



ANKARA
HACI BAYRAM VELİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ

**HANDMADE WOMEN'S RESISTANCE TO THE
DIVINE PATRIARCHY IN *THE HANDMAID'S TALE***

Merve Sultan VURAL

Supervisor
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nazli GÜNDÜZ

MASTER'S THESIS
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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Üye (Unvan/Ad-Soyad/Kurum): Doç. Dr. Nazli GÜNDÜZ Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli Üniversitesi	☒	☐

HANDMADE WOMEN’S RESISTANCE TO THE DIVINE PATRIARCHY
IN *THE HANDMAID’S TALE*

(M.A. Thesis)

Merve Sultan VURAL

ANKARA HACI BAYRAM VELİ UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

Throughout history, gender inequality has been a deep-rooted problem that has been an obstacle to women’s progress. Eradicating inequality requires radical changes in many areas. The most crucial of these is political innovation, due to fundamental ideas about gender being influenced by state policies. An example of how the form of government plays a primary role in sexism is Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Based on Christian Fundamentalism as a polity and ideologically grounded in totalitarianism and biopolitics, the novel depicts a patriarchal society in which women’s rights are restricted and they are reduced to mere reproductive tools. Critical discourse analysis is used as the method of analysis throughout this research. This method aims to explore the role of language in reflecting the totalitarian nature of the regime, to determine the position of biopolitics in violence against women, and to analyze the influences of fundamentalism on women’s physical and mental states. The meanings underlying certain words in the novel are evaluated within the scope of hermeneutics, and the messages the author tries to convey throughout the text are analyzed. The women’s reaction to misogyny and its connection with the elements of resistance are discussed within the framework of psychoanalysis. Finally, through comparative analysis, the elements intersecting with past and present events in the novel are determined. The central theoretical concept and the hypothesis to be validated in the study is that the personal is political. Moral values, domestic responsibilities, and inequalities of opportunity imposed on women take on a social dimension and call into question the civil order. The main argument is that gender inequality is based on state monopoly. The problem is that gender inequality has persisted for centuries. The point reached as a result of the research is that the totalitarian state as the law-maker is at the top of the social pyramid by triggering misogyny.

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(Yüksek Lisans Tezi)

Merve Sultan VURAL

ANKARA HACI BAYRAM VELİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ

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ÖZET

Tarihin her safhasında toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği kadının ilerlemesinin önünde engel teşkil eden köklü bir sorun olmuştur. Eşitsizliğin ortadan kaldırılması için pek çok alanda radikal değişiklikler yapılması gerekmektedir. Bunlardan en önemlisi siyasi alanda yapılacak olan yeniliklerdir çünkü toplumsal cinsiyete ilişkin temel fikirler devlet politikalarından etkilenmektedir. Yönetim şeklinin cinsiyetçilikte birincil rol oynamasına bir örnek, Atwood'un Damızlık Kızın Öyküsü'dür. Bir yönetim biçimi olarak ortaya çıkan Hristiyan Fundamentalizmini esas alan ve ideolojik olarak totalitarizm ile biyopolitikaya dayanan roman, kadınların tüm haklarının kısıtlandığı ve yalnızca birer üreme aracına indirildiği ataerki bir toplumu tasvir etmektedir. Araştırmanın genelinde eleştirel söylem analizi metodu kullanılmıştır. Bu metotla dilin, rejimin totaliter yapısını yansıtmadaki rolünü keşfetmek, biyopolitikanın kadına yönelik şiddetteki konumunu belirlemek ve fundamentalizmin kadınların fiziksel ve mental süreçlerine olan etkilerini analiz etmek amaçlanmıştır. Romandaki belirli kelimelerin altında yatan anlamlar hermenötik kapsamında değerlendirilmiş ve yazarın metin boyunca iletmeye çalıştığı mesajlar analiz edilmiştir. Kadın düşmanlığına kadının tepkisi ve direniş unsurları ile bağlantısı psikanaliz çerçevesinde ele alınmıştır. Son olarak karşılaştırmalı analiz ile geçmişte ve günümüzde yaşanan olayların romandaki hangi unsurlarla kesiştiği tespit edilmiştir. Çalışmanın merkezindeki teorik düşünce ve doğrulanması gereken hipotez, kişisel olanın politik olduğudur. Kadına yüklenen ahlaki değerler, ev içi sorumluluklar ve fırsat eşitsizlikleri toplumsal bir boyut kazanarak yönetim şeklini sorguladır. Bu noktada temel argüman, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin devlet tekeline dayandığıdır. Sorun, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin yüzyıllardır devam etmesidir. Araştırmalar sonucunda varılmak istenen nokta, kanun koyucu olarak totaliter devletin kadın düşmanlığını tetikleyerek sosyal piramidin en üstünde yer aldığıdır.

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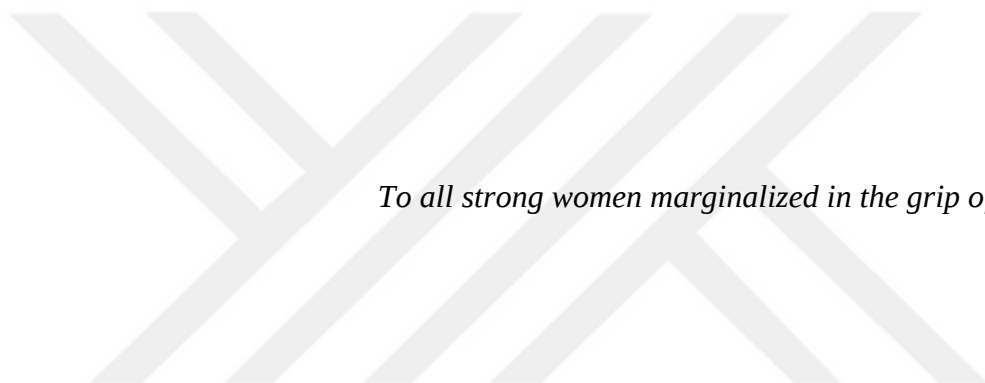
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To all strong women marginalized in the grip of patriarchy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations used in this study are presented below along with their descriptions.

Abbreviations	Descriptions
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
NIV	New International Version
PN	Proper Name
TBTN	Take Back the Night
U.S.	United States
UN	United Nations

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, norms and beliefs built upon gender have played a decisive role in women's lives, and constraining standards have deemed them 'the second sex' in all spheres of life. With this label, women have been relegated to the back rows of social, economic, and political arenas, drowning out their voices and curtailing their potential. Because this distinction is so deeply entrenched, even today, despite changes in times, gender inequality is a persistent problem that has been a stumbling block to progress.

Cases of discrimination and violence against women have recently been examined in depth by the United Nations and is identified as "human rights violations" (UN Women, n.d.). International efforts to combat discrimination and achieve gender equality have increased. UN Women and similar organizations are working to achieve gender justice. Efforts include increasing women's participation in education and the labor force, ensuring their representation in decision-making processes, and promoting legal regulations to end gender-based violence. Education, in particular, is seen as a fundamental tool in raising women's social status and ensuring their economic independence. However, the fact remains that there is still considerable work needed and that a continuous struggle is necessary to eradicate gender-based discrimination.

When it comes to gender, it is not only legal regulations that are crucial but also individual and collective actions to support social and cultural mindset transformation. Despite strides forward, significant obstacles remain to achieving full gender equality. These obstacles include expectations based on gender roles, stereotypes, and gender-based division of labor. To truly overcome these barriers and achieve gender equality, it is crucial to explore the motives of the root of discrimination and violence. This way involves questioning and reshaping social norms and attitudes toward gender roles.

A considerable number of books on gender have survived from past to the present. One of these is *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft (1985), who put her thoughts into writing on sexism in the eighteenth century. By emphasizing women's rights, she exposes the oppression of the patriarchal social structure and creates an essential ground for discussion on this

issue, considering gender roles as elements that shape social structures in a historical continuum. For Wollstonecraft (1985), “...till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education” (p. 35). The reason for her remarks is that in the eighteenth century, women did not receive as good an education as men, and their education was limited to domestic chores and virtuous teachings (pp. 36-37), as if to reinforce the view that the woman was created for man. In this context, she emphasizes that the real change must be in society before education since the thought structure of the society shapes education.

