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Self-Fashioning in Margaret Atwood's Fiction

Dress, Culture, and Identity

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Book synopsis

This study examines the associations between dressing and storytelling in Margaret Atwood's fiction. As cultural representations operating within a network of codes, clothed bodies are often discussed by theorists as constructed performances or as fabricated texts, inextricably bound up with ideology and power. The clothed body often becomes a battleground in Atwood's fiction as female protagonists respond to divisive cultural scripts through self-fashioning. Furthermore, Atwood seems to collapse the opposition between the material and the spiritual through clothing, to consider dress a fitting metaphor for the space between the natural and the supernatural. While the connections among dress, body, and story are visible from Atwood's earliest novel forward, they achieve their most unified and powerful effect in *The Robber Bride* (1993) and *Alias Grace* (1996). In these novels, Atwood draws upon the classical idea that the body clothes the soul to create a postmodern frame for the complex relationships among subjectivity, representation, voice, gender, and culture.

About the author(s)/editor(s)

The Author: Cynthia G. Kuhn is Assistant Professor of English at Metropolitan State College in Denver, Colorado. She earned her doctorate in English from the University of Denver. Her research interests include contemporary North American fiction, women's literature, and the gothic.

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