the irony of Gilead's claim to moral purity while exposing how scripture is manipulated to institutionalize female subjugation.

Atwood's use of biblical intertextuality, according to critics like Karen Stein, demonstrates "how patriarchal systems appropriate sacred texts to naturalize oppression." Atwood highlights the risks of fundamentalist interpretation, which ignores cultural and historical factors in favour of strict ideological control, rather than portraying religion as intrinsically oppressive. This selective use of scripture, which combines ancient religious texts with contemporary political authoritarianism, is an example of cultural hybridization.

Additionally, Atwood incorporates the book into a uniquely North American cultural memory by prominently referencing Puritan New England history. In Gilead, public executions, ritualized punishment, and moral monitoring are reminiscent of Puritan customs including theocratic rule and public humiliation. This intertextual resonance is further enhanced by the setting of Cambridge, Massachusetts, which is home to Harvard University. Atwood "reworks the Puritan past to critique contemporary anxieties about moral absolutism and political extremism," according to Coral Ann Howells. The novel's caution about recurring patterns of repression is strengthened by this historical layering, which creates a hybrid narrative space where the past and present meet.

Additionally, Atwood incorporates the book into a cultural memory unique to North America by prominently referencing Puritan New England history. Gilead's ritualized punishment, public executions, and moral monitoring are reminiscent of Puritan customs including public humiliation and theocratic rule. Harvard University is located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which enhances this intertextual resonance even more. Coral Ann Howells observes that Atwood "reworks the Puritan past to critique contemporary anxieties about political extremism and moral absolutism." The novel's warning about recurring patterns of suppression is reinforced by the hybrid narrative space created by this historical layering.

From a feminist perspective, critics such as Madonna Miner emphasize that Atwood's dystopia is not speculative fantasy but a cultural collage of real historical practices imposed on women. Atwood herself famously stated that nothing in the novel "has not already happened somewhere." This assertion highlights the novel's cultural hybridization, as it fuses global examples of gender oppression—ranging from forced reproduction to dress codes—into a single fictional regime. Gilead thus becomes a transnational construct, resonating with readers across cultural and political contexts.

The Handmaid's Tale's intertextual richness is further reinforced by its narrative framework. Testimonial tales and survivor fiction are reminiscent of Offred's disjointed storytelling, oral confessions, and ambiguity regarding authorship. Even in retrospective historical discourse, women's perspectives are marginalized, as revealed in the novel's "Historical Notes" section, which reframes the story through an academic viewpoint. This metafictional technique "forces readers to question whose narratives are preserved and whose are dismissed as anecdotal," according to Linda Hutcheon.

The Handmaid's Tale is a prime example of how intertextuality and cultural hybridization serve as essential narrative devices rather than ornamental components. The novel crosses national boundaries and enters the realm of world literature through its blending of biblical materials, historical memory, dystopian traditions, and feminist critique. The idea that literature is both a result of and a reaction to intricate cultural systems is reinforced by Atwood's work, which shows how texts communicate across time and culture. By utilizing these intertextual networks, The Handmaid's Tale highlights the ongoing significance of literary hybridity in comprehending modern global realities while providing a potent critique of ideological fanaticism.

### **From Myth to Microchip: Intertextuality and Cultural Hybridization in Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake**

The first book in Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* (2003), provides a compelling examination of intertextuality and cultural hybridisation in the context of speculative fiction. The work, which is set in a near-future world destroyed by corporate avarice and bioengineering, draws from a wide range of textual, cultural, and ideological elements, such as biblical stories, myth, scientific discourse, dystopian literature, and international media culture. Atwood places the book solidly into world literature by creating a hybrid narrative that addresses current concerns about technology, ethics, globalisation, and environmental collapse through this interweaving of influences.

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Biblical and mythological story is one of *Oryx and Crake's* most notable intertextual themes. Crake presents himself as a godlike creator who created the Crakers, a new post-human species meant to take the place of imperfect humans. Both the biblical Genesis story and the myth of Prometheus, who crosses divine boundaries in his quest for knowledge, are echoed in this act of creation.

"The human race won't survive for much longer," is how Crake sums up his hubristic vision: "Human nature itself is a design flaw." (Atwood, Oryx and Crake, 2003, p. 305). The issue lies with the genes themselves. Atwood employs these intertexts to challenge the Enlightenment ideal of scientific mastery, as critics like Sherrill Grace note, exposing how mythic themes recur in contemporary technoscientific discourse.