Wollstonecraft (1985), who demanded that women be recognized as independent individuals and that the principle of gender equality be applied in all areas, sees the absence of “a just constitution, and equal laws” (p. 244) as the basis of gender inequality. In this regard, the only institution that can change society is the state itself because only an authority has the right to dominate social phenomena.

The state’s monopolization, albeit indirectly, of women as a gap in society can be seen more clearly with the ideas of John Stuart Mill, who lived half a century after Wollstonecraft. Mill (1970), as a politician, conveys that society has a say over women to the extent that state policies allow it in a way that supports and validates Wollstonecraft’s argument:

In the present day, power holds a smoother language, and whomsoever it oppresses, always pretends to do so for their own good: accordingly, when anything is forbidden to women, it is thought necessary to say, and desirable to believe, that they are incapable of doing it, and that they depart from their real path of success and happiness when they aspire to it. (p. 50)

By critically evaluating the state’s approach to gender issues, Mill makes it clear that the center of power plays a key role in shaping and maintaining gender roles. He, here, points out that the state structure restricts the free will of individuals and that gender-based discrimination is legitimized within the framework of policies. As a result, social, economic, and political inequalities between men and women deepen, and the general welfare of society is negatively affected. Considering these factors, he argues that the state can act not only as an instrument of repression but also as a catalyst for social change. Such an approach, he believes, can contribute significantly to making women more visible in the political, social, and economic spheres, thereby reducing gender-based inequalities. Mill’s ideas provide important arguments for rethinking the state’s role in building a more just

and inclusive society. In this way, gender equality can only be achieved if state policies approach the issue more evenhanded and comprehensively.

According to Mill (2008), there is schooling that teaches “women to think marriage the one thing needful” (p. 100), and the fact that a woman chooses to be one of a man’s several wives rather than not wanting to marry at all (p. 100) shows how this oppression is embedded in women’s memory. He claims that through the implementation of egalitarian reforms, the state mechanism can transform gender roles and society. As a man, Mill is an advocate for gender equality that emphasizes the prevention of inequality by examining the secondary importance of women in such a way in the nineteenth century.

The twentieth century is a period in which the focus of inequality between men and women is placed on the socio-economic identity of the individual. The sharpest way to understand how a woman questions herself in the throes of existence and how she feels in the face of inequality is to listen to her from herself. However, in the twentieth century, women had to have a room of their own and economic freedom in order to come across fiction in which they narrated themselves. On the perception of women belonging to the masses at that time, Virginia Woolf (1977) states that the reason for women’s lack of self-actualization is the devaluation of women by not allocating personal space for them and the fact that they cannot even enter the library without a man (p. 12) shows that their self-improvement, writing and thus earning money are meaningless in the face of male hegemony.

Woolf (1977) explains that the social roles between men and women result in women not giving up: “Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind” (p. 83). Although women’s inability to have a private space, not being able to write, and being deprived of economic freedom are nothing new for the century, the author’s emphasis on liberty and her manifesto-like rebellious outburst make her a women’s rights advocate.

As a matter of fact, the marginalization of women in the twenty-first century is no different from that of previous centuries. hooks [sic] (2015) states in her dissertation that although men are disturbed by their hatred towards women (xiii), they do not give up the idea of patriarchy. This reveals that the cause of gender

inequality arises not from men but from the androcentric mentality, and thus, the cause of masculine hegemony is not the individual but social norms. In the current century, based on the marginalization of women's bodies, discrimination is subject to state policies, as the author mentions.

When hooks [sic] (2015) wrote that at least women had "the means to acquire an abortion" (p. 26), even if there is a lack of primary sex education and prenatal care, she was unaware that abortion would be banned in many states in the U.S. in which she lived. hooks [sic], who offers solutions to issues such as reproductive and economic freedoms, believes that the state should support working women by providing fair wages and aid to access home education programs, as well as offering social welfare for men so that "equal access to welfare...would no longer carry the stigma of gender" (p. 52). At some point, the guarantee of the social good by the state may be the most practical example of ensuring gender equality.

At the point where gender has evolved, the man continues to climb to the top of the pyramid, while the woman continues to remain at the bottom of it, unable to bear the weight of being a mother or a wife rather than a female. While women question their place in society, they are aware that social construction in which "they have won only what men have been willing to concede to them" (de Beauvoir, 2015, p. 8) and that society and the state are responsible for shaping and changing this construction. Therefore, it is a fact that a continuous struggle is necessary to eradicate gender inequality, a problem that has persistently taken root even in the modern era.

Accordingly, gender discrimination limits the overall progress of society by preventing women from reaching their full potential. Analyses by thinkers such as Wollstonecraft, Mill, Woolf, and hooks suggest that achieving gender equality requires a series of systemic changes in state policies. In this context, it is crucial for the state to support gender stereotyping content in education programs and to review existing legal regulations to eliminate all forms of discrimination that reinforce gender inequality. In light of the aforementioned authors' ideas, gender inequality is imposed on society by the state institution and can be ended by it.

Ensuring equality between the genders is an indispensable requirement for both strengthening the democratic social structure and increasing social

participation. However, the conclusion reached is that whether it is the eighteenth or the twenty-first century, there is still much work to be done and that an ongoing struggle is essential to wipe gender-based discrimination off the map.

This research, titled “Handmade Women’s Resistance to the Divine Patriarchy in *The Handmaid’s Tale*”, concentrates on the concepts of the state, theocracy, and gender. The study addresses the totalitarian and biopolitical regime’s use of religion to create a patriarchal system that subordinates women and exerts the power of death over them in the novel, *The Handmaid’s Tale*. It examines the resistance of women who are subjected to the tyranny of the regime in a society ruled by the state as legislators with Christian fundamentalism. The controversy that necessitated this study lies at the intersection of political authority and religious zealotry, raising concerns about the manipulation of spiritual beliefs to legitimize the oppression and control of women.

The purpose of the research is to analyze the role of tyrannical governments on gender inequality, which impose certain norms on society, and the commodification of the body in a state where religious fundamentalism is exploitative. Besides, the reasons that trigger misogyny are explored in terms of an inseparable bond among the state, religious extremism, and sexism as the aspects that play an active role in discrimination.

Although the issues of marginalization and ostracization of women in the patriarchal system are committed to paper frequently as a part of feminism, this study aims to bring women’s trivialization in terms of theocratic constraints in a totalitarian and biopolitical dystopia from a different perspective than previous research. Revealing the positive and negative sides of the characters within the framework of social and political themes can be a source of inspiration for future studies in the long run.

In the case of theses written in Türkiye, an analysis of master’s theses from the Department of Western Languages and Literatures in the Thesis Center Database of the Council of Higher Education reveals that studies titled ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ typically focus on either comparing two or more novels or analyzing themes of religion, biopolitics, or feminism. For instance, Kaya’s (2023) thesis “Gender trouble: Dystopian regimes, slavery, and its ‘Others’ in Margaret

Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*" and Arkut's (2019) work "Language as a tool for manipulation in dystopian novels" exemplify this trend.

Similarly, the OATD database, which provides access to international theses and dissertations, shows that theses from abroad often focus on specific symbols within the text or develop arguments around areas such as language use. For example, Wozniak's (2020) thesis "A resistance in red: Ideographs in *The Handmaid's Tale*" and Millward's (2007) dissertation "Dystopian wor(l)ds: Language within and beyond experience" illustrate these approaches.

However, this study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, integrating elements from diverse fields such as religious, social, legal, and political ideologies. By synthesizing concepts and theories from various disciplines, it aims to offer a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis.

