

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky



Silvie Pospíšilová

**THE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NOVELS
SET IN TORONTO**

Bakalářská práce

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.

Olomouc 2020

Zadání závěrečné práce

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem v ní seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne 15. dubna 2020

.....

Silvie Pospíšilová

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D. for her guidance. Her expertise was invaluable, and the patience and time she dedicated to me are much appreciated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
1. TORONTO, ONTARIO	8
1.1. Geography	8
1.2. Population	9
1.3. Economy	11
2. HELPLESS	12
2.1. Author's Biography	12
2.2. Characters	12
2.3. Plot Analysis	16
2.4. Main Themes	24
2.5. Writing Style and Special Devices	28
2.6. Mentions of Toronto	30
2.7. Book Reception, Accolades	31
3. CAT'S EYE	33
3.1. Author's Biography	33
3.2. Characters	33
3.3. Plot Analysis	34
3.4. Main Themes	37
3.5. Writing Style and Special Devices	40
3.6. Mentions of Toronto	42
3.7. Book Reception, Accolades	43
CONCLUSION	45
RESUMÉ	49
BIBLIOGRAPHY	51
ANNOTATION	54
ANOTACE	55
APPENDICES	56
Appendix 1	56
Appendix 2	57

INTRODUCTION

This Bachelor's thesis deals with two selected novels which are set in Toronto, Ontario. Although many books with a plot taking place in Toronto have been written by a number of international authors, this thesis is focused on works written by Canadian authors only. The two writers I have picked for the purposes of this thesis are Margaret Atwood and Barbara Gowdy. As far as the time frame is concerned, there is no specific period which the thesis concentrates on. The publication dates of the chosen works vary—Atwood's *Cat's Eye* was originally published in 1988, and Gowdy's *Helpless* in 2007, making it the newer book discussed in the thesis.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze these two novels. Although Barbara Gowdy is a renowned Canadian author, her novel *Helpless* is not getting all the attention it deserves. I have decided to rectify this problem by providing a literary analysis of the novel. The second novel selected for the literary analysis, Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, has been chosen because some parallels can be drawn between this novel and *Helpless*. Apart from the plot taking place in Toronto, there are certain themes which are prominent in both novels. For example, helplessness and the inability to defend herself can be observed both in Rachel Fox and Elaine Risley, protagonists of *Helpless* and *Cat's Eye*, respectively. Rachel is abducted and her future lies in the hands of complete strangers who claim that they are her rescuers. Rachel is confused about how to interpret the new situation and who to believe. She is too young to stand up for herself and fight her abductors. Elaine in *Cat's Eye* feels helpless because her friends convince her of her own incompetence in keeping up with them. Whatever she does to fit in, it is never good enough.

Family ties and a difficult childhood are two more examples of topics touched upon in both novels. Rachel is being raised by her loving mother, but her life feels incomplete because of the absence of her biological father. Elaine's childhood is idyllic until she is forced to move to Toronto. Being settled down in one place is difficult for her as it is, but the situation takes a turn for the worse when her friends start bullying her and make her life a living hell.

I structured this thesis into three main chapters. In the first main chapter, I am going to provide basic information about Toronto, Ontario as it is important for establishing geographic and social background of the novels. I am going to start by describing the location of Toronto and clarifying the differences between Toronto, the Toronto Greater Area, and the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area. In the next section of

the chapter, I am going to mention some relevant facts about the population of Toronto as well as Canada. Finally, in the last part of this chapter, I will briefly comment on Toronto's economy.

The next two chapters are focused on the selected novels; one novel per chapter. These two chapters are further divided into seven subchapters where I examine various aspects of the novels. For example, for each novel, I intend to include information about the author's background in order to determine whether the novel was inspired by events that were important to the author or that had an influence on the author's life. I am also interested in discussing what other main themes apart from feeling helpless are represented in the novels or what literary devices are used. Furthermore, I will take a close look at what streets, sights, or other landmarks of Toronto or the Toronto Greater Area are mentioned in the novels and attempt to assess their relevance to the plot.

The aim of the literary analysis is to determine whether there can be more similarities found between these two selected novels besides the most striking ones, such as helplessness and a troubled childhood of both Rachel and Elaine. At the end of the thesis, I will summarize my findings and reflect on the aims formulated in the introduction.

1. TORONTO, ONTARIO

This chapter provides information about the city of Toronto and lays the groundwork for understanding the geographic, social, and cultural background of the selected novels whose plot takes place in Toronto.

1.1. Geography

Canada, the second largest country in the world, consists of ten provinces, namely British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador, and three territories, namely Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. Most inhabitants occupy the area in proximity to the United States border in the south of the country, which results in significant differences in the density of population. Ontario, the province where Toronto is located, is the most populous province in Canada. As one of the original four provinces, Ontario was united into the Dominion of Canada along with Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia on July 1, 1867.¹ Ontario is said to belong to the Central Canada region which also includes the province of Quebec.² The name Central Canada, however, does not mean that Ontario is in the geographic center of Canada; the name merely points to the fact that Ontario as well as Quebec have historically been the center of political and economic power in the country.³

In terms of geographical location, Toronto is situated in Southern Ontario on the shore of Lake Ontario, the smallest of the five Great Lakes when it comes to the surface area.⁴ All Toronto's rivers and creeks flow into Lake Ontario and are part of the Atlantic Ocean Drainage Basin.⁵

It is necessary to distinguish among Toronto, the Greater Toronto Area (commonly abbreviated to the GTA), and the Census Metropolitan Area (frequently abbreviated to the CMA). The Greater Toronto Area and the Census Metropolitan Area are metropolitan areas that the city of Toronto is a part of. These administrative areas have slightly different boundaries, but they both encompass other cities and towns in the

¹ Virginia L. Sauvé and Monique Sauvé, *Gateway to Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 21.

² Sauvé and Sauvé, *Gateway to Canada*, 2.

³ Sauvé and Sauvé, *Gateway to Canada*, 4.

⁴ Sauvé and Sauvé, *Gateway to Canada*, 4.

⁵ "Toronto at a Glance," City of Toronto, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/toronto-at-a-glance/>.

regions surrounding the city of Toronto. For instance, the GTA covers areas such as the city of Mississauga in the Peel Region located west of Toronto, and Pickering or Oshawa in the Durham Region east of Toronto. Therefore, when someone refers to the GTA, they are also referring to other cities and towns outside the city of Toronto, not just the city of Toronto itself. Neither the GTA nor the CMA are municipalities; they are simply defined as administrative areas and their exact demarcation is depicted on the map in Appendix 1 attached to this thesis.

In reference to administrative division, Toronto is currently divided into four Community Council Areas: Etobicoke York, North York, Toronto and East York, and Scarborough. Each of these Community Council Areas can then be further divided into Wards. Toronto has adapted the 25-ward system, which replaced the 44-ward model in 2018.⁶ The Community Council Areas and Wards boundaries can be found on the map in Appendix 2.

1.2. Population

As of October 2019, the population of Canada was estimated at 37,797,496 inhabitants.⁷ According to New, most of Canada's population was urban in 2001: "Of the total population of Canada (30,007,094 inhabitants in 2001), approximately 78 per cent was urban, with 32 per cent of the population living in the three largest metropolitan areas (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver)."⁸ The figures indicate that Canada's population grew by almost 7,800,000 inhabitants from 2001 to 2019. Population growth and immigration have always played an important role in the country—from looking at recent statistics, it is evident that Canada's population increased by 208,234 from July 1 to October 1, 2019, driven mainly by an influx of immigrants and non-permanent residents. An interesting fact is that this has been the first time that Canada's population increased by more than 200,000 in a single quarter.⁹ Andrew claims that Canada's diversity appears to be

⁶ "Community Council Area Profiles," City of Toronto, accessed February 9, 2020, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/community-council-area-profiles/>.

⁷ "Canada's population estimates, third quarter 2019," Statistics Canada, accessed January 29, 2020, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/191219/dq191219c-eng.htm?HPA=1&indid=4098-1&indgeo=0>.

⁸ William H. New, *A History of Canadian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 323.

⁹ Statistics Canada, "Canada's population estimates, third quarter 2019."

concentrated in the largest cities. Almost 75 percent of the immigrants arriving between 1991 and 2001 settled in Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal.¹⁰

Based on its geographical location, Toronto lies in an area with a high population density. Being the largest Canadian city, Toronto's population amounted to 2,956,024 inhabitants as of July 2018.¹¹ If the CMA is taken into consideration, the population was estimated to add up to 6,341,935 inhabitants in 2018.¹² With that said, both Toronto and the CMA are often depicted as a multicultural urban center. A new immigration trend has arisen recently; a matter that Andrew calls the non-white character of immigration. According to her, between 1991 and 1996, the five leading countries of origin of immigrants to Toronto (as well as Vancouver) were all countries with mainly non-white populations.¹³ In fact, there is a special term coined for the purposes of the non-white character of immigration: visible minorities. The data released by the Ministry of Finance attest to the importance of the trend. As taken from the Ministry of Finance's official website, "visible minorities are defined as persons who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color and who do not report being Aboriginal."¹⁴ Relevant data provided by the Ministry of Finance show that as part of the 2016 Census, 3,011,905 people living in the Toronto CMA identified themselves as visible minorities. The data show that the largest group of visible minorities were the South Asians who made up 32.3% of the Toronto CMA visible minorities population, followed by the Chinese who represented 21% of the Toronto CMA visible minorities population.¹⁵

Owing to the large number of immigrants in the region, there is a variety of languages spoken around the Toronto CMA. Data collected by the 2016 Census reveal that more than four in ten people in the Toronto CMA had a mother tongue other English or French, which are the two official languages of Canada.¹⁶

¹⁰ Caroline Andrew, "City States and Cityscapes in Canada: The Politics and Culture of Canadian Urban Diversity," in *Managing Diversity: Practices of Citizenship*, eds. Nicholas Brown and Linda Cardinal (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2007), 116.

¹¹ City of Toronto, "Toronto at a Glance."

¹² "Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries," Statistics Canada, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=1710013501>.

¹³ Andrew, "City States and Cityscapes in Canada: The Politics and Culture of Canadian Urban Diversity," 116.

¹⁴ "2016 CENSUS HIGHLIGHTS: Factsheet 9," Ministry of Finance, accessed February 13, 2020, <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/census/cenhi16-9.html>.

¹⁵ Ministry of Finance, "2016 CENSUS HIGHLIGHTS: Factsheet 9."

¹⁶ "2016 CENSUS HIGHLIGHTS: Factsheet 6," Ministry of Finance, accessed February 13, 2020, <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/census/cenhi16-6.html>.

1.3. Economy

Toronto is regarded as Canada's business and financial capital. It is headquarters to the country's largest financial institutions including the five largest banks in Canada: Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), Toronto-Dominion Bank (TD), Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), Bank of Nova Scotia (Scotiabank), and Bank of Montreal (BMO), the oldest bank in Canada.¹⁷

An integral part of Toronto's economy is tourism. According to the data published by the City of Toronto, Toronto is the leading tourism destination in Canada with over 43.7 million visitors in 2017. It is attractive to visitors because it offers a wide range of tourism options, such as sports, festivals, performing arts, shopping, or parks and recreation.¹⁸

Recently, the film industry has become another vital aspect of Toronto's economy. The key factors why directors choose to shoot a film in Toronto are, for instance, lower costs and an abundance of talent.¹⁹ In reality, several films and TV shows which are supposedly taking place in American cities were filmed in Toronto.

¹⁷ "Financial Services," City of Toronto, accessed February 9, 2020, <https://www.toronto.ca/business-economy/industry-sector-support/financial-services/>.

¹⁸ "Tourism," City of Toronto, accessed February 9, 2020, <https://www.toronto.ca/business-economy/industry-sector-support/tourism/>.

¹⁹ Melanie U. Pooch, *DiverCity – Global Cities as a Literary Phenomenon: Toronto, New York, and Los Angeles in a Globalizing Age* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016), 81.

2. HELPLESS

2.1. Author's Biography

Barbara Gowdy is one of Canada's contemporary writers. Although she was born in Windsor, Ontario in 1950, she was raised in Toronto where she attended York University and the Royal Conservatory of Music.²⁰ She is currently listed as one of the Adjunct Professors at the University of Toronto's Department of English. She is known for her novels as well as short stories; her works have been published in 24 countries.²¹ As a Toronto resident, Gowdy is familiar with the city, which is the reason why she chose Toronto's Cabbagetown as the setting of her novel *Helpless*.

2.2. Characters

There are four main characters appearing in the novel *Helpless*. The first one is Celia Fox. Celia is a single mother who lives in Toronto with her daughter, Rachel Fox. Together they occupy a small apartment in a Victorian building in Toronto's Cabbagetown, not too far away from Parliament Street. From the first chapter, it is evident that Celia's income is barely sufficient for providing for her and her daughter. She struggles to make ends meet despite having two jobs—during the day, she works as a video store clerk, and in the evenings, she earns money as a jazz and blues pianist at a place called the Casa Hernandez Motel, utilizing her talent to play the piano impeccably. Another fact known about Celia is that her mother suffered a massive stroke and died about half a year later; shortly before Rachel was born. Celia's father moved to Florida when she was eight years old; she has not spoken to him in years. In general, Celia and Rachel are quite isolated—they are not in touch with any relatives, nor do any family members live close by.