Atwood's blending of scientific terminology with consumer capitalism and globalised media culture in *Oryx and Crake* is a prime example of cultural hybridisation. A lexicon that combines scientific terminology with commercial rhetoric is created by the novel's corporate chemicals, branded medications, and bioengineered animals like the rakunk and pigoon. This hybrid language represents what Ursula K. Heise refers to as a "posthuman ecology," in which global capitalism and technological innovation are inextricably linked. Atwood's satirical naming techniques highlight the ways in which commerce, culture, and science all come together to form a single ideological system.

Another aspect of cultural hybridisation is represented by the character of Oryx. Oryx is positioned as a person formed by international exploitation and media circulation due to her unclear origins—possibly Southeast Asian, trafficked across borders, and consumed as an image through online pornography. The limitations of Western narrative power are highlighted by Snowman's incapacity to fully comprehend or possess her story. "Why do you want to know? You can't understand. It's not your story." (Atwood, Oryx and Crake, 2003, p. 133) says Oryx herself. You are unable to comprehend. It's not your tale.

Oryx's detractors, like Coral Ann Howells, contend that it shows how global injustices are incorporated into speculative futures by symbolising the voices of the global South that have been muted. The dystopian tradition, especially Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, is also discussed intertextually in *Oryx and Crake*. Both books show cultures that forgo moral obligation in favour of security and luxury. Instead of centralised totalitarian regimes, Atwood's dystopia is more globally distributed and fragmented, mirroring late-capitalist reality. Tom Moylan claims that Atwood's writing is a prime example of the "critical dystopia," a genre that defies resolution and encourages moral contemplation as opposed to hopelessness.

In the book, language itself becomes the centre of cultural memory and resistance. Crake's utilitarian outlook stands in stark contrast to Snowman's commitment to obsolete vocabulary and literary allusions. "Old words are like old friends," (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 2003, p. 43) the snowman laments. "There are some you want to see, and others you don't" illustrates how storytelling and literature maintain human complexity in a world where instrumental reason is taking over. According to Linda Hutcheon, Atwood's criticism of posthuman futures that eliminate story, history, and moral uncertainty is strengthened by this metafictional understanding.

In summary, *Oryx and Crake* serves as an example of how Atwood's speculative fiction employs intertextuality and cultural hybridisation as key narrative techniques. Atwood creates a hybrid narrative world that explores humanity's connection with technology and power by fusing myth, science, dystopian tropes, and global cultural realities. The book's intertextual networks place it in the context of world literature and show how modern fiction both reflects and transforms international cultural conversations. Atwood cautions via *Oryx and Crake* that the future is not a break from the past but rather a reconfiguration of inherited narratives, philosophies, and moral quandaries in unsettling new ways.

### **Narrative Palimpsests: Intertextuality and Cultural Hybridization in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace***

Margaret Atwood's 1996 historical fiction book *Alias Grace*, which reimagines a true Canadian murder case from the eighteenth century, is a prime example of the complex processes of intertextuality and cultural hybridisation. Atwood creates a story that blurs the lines between fact and fiction by drawing on a variety of textual sources, such as court records, newspaper articles, medical records, ballads, letters, and Victorian literary tropes. *Alias Grace* positions the book as a major addition to Canadian and international literature by using this hybrid form to question the creation of reality, the legitimacy of historical narratives, and the silencing of marginalised voices.

The intertextual interaction with historical records pertaining to the 1843 killings of Thomas Kinnear and Nancy Montgomery is at the heart of *Alias Grace*. Atwood juxtaposes Grace Marks's first-person account with passages from confessions, trial transcripts, and modern journalism. The volatility of historical knowledge is shown by this stacking of texts. When Grace says, "It is very hard to tell the truth, but sometimes it is very easy to tell a lie," (Atwood, *Alias Grace*, 1996, p. 298).

She is expressing her confusion. The sentence captures the main issues of the book, which are the fabrication of truth and narrative dependability. *Alias Grace*, according to Linda Hutcheon, is a prime example of "historiographic metafiction," a style that both references and challenges historical authority.

Atwood's blending of many discursive systems—Victorian science, religion, folklore, and household ideology—in the book results in cultural hybridisation. Dr. Simon Jordan's medical evaluations are based on psychological theories from the nineteenth century, such as early concepts of multiple personality disorder and hysteria. Particularly in Grace's relationship with Mary Whitney, these scientific discourses clash with popular superstition, spiritualism, and traditional beliefs.

Grace's memory, "I think of all the things that were said about us, and all the things that were never said at all," (Atwood, *Alias Grace*, 1996, p. 329) illustrates how competing cultural narratives that frequently mute or misrepresent women's voices mediate their experiences. Atwood reveals how patriarchal knowledge institutions classify and control female bodies under the pretence of objectivity, according to critics like Sherrill Grace.