Moreover, in the thesis, a detailed analysis is conducted on how nocturnal expressions such as night, darkness, shadow, and black affect and shape the main character's mood. This study examines how these expressions reflect the character's inner world and emotions, revealing that no such analysis exists in the current literature. In many articles and theses, there is no approach linking the novel to nocturnal expressions. This original method brings an unprecedented perspective to character analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is used when certain statements and sentences give clues about the ideologies, symbols and norms "is specifically interested in power abuse, that is, in breaches of laws, rules and principles of democracy, equality and justice by those who wield power" (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). With this method, the social problems of hegemony, inequality and gender discrimination are put into practice within the framework of the use of language. In the research, social problems are identified and the meanings and symbols inside and outside the text are analyzed in order to reveal the paratext of the intended message while analyzing the apparent meaning of the text.

Since the use of language is analyzed in relation to power relations and the individual-society in the novel, branches of multidisciplinary CDA are utilized. These are the Hegemonic Analysis method, which determines how the ideological

language controlled by oppressive forces is acceptable; the Ideological Discourse Analysis method, which analyzes its ideological carriers; and the Gender Studies-based CDA method, which shows how the impact of language on gender is shaped. Within the scope of the novel, the evaluation of the language of the state within the framework of ideological and hegemonic discourses is made by referring to Ludwig Wittgenstein's books, which contain his thoughts on language and language game. Accordingly, it is analyzed how words turn into a tool of manipulation with the meaning specific to the person using them.

In line with the fact that human beings are individuals and social subjects through language, the meaning of language and its social relations are taken into account in this methodology. Thus, the important ideologies of the novel are extracted from the discourse used by the characters and the use of Latin is revealed with its symbolic meanings being explored. These reviews are supported and exemplified by political and religious terms. In the light of the findings, the themes that enrich the layers of meaning in the novel, solid concepts such as totalitarianism, biopolitics, thanatopolitics, fundamentalism, and gender ideologies, are discussed in detail. The interdisciplinary methods of ideology analysis such as political sciences and science of religion is used to reveal how these concepts are woven into the background of the novel and how the author weaves these ideas together. The layering and interpretation of ideologies is based on the views of Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben and Achille Mbembe. Consequently, it reveals the author's critical approach to these ideologies and how these affect the lives of the characters.

Hermeneutics is utilized in researching the dynamic structure of the novel, the interpretation of certain words and the author's intention. "Hermeneutics rests on the fact of the non-understanding of discourse" (Schleiermacher, 1998, p. 227) and therefore the message and internal coherence that the author tries to convey throughout the text, which requires a deep analysis to understand, are analyzed with nocturnal expressions within the scope of the use of symbolic language. The underlying meanings of the words 'night', 'shadow', 'black', and 'darkness', the way the words are used in the novel and their biblical connotations are determined. In addition, the behavior of power affecting gender and the effects of the language

used by the characters on personality are combined around Uri Margolin's comments on proper names. Considering the depth of meaning of the place and person names in the novel, the effects of written, verbal and symbolic expressions on women are evaluated.

While examining the situations underlying the marginalization of women in the novel, the method of psychoanalysis is applied. With this method, the legalization of violence is explained in the context of conscience and symbolic violence is evaluated within the framework of Pierre Bourdieu's approaches. How the elements of violence are perceived by women and the reactions to them are explained in the context of Freud's thoughts. In addition, the biological status of women, which is seen as a taboo, is also evaluated within the scope of Freud's theories, and the relationship between misogyny and society is observed.

Finally, a comparison is made between the novel and real life with the comparative analysis method, and it is concluded that history repeats itself. It is explained with real examples that today, just like in the novel, women are inferior to men. While explaining these, examples of women's oppression in Nazi Germany, Khomeini-era Iran, Ceausescu-era Romania and Afghanistan are shown.

In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), the state uses religious doctrine to legitimize and enforce rigid gender roles, leading to the oppression of women and the stratification of society. The fundamentalist interpretations of Christianity depicted have the effect of solidifying gender roles by reinforcing patriarchal values, suggesting that certain religious beliefs and practices play a central role in legitimizing gender inequality. The rigid hierarchical order and biopolitical systems of control in a totalitarian society profoundly affect the lives of individuals, limiting their physical and mental autonomy and serving to maintain power dynamics in society.

This study's point of interest is whether gender inequality through policies in the novel affects the novel's progress and the characters' development. Accordingly, ideological language directly reflects the atmosphere of the regime and conveys the desired political message to the society through the people it chooses. Determining how biopolitical control through violence affects women's lives in an extremist society, how fundamentalist interpretations of Christianity

determine the mental and physical drives of the Handmaids, how the concepts of the night contribute to the protagonist's psychological experience, why the content of the novel is reminiscent of the Middle Ages despite its futuristic nature, and whether the state policies in the novel are applied in real life is the preferred method to see the building blocks of the novel and strengthen the hypothesis.

Hypothetically, the thesis concludes that the fundamentalist form of governance is most influential in gender inequality. As a policy maker, power is above society and the belief system, and it shapes feminism and utilizes religion in the way it desires. Therefore, specific sequencing needs to clarify and comprehensively exemplify some necessary concepts in the literature review. These are the state, religion, and gender, respectively. Eventually, the state depriving citizens of their fundamental rights by using religion gives rise to the need for gender equality in the face of traumatic violence.

The Handmaid's Tale (Atwood, 2017) is an anti-utopian novel set in a world dominated by a totalitarian regime in which patriarchy has a pervasive effect felt by strict religious rules adopted in the repressive system. Even though Atwood's totalitarian and theocratic plot reflects a fantastic and unimaginable narration, the author presents a realistic portrait for the reader. Her statement, "The dystopian society I proposed would contain no feature that human beings had not already put into practice, somewhere, sometime" (Business Journal Daily, 2017), shows that she does not resort to unreality in her narrative but instead describes sexism that has existed from the past to the present with all its reality. As an example of this realism, even though the novel is about the near future, the way the characters dress, their distance from technology and the religious terms used reflect the medieval period. Aware that discrimination and persecution of women still exist in various parts of the world, Atwood aims to enlighten the reader about the influence of power elements on society.

In the novel, two main concepts accommodate the notion of the misogyny with the Republic of Gilead: state and religious extremism. These elements interrelatedly reinforce each other and cannot be considered separately. Given the diverse and complex approaches to state structure, religious doctrines, and the female body, examining the underlying principles in consideration of the misogyny

that corroborates and shapes this novel is essential.

As a first motif, the state and its governing bodies implement complex and intricate military and media policies with reactionary measures that enforce rigid restraints on freedom of expression and access to information. Authority, which tries to increase birth rates, also adopts a policy based on class discrimination and carries out a conservative form of governance with the religion it shapes. The state operates in tandem with the overarching feminist perspective that underpins the narrative, thus contributing to the complex and challenging nature of the novel's exploration of gender roles, power differentials, and societal norms.

The reactionary practice of the fundamental theocracy, imposed by the steady implementation of all the policies and sanctions of the country through the new Christianity it has created, is explained by the second element, religion. The holy book, which lies at the heart of Gilead, stands out, especially with the Genesis section of the Holy Scripture, and addresses a policy that women should constantly give birth. Atwood's portrayal of the oppressive regime functions as a reminder of the menaces of religious fundamentalism and highlights the importance of safeguarding individual rights and freedoms through ongoing vigilance.

Government policies and religion shape the complex and multifaceted approaches to the female body. The novel's exploration of the intersectionality of politics, religion, and gender exemplifies the complex nature of societal power structures and their impact on individuals and communities. As such, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017) is an essential piece of feminist literature that contributed significantly to the ongoing conversation surrounding gender inequality and the need for social change.

In this context, the first section of the main part of the thesis discusses the ideological dimension of the use of language. Ludwig Wittgenstein's theories on language are interpreted in this section, and their effects on the main character are discussed. Then, Uri Margolin's evaluations on the use of proper name are analyzed in the context of specific sentences in the novel, and the linguistic use of certain expressions is addressed. In the same section, the sentences of the character of Aunt Lydia are analyzed in detail, and the totalitarian and biopolitical power of the state is explored through these sentences. The ideological use of language is especially

shaped around the Latin sentence in the narrative, and the main character's power to feel independent is explained through the Scrabble game.