The second protagonist of the novel is above mentioned Rachel Fox. Rachel is nine years old and of a mixed race—while her mother is Caucasian, her father is of African ancestry. Having blonde hair and a darker complexion, Rachel is described as an exotic child. Throughout the novel, attention is often drawn to her extraordinary beauty. She is quite frequently looked at by strangers who admire her looks. Needless to say, the attention is often unsolicited. An important aspect of Rachel's life is the absence of her

²⁰ Colin Boyd and Karen Grandy, "Barbara Gowdy," The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed February 2, 2020, <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/barbara-gowdy>.

²¹ "Gowdy, Barbara," University of Toronto, accessed February 2, 2020, <http://www.english.utoronto.ca/facultystaff/affiliatedfaculty/gowdy.htm>.

biological father. The truth is that Celia is not certain who exactly Rachel's father is. One of the options is that it may be an architect from New York City named Robert Smith; at least this is the version she shares with Rachel. Rachel longs for meeting her father, which interferes with her daily life—on occasions when Rachel encounters an American citizen, she asks whether they come from New York and whether they happen to know a man named Robert Smith, her alleged father. Also, having been raised with no father around, just by her mother, Rachel and Celia have become very close. Their relationship can even be described as best friends.

The third main character is Ron, a 37-year-old repairman who lusts for Rachel and eventually abducts her. His real name is Constantine, which is the name his mother gave to him. However, everyone but his mother would call him Con. When he was younger, Ron was ashamed of the unusual name Constantine, which is why he would always tell people that Con was the shortened version of Conrad in order to blend in. When he purchased Ron's Appliance Repair store in his mid-twenties, he decided it was time to bury the past, start anew and go by the name Ron. In the course of the novel, readers discover some disturbing facts from Ron's childhood. A good example would be Ron's mother's tragic death. She was hit by a car on the morning of Ron's eleventh birthday as she was returning home from a store, bringing him a birthday cake. Another experience which had an impact on Ron's life is Mrs. Lawson and her eight-year-old daughter, Jenny Lawson, moving in with Ron and his father. The two women joined Ron and his father shortly after Ron's mother was involved in the fatal accident. Ron's father explained to Ron that Mrs. Lawson had lost her husband recently and was not doing too well. Therefore, he and Ron would accommodate Mrs. Lawson and her daughter in the house for some time until their mental health improved. Ron accepted it as a fact. He was a naïve child and did not understand that his father was, in fact, dating Mrs. Lawson. It was Jenny who revealed to him that his father and her mother were lovers. Ron's relationship to Jenny can be described as atypical, to say the least. They used to play house; Jenny would pretend to be a woman named Carol, Ron would be her husband Phil, and together they would be raising a baby named Wendy. The only catch was that playing the game involved having intercourse. One night when Ron and Jenny were in the middle of one of their adult-version pretend play sessions, Mrs. Lawson walked in on them. She immediately drew the obvious conclusion from what she saw. The very next day, she and Jenny moved out to Barrie, a town north of Toronto, where Mrs. Lawson's sister lived.

Ron has never seen Jenny ever since. What made the whole situation even more peculiar was that Ron's father never properly reacted to Ron's actions. All Ron's father said was: "You know what you did was wrong. You know that."²² Apart from uttering this comment, Ron's father acted like nothing was out of the ordinary. He never reprimanded Ron, nor did they ever speak of the incident again.

The last character that should be listed as a main character is Ron's girlfriend, Nancy. Nancy is a former drug user, a great banjo player, and the readers also find out that she has a problem with her leg—she gets spasms which cause her to either fall or at least drop anything she is holding in her hands. Nancy's childhood was far from idyllic. When she was a little girl, she was repeatedly molested by her father. At first, Nancy thought that her father devoted so much attention to her because she was his favorite daughter. She realized the harsh truth soon enough—she was chosen by her father due to her being the weakest and the most naïve of her sisters. The painful memories still haunt her to this day. As an adult, Nancy is characterized as a woman who has a lot of love to give. She is as naïve as she was as a child. For instance, she believes that Ron plans a future with her in the picture. In reality, he has no intention of staying with her forever, but Nancy cannot see it. Moreover, Nancy is overly tolerant and forgiving when it comes to Ron. She cannot have children and often thinks to herself that she would be willing to tolerate it if Ron found another woman who would be able to give him a child. Nancy is the embodiment of a loyal woman who would do anything for her partner. One of the possible explanations why she is so loyal to Ron is that she lacks confidence. As a matter of fact, Nancy is so insecure about herself that she blames herself for everything. It is absurd, but she genuinely believes she is the one to blame for a power outage that occurred one evening: "Nancy pokes her head out her kitchen window. 'Ah, jeez,' she says. She thinks it's her fault. Just as she turned on her air conditioner the electricity went off... in the entire neighborhood, from what she can see."²³ This excerpt brilliantly illustrates what kind of person Nancy is. It would be preposterous to suggest that the power outage in the entire neighborhood is her fault, but due to her low self-esteem, Nancy is convinced that she is responsible regardless. One more trait typical of Nancy is that she tends to be influenced easily. For example, when Rachel lets Nancy know that she is a vegetarian because eating meat is cruel, Nancy immediately agrees with her and says that she has to

²² Barbara Gowdy, *Helpless* (New York: Picador, 2008), 193.

²³ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 76.

stop eating meat, too: “Rachel pulls her eyes from the door. ‘I’m a vegetarian,’ she says. ‘Oh,’ Nancy says. ‘Well, it’s healthier, I know that.’ ‘It’s not because it’s healthy. It’s because eating meat is cruel.’ ‘You’re right. I’ve got to stop.’ She’s serious. She sits on the sofa.”²⁴ On a whim, Nancy announces to Ron that she is neither eating nor buying meat from this moment on. She does not think it through, but because Rachel says that eating meat is cruel, Nancy becomes a vegetarian, too. In summary, Nancy serves as a contrastive element to Ron. Nancy’s traits include being timid, gullible, and obedient, whereas Ron is the self-assured and dominant individual in this relationship. He does whatever he pleases and always needs to have his own way while Nancy conforms. He does not feel any remorse over deceiving her. In contrast to him, Nancy is very honest about her feelings for Ron. It may sound as a cliché, but she would do anything to make him happy. In consequence, she constantly feels guilty about not being able to do even more for him, for example, to bear his child. Forster introduced the concept of flat and round characters.²⁵ Nancy certainly fits the description of a round character, mainly due to the element of surprise. In my opinion, she is an elaborate character who undergoes most changes throughout the story. I will state arguments in support of my claim in the subchapter Writing Style and Special Devices.

Apart from the main characters, there are some recurring characters in the novel. One of them is Mika Ramstad, Celia and Rachel’s landlord. It is obvious that both Celia and Rachel are on good terms with him. Sometimes when Celia is at work, Mika watches Rachel for her. An interesting fact about Mika is that he is one of the many immigrants living in Toronto—he moved to Canada from Finland.

One more important character appearing in this novel is Angie. She is known to be in a relationship with a man who has ties with the mafia and yet, Angie comes across as a nice and caring woman. She works at a nail studio which is visited by Celia and Nancy. Despite being customers at the same nail studio, Celia and Nancy do not know one another; Angie is their mutual friend. There is, nevertheless, one time when Celia and Nancy interact: Nancy comes to visit Angie, walks into the nail studio holding a cake but gets a leg spasm and stumbles. Celia acts promptly, catches Nancy and saves both her and the cake. Nancy thanks her and is genuinely grateful. Rachel is also present during this incident which takes place shortly before the kidnapping. Although not a main character,

²⁴ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 145-146.

²⁵ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th ed. (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999), 33.

Angie plays a key role later in the story after Rachel's disappearance. There is an encounter that involves Angie. As a result of the encounter, Nancy becomes convinced that Ron's rationale for kidnapping Rachel may be wrong. I will describe the encounter in more detail in the following subchapter.

2.3. Plot Analysis

This subchapter deals with the plot of the novel. I will describe the plot in detail in order to demonstrate the traits of the characters appearing in this novel.

Helpless is set in present-day Toronto during a hot summer. It revolves around Rachel who is eventually abducted by Ron. They do not know each other, but one day Ron spots Rachel in front of her school and is besotted with her immediately. He does not know anything about her. He is, however, a patient observer and soon he manages to find out more details about Rachel, including her address.

The frequency of Ron's trips to watch Rachel gradually escalates. The more Ron stalks Rachel, the more infatuated he becomes. He misreads some events and jumps to conclusions. He becomes under the impression that Rachel is being neglected by her mother and abused by men, which leads him to the idea that he should abduct her and keep her safe at his own place. He acts upon the idea and starts remodeling the basement of his store in anticipation of Rachel's arrival. He justifies the renovations to Nancy by claiming that he does it for the child who they are going to adopt together. Naïve Nancy has always been afraid of Ron leaving her; therefore, she is ecstatic to hear that Ron is willing to stay in a relationship with her and adopt a child, as opposed to leaving Nancy, finding a fertile woman and having a child with that woman. Nancy is curious as to why Ron makes her swear not to tell anyone about the basement bedroom and as to why he does not let her call adopting agencies in order to start the process of adoption. He deceives Nancy by saying that the first step of the adoption process should be to prepare a bedroom for the child and only then to call an agency, not vice versa. Nancy is of a different opinion but remains characteristically silent. Moreover, she thinks that a bedroom upstairs would be more suitable for the adopted child but again, she keeps quiet and does not argue with Ron.

One evening when Celia is at work and Rachel is home alone with Mika, Ron is on a stakeout outside their house. He considers making a move and executing his plan to abduct Rachel when she suddenly disappears into the house. This is the moment when

Ron becomes aware of a major power outage which has struck the area. Meanwhile, Rachel is inside the house with Mika who is fetching a battery-powered lantern from the basement. While walking down the stairs, Mika trips and falls to the ground where he lies unconscious. When Mika does not respond to Rachel's cries, she tries dialing 9-1-1 on the kitchen landline phone. Unfortunately, the phone is not ringing, so she darts out to get help. When she reaches the porch steps, she runs into a man who is blocking her way—it is Ron. With the blackout, an opportunity comes along and Ron seizes it—he directs Rachel to get into his vehicle. She obeys because she is worried about Mika and believes that Ron is there to help her.

Ron calls Nancy and orders her to come over immediately. When Nancy arrives at Ron's place and he finally reveals the reason why he needed her to come over, Nancy is not very pleased. She is not sure whether bringing Rachel to the basement was a good idea:

“I don't know, Ron. I don't know, I don't know. This is, like, kidnapping.” He balances the pencil across a jar of paperclips. “Only if we get caught.” “*We*? What do you mean, *we*?” “If we stay cool and collected, everything will work out. After a while she'll start to feel safe. She'll want to stay because for the first time in her life she'll understand what it is to live in a real home. We'll be like parents to her. She'll have both a mother—a good mother—and a father.”²⁶

This excerpt shows that Nancy does not share Ron's view on the issue. It comes as a surprise that she disagrees with him and questions his actions. Up until this moment, Nancy has been willing to do anything Ron says, no questions asked. Furthermore, it is unexpected that she asks what Ron meant by “we.” She loves him unconditionally and under any other circumstances, she would be delighted if Ron referred to them as “we.” She has always wanted them to be one unit. Also, the excerpt serves as an example of one of Ron's self-serving lies. He claims that Rachel will gain a good mother through the kidnapping. Nevertheless, he only says so for Nancy's benefit. The truth is that Ron needs Nancy's compliance. This point in the novel is crucial because this is the first time Nancy has expressed her disapproval of Ron's actions. She seems to be a rational being at this point because she attempts to persuade Ron to return Rachel back home several times. One of the many conversations Ron and Nancy have on the night of the abduction is as follows: “‘Ron.’ ‘What?’ ‘She wants to go home.’ He blinks, then goes behind the counter.

²⁶ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 94.

Without looking at her, he says, ‘There should be some clean sheets in the upstairs cupboard.’”²⁷ It is clear from Nancy’s comment that she feels sorry for Rachel and wants to get her back home. Nancy recognizes that the kidnapping is a bad move. Ron, on the other hand, does not factor in Nancy’s concerns. He ignores her remarks and carries on with the conversation as if nothing happened in order to get his own way.

Nancy has doubts about the whole situation at the beginning. Nonetheless, Ron’s strategy works because Nancy comes around to Ron’s way of thinking in a short time. She accepts the explanation he offers—taking Rachel away from a negligent mother and an abusive landlord was the right thing to do. Nancy is a gullible person, after all, and trusts Ron. Another reason why Nancy starts supporting Ron’s idea to keep Rachel in the basement is that she is aware of the perils of being raised by an abusive parent. As mentioned in the character analysis, Nancy herself had an abusive father. Being a caring person, Nancy is emotionally invested in the matter and would never wish any harm to happen to anyone else, let alone to an angelic girl like Rachel. In addition to that, Nancy warms up to the idea of becoming Rachel’s new mother. As outlined in the quotation from page number 94 in the novel, Rachel should realize that Celia’s attempts to provide for her were lame. According to the scheme that Ron has devised, she should erase memories of her biological mother over time, adapt to the new situation, and accept Ron and Nancy as her new beloved parents. The next step in the elaborate scheme Ron came up with is giving Rachel a makeover to ensure she is unrecognized in public, and then all three of them are going to start a new life in Florida. In support of his argument, Ron refers to the case of Elizabeth Smart who herself was abducted as a young girl. She appeared with her kidnapers in public on multiple occasions, albeit in disguise. According to some sources, Elizabeth had opportunities to walk away from her kidnapers and return home, but never did.²⁸ It is important to state that at this point in the novel, Ron still lives in denial. He is convinced that he is rescuing Rachel from being neglected and abused. He manages to delude himself into thinking that his feelings toward Rachel are innocent and that he did not abduct her to fulfil his desire for her.