The novel's hybrid structure is further enhanced by intertextual allusions to Victorian literature. The themes of madness, secrecy, and captivity are reminiscent of Gothic novels and sensation fiction, including works by Wilkie Collins and Charlotte Brontë. By focussing on a working-class Irish immigrant woman, Atwood challenges prevailing literary hierarchies and modifies these conventions. Coral Ann Howells claims that *Alias Grace* "rewrites the Victorian novel from the margins," turning well-known genres into platforms for postcolonial and feminist criticism.

The novel's cultural hybridity is further enhanced by its interaction with oral culture and folk tradition. Ballads and quilting metaphors serve as alternate storytelling formats that preserve women's histories outside of official documents. Grace's statement, "Every quilt tells a story," (Atwood, *Alias Grace*, 1996, p. 551) emphasises how household customs turn into archives of cultural memory. Margaret Rogerson notes that Atwood is able to counter the dominance of institutional narratives by including women's collective knowledge into the historical record thanks to these symbolic frameworks.

The intertextual richness of *Alias Grace* is further reinforced by its unclear conclusion. The unanswered question of Grace's guilt highlights the power of storytelling and the limitations of historical reconstruction. As Barbara Godard argues, the novel resists narrative closure in order to “foreground the politics of interpretation,” compelling readers to confront their own assumptions about truth and justice.

Finally, *Alias Grace* shows how cultural hybridisation and intertextuality function as essential narrative methods rather than ornamental ones. Atwood crafts a palimpsestic book that captures the variety of voices influencing history by fusing historical records, literary genres, scientific discourse, and oral tradition. The novel's hybrid form places it in the context of international literature as a piece that offers a profound reflection on memory, identity, and the ethics of representation while transcending national history. Atwood demonstrates via *Alias Grace* that history is a contested narrative realm, where reality arises from the interaction of several and frequently contradictory texts rather than from a single authority.

### **Conclusion**

In order to show how *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *Alias Grace* function as related but separate places of textual convergence, this study has investigated intertextuality and cultural hybridisation in Margaret Atwood's books from a digital humanities viewpoint. Atwood continuously incorporates biblical, mythological, historical, scientific, and literary traditions into these works, rearranging them into hybrid narrative forms that mirror altering power dynamics and cultural concerns around the world. The work has demonstrated how Atwood's fiction shifts dynamically from text to context by fusing digital approaches with literary interpretation, exposing patterns of influence that cut across individual novels and national borders.

Biblical scripture is intertextually appropriated in *The Handmaid's Tale* as a means of ideological control. Sacred texts are selectively mobilised to legitimise patriarchal authority, turning spiritual narratives into tools of state power, as demonstrated by a digital analysis of recurrent religious and legal language. This blending of politics and religion highlights Atwood's criticism of fundamentalism and shows how repressive systems may be maintained through the manipulation of cultural memory. The intertextual richness of the book emphasises gender as a key axis of control while placing it within a global dystopian tradition.

Atwood's intertextual approach is extended in *Oryx and Crake* to the field of technoscience, where corporate capitalism, scientific discourse, and creation stories from mythology and the Bible collide. The novel creates a hybrid cultural world where old myths reappear through posthuman futures, as demonstrated by the digital mapping of linguistic patterns related to genetics, consumption, and mythology. The work is situated among worldwide literary discussions on globalisation, environmentalism, and posthumanism, and this convergence of myth and technology highlights the moral ramifications of unbridled scientific ambition.

*Alias Grace*, on the other hand, uses intertextuality through Victorian literary traditions and historical documents to create a palimpsestic tale that undermines conventional wisdom. The coexistence of official documents with oral tradition, folklore, and home symbols is highlighted by digital tracing of narrative voices and thematic clusters. By highlighting marginalised female viewpoints and challenging prevailing historical narratives, this cultural hybridisation emphasises the politics of memory and representation.

When considered collectively, these books show that intertextuality and cultural hybridisation are fundamental narrative techniques that challenge identity, power, and knowledge production rather than just being stylistic elements in Atwood's writing. By highlighting extensive textual patterns and intertextual networks that support careful reading, a digital humanities viewpoint improves this comprehension. In the end, Atwood's books serve as an example of how modern literature contributes to international cultural discussions and how digital approaches can broaden literary studies' interpretive perspectives. This work confirms the value of digital humanities in rethinking literary research in a world growing more linked by connecting computer analysis and humanistic inquiry.

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