In the second part, the extent to which violence is legitimate in a totalitarian state is explained through the ideas of Hannah Arendt, Byung-Chul Han and Henry David Thoreau. The degree to which resistance is necessary in the face of violence is also discussed, and the elements of violence in the novel and the passive resistance of women are analyzed. Then, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is explained and how it is manifested in which parts of the novel is determined.

In the third part, the terms night, darkness, black and shadow, which are the concepts of the nocturnal in the novel, are evaluated in terms of the psychological development of the protagonist. Especially the word night, which gives its name to both the prologue and the epilogue of the novel, is explained around religious references.

In the fourth part, biblical references are quoted to show how the floral expressions in the novel created a false paradise in the Gilead regime. The reasons for the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise are evaluated and compared through the characters. Then, within the framework of Newton's Third Law of Motion, the main character's fight against the oppressive regime is assessed.

In the fifth and final part of the thesis, examples of the real-life reflections of *The Handmaid's Tale* are given. Examples from the past and present, such as Nazi Germany, Ceausescu's Romania, and women's issues in the Middle East, are linked to the novel. As a result, it has been observed that women face the same discriminatory reality in every period of life.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Domination of Total State Control: Totalitarianism

Man is, by nature, a political animal.

—Aristotle, *Politics*

Totalitarianism is a political system that represses the individual in all areas of life, limits freedoms and prevents the formation of opposition. In the long run, this system leads to social division and economic hardship, triggering an increase in the control elements of power and restrictions on freedom of expression.

In other words, totalitarianism, based on aggressive nationalism and coercion, controlling the entire population, companies, and associations, is an ideology that stands out sharply from other ideologies and is full of intolerant restrictions in both public and private life (Cassinelli, 1960, p. 90). As a lexical meaning of a despotic government with a centralized administration and dictatorial control (Brown et al., 2018, p. 1240), this ideology does not seek pluralism, freedom, ideas of other nations, or different beliefs. Analyzing totalitarianism, putting masses under great distress, through the lens of Hannah Arendt's perspective, a historian who compiles this movement in depth, will make it easier to perceive the ideology in its main outlines.

According to Arendt (1973), totalitarianism as an ideology that “attempts to make men superfluous” (p. 457) is related to the doctrine of fascism under the umbrella of Anti-Semitism. For her, understanding these ideologies is essential to grasping the basis of totalitarianism because both are often used effectively in totalitarian regimes and are one of the tools used to control society.

Fascism is an ideology promoted by Benito Mussolini (Thompson, 2011, p. 85) in the early twentieth century. It is essentially a right-wing nationalist movement with an anti-democratic and hierarchical structure. Its ideology includes monism, which holds absolute truths, extreme belief in good or evil, and nationalism, which advocates a privileged nation (Brown et al., 2018, p. 515). This term, which identifies with Mussolini, is based on the chain of command and obedience to a dictatorial regime that includes propaganda on various topics such as education, culture, faith, and religion.

In the national socialist regime of Nazi Germany, which had a fascist ideology that some of its features influenced Mussolini (Broszat, 1966, p. 59), mass media were taken under control by establishing the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment and preparing young children to send to war groups were formed that instilled the ideologies of Hitler Youth to children (Bytwerk, 2010, p. 94). Afterward, Hitler referred to himself as Führer, which means leader. Similarly, Mussolini aimed to spread fascist propaganda by The Ministry of Popular Culture in Italy. Accordingly, the other branches of the ministry, The Division of Cinematography, supervised film production, and The Inspectorate for the Theater brought theater and musical activities under the leader's authority (Cole, 1938, pp. 425-426). At this stage, he wanted to be known as Duce. Considering Hitler as a "German variant of Benito Mussolini" (Sauer, 1967, p. 404), all this explains Mussolini's desire to ally with Germany in the Second World War, and Nazism is seen as a German fascism.

According to Mussolini's book *The Doctrine of Fascism* (2006), the fascist person "disdains an easy life. [His] life is religious [and] anti-individualistic. Outside of [the Fascist state,] no human or spiritual values can exist" (pp. 9-11). Therefore, this ideology is an extreme version of the government's right wing. As individuality is of no account herein, the people do everything for the state and are less important than the state itself.

Mussolini (2006) makes totalitarianism possible as an ideology by declaring, "Fascism is totalitarian" (p. 11). This expression refers to a form of government in which the state does not allow autonomous institutions, control associations' activities, restrict communication means, and either wholly or partially permit religious structures and educational activities (Scruton, 2007, pp. 244-245). That is because during his reign, all parties not united under the umbrella of fascism were shut down, books and newspapers were censored, education was taken under state control. Duce stated "a policy of force was absolutely necessary" (Mussolini, 1998, p. 240), and took the first step of dictatorship by assigning all state positions from the army to the ministry to himself, making Italy a totalitarian state.

In her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973), Arendt describes fascism as a less harsh movement than totalitarianism. She mentions that although Mussolini

is into totalitarianism, he does not implement such an advanced regime and makes do with dictatorship (p. 308). This demonstrates that even though fascism paves the way for totalitarianism, the two are different movements, and totalitarianism is a more extreme ideology. Arendt refers to the main factors that feed off totalitarianism rather than what it is. One of the states that exemplifies this ideology is Nazi Germany, as she illustrates this. For her, the most essential factor that provides this ideology is the mass. The existence of a mass organization further legitimizes the leader's despotism. Since the leader cannot be considered independent of the masses, the crowd is so vital that without their support, Hitler could not have "maintained the leadership" (p. 306).

Propaganda as an "ability to shut the masses off from the real world" (Arendt, 1973, p. 353) is another element that draws strength from totalitarianism. A totalitarian leader prepares his propaganda quite skillfully. Supposing the leader regularly prepares propaganda through different media outlets, speaks confidently on the presidential platform, tells a lie, or makes an extreme claim, people may still start to believe him. Thus, if the public were to question the fantastic scale of lies, they would only be skeptical of what they hear and see since they cannot blame the leader. In Arendt's terms, this situation opens the curtain on a skeptical society. As a matter of fact, Goebbels (1948), the propaganda minister in Nazi Germany, describes propaganda as "simple...repetitive...convincing...exceptionally effective [and] word-of-mouth" (pp. 56, 81, 120).

Arendt (1973) says, "It is not the truthfulness of the Leader's words but the infallibility of his actions which is the basis for the structure" (p. 387) for the totalitarian formation of a Nazi society where Hitler was always right. Indeed, the beginning of the genocide in the concentration camps is enough evidence for the Germans to believe Hitler and his policies. In propaganda, which is brainwashing, there is a question of terrorism. The populace in a government where voices are suppressed is intimidated by terror. Examples of this can be seen in the environment created by anti-Semitism, where Jews were outlawed from sitting in the gardens of their homes after a particular hour, visiting the homes of their Christian neighbors, or participating in entertainment activities such as cinema or theater (Frank, 1995, p. 27).

This propaganda is a perception operation not only for the German people but for the outside world, where totalitarianism does not exist, because it is about global domination. Therefore, the media's insertion of unfounded news into the business also stems from Hitler's desire to gain the sympathy of other country's leaders. Italy's fascist leader Mussolini is an example of this sympathy. In other words, a totalitarian regime restricts human freedom and gradually massifies both its own and the outside population by trying to fit them into the molds it has set, making propaganda the most crucial "instrument of totalitarianism for dealing with the nontotalitarian world" (Arendt, 1973, p. 344).

The last element binding the population to totalitarian power is the secret police, which is not concerned with who is or is not a part of the nation or whether he has committed a crime. If a person belongs to a group and believes that the leader is disturbing the order, that person will be eliminated.