Meanwhile, Celia comes back home from work later that night and finds police officers and injured Mika in the house. Harsh reality sets in soon. The decision to call in

²⁷ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 102.

²⁸ Timothy Egan, “END OF AN ABDUCTION: ORDEAL; In Plain Sight, a Kidnapped Girl Behind a Veil,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/14/us/end-of-an-abduction-ordeal-in-plain-sight-a-kidnapped-girl-behind-a-veil.html>.

the canine unit has been made because of the power outage. The darkness surrounding the city makes the search for Rachel difficult. The police ask Mika to stay elsewhere for several days. The official reason they give is that there is a risk of him contaminating evidence in the house. The real reason behind this request is that Mika's credibility is questioned by the police as he is the last person who saw Rachel. Mika takes the hint immediately and is understanding while Celia finds it ridiculous. She defends Mika, but the investigator is adamant. Celia is left home alone with two female plainclothes police officers, both named Lynne, who basically function as her family liaison officers.

Back at Ron's place on the night of the abduction, Rachel is scared and refuses to communicate with him; she just keeps weeping. Ron sends Nancy downstairs to try to talk to Rachel. Nancy is not thrilled about it, but she obeys: "'Just see if she's asleep,' Ron says. 'If she isn't, ask her if there's anything she wants. You're good with kids. Tell her she's safe here.' Nancy sighs. 'Ah, jeez.' 'For *her*.' 'Yeah, okay. Okay. But holy Christ, Ron. This is way too—' 'Hold on. She might be hungry.'"²⁹ This is another typical example of the way Ron treats Nancy. When Nancy attempts to voice her concerns, he interrupts her and continues to talk, pretending as if Nancy did not say anything. Also, by saying "You're good with kids.", he essentially "sweet-talks" her into doing what he wants. Nonetheless, Nancy cannot see through Ron's manipulation and goes to the basement as he told her to. When she sees Rachel lying on the floor shivering, she recognizes her immediately—they have met before at Angie's nail studio. Nancy's first thought is that back at the studio, Rachel's mother came across as a nice person. It is hard to believe that she would give her consent to other men to molest Rachel (which is Ron's account of events). Rachel cannot shake off the feeling that she has seen Nancy before, but she cannot figure out where. One day when Nancy's leg gives out in Rachel's presence, it finally comes to Rachel: "'My mom caught you when you fell.' 'I know.' 'She saved you.' 'She did. It was really nice of her.' 'So how can you be so mean?'"³⁰ Using her child's logic, Rachel is confused because her mother saved Nancy from falling at Angie's nail studio. How is it possible, then, that Rachel is being held away from her mother against her will? Nancy tries to make up for the abduction and treats Rachel very kindly, which is something that Rachel takes advantage of. She urges Nancy to make an anonymous phone call to Celia to assure her that Rachel is alive. After Rachel has

²⁹ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 96.

³⁰ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 148.

confronted Nancy about the nail studio incident, Nancy feels guilty. She is manipulated by a nine-year-old girl into making the phone call and relaying Rachel's message. At this point in the novel, Nancy is not acting rationally. Making the phone call is a rash step because there are too many variables involved that could go wrong. The police will trace the phone call easily to the phone booth at Pape and Gerrard. Furthermore, it is astonishing that Nancy is not concerned about the possibility of being caught on the CCTV camera. Nevertheless, Nancy insists on keeping the phone call a secret from Ron as she does not want him to be furious or disappointed with her.

In the three paragraphs that follow, I will describe the turning points the characters reach in the story.

When Rachel attempts to climb up to a window in her room to break it and escape, she falls and sprains her foot. Ron hears the commotion, so he comes to see what is happening. Rachel gives Ron her consent to treat her injured foot even though she is still very uncomfortable with him around. As Ron is touching Rachel's foot, something in him moves and he starts to realize his true feelings for her. They are growing less and less innocent. The realization makes Ron nervous. Rachel demands some answers. She would like to know the reason why he kidnapped her. He comes up with a story about men who are dangerous and want to hurt her. Afterwards Ron leaves the room. Rachel is all by herself and has some time to reflect on what Ron told her. It occurs to her that Ron had slave drivers in mind when he referred to dangerous men who want to hurt her. Slave drivers is a concept that Rachel was introduced to by her friend Lina's brother. Apparently, "slave drivers from Africa are stealing dark-skinned girls off the streets and shipping them out of the country in orange crates."³¹ Rachel considers Ron's explanation for the kidnapping and admits that everything tallies. This is the first time in the novel that Rachel has not thought ill of Ron. She now finds it plausible that Ron and Nancy kidnapped her for her own good.

I stated in the character analysis that Angie plays a key role during one of the encounters after Rachel's disappearance. Angie comes to see Nancy at Ron's Appliance Repair and mentions that the missing girl on the news is the daughter of the woman who caught Nancy that day at the nail studio. Nancy feels sick to her stomach but manages to act surprised. Angie shows Nancy a flyer which has been circulating in the neighborhood.

³¹ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 159.

The flyer is titled “Please Give Me Back My Daughter”³² and shows a picture of Celia and Rachel hugging. Angie points out how happy they look, and Nancy has no choice but to agree. She vomits as the realization of what a grave mistake she and Ron made dawns on her. It is clear to Nancy that Ron must have known that Rachel was not being neglected by her mother. This revelation alerts Nancy to Ron’s possible ulterior motives for abducting Rachel. As a naïve person, she still wants to believe that Ron’s rationale for kidnapping Rachel is not full of sexual undertones. She levels with herself and strives to rationalize all the warning signs that would imply otherwise. For example, Nancy thinks back to last night when the three of them were watching a movie. Nancy recalls that Ron’s eyes were on Rachel the whole time. She tries to account for it by claiming that her own eyes were probably on Rachel the entire time, too, without even realizing it. She tries her best to dismiss this train of thought: “‘You’ve got a fever,’ she tells herself. ‘It’s the fever talking.’”³³

The third turning point in the story occurs when Ron accidentally leaves the basement door unlocked. Astonishingly, Rachel does not contemplate escaping. She only wants to sneak out a note she wrote previously. It is absurd, but in the note, she is asking for help because she is being held against her will. Neither Ron nor Nancy are in sight, so Rachel successfully gets out of the store. She sees a man across the street who looks like an ideal candidate for receiving her note. Rachel starts to cross the street, but there is a car that emerges out of nowhere and almost hits her. The driver stops the car to make sure Rachel is all right. The man happens to fit the description of a slave driver. Rachel assumes he must be a slave driver who managed to track her down. She panics and runs back toward the store. The door to the store is, however, stuck, and Rachel struggles to open it. Ron runs to the door as he hears a noise. He opens the door from the inside and carries frightened Rachel back to the basement. This moment counts as crucial because Rachel is not scared of Ron, for once. On the contrary, she feels safe as he carries her in his arms. Also, minutes after the incident, Rachel is aware of Ron stroking her face with his shaking hand, but she does not mind. This slave driver event leads to a chain of consequences. First, Rachel begins to see Ron as a hero who saved her from an evil slave driver. She now admires how strong and brave he is. Nancy does not take it well and starts being jealous of Rachel. Second, Ron realizes that it was a close call—if the driver had

³² Gowdy, *Helpless*, 239.

³³ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 242.

recognized Rachel, Ron would have gotten caught. As a result, Ron starts considering fleeing to the United States or at least to a different province in Canada.

Ron likes the new order as he enjoys being admired by Rachel. However, he starts being paranoid in certain respects. It crosses his mind that Rachel is fully aware of his desire for her. Just before Nancy enters the room, Rachel makes a conscious effort to pull away from Ron. This makes Ron think that Rachel must have detected his lust for her. In evidence of this, I would like to quote the following excerpt from the novel:

He was sure she wouldn't flinch when she felt his hand on her knee, and he was right. He figured she barely registered it. Except she did. She did register it. Because when she heard Nancy on the stairs, she tugged her skirt down and moved away from him. Like a girlfriend when the wife turns up. She *knows*, he thinks.³⁴

In the excerpt, Ron analyzes the moments that follow after he carries Rachel back to the basement. While trying to console her, he touches her on purpose to test waters. According to Ron, the fact that Rachel did not recoil when he touched her and that she pulled away from him as Nancy was about to enter the room imply that firstly, Rachel knows about his secret desire, and secondly, Rachel is not as innocent as he thought she should be.

Nancy is jealous because the tables have turned. Before the slave driver incident, Rachel was not comfortable in Ron's presence and much preferred to spend time with Nancy. After the incident, Rachel wants to be around Ron and cannot stop talking about how brave and strong he is. She is just mesmerized by him and Ron realizes it. He is delighted by the improvement of Rachel's attitude, but he tries not to let it show too much. For Nancy's benefit, he masks his excitement by downplaying it to: "She needs to see me as a hero right now. It's a stage, it'll pass."³⁵ Nancy is able to sense a change in the atmosphere, however. She starts to suspect that she was one hundred percent right about Ron's ulterior motive for kidnapping Rachel. It is very surprising that she can register the change as she has always been naïve and blind when it comes to Ron. Nancy's concerns are legitimate this time. One evening she experiences an epiphany as she is walking her dog, Tasha: Nancy realizes that she smelled cologne on Ron earlier that evening. This is a very important revelation for Nancy because Ron has a habit of wearing cologne every time he and Nancy are about to have intercourse. The fact that he is wearing cologne

³⁴ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 264.

³⁵ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 273.

before heading to the basement to read Rachel a book indicates that Ron is possibly planning to have intercourse with Rachel. While Nancy is still outside walking the dog, Celia and Mika enter Ron's store as part of their search for Rachel. Celia asks Ron about the basement door she sees. Ron is tense and pretends he cannot find the key. Nancy spots Celia and Mika walk into the store. Although her suspicions about Ron's ulterior motives have just been confirmed, Nancy remains collected and reacts quickly. She calls the store and gives Ron instructions to pretend that his friend has been in an accident and needs him to come to the hospital immediately. The maneuver works and Celia with Mika agree to perhaps stop by another time. Nancy averts a crisis, but she is far from being proud of herself. She drives away in her car, finally pulling over on Cherry Street. She assesses the situation soberly: "Maybe he's hoping she'll be too late and he'll have Rachel all to himself."³⁶ The narrator refers to the option that Ron could be exercising at this moment: fleeing to Florida to avoid imprisonment. Nancy sees the situation realistically now and has no illusions about Ron wanting to include her in his plans to flee abroad.

Ron is not too worried about Celia and Mika showing up again, but he does believe that it is necessary to leave Toronto as soon as possible. He would like to adhere to the plan he has devised, but he rules out going to the United States as crossing the border might be too risky. He considers driving to either Manitoba or Alberta. Ron is not worried about Nancy going to the police. He is confident that he has her tamed. The only unsettling idea that comes to Ron's mind involves Nancy visiting her good friend Angie and confiding in her, which is why Ron keeps trying to get hold of Nancy to see where he is standing with her.

The story unravels several hours after Celia and Mika's visit. When Ron picks up Rachel who has just taken a bath and carries her over to her bed, he starts acting as if something has obscured his brain. He almost gives in to his lust, but he notices how terrified Rachel suddenly looks, so he stops in his tracks. It is an eye-opening moment for him as he cannot believe that he is the menace. Something moves in Ron and he drives Rachel back to her mother. He does not want to live without Rachel, so he comes up with another plan—an impromptu plan to commit suicide. As he is sitting in his car, imagining what his life would be like without Rachel, Nancy is walking toward a police station, ready to face the consequences.

³⁶ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 293.

2.4. Main Themes

This subchapter explores the themes that can be found in the novel. To begin with, the novel is titled *Helpless* – helplessness is indeed one of the themes featured in the book. Personally, I consider this the most striking theme of the novel. Almost every character in the novel is helpless, but each of them is helpless in a different way. Undoubtedly the most helpless character is Celia. She was facing financial problems even before the kidnapping. Despite working two jobs, she has a low income. There is no way for her to increase it in order to be able to attend to Rachel's needs better. When the kidnapping takes place, Celia cannot do much to locate Rachel. She knocks on doors and distributes missing-person flyers in the established perimeter of the abduction, but that is all she can do. She needs to rely on the police to do their job thoroughly. In other words, Rachel's fate is in someone else's hands, which renders Celia powerless. Additionally, she feels so desperate that she decides to contact her father who lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Celia is anxious about his reaction to her call as they have not spoken in years, but to her relief, he is happy to hear from her. When she informs him of having a granddaughter who got abducted, he is saddened to hear it. On that account, it is possible to say that even Celia's father, William C. Fox, is helpless. He has just found out about having a grandchild under such unfortunate circumstances. Although he lives abroad, he wishes he could help locate Rachel. However, he is in a wheelchair, so there is no way for him to contribute to the search, which he finds agonizing.

