

## GENDER AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *ORYX AND CRAKE*

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### ABSTRACT

*The concept of gender came into common parlance during the early 1970's and is explained to be the feature of subjectivity. It explores that gender identity i.e. both masculinity and femininity is a product of social and cultural discourse which can be appropriated by the person of either gender, irrespective of their sexual identity. The arguments posed by eminent gender critics established that there are no behavioural patterns or traits that can be exclusively labeled as feminine or masculine. By uprooting the domain of gender from body gender theorists shook the very foundation of patriarchy and masculinity as superior and women as inferior.*

*Being a postmodern writer, Canadian author Margaret Atwood offers various ways, mediums, practices, patterns and norms of society and culture that lead to the conditioning of psyche of both men and women that result in the shaping and 'becoming' of feminine and masculine gender identities. It is according to the cultural expectations and scripts of femininity and masculinity that both man and woman internalize and mould themselves according to the stereotypes available of each gender identity. Atwood deconstructs the binary of gender/sex in her novel *Oryx and Crake* and proves that traits known to be masculine can be displayed by women and vice versa.*

*In this paper I'll unearth and show that how gender identities are unstable and are constructed socially and culturally. I will also explore through both male and female characters that how society and culture influence and mould the identities of men and women according to the constructed stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.*

**Keywords:** gender, performativity, discourse, construction, patriarchy