Arendt (2005) expresses it as follows;

Who the person to be arrested and liquidated is, what he is thinking or planning—that is already determined by the government in advance. Once he is arrested, his actual thoughts and plans are of no consequence whatever. His crime is objectively determined, without the help of any "subjective" factors. If he is a Jew, he is a member of the conspiracy of the Elders of Zion; if he has heart disease, he is a parasite on the healthy body of the Germanic people; if he is arrested in Russia when an anti-Israeli and pro-Arab foreign policy is in force, then he is a Zionist...And so on. (p. 301)

Based on the quote above, the secret police are not responsible for ensuring peace but for the permanent continuation of power, destroying the opposition. The person punished or left to die is considered as if he never existed. This form of government, which leaves society to face a human rights problem, continues to exist in several countries today. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a country with one of the strictest totalitarian regimes, in which its people live in almost complete isolation from the outside world. As stated by the 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is governed by a totalitarian system complete with restrictions, with no human rights due to "arbitrary killings by the government; punishment of family members for offenses...committed by an individual; restrictions on freedom of religion or belief; complete denial of access to international human rights; lack of accountability for

gender-based violence” (United States Department of State, 2022, pp. 1-2). North Korea accepts only one truth by withdrawing the people from the world. The supreme leader constantly uses propaganda to keep his people in the state because it is the only means of restricting communication with the non-totalitarian world.

As stated by Arendt (1973), totalitarianism is a form of government born as a result of the dark interaction of anti-Semitism and fascism, which eliminates the preferences of the individual and the community and turns them into instruments that serve the purpose of the state. One of the most dangerous aspects of a totalitarian order is that reality is replaced by ideology, and this ideology is constantly manipulated and supported by lies. Under this rule, one loses not only political freedom but also the ability to think and interpersonal trust. The isolation of people and weakening social bonds are among the main methods of totalitarianism’s domination over the individual. As part of this comprehensive control mechanism, the state seeks to penetrate not only the economic and political spheres but also the private lives of individuals. Thus, totalitarianism emerges as more than a mere political doctrine but a force that pervades the social fabric and reshapes it to serve its own ends.

As a result, Anti-Semitism, as a compound of fascism, prepares the ground for totalitarianism. Totalitarianism functions not only as a characteristic of a political regime but also as a system that completely transforms society and the life of the individual. Totalitarian movements tend to manipulate the masses and impose a uniform mindset through propaganda. In such a system, the free will of individuals is greatly restricted, and the ideology of the state dominates in all areas.

2.2. Dynamics of Control in Governance: Biopolitics and Thanatopolitics

Power has long been studied as a fundamental element of societies. As a network of relations, it is a dynamic phenomenon with a complex structure that determines the decision-making process in social life. Although its definition is unique to each person, Michel Foucault (1982) takes a comprehensive perspective and assumes that it is not only a political structure but also a whole that completes all human relations. For him, power is always present in institutional life, economic relations, bilateral relations, or verbal communication (pp. 786-787). The slightest influence of one thing on another person or society is the most robust evidence of

its power, and it cannot be attributed to a particular class since it is dynamic and can be disrupted, changed, or reversed. In the hospital, the doctor has the power, whereas in the school, the principal has it. The change in power dynamics can be explained with an example within the household: the child who gets chocolate every time he cries has the power at home, but if the parents stop buying chocolate, then, they have the power. For this scenario, changing dynamics are parallel to the control of power.

Foucault's power is based on freedom. According to him, "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). The person or group being ruled or influenced must be conscious and free to have a say. Therefore, the balance in the chain of ruler and ruled allows for resistance with free will and makes power fair. In this case, the ruled person can become the ruler instantly, which decentralizes power. The state is one of the most critical areas where power is represented extensively. It regulates the lives of its citizens and is the focal point of power. Its form of governance determines the character of its society. The state not only possesses the know-how of the past but also the potential for future governance. It is one of the most concrete indicators of political power and pursues various policies to control the population. In this given context, management evolves into a concept called biopolitics.

Foucault (2003) describes biopolitics as a life-supporting, productive power mechanism. He defines the body the most essential factor in the birth of biopolitics based on people who reproduce through birth (p. 245). However, the body here is both the human body and the structures encompassing state institutions such as mental hospitals. In other words, either the human body must adapt to the set of rules that the state draws the boundaries of, or one of the state's bodies must use a method to rehabilitate the human being. For instance, the insane are locked up in asylums in order to be disciplined because they cannot adapt to the general structure of society. In this technology of power, the majority outside the asylum is attributed as healthy. This is a system for controlling the population "as political problem" (p. 245) to increase and improve it. All biopolitical policies implemented make the state a biopower, meaning the practical implementation of policies to heal the human body is a transforming system.

Punishment mechanisms in prisons play a rehabilitative role as a disciplinary system. Foucault (1995) defines prison as “the general form of an apparatus intended to render individuals docile and useful, through precise work upon their bodies” (p. 231). Punishing the prisoner through spatial confinement is a way of maintaining order. Therefore, since the body must be transformed into a productive force to be utilized, prisons are institutions that help bodies to function in a certain way and to have certain characteristics. Biopower, the disciplinary power that focuses on the body, accepts the body together with its soul. Hence, in a way, the soul becomes “the prison of the body” (p. 30). In this prison, even the soul, which creates the prisoner, helps to empower the state. In this case, power not only shapes the body but also ensures the continuity of government through the individual’s soul. Accordingly, the soul becomes subject to punishment in addition to the body. Serving power, the soul equips the atonement of the body with a system of punishments consisting of thought and will. Foucault proposes that man is a power subject, and this power makes him biologically sustainable and healthy. In a word, Foucault’s biopolitics represents the beginning of the modern state.

Although the continuity of power is ensured through the discipline of survival, death is another measure of the state’s survival. In some cases, the state uses the right of execution to prevent the exercise of thought and will. Biopower, which has the right to kill those who do not conform to society, uses public execution as “a juridico-political function” (Foucault, 1995, p. 48). Here, the executioner is both the enforcer of the law and the realizer of power, using discipline to produce “subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies” (p. 138). The body, which both stands out as the object of punishment and is put forward as a means to discipline the people left behind in the penance itself, exists as the punishment for the action itself.

Racism underlies the fact that biopolitics, which Foucault thinks gives meaning to human life, invites society to death. Biopower contributes to the life-death balance and creates a biologically healthy society. It eliminates the abnormal human being by destroying the inferior race (Foucault, 2003, p. 255). The term ‘inferior’ race can mean something different in each state policy. In the realm of modern biopolitical society, these races are punished by stigmatizing them as religious, atheist, gay, black, or Jewish, depending on policies. The punishment

mechanism of power has used the body many times so far and intervened by making it work, torturing it, and locking it up. Foucault states that power violates the rights and freedoms of the individual within the framework of the punishment-body relationship and that the whole of society is present in the punishment. Thus, by obtaining obedient bodies, power eliminates the unwanted race and makes society more livable. Foucault's policy of death is derived from the uniform society that power seeks to create.

Thanatopolitics emerges as the negative side of biopolitics and refers to the politics of power over death. The state considers it a natural right to have the power of death over the population, which makes life and death political concepts rather than biological ones. While the method of punishment by imprisoning both the soul and the body is directed towards action, the use of killing as a technique of punishment is "the punitive technique on a life" (Foucault, 1995, p. 252). The state, which creates a norming society, legalizes death because it does not see it as a serious matter.

Giorgio Agamben (1998), less optimistically than Foucault, sees the center of biopolitics as death. For him, the sovereign that wields power poisons society and leaves it to die (p. 122). His power is an organ that creates a biopolitical body, politicizing bare life, which is 'homo sacer's life, a human being whose ability to be killed is politicized. Therefore, what leads the sovereign to law is violence. Agamben defines the power of the sovereign to apply extraordinary sanctions by going beyond the rules in certain situations as the "state of exception" (pp. 15-16). Just like the Nazis, concentration camps where individuals are left to die are the sharpest state of exception example. In other words, the segment outside the ruling power's policies manifests itself through the punishment of the body outside the rules of law.

The sovereign power suspends the existing rules with the state of exception and creates a new set of rules, but this does not mean that the bare body has no relation with the rules because it is excluded. Indeed, when the system encounters something it does not want, it internalizes it by prohibiting it, which shows that the sovereign does not need a law to set rules. While the law's regulation of everyday

life makes it inside life, the fact that it goes beyond these rules and controls bare life under extraordinary conditions pushes it outside life.