Rachel is certainly helpless as well. Looking at her life before the kidnapping, she was preoccupied with finding her biological father. She is only nine years old, so she is forced to rely on the pieces of information provided by her mother. When Rachel is kidnapped by Ron, there are not too many options available to her with respect to escaping her captors. After all, she is a child and would not stand a chance in a potential fight with Ron. Also, she is torn between believing Ron and listening to her common sense. Her common sense dictates that Ron and Nancy are liars who took her away from her mother. On the other hand, Ron claims that there are bad men out there who want to hurt her, which she finds plausible after recalling hearing about slave drivers before.

It may not be too obvious, but even Ron is afflicted by helplessness. He has developed a strong desire for Rachel, which he cannot fight any longer. He wants her to belong to him, so one day he succumbs to his desire and kidnaps her. The following excerpt demonstrates that Ron lives in denial: "The thought of Rachel gave him the

expected pleasure, but nothing beyond that. Nothing he couldn't handle."³⁷ He is convinced that he is in charge of his life, but in reality, he is not. It is his desire for Rachel that governs his actions now.

Finally, there is one more character who finds herself in a helpless situation: Nancy. She cannot have children, which makes her powerless because she falsely assumes that Ron would like to have a child one day (he does not want his own child; he is only interested in Rachel). After finding out about Rachel being held in the basement, Nancy does whatever Ron tells her. At times, she believes that what Ron and she are doing is the right thing; other times she has doubts. She realizes she cannot distance herself from the issue as she is an accessory to a crime now that she is aware of Rachel's abduction. She is torn between adhering to Ron's plans and turning herself and Ron in to the police. There is nobody she could turn to and ask for advice; she is on her own.

Another theme emerging from the novel is a child abduction. In a reviewed article by Allender, it is reported that abduction must be a prime concern when it comes to handling cases. According to a research he mentions in his article, abductors who are strangers with a sexual desire often murder their victims within three hours of the crime.³⁸ This means that time plays a key role in locating the abductor and the victim. If this is applied to Rachel's case, Rachel's striking beauty could be enticing for certain men, and it does cross Celia's mind that Rachel could subject to rape. Moreover, Celia has every right to assume that her daughter was abducted as there is no history of Rachel running away from home. Therefore, Celia is active and does whatever she can to locate Rachel as soon as possible. She is aware that every minute counts, which adds to the feeling of helplessness because in the days following the abduction, the police are unable to link Rachel's disappearance to any suspects and there are no witnesses coming forward. Notwithstanding the wide media coverage and volunteers stepping in to search for Rachel, there are no leads.

The theme of child abduction is related to the theme of pedophilia. Although Ron never proceeds to rape Rachel, he does have certain pedophilic tendencies. The first hint can be found on page 16 in the novel:

He knows all the elementary schools within a fifteen-minute drive of his shop and about once a week, if it's coming around to three thirty and he

³⁷ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 21.

³⁸ David M. Allender, "Child Abductions," *The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 76, 7 (2007): 5.

happens to be out on an errand anyway, he visits one he hasn't been to in a while. Sometimes it's just a slow drive-by. Other times he pulls over and pretends to consult his *Perly's Street Guide*.³⁹

From the excerpt, it is evident that Ron has an unusual pastime. He either drives by elementary schools, or he pretends to be lost in order to watch young girls. Ron is very cautious when it comes to stalking Rachel, his prey. He realizes it would be suspicious if there was a van with his store's logo idling outside her house too often. For that reason, Ron purchases a cheap nondescript car which will grant him more anonymity while cruising around Rachel's neighborhood. Another sign of Ron's pedophilic tendencies is the dream he wishes he could hold on to: "Ron wakes from a dream that Rachel is sitting in his lap and kissing him on the lips. He tries to hold on to the sensation of her luscious mouth but quickly loses it to the real world: Tasha barking, the smell of coffee."⁴⁰ Taking a closer look at Ron, he cannot be characterized as a typical child molester. One would expect him to leap at the first chance to rape Rachel, but he does not do that. On one hand, Ron assumes the role of Rachel's protector. He wants to be the fatherly figure in her life. On the other hand, he has a twisted notion of what being a fatherly figure means: "Every father of a beautiful child must be tempted, he thought—he still thinks."⁴¹ Because of his desire for Rachel mixed with fatherly instincts, Ron is nervous around her and trembles in her presence. It is apparent that he hopes for something to happen the evening he reads Rachel a book because he puts on cologne. He does his best to make sure that Nancy does not notice: "She shuts the fridge and walks toward him, limping a little. He steps back so that she won't smell the cologne."⁴² When Ron reads Rachel the book a few moments later, he shows a certain degree of self-control. He is carried away by Rachel's beauty and struggles not to make a pass at her, but he manages to regain his composure and does not yield to his urges.

Another theme which is addressed in the novel is an obsessive kind of love. Almost everything that happens in the novel happens in the name of obsessive love. Ron is infatuated and obsessed with Rachel. He stalks her and when the power outage strikes, he gives in to his urge and abducts her. At the end of the novel when Ron releases Rachel, he explains the reasons behind his planned suicide: "It isn't the thought of jail or the trial.

³⁹ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 16.

⁴⁰ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 232.

⁴¹ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 265.

⁴² Gowdy, *Helpless*, 280.

It's the thought of the world without her. It's love."⁴³ From Ron's point of view, the world is not a place to be when Rachel is not in the picture. Nancy's love for Ron could be described as obsessive, too. She depends on him heavily. When he does not validate her feelings or show her his love for her, she suffers. Unfortunately, she is blinded by her own love for him, thus she cannot see that he does not reciprocate her feelings: "He has always pitied her for loving him, but now that he loved somebody just as hopelessly he found himself in awe of her faculty for self-denial and acceptance."⁴⁴ Using Ron's own words, he pities Nancy, but loves Rachel hopelessly. Nancy, however, loves Ron so much that she is willing to be covering for his crime for over a week before her conscience orders her to go to a police station.

Family ties is another topic which is touched upon in the book. Rachel is the most important thing in Celia's life. She is her closest family member and when she goes missing, Celia is devastated. Relationships in families can also be complicated. For example, Celia and her father have not been very close since he moved out. When Celia finally reaches out after Rachel vanishes, it seems as Celia's relationship with her father may be on the mend. Family relationships can be unfulfilling, too. Rachel longs for meeting her father. There is a gap in her life she would like to fill but does not have the necessary means. Some people—namely Ron in this novel—have distorted views of what family ties should look like. As mentioned in the plot summary, Ron's plan is for Rachel to accept him and Nancy as her new parents. Together they can form a happy new family and move to Florida to start afresh.

Immigration is another theme represented in the novel. To begin with, Mika, the landlord, comes from Finland. Wanda, a waitress who works at the place where Celia plays the piano, is Serbian. George who is also employed at the restaurant came to Canada from Greece. Before moving to the apartment in Mika's house, Celia and Rachel used to occupy an apartment owned by a man named Klaus—originally a German citizen. A man named John Paulsen serves as another example of an immigrant living in Toronto. He emigrated to Canada from a Scandinavian country. When Rachel was younger, Celia used to work as his piano tutor and tried to teach him to play despite his painful lack of talent.

⁴³ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 306.

⁴⁴ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 22-23.

2.5. Writing Style and Special Devices

In the novel, Gowdy employs a third-person point of view; to be more specific, a third person omniscient point of view. The narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of all the characters. It makes the novel quite special because the story is not told from the abducted child's parent's perspective only. In the narrative, Gowdy focuses on portraying the reality through the eyes of the abductor, his girlfriend, the abductee, and the abductee's mother. In this manner, Gowdy captures how kidnapping affects more people who are involved, not just the parent of the abducted child.

There are both dialogues and monologues featured in the novel. Readers gain insight into the past of the characters through flashbacks. This is the way in which readers learn about Nancy's father-molester or Ron's unhealthy relationship with his almost stepsister Jenny. Apart from the occasional flashbacks, the events are depicted in a chronological order. In other words, the story which is being told is happening right now.

In his *Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams defines suspense as "a lack of certainty, on the part of a concerned reader, about what is going to happen."⁴⁵ By this definition, *Helpless* can be considered a suspense novel. Regarding Gowdy's writing style, she mastered building up tension. It is inevitable that Ron abducts Rachel, but readers do not know where and when he strikes. It takes nearly 80 pages for Ron to commit the crime. The abduction itself raises a few questions: Will Ron molest Rachel before the police locate her? Will he realize that he has committed a serious crime and murder Rachel while he is in a state of panic? What if he murders her by accident, perhaps when she is putting up a fight and he is trying to subdue her? Will Rachel insist that Ron and Nancy are liars, or will she be brainwashed to believe their version of events? Will Nancy take courage to go to the police, or will she remain loyal to Ron despite having doubts? The answers are not provided until the very end of the novel. In one of the last scenes, when Nancy has driven away and Rachel is done taking a bath that Ron was running for her, it seems as the rape will take place after all. Ron picks up Rachel, carries her over to her bed. Rachel, still seeing Ron as her hero, thinks it is a kind of game, so she screams with laughter. She figures out that Ron is not just goofing around when he snatches her duvet out of her hands. However, Ron recognizes how horrified she is and retreats. While he is driving Rachel back to her mother, readers are still uncertain whether Nancy will inform the

⁴⁵ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 225.

police, or whether she will change her mind and drive away from the parking lot of the police station. Old habits die hard, so will Nancy submit to Ron once again and help him cover their tracks? Gowdy keeps the readers in suspense until the very last page.

Gowdy works brilliantly with the development of characters. Nancy is a case of a round character. She is an elaborate character who can surprise readers by her actions. At the beginning of the novel, Nancy's love for Ron is blind. When she is presented with Rachel's abduction as a *fait accompli*, otherwise obedient Nancy objects to it, which is astonishing. Nevertheless, she is under a lot of pressure by Ron, so she starts being compliant. After several days, she begins to believe that Rachel is getting used to her new situation. However, Nancy is set straight when she discovers a note with a plea for help that Rachel has written, hoping to sneak it outside. Apart from other things, the note reads "liars", which hurts Nancy deeply. Through her disappointment, she gains a new perspective and starts to see the situation in a more realistic light. Nancy realizes that Rachel would still choose her biological mother over her, and that is not an easy thought to accept. Nancy eventually starts to have doubts about her love for Ron, but she is aware that now it is too late to turn back—she cannot just walk away from the situation. When Celia and Mika come knocking at the door, Nancy is the one who takes charge, which is, in my opinion, the most unexpected moment of the story. She is usually nervous and relies on Ron for being the leader, but in this case, she is surprisingly resourceful and takes matters into her own hands. Although she offers Ron a way out when she reacts so promptly, she already has her feet on the ground by the time Celia and Mika show up at the doorstep. At the beginning of the novel, Nancy thinks that she does all this for love, but later she is awakened and sees Ron for who he really is: "'Bastard,' she moans. She punches the steering wheel."⁴⁶ She knows that her and Ron's actions have serious ramifications. Her conscience dictates that what they did cannot be justified, which is why she resorts to going to the police.

A prominent literary device used in this novel is irony. Not so much verbal irony, but dramatic irony as defined in Abrams' *Glossary of Literary Terms*.⁴⁷ There are many situations that could be deemed ironic. The first use of irony can be detected in flashbacks to Ron's childhood. At the beginning, Ron does not wish to participate in Jenny's game, but as the time progresses, he grows to like it and is eager to play. On the other hand,

⁴⁶ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 300.

⁴⁷ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 136.

Jenny, who came up with the game, starts to “play hard to get.” Another shining example of dramatic irony is Ron’s anger directed at Celia for leaving Rachel alone with Mika. Ron, who himself has lust for Rachel, cannot comprehend how Celia could have left her beautiful daughter alone with a man who is not her father. Nancy stands in the focal point of dramatic irony, too. Nancy was traumatized during her childhood by her molesting father, but now she unintentionally helps Ron fulfil his pedophiliac fantasies. Rachel is put in danger with Nancy aiding and abetting. Her well-meant actions have the opposite effect. It can also be deemed ironic that Nancy was saved by Celia from falling at the nail studio and now Nancy is “saving” Rachel in return. Another ironic situation occurs when Nancy notices Rachel cringe when Ron is near her. At that point in the novel, Nancy is inoculated with Ron’s beliefs about rescuing Rachel, and wants all three of them to become a family. Nancy encourages Ron to spend more time with Rachel alone so that Rachel gets used to him and stops flinching when he is around. In other words, Nancy thinks that she is rescuing Rachel from a molesting landlord while she is basically serving her to Ron, an actual pedophile. Rachel notices that Ron shakes in her presence and attributes it to Ron being sensitive. It is ironic because he is not sensitive, but full of lust for her, which is what makes him weak and nervous. Also, when Rachel begins to believe that Ron is her rescuer, she feels a pang of guilt about telling him earlier that he will end up in jail. Simply put, Ron abducts her, but she is the one who feels guilty. The end of the novel is ironic, too. Even though Ron is the main perpetrator, he does not have to face a life in prison because he opts for suicide. Nancy, who is an accessory to the crime, turns them in to the police and will most likely be indicted and imprisoned.