According to Agamben (1998), the sovereign juxtaposes prohibition and law (p. 19). He, who sees the ability to kill human beings as the most fundamental basis of biopolitical life, does not see a difference between ruling life and ruling death. Biopolitics evolves into the politics of death, that is, thanatopolitics, in the context of the politics of genocide, that is, the destruction of lives that are not worth living. According to him, the Nazis, “as the first radically biopolitical [group]” (p. 143), are the biggest genocidal group, which means, the extermination of the Jews, the inferior race, is subjected to the greatest politics of death.

Agamben (1998) analyses Foucault’s prison as a camp and explains that modern biopolitics is not satisfied with the prison but exiles society to concentration camps (p. 4), a more brutal and discriminatory space. The Holocaust politicizes biological life to the point where biopower turns into the politics of death. As such, the camps constitute political space, executioners form power, the inferior race embodies lives that are not worth living, and corrupt societies and bodies represent public property. Agamben’s concept of sovereignty is, at one point, an institution that dominates the value of life if modern politics dominates not life but death. This institution has politicized death by turning it into an instrument of power and weeding out a specific segment. In this case, Agamben’s power is based on the sovereign power that shapes the body and the state that forcibly molds the bare life, the object of power, into a specific mold, and the state derives its power from the death of the homo sacer.

Mbembe (2019) finds the concept of biopower insufficient in submitting life to the authority of death. According to him, a form of violence of power emerges when governance does not base its power on “the consent of the governed” (p. 17). He agrees with both Foucault and Agamben that power is sustained in the third space of camps and prisons, but these spaces are insufficient to exercise violence. Like Foucault and Agamben, he links the origin of the thanatopolitical principle to racism. If power wants to bring people together within the framework of biopolitics, it must divide them, and it can only do this through apartheid. Therefore, the state has the right to carry out ethnic cleansing on any piece of land without the need for

a prison or camp, turning its face towards thanatopolitics. Power naturally uses the right to kill to ensure sovereignty and imposes political sanctions on individuals, aiming to make it more civilized. For instance, it can regulate the citizenship status of refugees to their detriment.

According to Mbembe (2019), the most advanced form of death politics is the current “colonial occupation of Palestine” (p. 80). The entire population targeted by the sovereign is cut off from the world, deprived of the right to earn an income, the right to live, and to shelter. In thanatopolitics, there is a fine line between death and freedom. As such, the concept of biopower is entirely inadequate to explain the sovereign’s power over the people. In Mbembe’s view of the politics of death, the sovereign either denies the use of violence or cites provocation as the reason for it. Being killed is, at some point, deserved in this kind of power. The non-fragility of death stems from the sovereign’s indifference to violence because “...even when [death’s] existence is proven, it has no subject. Thus, if...they are killed, it is owing to who they are. To avoid being killed, they only have to not be who they are” (p. 138).

2.3. From Pulpit to Power: Theocracy and Religious Extremism

Religion, which exists as a system of belief and worship, has a dynamic structure that shapes the lives of individuals and societies. Over time, it has become a power with the potential to influence the political and administrative structures of communities and has begun to be integrated into the system of governance. When religious authority becomes more dominant than political authority, theocracy, a form of government whose meaning is based on the will of God, emerges. In the states that recognize God as king, the holy book constitutes the state law, sins correspond to punishment in law, and divine laws constitute the state law. With all this, Theocracy is “liable to be incompetent, quarrelsome, or corrupt” (Ferrero, 2013, p. 731).

In *Leviathan* (1994), Thomas Hobbes argues that for this type of government, people must always be subject to divine power, regardless of willingly or unwillingly. Others who do not obey the word of God are considered enemies by society and the state (p. 215). Therefore, under this governing structure, sin violates the laws. More precisely, the power considers them enemies, which imposes this on

society. Accordingly, in a theocratic state, people who obey the rules are supposed to follow God's sovereign law. That is why those who break these rules face punishments, including execution. That makes the theocratic state dictatorial and always calls into question the concepts of justice and freedom.

The state, which derives its power from religion and is both sovereign and supreme, has the right to declare what is lawful and sinful. There are many groups, autonomous regions, and states in which different segments of society live their religious ideology ultra-conservatively and preach it to others. Some societies with large numbers of believers in the Abrahamic religions, past and present, are theocratic. An example is the Vatican State, which enforces the religious rulings of the Catholic Church on the people. The Vatican is governed by a theocratic monarchy that has adopted the Catholic Church's rules of law, the Canon. The Pope is infallible as the absolute sovereign of both religious and political authority. Everything he says is considered accurate because he is God's representative on earth.

Masses with an ultra-conservative attitude are possible in most states ruled by theocracy. That gives rise to the concept of extremism, which advocates extreme religious or political ideas. Religious extremism is a system of misinterpretation or misuse of religious beliefs that causes harm to society in the long run and can often be associated with violence (Iannaccone & Berman, 2006, p. 125). Such an example of this is the Salem Witch Trials. In the seventeenth century, the Puritans who immigrated to America from England considered witchcraft a grave sin because it was against their beliefs.

According to the Puritan Church, practicing and believing in magic was incompatible with Christian ideology as it meant going against the will of God. For this reason, many people, primarily women, were arrested, tortured, or executed for practicing witchcraft on the basis that it corrupted the moral values of society. The youngest person imprisoned among the accused was a four-and-a-half-year-old girl named Dorcas Good (Hill, 2002, p. 76). All of this is a dramatic example of how religious extremism and bigotry triggered violence and injustice in a society dominated by religious authority and beliefs of the time.

2.3.1. Christian Fundamentalism

Christian Fundamentalism is a religious extremism that emerged in North America (Sandeem & Melton, 2024). It aims to spread the teachings of the Bible so that it “has brought the Bible into the position of being itself an object of worship” (Hopewell, 1998, p. 1). This movement has gained momentum, especially since Darwinism and the First World War, and it is highly reactive against liberal theology, scientific thought, and secularism. Based on principles such as revitalizing religion, emphasizing the importance of the Bible, and faith in Jesus Christ, this ideology is rigid on social and political issues because of its very existence. It is also dogmatic in its acceptance of religion without questioning it or without the need to question it.

Essentially, Darwinism, the most concrete example, is an ideology that cannot be accepted by fundamentalists who see knowledge as a source of revelation. In 1925, a statute outlawing the teaching of Darwinism in state schools was passed in Tennessee (Marsden, 2022, p. 243) following the harsh outcry of fundamentalists who believed that Christianity should be lived as it was in the time of Jesus and that they could rebuild society according to the rules of religion and who lived in extremes beyond conservatism. That led to the polarization of “modernism vs. fundamentalism and evolution vs. supernaturalism” (Dobson, Hindson, & Falwell, 1986, p. 52).

According to the fundamentalists, the Bible is an accurate word for word and should be followed precisely in every aspect of life. Thus, fundamentalist groups, who stand against the concepts of evolution and modernism and attempt to impose religious values on society, target issues such as abortion, education, science, and LGBTQ+ rights. This ideology, which is a concrete manifestation of religious extremism, does not respect other religions and systems of thought and, therefore, divides society and threatens freedoms. Indeed, fundamentalists do not see themselves as fundamentalists but as true Christians. For them, their role as the New Testament inheritors is nothing less than the very essence of Christianity. An ideology originating from a religion is not enough to define them because they are the whole and not the part. Just like the fundamentalist movements of the past with the Crusades or the Witch Hunts, in today’s world, anything that is not biblical is a

sin and must be fought. Ironically, because of the notion that they identify themselves as true Christians, not fundamentalists, they are fundamentalists.

However, Feldman and Clark (1996) see fundamentalism as a purely political project. According to them, fundamentalism, as a movement of authoritarian religious groups, targets women (p. 12). This project tries to normalize many laws over time by causing social pressures. In this context, holding on to strict religious rules alone does not make this ideology fundamentalist, and it must be seen in conjunction with either the right wing of the government or its authoritarian policies. Therefore, it is not the groups that believe in religious fundamentalism and try to mobilize the populace that make religious fundamentalism what it is, but the conservative government policies and, thus, the church itself.

Feldman and Clark (1996) argue that the most effective weapon of fundamentalism, which embraces the patriarchal family order, is abortion policies targeting the female body (p. 15). Christian fundamentalist governments with right-wing nationalist policies consider women only in terms of their status as mothers and use them as a tool to ensure the perpetuation of their species. Their argument in action today is visible in contemporary America. Fundamentalism is behind the banning of abortion in some U.S. states. For fundamentalists, abortion is morally unacceptable because it is not biblical. The fact that they are influential in politics because they defend their ideas and impose them on society shows how influential this ideology is.

2.4. Roots of Gender Discrimination

Love of freedom is a universal trait, and no tyranny has thus far succeeded in eradicating it.

— Emma Goldman, *Was My Life Worth Living?*

The history of gender inequality extends back a long time. Having evolved about 2.5 million years ago (Harari, 2015, p. 6), humankind has its ancestors' biological determinants, social instincts, and environmental factors. Many personality traits are passed on to later generations through genes that take shape by the biological characteristics of anatomies, such as human reproductive systems, muscle, and bone structures; social instincts, such as a sense of trust and tolerance;

and environmental factors, such as socio-cultural milieu and social support. These frames of mind handed down millions of years ago have eventually called forth social meanings attributed to the female and male sex and have divided them into two groups: woman and man. Over time, having a female genotype has become insufficient to be a woman. So, a woman is also bound to adhere to the moral values adopted by society. Likewise, having only a spermatozoon is not enough to be a man. Instead, eligibilities like controlling the land or working better jobs (Ridgeway, 2011, p. 4) are essential to him.

In a sense, while masculine and feminine traits are rooted in biological differences that cannot be altered without external factors, the phrases of man and woman are based entirely on social phenomena brought about by culture (Ivie, S & Roebuck, F, 1992, p. 180). In this way, “women and men [become] conceptual categories, not enduring objects” (Wiesner-Hanks, 2010, p. 5). More particularly, the range of the concept of private property has made males and females part of the social class by which unnatural gender categories are evaluated.

As Morgan (2013) points out, the existence of a property necessitates a patriarchal order for a successor to acquire it through patrimony (p. 222). Fathers who have a legacy for their sons see themselves the right to control the woman’s sexual life to know whether the heirs are their own children (Wiesner-Hanks, 2010, p. 16). The control of sexuality has consequently revealed the importance of giving birth by being a mother, and fertility has become one of the essential features that make a woman a woman. This situation, in turn, has forced women to adapt to the patriarchal system, which has been continuing for centuries, gradually carrying them along with discrimination. Briefly stated, moving to a permanent settlement has dragged society into a male-dominated form of government while making women the most tragic victims of the system.

The ever-changing polity gives rise to monogamy, which lays the groundwork for the concept of chastity that women would later be judged by, which is mandatory only for females. Normalizing the androcentric structure turns the woman into a faithful one and the man into a living being without such obligation as loyalty (Engels, 2010, p. 128). Thus, the secondary importance of the woman from the past to the present lays the groundwork for questioning her sexual life and rights. All

these inequalities triggered the women's rights movement.

Looking at recent examples, *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (n.d.), implemented by the French constituent assembly in the last twenty-five years of the eighteenth century, is a declaration that pushes women in the background. Articles such as the requirement that men live under free and equal conditions (Article 1) that no man can be arrested or charged unless the rules set out in the law are violated (Article 7), that he cannot be tried for his opinions (Article 10), and that the importance of freedom of thought and expression (Article 12) metaphorically silence women. Including inalienable rights in seventeen articles, where only men's rights are considered, indicates that the natural rights of other citizens, namely women, are ignored.

Olympe de Gouges is the most critical name that clearly shows she opposes this declaration, which is one of the most noteworthy instances of the transition of the trial of women from person to society, from society to the state. De Gouges (2018) changes the declaration's title by adding *The Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* and prepares a manifesto containing her thoughts in seventeen articles. The emphasis on the existence of women's rights, such as the fact that women have equal rights with men (Article 1), the law is the same for every citizen (Article 6), the importance of freedom of thought and expression for women (Article 11), is a rebellion against patriarchy. This revolt, which has been going through a rather difficult period, has gained political meaning while guiding the understanding of gender, and resulted in execution, further strengthening the patriarchy that women have been unable to crush since their hunting-gathering time. This is a proof that as patriarchy gets stronger, so does women's resistance. Even defending women's rights has ceased to be an individual or social idea but has gained a political perspective.

Looking at more recent examples of patriarchal society, by the last quarter of the twentieth century, how the male-dominated social structure shaped women can be apparent with Margaret Thatcher, the former prime minister of the United Kingdom. Thatcher received voice coaching before becoming Prime Minister (Purvis, 2013, p. 1016); as the phrase is, she masculinized herself to consolidate her authority in her political career. According to research by Anderson, Klostad, and

Nowicki (2016), voice pitch is vital in communicating with people and can make a person more puissant or worthy. The fact that a low-pitched voice is more dominant than a high-pitched one also plays a significant role in electing a candidate, so much so that it affects the voting because it makes the nominee perceived as old, that is, experienced. This shows that Thatcher found power, so to speak, in masquerading as a man.

On the other hand, imprinted on the community's memories as a housewife, Thatcher immortalized the moments when she served her husband by posing for the cameras with her kitchen apron (Conway, 2016, p. 258). Although she thought that her pitch made her authoritarian, her anti-feminist attitude, in which being conservative and modest meant being a housewife, is identified with her worldview. Furthermore, she saw equality between men and women as poison and stated that she owed nothing to the emancipation of women (Cowman, 2018, p. 140), bringing the women's movements to a halt that was going through fire until the twentieth century.

Regarding the United States of America, Ronald Reagan, who presided over a "happy political marriage" (Richard, 2012, p. 68) with Thatcher during the same years of office as the fortieth president, brought many anti-feminist events in its back. His anti-abortion views ("Remarks to Participants in the March for Life Rally," 1986), based on conversations with Mother Teresa, at the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1986 State of the Union Address (Costain, 1991), his blind promise to do something for women's rights, but his failure to do anything for sexual harassment and poverty among women, and his announcement that he would cut the \$122 allowance women received at that time ('Opinion: Reagan vs. Women', 1981), shook women's faith in him.

In North America, at the end of the twentieth century, more than a hundred women writers started to publish their works with a feminist perspective. When the second-wave movement gained momentum, many writers showed a firm commitment to the Canadian Charter, in which articles included freedom of expression and equality. It contained many egalitarian policies within the 'Chart of Rights and Freedom', which was upheld relatively quickly compared to the Equal Rights Amendment in the United States. Safeguard the continuity of employment

of women on maternity leave, the right to divorce and handling of issues (such as abortion and marital rape) by President Brian Mulroney (Bashevkin, 1994, p. 280) in the late 80s supported the argument that Canada's conservative administration is more progressive compared to the conservative administrations of Thatcher and Reagan (Bashevkin, 1996, p 214).

As a consequence, the disparity between genders has been shaped by a myriad of historical, cultural, and social factors. This disparity arises from the patriarchal social structure and profoundly affects discrimination in political, economic, and social domains. While strides have been made towards gender equality, the patriarchal structure remains a formidable obstacle.





3. STATE'S LANGUAGE AS IDEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

Ludwig Wittgenstein (2021) plays language as a system of rules in which the meaning of words is determined according to their use in specific contexts. According to him, language is not a fixed set of definitions but a constantly evolving, fluid, and dynamic tool so that the meaning of words is not determined by their inherent properties but rather by how they are used in daily communication. He says, “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (p. 206), stressing that language is the mirror of life and what determines the limit of people’s thoughts. Thus, if language determines the limit of the ideas, then the limit of one’s thoughts is as much as one can tell, which means the more restricted language is used, the more restricted one can think over time. This perspective on language is particularly relevant when analyzing the language in *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 2017), where the state imposes religious terms and idioms on its citizens, changing the meaning of words and restricting their use. Since Gilead, where the new government that has come to power through a coup d’état, has no history, the language is unfamiliar to everyone, and therefore, people’s thoughts are restricted.