2.6. Mentions of Toronto

In this subchapter, I will examine what significant points of interest are mentioned in the novel. In general, most of the plot takes place in Cabbagetown, which is a neighborhood falling under Ward 13. The exact location of Ward 13 can be found on the map in Appendix 2. Mika’s house is located on the corner of Carlton and Parliament Streets, in the heart of Cabbagetown. Parliament Street itself is one of the most frequently mentioned streets in the novel. Angie’s Nails where Celia saves Nancy from falling is located on the part of Gerrard Street which belongs to Cabbagetown. A prominent landmark of Cabbagetown, Riverdale Farm, is mentioned multiple times throughout the novel. A notable intersection featured in the book is Yonge and Eglinton. When Celia and Mika visit Ron’s store in search for Rachel, he pretends to have to drive to a hospital to

see a friend: “Ron follows them out, gets in the van and drives as far as Eglinton and Yonge before turning back.”⁴⁸

When Ron sits in his van during one of his stalking sessions, he has a view of the most prominent landmark of Toronto, the CN Tower: “In his van down the road from the Casa Hernandez Motel, he watches the lights of the CN Tower come on.”⁴⁹ The Bloor Street Viaduct, a bridge over the Don River, is brought up in the flashbacks to Ron’s childhood when Ron contemplates jumping off this bridge. For instance, after Mrs. Lawson walks in on him and Jenny, he is afraid of the police coming to arrest him: “If the police came, he’d sneak out the back door and jump off the Bloor Street Viaduct.”⁵⁰

Apart from various places around Toronto, this novel refers to some municipalities in the GTA, such as Mississauga or Burlington, both of which can be found on the map in Appendix 1.

The majority of the points of interest referred to in the novel seem to be real. However, I uncovered several discrepancies. For example, Gowdy writes about Laird Avenue: “Because of construction along Laird Avenue, Nancy is forced to backtrack down to Don Mills Road before heading north again.”⁵¹ While Don Mills Road is an existing street in Toronto, Laird Avenue is not on the maps. Nevertheless, there is a street in the vicinity of Don Mills Road called Laird Drive. It is not clear whether this discrepancy is intentional or not. Although many edifices mentioned in the novel are real, exceptions can be found. For instance, when I looked for the Casa Hernandez Motel, Celia’s workplace, the search did not return any relevant results. As of February 2020, there is no such place in Toronto.

In summary, Gowdy often remarks on places around Toronto when describing characters’ whereabouts. It indicates that Toronto is an integral part of the novel.

2.7. Book Reception, Accolades

Gowdy takes an interesting approach when she depicts Ron as a pedophile who is convinced that he is acting in the name of love, not in the name of his pedophilic lust. To paraphrase Briscoe and her article for *The Guardian*, the portrayal of Ron as a character who is not just black or white earned Gowdy mixed reception both in the United

⁴⁸ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 287.

⁴⁹ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 25.

⁵⁰ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 192.

⁵¹ Gowdy, *Helpless*, 91.

States and Canada.⁵² In his review for *Junctures*, Martin claims that “Gowdy never lets the reader forget that Ron is dangerous, but dares one to consider Ron human.”⁵³ It is an accurate description as there are two sides to Ron. Although Ron longs for Rachel, he never hurts her physically. When it appears as he is about to rape her, he decides to do the right thing and drives Rachel back home to her mother. It almost seems as Gowdy tries to make readers pity him, which many people may find controversial or downright outrageous. The fact that he releases Rachel at the end of the novel contributes to an unforeseen development of the plot. If Ron was the classic predator who rapes and murders his victim, the novel would become quite predictable.

On Goodreads, a popular website featuring book reviews, *Helpless* received 3.37 stars on average as of February 28, 2020. The maximum number of stars a book can be awarded is five. This score is based on 1108 ratings.⁵⁴ In 2007, this book was a longlisted finalist for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and became shortlisted for the Governor General’s Literary Award for fiction written in English.⁵⁵ ⁵⁶ In 2008, the novel was awarded the Trillium Book Award.⁵⁷

⁵² Joanna Briscoe, “Review: Helpless by Barbara Gowdy,” *The Guardian*, accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jun/23/featuresreviews.guardianreview15>.

⁵³ Michael G. Martin, “The Monster at the End of the Book: A Review of Barbara Gowdy’s *Helpless*,” *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* 11 (2008): 123.

⁵⁴ “Helpless by Barbara Gowdy,” Goodreads, accessed February 28, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/80967.Helpless>.

⁵⁵ “2007 Finalists,” Scotiabank Giller Prize, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://scotiabankgillerprize.ca/2007-finalists/>.

⁵⁶ “Past Winners and Finalists,” Governor General’s Literary Awards, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://ggbooks.ca/past-winners-and-finalists>.

⁵⁷ “Trillium Book Award Winners,” Ontario Creates, accessed February 29, 2020, http://www.ontariocreates.ca/book/trillium_book_award/trillium_book_award_winners.htm.

3. CAT'S EYE

3.1. Author's Biography

Although Margaret Atwood's parents come from Nova Scotia, Atwood was born in Ottawa, Ontario in 1939 and relocated to Toronto with her parents and an older brother in 1946.⁵⁸ She did not start to entertain the idea of becoming an author until the age of sixteen, which coincides with the time she rediscovered her passion for writing. After graduating from Leaside High School in Toronto, she decided to pursue a degree in English Language and Literature at the University of Toronto.⁵⁹ Atwood eventually earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Toronto and a master's degree at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her résumé includes lecturing at the University of British Columbia before returning to Harvard University to pursue doctoral studies. Even though she completed her doctoral exams, Atwood never finished her dissertation thesis because her serious interest in creative writing took over.⁶⁰ Nowadays, Atwood is a respected prolific writer whose notable works include, for example, *The Handmaid's Tale*, a popular novel which was made into a TV show that is being filmed in the streets of Toronto. Atwood's outstanding writing skills and international acclaim did not go unnoticed as she was the first novelist and poet to be inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame. She received her star on Toronto's King Street West in 2001.⁶¹

3.2. Characters

The protagonist of the novel is a painter named Elaine Risley. She and her older brother Stephen were raised living a nomadic lifestyle. Their father was an entomologist doing a field research and they would spend most of the year travelling around Northern Ontario. At the age of eight, Elaine had to make major adjustments when the family moved to Toronto because of her father's new job as a university professor. Despite being awkward around her classmates, a girl named Carol Campbell befriended her. Even though the two girls bonded, Carol always deemed Elaine exotic. It was apparent to other children that Elaine was different, but Elaine did not realize it until she took Carol to her father's workplace to show her around: "We show her the snakes and the turtles; she makes a

⁵⁸ David Staines, "Margaret Atwood in her Canadian Context," in *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, ed. Coral Ann Howells Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12.

⁵⁹ Staines, "Margaret Atwood in her Canadian Context," 12-13.

⁶⁰ Staines, "Margaret Atwood in her Canadian Context," 15.

⁶¹ "Margaret Atwood," Canada's Walk of Fame, accessed March 3, 2020, <https://www.canadaswalkoffame.com/inductee/margaret-atwood>.

noise that sounds like ‘Ew,’ and says she wouldn’t want to touch them.”⁶² Elaine was surprised by her friend’s reaction and started to suspect that she and Stephen may not be as perfectly ordinary as other children. Despite some differences, Carol introduced Elaine to another friend of hers, Grace Smeath, and the three girls became best friends. Just as Elaine was becoming used to her new life, her parents took her back north toward the end of her first school year in Toronto. She was gone for four months and after her return, everything was different. A new girl joined their clique—Cordelia.

Cordelia is the villain of the story. Just like Grace, she is one year older than Elaine and Carol. She comes from a rich family and has two older sisters with unusual names, Perdita and Miranda. Everyone used to call them Perdie and Mirrie; Cordelia was different from her sisters because she insisted on not being called by a diminutive. When Cordelia moved to the area and joined the group, the dynamics of the group changed dramatically. The friends were not equal anymore. On the contrary, Cordelia became the leader of the group and the girls became her loyal followers. Cordelia was the instigator and when she decided to plot against Elaine, the other girls blindly followed her orders. They “ganged up” on Elaine and bullied her. The girls did whatever Cordelia told them because they did not want to find themselves in Elaine’s place. Over the course of the novel, possible explanations for Cordelia’s motivation for bullying Elaine are revealed. Cordelia was her parents’ least favorite daughter and she was well-aware of the fact. She believed that she was a great disappointment to her parents and no matter what she did, she could not outdo her sisters. She acted confident, but on the inside, she was not a happy child. Furthermore, Cordelia herself was mocked and treated with scorn by her sisters. They would tease her, which might be the reason why she adopted this model of behavior and “took it out” on Elaine. The rationale for choosing Elaine as the victim may be the fact that Elaine was different from the other girls. Living in one place among more people was a new territory for Elaine, which made her the weakest link, and therefore the perfect victim.

3.3. Plot Analysis

Cat’s Eye maps Elaine’s journey of coming to terms with her past while trying to let go of Cordelia’s omnipresent influence. Although Elaine spent most of her childhood and teenage years in Toronto, she never felt quite happy here, which is why she decided to

⁶² Margaret Atwood, *Cat’s Eye* (London: Virago Press, 2009), 58.

relocate to Vancouver as an adult: “I live in a house, with window curtains and a lawn, in British Columbia, which is as far away from Toronto as I could get without drowning.”⁶³ She now has a second husband, Ben, and two daughters, Sarah and Anne. Elaine has worked her way up to a well-respected painter who returns to Toronto for a few days for a retrospective exhibition of her work. There are two story lines in the novel. The first one takes place in the present where Elaine describes what it is like to be back in Toronto after so many years. The other story line is Elaine’s past. Being back in Toronto triggers memories which Elaine has repressed over the years. Through flashbacks, Elaine gives an account of what it was like to grow up while being bullied by people who called themselves her best friends. Also, Elaine recalls her memories from her teenage years as well as her impressions of being a mother of two daughters.

Elaine explains that things start to go awry when Cordelia joins their circle. The first instance of Elaine being bullied occurs one November day, shortly before Elaine’s ninth birthday, when Cordelia digs a deep hole in her garden, The three girls lower Elaine into the hole, place boards over the top, and simply leave: “Up above, outside, I can hear their voices, and then I can’t hear them.”⁶⁴ Elaine thinks it is just a game until she realizes that she is left there stranded. A sense of terror washes over her, but that is all she can remember from that day. She does her best to suppress the memory. Of course, she cannot suppress all the bad memories because the bullying escalates. It is not physical abuse Elaine has to endure, but primarily verbal abuse. Cordelia, Grace, and Carol are constantly criticizing and mocking her. Elaine is subject to condescending comments about her own manners. For instance, Grace reports to Cordelia: “She didn’t stand up straight in Sunday School yesterday.”⁶⁵ Talking about Elaine in third person in her presence is one of Grace’s favorite ways to humiliate Elaine. Apart from the previous excerpt, it can be demonstrated by the following snippet of conversation among the girls: “Cordelia says, ‘We said we would come and get you. We didn’t say you could come here.’ I say nothing. Grace says, ‘She should answer when we talk to her.’ Cordelia says, ‘What’s the matter, are you deaf?’”⁶⁶ An integral part of Elaine’s torture is making her feel left out. An example can be found on page 138: “I’m standing outside the closed door of Cordelia’s room. Cordelia, Grace, and Carol are inside. They’re having a meeting. The meeting is

⁶³ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 15.

⁶⁴ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 125.

⁶⁵ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 146.

⁶⁶ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 162.

about me. I am just not measuring up, although they are giving me every chance. I will have to do better. But better at what?"⁶⁷ Innocent Elaine does not understand what she is doing wrong to deserve to be the one on the margins of their group. She feels as if she is failing the tasks the girls assign her with to prove that she is not inferior to them. She would like to please them and be on equal terms with them, but she does not know how.

The bullying by Elaine's so-called friends continues. The situation takes a sinister turn one March evening when the four girls are running down a hill. Cordelia slips on the snow and starts rolling down the hill. The other girls assume she did that on purpose, which is why they all start laughing. When they reach Cordelia and see the expression on her face, it is obvious that the fall was an accident. Naturally, Cordelia ignores the fact that Carol and Grace were laughing as well. Instead, she addresses Elaine and throws her hat down a bridge. Cordelia incites Elaine to go down into the ravine under the bridge to fetch the hat and redeem herself for laughing. Elaine obeys, but her legs and clothes get soaked because the hat fell into a creek. Climbing back to the bank of the creek, Elaine is freezing and unable to move due to a stabbing pain in her body. The girls have never intended to wait for her—they abandoned her in the ravine to die. Semi-conscious and hallucinating about the Virgin Mary, Elaine is, however, able to muster enough strength to walk back home. This incident is crucial because Elaine realizes that the three girls have been taking advantage of her innocence all along. Elaine no longer seeks their friendship. Moreover, she is not speechless anymore on the occasions when she has to interact with them. She is now able to decline their invitations to play with them. At the same time, the incident in the ravine leaves Elaine exasperated. She is angry with the three girls for tormenting her, as well as angry with herself for not seeing them for who they really are and not being able to stand up to them sooner.

Being back in the present-day Toronto, Elaine still finds herself under Cordelia's influence. She cannot stop thinking about Cordelia. While walking in the streets of Toronto, Elaine wonders what Cordelia looks like now. She ruminates on what she would say to Cordelia if she ran into her or whether she would even approach her at all if she saw her. Being back in the city connected with so many bad memories, Elaine's bad habits resurface. This helps her admit to herself that she is still under Cordelia's influence and that she still has the need to impress Cordelia in order to prove to Cordelia that she is

⁶⁷ Atwood, *Cat's Eye*, 138.

worthy of the friendship: “If I were to meet Cordelia again, what would I tell her about myself? The truth, or whatever would make me look good? Probably the latter. I still have that need.”⁶⁸ Even though they have been out of touch for years, Elaine cannot help feeling disappointed when Cordelia does not come to the retrospective exhibition. The next day, Elaine takes a stroll around her old neighborhood. She reaches the bridge from which Cordelia threw her hat when they were children. While being in the middle of reflecting on her past, Elaine suddenly sees an illusion of young Cordelia, standing there, helpless. It finally strikes Elaine that not her, but Cordelia has been the weaker one all along; the one who has been yearning for being loved and accepted. Elaine proves that she is stronger by showing compassion and telling the young illusion of Cordelia that it is all right and that she can go home. By doing this, Elaine takes an important step toward letting go of her past and the anger that has been suffocating her for years. In the end, she manages to regain her emotional equilibrium through forgiving Cordelia for her actions.

3.4. Main Themes

Although *Helpless* and *Cat's Eye* are novels which were published approximately two decades apart, certain common themes can be observed in both. The first theme emerging from both novels is helplessness. Before moving to Toronto, Elaine never had any girlfriends. Now her so-called friends bully her, but she interprets it as her best friends helping her improve herself. She does not understand why she needs to be improved, but she is desperate to do whatever it takes to become better and stand the test in her friends' eyes. She feels helpless for two reasons: First, her friends make her feel as if she cannot be improved even though they are trying hard. Second, she is defenseless. She does not dare stand up for herself because she is afraid of losing her friends. Thus, she suffers in silence.

In Elaine's case, being helpless is related to childhood bullying, a theme unique to *Cat's Eye*. The novel depicts how complex childhood bullying can be. It is not physical bullying that Elaine's friends subject her to; therefore, there are not any visible bruises or other injuries Elaine could show her parents or her brother. Furthermore, Elaine is worried that her brother could think of her as a coward if she complained about some girls tormenting her: “Also I'm ashamed. I'm afraid he'll laugh at me, he'll despise me for being a sissy about a bunch of girls, for making a fuss about nothing.”⁶⁹ Elaine's mother

⁶⁸ Atwood, *Cat's Eye*, 6.

⁶⁹ Atwood, *Cat's Eye*, 185.

notices the slight changes in Elaine's behavior and connects the dots, but she does not offer much empathy for Elaine. She thinks Elaine is a pushover and suggests that Elaine stops being spineless.

The impact of childhood bullying is also dealt with in the novel. The torture Elaine is forced to withstand proves to be detrimental to her health. Developing many bad habits, she becomes an anxious person at such a young age. Some of the unconscious bad habits include chewing the ends of her hair or biting off the skin around her fingernails. Other bad habits, such as peeling the skin off her feet, are deliberate, therefore can be defined as self-harm. Elaine contemplates suicide because Cordelia does not hesitate to go as far as to incite her victim to commit suicide: "I don't want to do these things, I'm afraid of them. But I think about Cordelia telling me to do them, not in her scornful voice, in her kind one. I hear her kind voice inside my head. *Do it. Come on.* I would be doing these things to please her."⁷⁰ Fortunately, Elaine never gives in; however, the novel draws attention to the issue regardless of the outcome of Cordelia's incessant urging. Furthermore, the three bullies label Elaine as someone who needs to be "improved". To paraphrase Brown, most adults think of Cordelia as the ideal of how a child should be. Therefore, Elaine sees Cordelia as an authority and assumes that what Cordelia says about her must be true.⁷¹ Elaine starts acting upon the assigned labels and feels self-conscious as a result. Her self-esteem is so low that she is convinced that everything she does is wrong, just because the girls say so. The novel also shows the lifelong impact that childhood bullying can have on one's life. After the incident in the ravine, Elaine discovers that the girls were just being mean and becomes angry both with them and with herself. Without realizing it, Elaine has a burning desire for revenge and continues to be consumed by it in the years to come.

Family ties and friendships are other themes which are explored in *Cat's Eye*. As stated in Thomas' *Reading Learning, Teaching Margaret Atwood*, relationships, either between family members or between friends, is a theme typical for Atwood. *Cat's Eye* represents a perfect example because "Atwood looks closely at women's friendships—uncovering the darkness of those relationships."⁷² Building on the friendships note, Carol did not befriend Elaine out of genuine intentions. Carol deemed Elaine exotic and saw

⁷⁰ Atwood, *Cat's Eye*, 185.

⁷¹ Lyn Mikel Brown, "The Dangers of Time Travel: Revisioning the Landscape of Girls' Relationships in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*," *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 6, 3-4 (1995): 291.

⁷² P. L. Thomas, *Reading, Learning, Teaching Margaret Atwood* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 17-18.

that as a great opportunity to become popular and admired for being friends with an exotic girl. Cordelia does not have best intentions for Elaine, either. She joins the circle and makes Elaine her victim as a way of compensating for her own unhappiness and for being teased by her own sisters. In his *History of Canadian Literature*, New aptly states that “*Cat’s Eye* looks into relations between siblings and girlfriends and follows the different directions their lives take.”⁷³ This is also true because Atwood follows the different paths of the former friends. While Carol and Grace go to different schools and never cross paths with Elaine again, Atwood keeps readers abreast of Cordelia’s life. Bullied Elaine becomes a renowned artist with two daughters and a loving husband, whereas Cordelia, the instigator who used to have the upper hand, leads an unaccomplished life. It is revealed that Cordelia did not do well at high school and pursued an acting career instead of attending a university, which backfired because her career as an actress met with little success. Suffering from depression, Cordelia was committed to a mental health institution following her failed suicide attempt.

The theme of feminism is touched upon as well. It seems as Atwood highlights both pros and cons of the ideology. On one hand, Elaine does agree with the view that women are often put in an inferior position to men because of the conventions prevailing in the society. For example, the rules dictate that women’s ultimate goals in their lives should be to stay at home and take care of the family rather than pursuing their own careers. Elaine is opposed to this attitude. On the other hand, Elaine in her fifties does not appreciate being associated with feminists because, simply put, she is of the opinion that women should be responsible for their actions and should stop blaming others—mainly men—if something does not go according to their plan. Moreover, she does not share the feminists’ views of men being the only violent individuals in this world. Elaine acknowledges that there are, for example, rapists and molesters who are male, but she certainly does not think of women as innocent creatures. In fact, most women in the novel are depicted as cruel and critical, whereas most men appearing in this novel are characterized as nonjudgmental. Even a baby boy named Brian Finestein is described in this manner: “But I like him: he’s silent, but also uncritical.”⁷⁴ Pertaining to the topic of women as judgmental individuals, Elaine’s mother is portrayed as the opposite. She does not judge anyone, nor does she care about other people’s opinions of her. She is different

⁷³ New, *A History of Canadian Literature*, 2nd ed., 304.

⁷⁴ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 157.

from all the other mothers, which is frowned upon. Although she is a stay-at-home mother, her house is not neat and tidy. She dislikes shopping and does not know how to sew. As far as her physical appearance goes, she does not bother putting on make-up, nor is she obsessed with fashion. She does not always know the customs of the society. For instance, she is not aware of the fact that women should wear a hat to church. When Elaine wants to join Grace for the Sunday service, she is sent without a hat, which Grace's mother finds outrageous and treats eight-year-old Elaine with contempt. Grace's religious mother is the epitome of the hidden cruelty and malice many women in the novel represent. She knows about the three girls tormenting Elaine and yet, she does not consider putting an end to it. On the contrary, she talks about Elaine as a heathen who deserves to be bullied as a part of God's punishment.

3.5. Writing Style and Special Devices

Cat's Eye is a coming of age novel. It is narrated by a single narrator, Elaine, using a first-person point of view. Both monologues and dialogues are featured in the novel. Readers follow the life of Elaine, now fifty years old. When back in Toronto, Elaine retraces her memories. Through flashbacks, it is revealed what shaped Elaine into a person she is today. She shares her memories of her life before moving to Toronto as well as memories of her miserable life in Toronto. Elaine also retrospects her marriages and motherhood. In the novel, Elaine's retrospective exhibition in Toronto serves as an analogy. While the followers of Elaine's work have a chance to look back at her paintings from various stages of her career, Elaine herself looks back at various stages of her own life.

Wilson categorizes *Cat's Eye* as autobiographical fiction.⁷⁵ It can be maintained that Atwood based some aspects of Elaine's life on her own life, resulting in autobiographical elements incorporated into this novel. To begin with, Elaine's father is an entomologist. His job entails extensive travel, which results in the family's nomadic lifestyle and in being quite isolated from other people. Atwood's childhood can be described in precisely the same way.⁷⁶ Furthermore, both Elaine and Atwood's family's views of the world are different from the views typical for that time period. As mentioned in the subchapter Main Themes, Elaine's mother cannot be regarded as a typical woman as she does not share the common views and does not necessarily follow the "correct"

⁷⁵ Sharon R. Wilson, "Blindness and Survival in Margaret Atwood's Major Novels," in *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, ed. Coral Ann Howells Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 182.

⁷⁶ Staines, "Margaret Atwood in her Canadian Context," 12.

social protocol. Just like Elaine's parents, Atwood's parents did not pressure Atwood into being a cheerleader, getting married and settling down. Instead, they encouraged Atwood to get education.⁷⁷ Another common denominator for Atwood and Elaine is the University of Toronto. While Elaine is enrolled at this university studying Art and Archaeology, Atwood earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Toronto in 1961.⁷⁸

A certain degree of foreshadowing can be found in the novel. At the very beginning of the novel, present-day Elaine walks around Toronto and in her mind comments on her bad habits resurfacing: "I've started to chew my fingers again. There's blood, a taste I remember."⁷⁹ She says that she remembers the taste of blood, which suggests that something ominous is bound to happen over the course of the novel.

In the novel, there is an important recurring symbol: a cat's eye. At one point, it was popular to play marbles at school, and the cat's eye stands for a blue-colored marble Elaine won during one of the games. She treasures it and keeps it a secret from everyone. It only belongs to her and she believes that the marble exists to protect her. She associates it with feeling safe. It is just a marble, which means that it is oblivious to all the criticism and mean remarks Elaine is exposed to. Elaine also associates the marble with being able to express herself. When Elaine is bullied by Cordelia, she is often unable to speak up and defend herself. Choosing a career as a visual artist later on, Elaine unconsciously sees the world not through her own eyes, but through this cat's eye, and thus can express her emotions freely as she is not limited by her own vision. The motif of the cat's eye even appears on some of her paintings. To be more specific, she only adds this motif to paintings which feature people who are important to her. A shining example of Elaine's use of the cat's eye is in the painting where she portrayed the mysterious figure whom she saw while hallucinating in the ravine, almost frozen to death. She believed this figure to be the Virgin Mary who helped her find the strength to return home, and therefore saving her life. In Elaine's painting, the mysterious figure is holding the enlarged marble in her hands.

⁷⁷ Staines, "Margaret Atwood in her Canadian Context," 12.

⁷⁸ Staines, "Margaret Atwood in her Canadian Context," 14.

⁷⁹ Atwood, *Cat's Eye*, 10.

3.6. Mentions of Toronto

While the novel takes place mostly in Toronto, some attention is dedicated to Vancouver as well. Elaine left Toronto to build a new life in Vancouver and Toronto is presented as a city Elaine has hated ever since she moved there with her parents. First, she felt trapped. She was used to a nomadic lifestyle, and suddenly, she was forced to settle down in one place. Also, Toronto is tied with her bad childhood memories which resurface and haunt her as soon as she returns for the retrospective exhibition. Elaine often remarks on how the city has changed on the outside since her last visit. For example, she voices her displeasure at how busy and crowded Toronto has become: “The old emptiness of Toronto is gone. Now it’s chock full: Toronto’s bloating itself to death, that much is clear.”⁸⁰

When trying to pinpoint the exact location of Elaine’s childhood neighborhood in Toronto, I worked with several clues. A promising clue can be found on page 275 where Elaine describes the cemetery which is located near her house: “Beyond it is Yonge Street, lined with rush hour traffic.”⁸¹ After reading this sentence, I immediately thought of Mount Pleasant Cemetery, which is a well-known cemetery in Toronto accessible from Yonge Street. I checked Google Maps and discovered that there is a ravine near the cemetery, the Moore Park Ravine. The Mud Creek runs down the ravine with a pedestrian bridge over it.⁸² When Elaine talks about a murder which took place in a remote, southern part of the ravine, she mentions that this part of the ravine is located near the brickworks. It is very likely that she is referring to the Evergreen Brick Works. Although Cordelia and Elaine supposedly go to Burnham High School, Google search did not return any relevant results. The school could be fictional or perhaps it existed in the past. There is, however, a street called Burnham Road in the ravine’s immediate vicinity, which could have been an inspiration for the name of the high school. One more compelling clue pointing to this neighborhood turns out to be the Cat’s Eye Bridge. When I searched for the Moore Park Ravine and zoomed in on the area, the name came up. According to Google Maps, Cat’s Eye Bridge is the name of the aforementioned pedestrian bridge over the Mud Creek.⁸³

⁸⁰ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 49.

⁸¹ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 275.

⁸² “Moore Park Ravine,” Google Maps, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Moore+Park+Ravine/@43.6946806,-79.3825193,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x89d4ccb6a5e6b031:0xd16d13d011f94000!8m2!3d43.6946806!4d-79.3803306>.

⁸³ “Cat’s Eye Bridge,” Google Maps, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://www.google.ca/maps/place/Cat's+Eye+Bridge/@43.6935579,-79.3800662,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x89d4ccb4fea8313f:0x52bb401d87807aa!8m2!3d43.693554!4d-79.3778775>.

Based on the clues provided in the novel, I am convinced that the house Elaine moved in to with her parents is situated close to the Moore Park Ravine, south of Moore Avenue and west of Bayview Avenue.

One of the most frequently mentioned streets in the novel is Queen Street. Elaine spends a lot of time walking on Queen Street when she returns to Toronto for the exhibition. For example: “I continue east along Queen Street, still a little dizzy from the wine at lunch.”⁸⁴ Another street which comes up often is Bloor Street. It is where Elaine’s summer job workplace is located: “Instead I’ve taken a job at the Swiss Chalet on Bloor Street.”⁸⁵

Toronto’s most prominent landmark, the CN Tower, was yet to be built when Elaine was still living in Toronto. In the novel, the CN Tower is only remarked on briefly when Elaine sees it from a rooftop bar while visiting Toronto for her exhibition: “Due south is the CN Tower, lifting up like a huge inverted icicle.”⁸⁶

To summarize, Toronto is an integral part of the novel. Nevertheless, Elaine depicts it in a bad light, as a place which she has always disliked. The city will forever be connected to her childhood traumas, from involuntary being done with the nomadic lifestyle to being bullied by her so-called friends. Elaine is vocal about her negative opinions of the city and often expresses her wish to be back in Vancouver as soon as possible.

3.7. Book Reception, Accolades

On Goodreads, *Cat’s Eye* was awarded 3.94 stars on average as of February 28, 2020. This score is based on 54,033 ratings.⁸⁷ The critics perceived the quality of the novel as outstanding because *Cat’s Eye* won several awards. According to Atwood’s website, *Cat’s Eye* received four book prizes in 1989: Torgi Talking Book, City of Toronto Book Award, Coles Book of the Year, and Foundation of the Advancement of Canadian Letters in conjunction with Periodical Marketers of Canada Book of the Year Award. Thanks to *Cat’s Eye*, Atwood was awarded the Canadian Booksellers Association Author of the

⁸⁴ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 365.

⁸⁵ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 348.

⁸⁶ Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*, 431.

⁸⁷ “Cat’s Eye by Margaret Atwood,” Goodreads, accessed February 28, 2020, https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/51019.Cat_s_Eye?from_search=true&qid=H4FQMPusei&rank1.

Year Award in 1989.⁸⁸ In addition to that, *Cat's Eye* was shortlisted for the Governor General's Literary Award for fiction written in English in 1988.⁸⁹ In 1989, the novel made it to the shortlist for the Booker Prize.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ "Awards & Recognitions," Margaret Atwood, accessed March 06, 2020, <http://margaretatwood.ca/awards-recognitions/>.

⁸⁹ Governor General's Literary Awards, "Past Winners and Finalists."

⁹⁰ "The Booker Prize 1989," The Booker Prizes, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://thebookerprizes.com/booker-prize/1989>.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to analyze two selected novels which are set in Toronto, Ontario. Although Barbara Gowdy is a renowned Canadian author, there are not too many works or theses in the Czech Republic that deal with her quite recent novel *Helpless*. In my thesis, I wanted to address the issue by providing a literary analysis of the novel. The second novel selected for the literary analysis was *Cat's Eye* by another established Canadian author, Margaret Atwood.

I structured the thesis into three main chapters. The chapter titled Toronto, Ontario offered basic information about the city of Toronto. It described its location within Canada and the province of Ontario. Also, it explained the difference between Toronto, the Greater Toronto Area, and the Census Metropolitan Area, which are three terms that can sometimes be a source of confusion. The purpose of this chapter was also to provide information about Toronto's population including its relatively high number of immigrants, as well as information about Toronto's economy. In summary, this chapter laid the groundwork for understanding the geographic and social background of the selected novels.

The following two chapters dealt with the two selected novels, one novel per chapter. Each of these two chapters consisted of seven subchapters; each subchapter discussing various aspects of the novels including, for example, used literary devices or the plot summary which served as an opportunity to demonstrate the characters' traits, using specific examples from the novels.

I was interested in examining what themes were represented in the novels. The analysis of *Helpless* revealed that, not unexpectedly, the most prominent theme was helplessness. Almost every character appearing in the novel was helpless, but each of them was helpless in their own unique way. Celia was rendered helpless when the fate of her abducted daughter was in the police's hands. Despite living in denial, Ron's actions were governed by his desire for Rachel and there was nothing he could do to help it, to control it. He eventually gave in to his desire and abducted Rachel when an opportunity came along. Nancy was an example of a helpless character as well. She was blindly in love with Ron and was constantly afraid that the day when Ron leaves her would come. Nancy's low self-esteem caused her to think that she was not good enough for Ron. The fourth protagonist of the novel, Rachel, was afflicted by helplessness, too. She was taken

away from her mother and held in Ron's basement against her will. She was aware that she would not stand a chance in a potential fight with her abductor, so she knew that her chances of escaping were slim.

The second main theme of the novel was obsessive love. This applied mainly to Ron and Nancy. Ron was obsessed with Rachel. He stalked her and concluded that she was being molested by men. He revamped the basement of his store for her. Just the mere thought of Rachel staying there brought a twisted joy into his life; he was in a dreamlike state whenever he thought of it. His obsession with nine-year-old Rachel eventually led to her abduction. Nancy was obsessed with Ron. Her love for him was unhealthy. She was willing to do anything for him just to please him without being able to see that he did not reciprocate her feelings. Although Nancy expressed her concerns about Rachel being held in the basement, her integrity was compromised when she helped cover the abduction before turning in herself and Ron to the police.

As far as literary devices are concerned, I would like to highlight the use of dramatic irony as defined in Abrams' *Glossary of Literary Terms*. The most striking example was Nancy encouraging Ron to spend more time alone with Rachel. Nancy trusted Ron at that point in the novel and regarded him as Rachel's rescuer from child molesters. By leaving them alone in the basement, she was exposing Rachel to real danger in the form of an actual pedophile.

In the analysis of *Cat's Eye*, main themes were identified as well. One of the most important themes emerging from the novel was childhood bullying. Elaine was thrown into a completely new world when she was forced to abandon the nomadic lifestyle and settle down in Toronto with her family. She had no experience in having girlfriends and therefore did not understand that she fell victim to their cruel games. *Cat's Eye* also points out the lifelong impact of childhood bullying. It took Elaine about forty years to finally come to terms with her past and let go of the anger she had been harboring.

As suggested by P. L. Thomas, feminism is one of the most common themes in Atwood's novels, and *Cat's Eye* is not an exception. Elaine's views of feminism were examined in the thesis as well. Although Elaine used to attend artistic meetings along with other women, radical feminists, she never felt as if she belonged. These feminists saw men as evil, violent beings who oppressed women. Elaine did agree that the society considered women to be inferior to men; however, she did not think that women should

be entitled to blame men for their own actions. Elaine regarded most women as people who pretend to be fragile and innocent while covertly being malevolent and evil.

By means of the analysis, I was surprised to find many similarities between these relatively randomly chosen novels. For example, both Rachel and Elaine were perceived as exotic, Rachel for her looks, Elaine for her nomadic style of living. They both were asked to make major adjustments at one point in their lives. Rachel was supposed to get used to her new family consisting of Ron and Nancy. A review of the case of Elizabeth Smart presented in the article by Timothy Egan speaks in Ron's favor. Ron truly believed that he could make Rachel forget about her own mother and lead a happy new life with him and Nancy. Elaine in *Cat's Eye* also had to get used to her new life, a life in one place. Atwood most likely based Elaine's character on her own life. Having had to adjust to a new life in Toronto is one of the reasons why the novel is considered autobiographical fiction, as Sharon R. Wilson pointed out. Another similarity between both novels is helplessness and the inability to defend themselves which can be observed both in Rachel and Elaine. Rachel's future was in Ron and Nancy's hands. Rachel was just a bystander, waiting for Ron and Nancy to do the right thing and let her go home. The source of Elaine's helplessness were her three friends who convinced her that she needed to be improved in order to be worthy of their friendship. Elaine was willing to do anything to be accepted by the three girls, but the problem was that she did not know what it was that she was supposed to do. They made her believe that she could not keep up with them even though they were giving her every chance. Certain characters from both novels were haunted by their childhood memories. Even as an adult, Nancy sometimes used to think of her molesting father, of how much he hurt her when he picked her as his victim. When Elaine visited Toronto for the exhibition, she was overwhelmed with her negative childhood memories, too. Also, the idea of starting anew was discussed in both novels. Ron's elaborate scheme included kidnapping Rachel to Florida and building a new life there, away from the police and Celia, whereas Elaine bought a train ticket to Vancouver to start a new chapter of her life, as far away from Cordelia and Toronto as possible.

The outcome of the research was a surprising number of similarities found between the novels. Each of these similarities could be developed further and discussed in more detail. A thesis focused merely on the comparison of the two novels would be an idea for further research. Moreover, both novels are rich in themes. Selecting one theme in particular and elaborating on it would be an option for future research, too. When I

read *Helpless* for the first time, it reminded me of another novel: *The Collector* by John Fowles. If I disregarded the requirement for the novels to be set in Toronto, it would open up a new avenue for a future study which would analyze *Helpless* and *The Collector*, drawing on this analysis and comparing the circumstances, reasons, and consequences of the abductions featured in the novels.

RESUMÉ

Cílem předložené bakalářské práce je provést literární analýzu dvou vybraných románů, jejichž děj se odehrává v Torontu. Ačkoliv je Barbara Gowdy renomovanou kanadskou autorkou, v České republice není jejímu románu *Helpless* věnována pozornost, což se tato práce snaží napravit. Druhým románem vybraným pro účely literární analýzy je *Cat's Eye* od další významné kanadské spisovatelky Margaret Atwood.

Práce je strukturována do tří hlavních kapitol. Kapitola s názvem Toronto, Ontario nabízí základní informace o Torontu a poskytuje tak stručný přehled o městě, ve kterém se dva vybrané romány odehrávají.

Další kapitola se zabývá románem *Helpless*. V této kapitole jsou identifikovány hlavní i některé vedlejší postavy a je zde popsán děj, na kterém jsou názorně demonstrovány vlastnosti hlavních postav. Pozornost je věnována i tématům, která tento román řeší. Jako jedno z hlavních témat lze identifikovat pocit bezmoci, se kterým se hlavní postavy potýkají. Každá z hlavních postav je nespokojená se situací, ve které se nachází, ale neexistuje žádné východisko, které by vedlo k uspokojivému řešení dané situace. Dalším ústředním tématem románu je únos dítěte. Autorka díla sleduje, jak taková závažná událost ovlivňuje životy všech zúčastněných, tedy nejen životy únosce a uneseného dítěte, ale například i život přítelkyně únosce, která se o únosu dozví, a je tak postavena do pozice spolupachatele.

Následující kapitola je věnována románu *Cat's Eye*. Literární analýza označila za hlavní téma tohoto románu šikanu a její dalekosáhlé následky. Hlavní postava románu, Elaine Risley, se musela vzdát kočovného stylu života a usadit se s rodiči a bratrem na jednom místě. Díky jejímu nedostatku zkušeností si šikanu ze strany spolužaček vykládala jako jejich shovívavé pokusy ji „napravit“ a začlenit ji tak do společnosti. Ačkoliv byla nakonec schopna se svým agresorům postavit, nízké sebevědomí a skrytá spalující touha po pomstě v ní zůstaly zakořeněny mnoho dalších let. Jedním z hlavních zjištění literární analýzy je také skutečnost, že lze tento román označit za bildungsroman s autobiografickými prvky. V mé práci jsou identifikovány podobnosti mezi životem hlavní postavy Elaine a životem samotné autorky románu Margaret Atwood.

Ačkoliv se jedná o dva relativně náhodně vybrané romány, výsledek literární analýzy odhalil překvapivé množství podobností. Nejnápadnějším příkladem je pocit bezmoci a neschopnost bránit se agresorům, což lze vysledovat jak u Rachel v *Helpless*,

tak u Elaine v *Cat's Eye*. Devítileté Rachel, která je držena v zajetí, se neskýtají prakticky žádné příležitosti k útěku. Navíc je zřejmé, že v případném souboji se svým únoscem by neměla šanci na úspěch, a tak jí nezbývá, než stát opodál a spoléhat se na to, že ji její vězňitelé propustí. Jak již bylo zmíněno, Elaine si šikanu vykládá jako projev přátelství, a tak v tichosti trpí, ačkoliv se jí jednání jejích spolužaček často nezamlouvá.

Množství podobných témat, která se v těchto románech vyskytují, nabádá k tomu, aby byla případně vypracována studie zabývající se přímo porovnáním těchto románů. Román *Helpless* místy nápadně připomíná román *The Collector* od Johna Fowlese. Kdyby byl vypuštěn požadavek na děj odehrávající se v Torontu, otevřelo by to nové možnosti pro další studii, která by mohla porovnávat téma únosu v těchto dvou románech, konkrétně jeho okolnosti, důvody a následky.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999.
- Allender, David M. "Child Abductions." *The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 76, 7 (2007): 1-7.
- Andrew, Caroline. "City States and Cityscapes in Canada: The Politics and Culture of Canadian Urban Diversity." In *Managing Diversity: Practices of Citizenship*, edited by Nicholas Brown and Linda Cardinal, 115-135. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2007.
- Atwood, Margaret. *Cat's Eye*. London: Virago Press, 2009.
- Boyd, Colin and Karen Grandy. "Barbara Gowdy." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Accessed February 2, 2020.
<https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/barbara-gowdy>.
- Briscoe, Joanna. "Review: Helpless by Barbara Gowdy." *The Guardian*. Accessed April 15, 2020.
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jun/23/featuresreviews.guardianreview15>.
- Brown, Lyn Mikel. "The Dangers of Time Travel: Revisioning the Landscape of Girls' Relationships in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 6, 3-4 (1995): 285-298.
- Canada's Walk of Fame. "Margaret Atwood." Accessed March 3, 2020.
<https://www.canadaswalkoffame.com/inductee/margaret-atwood>.
- City of Toronto. "Community Council Area Profiles." Accessed February 9, 2020.
<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/community-council-area-profiles/>.
- City of Toronto. "Financial Services." Accessed February 9, 2020.
<https://www.toronto.ca/business-economy/industry-sector-support/financial-services/>.
- City of Toronto. "Toronto at a Glance." Accessed February 8, 2020.
<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/toronto-at-a-glance/>.
- City of Toronto. "Tourism." Accessed February 9, 2020.
<https://www.toronto.ca/business-economy/industry-sector-support/tourism/>.
- Egan, Timothy. "END OF AN ABDUCTION: ORDEAL; In Plain Sight, a Kidnapped Girl Behind a Veil." *The New York Times*. Accessed February 20, 2020.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/14/us/end-of-an-abduction-ordeal-in-plain-sight-a-kidnapped-girl-behind-a-veil.html>.

- Goodreads. "Cat's Eye by Margaret Atwood." Accessed February 28, 2020.
https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/51019.Cat_s_Eye?from_search=true&qid=H4FQMPusei&rank=1.
- Goodreads. "Helpless by Barbara Gowdy." Accessed February 28, 2020.
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/80967.Helpless>.
- Google Maps. "Cat's Eye Bridge." Accessed March 23, 2020.
<https://www.google.ca/maps/place/Cat's+Eye+Bridge/@43.6935579,-79.3800662,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x89d4ccb4fea8313f:0x52bb401d87807aa!8m2!3d43.693554!4d-79.3778775>.
- Google Maps. "Moore Park Ravine." Accessed March 23, 2020.
<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Moore+Park+Ravine/@43.6946806,-79.3825193,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x89d4ccb6a5e6b031:0xd16d13d011f94000!8m2!3d43.6946806!4d-79.3803306>.
- Governor General's Literary Awards. "Past Winners and Finalists." Accessed February 29, 2020.
<https://ggbooks.ca/past-winners-and-finalists>.
- Gowdy, Barbara. *Helpless*. New York: Picador, 2008.
- Margaret Atwood. "Awards & Recognitions." Accessed March 06, 2020.
<http://margaretatwood.ca/awards-recognitions/>.
- Martin, Michael G. "The Monster at the End of the Book: A Review of Barbara Gowdy's *Helpless*." *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* 11 (2008): 119-124.
- Ministry of Finance. "2016 CENSUS HIGHLIGHTS: Factsheet 6." Accessed February 13, 2020.
<https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/census/cenhi16-6.html>.
- Ministry of Finance. "2016 CENSUS HIGHLIGHTS: Factsheet 9." Accessed February 13, 2020.
<https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/census/cenhi16-9.html>.
- New, William H. *A History of Canadian Literature*. 2nd ed. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.
- Ontario Creates. "Trillium Book Award Winners." Accessed February 29, 2020.
http://www.ontariocreates.ca/book/trillium_book_award/trillium_book_award_winners.htm.
- Pooch, Melanie U. *DiverCity - Global Cities as a Literary Phenomenon: Toronto, New York, and Los Angeles in a Globalizing Age*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016.
- Sauvé, Virginia L., and Monique Sauvé. *Gateway to Canada*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

- Scotiabank Giller Prize. "2007 Finalists." Accessed February 29, 2020.
<https://scotiabankgillerprize.ca/2007-finalists/>.
- Staines, David. "Margaret Atwood in her Canadian Context." In *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, edited by Coral Ann Howells Brown, 12-27. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Statistics Canada. "Canada's population estimates, third quarter 2019." Accessed January 29, 2020.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/191219/dq191219c-eng.htm?HPA=1&indid=4098-1&indgeo=0>.
- Statistics Canada. "Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries." Accessed February 8, 2020.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=1710013501>.
- The Booker Prizes. "The Booker Prize 1989." Accessed February 29, 2020.
<https://thebookerprizes.com/booker-prize/1989>.
- Thomas, P. L. *Reading, Learning, Teaching Margaret Atwood*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.
- University of Toronto. "Gowdy, Barbara." Accessed February 2, 2020.
<http://www.english.utoronto.ca/facultystaff/affiliatedfaculty/gowdy.htm>.
- Wilson, Sharon R. "Blindness and Survival in Margaret Atwood's Major Novels." In *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, edited by Coral Ann Howells Brown, 176-190. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

ANNOTATION

Author: Silvie Pospíšilová
Department: The Department of English and American Studies
Title of Thesis: The Analysis of Selected Novels Set in Toronto
Thesis Supervisor: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.
Number of Pages: 57

Key Words:

Toronto, Canadian literature, novel, Barbara Gowdy, Margaret Atwood, *Helpless*, *Cat's Eye*, literary analysis

Abstract:

The aim of this Bachelor's thesis is to analyze two selected novels which are set in Toronto. Although Barbara Gowdy is a renowned Canadian author, there are not too many works that would be dedicated to her quite recent novel *Helpless*. In my thesis, I would like to address the issue by providing a literary analysis of the novel. The second novel selected for the purposes of this thesis is *Cat's Eye* by another well-known Canadian writer, Margaret Atwood. In the thesis, I examine various aspects of the novels such as used literary devices or main themes. The outcome of the analysis is a surprising amount of similarities that can be identified between these two relatively randomly selected novels.

ANOTACE

Autor:	Silvie Pospíšilová
Katedra:	Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Název práce:	Analýza vybraných románů odehrávajících se v Torontu
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.
Počet stran:	57

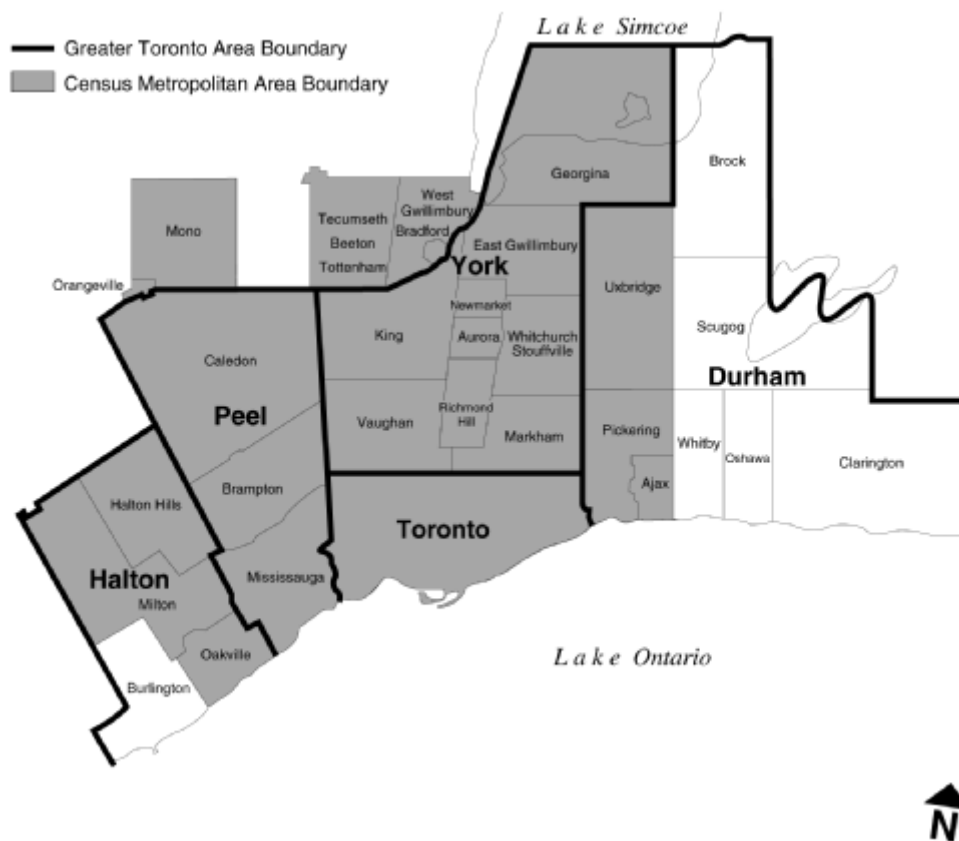
Klíčová slova:

Toronto, kanadská literatura, román, Barbara Gowdy, Margaret Atwood, *Helpless*, Kočičí oko, literární analýza

Abstrakt:

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analýza dvou vybraných románů, které se odehrávají v Torontu. Ačkoliv je Barbara Gowdy renomovanou kanadskou autorkou, neexistuje mnoho prací, které by se věnovaly jejímu novějšímu románu *Helpless*. V mé práci bych tento problém chtěla napravit tím, že provedu literární analýzu tohoto románu. Druhým románem vybraným pro účely této práce je *Cat's Eye* od další známé kanadské spisovatelky Margaret Atwood. V práci zkoumám různé aspekty těchto románů, jako jsou například použité literární prostředky nebo hlavní témata. Výsledkem analýzy je překvapivé množství podobností, které lze identifikovat ve dvou relativně náhodně vybraných románech.

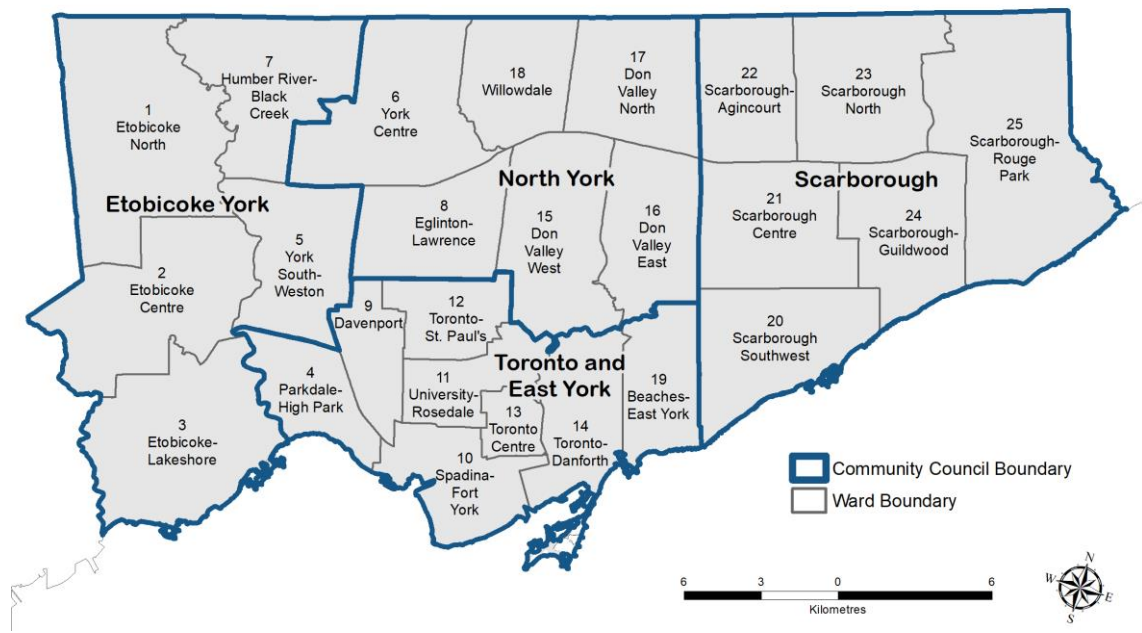
APPENDICES



Appendix 1

The Greater Toronto Area and the Census Metropolitan Area demarcation.

City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/90c1-EDC-Map-GTA-CMA.png>. Accessed January 28, 2020.



Appendix 2

The City of Toronto's Community Council Areas and Wards boundaries.

City of Toronto. https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/8bc1-web_communitycouncil_25.png. Accessed February 9, 2020.