Just as a person sets the limits of his own thinking, in some cases, political factors set the limits of society’s thinking. When the system of power controls language, its structure is always on the verge of the act of restriction, censor, ban, and corruption (Namjoo, 2019, p. 87). Language, which has ceased to be individual and has become social to the extent desired by power, begins to serve particular purposes. The domination of language by a power of which it is an apparatus creates a kind of pressure on society to the extent that the policies of the administration allow and turn social language into the language of power. In this situation, there are some things that the current government takes into consideration before imposing restrictions on language.

To determine the boundaries of a language, it is first necessary to know the characteristics of the speech community. The things to be determined are “(1) the size and location of the community; (2) what is shared by members of the community; and (3) the type of interactions the community members might or must have” (Ahearn, 2016, p. 120). The size of the community can be a family or a country. This group forms a social network with different and diverse backgrounds

depending on the geography in which they live. There may also be restrictions on how they communicate that vary from region to region; for instance, in a secular country, there is freedom of speech, whereas in a theocratic state, there may be restrictions on language.

In the case of *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), the community here is the Republic of Gilead. Set in the United States in the near future, a society - previously- based on gender equality, the coup plotters take some measures before taking over the country. The fact that they start by laying off women (p. 172) reveals that economic freedom significantly impacts individuals' language and thought systems. When they take over the country, their ignorance of the names of individuals from the pre-Gilead era shows that the second factor that narrows the language 'vocabulary' and limits the thought is the gradual destruction of the individual's real identity. Eventually, the prohibition of women to read and write (p. 39) is the last factor limiting thought. In this case, the community in the area to be taken possession is first identified, women's employment status is determined, they are dismissed from work, credit cards are invalidated, and the territory is blockaded.

In the novel, the state uses language games to exert control over its citizens and shape their beliefs and behavior through the manipulation of language. To illustrate, "Handmaid" (Atwood, 2017, p. 19) describes the main character's role in society, emphasizing her submissiveness and lack of autonomy. Indeed, this word is a homophone with handmade, proving that Gilead creates these women through its policies. The term 'handmade', which also serves as part of the title of this thesis, reflects the androcentric structure's desire to shape women through strict control. Just as the mythological character Pygmalion falls in love with the statue he created and named it Galatea and begs Aphrodite to give his creation life (Ovid, 2004, pp. 394-396), the Republic of Gilead has a social structure that shapes and controls women as if they were handmade objects. This portrayal illustrates a world in which women are deprived of their personal autonomy and identity—a world that can only exist through a male-dominated perspective. Alternatively, rape is called "the Ceremony" (p. 81), which normalizes and legitimizes sexual violence. This illustrates the connection between language and power in a totalitarian regime

where it is used to control and manipulate the masses. The use of language strengthens the power of the state over its citizens and reinforces gender roles and power dynamics.

Language produced by Gilead with the curiosity of understanding and knowing themselves is also a part of the culture they have created. In the novel, the state uses language to create a sense of community and shared identity among its citizens while at the same time limiting their ability to express themselves freely.

An example of the restriction is the use of religious terminology, which acts as a unifying force among citizens and simultaneously limits their ability to think critically and question the authority of the state. For instance, the phrase “Praise be” (Atwood, 2017, p. 19), which is frequently used (or forced to be used) in the novel, is a biblical expression and appears there as “Praise be to the Lord” (Psalm 135:21, NIV) and “Praise be to God” (Psalm 66:20, NIV). However, Gilead has shortened this phrase and removed the references to God. That shows that religion is being used for exploitation by the state. This use of language stresses the power dynamics in *The Handmaid’s Tale* and the importance of language in shaping the characters’ understanding of the world around them.

In a theocratic society, the abbreviation of even the daily use of the word ‘God’ is the most crucial incentive for women to speak less. The less they speak, the less they think, and the less they act. The state’s dictate of religious words in the novel emphasizes the significance of maintaining a dynamic and evolving understanding of language that is not constrained by rigid definitions or limited by attempts at control and manipulation. The power dynamics of language are also evident in the novel’s depiction of the primary state-citizen relationship. In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, the state uses language to reinforce the prevailing fundamentalist ideology and maintain existing power structures. By exploring the complexity of words and its power relationship, the novel underlines the importance of critical thinking and the need to question the language used to shape the understanding of the world.

Wittgenstein’s (2004) philosophy of language reveals the significance of the relationship between meaning and use (p. 77); meaning is derived from how words are used in a particular context. In *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 2017), the state

uses language as a means of suppression, imposing religious terms and limiting the language available to the characters. This restriction is a clear example of how language can be used as a tool of control and domination, as Wittgenstein (2004, p. 67), notes. He believes that language is a dynamic and constantly evolving system shaped by its everyday use. Enforcing such strict rules on the words used can be seen as an attempt to control and manipulate the way the people think.

However, despite the state's efforts to isolate and divide women through language, the Handmaids connect with each other and create a sense of community. For instance, during the mandatory morning walking in the novel, Offred learns from Ofglen that there is an opposition organization called "Mayday" (Atwood, 2017, p. 43). Later, when her walking partner changes, she uses different words to determine whether the new Ofglen knows about this organization. Offred, who somehow needs to use the expression Mayday, which means "help me" (p. 44), says the following,

"I've only known her since May," I say. I can feel my skin growing hot, my heart speeding up. This is tricky. For one thing, it's a lie. And how do I get from there to the next vital word? "Around the first of May I think it was. What they used to call May Day." (Atwood, 2017, p. 286)

In contrast to the state's use of language for control and manipulation, the characters in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017) use language as a means of resistance and rebellion. According to Wittgenstein, language is not only "a means of communication but also a means of expressing our thoughts" (Tomorrow Bio, 2023), feelings, and experiences. The characters in the novel use words to assert their agency and challenge the oppressive system they live in. This use is similar to what Wittgenstein (2004) calls "the language game" (p. 62), where their use in a particular context determines the meaning behind words. The imposition of sectarian terms by the state in the novel is an example of how language can be used to support power dynamics and maintain social hierarchies.

As Wittgenstein (2004), who sees language as a tool on which games can be played, says, "If for our purposes we wish to regulate the use of a word by definite rules, then alongside its fluctuating use we set up a different use by codifying one of its characteristic aspects" (p. 77). The aforementioned quote serves language as a game art and presents what is wanted to be given with two different arguments.

Offred's statement that she has known Ofglen since May is the first way of saying May Day. Thus, Offred will take on a particular character according to the answer of her new walking mate. She then decides to use the word itself grammatically to avoid confusion and does so with the pre-Gilead usage of May Day, the first of May. If the new Ofglen does not know about this secret organization and is a true believer, then Offred will keep silent in order not to risk her life, but if Ofglen knows, then she will take a big step.

"The sentences that we utter have a particular purpose, they are to produce certain effects. They are parts of a mechanism, perhaps a psychological mechanism, and the words of the sentences are also parts of the mechanism" (Wittgenstein, 2004, p. 69). A psychological mechanism underlies this specific word created by a characteristic coding. Offred's fear of death and her hope of being saved by the secret organization create a dramatic effect. Using the pre-Gilead month of May to refer to the secret organization mentioned amongst the Handmaids shows that Offred still retains her identity and is brave when mentioning the past.

Wittgenstein's philosophy of language stresses the importance of context in shaping meaning. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), Gilead's enactment of divine talks robs the original context of language, alters its meaning, and limits its potential for interpretation. This practice can be seen as an attempt to control the narrative and shape how characters perceive the world surrounding them.

3.1. The Meaning of Identity Through Language

In the context of revealing the importance of expressions in literature, Uri Margolin (2002) mentions how the proper name plays an essential role in constructing the narrative world (p. 109). The proper name serves as a means of conveying meaning and creating a sense of continuity and coherence in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017). Many proper names used in the novel function as Margolin (2002) calls "indexical" (p. 125) expressions, pointing to specific individuals or entities. Therefore, in the novel, the names and places of the characters are not just labels but essential elements in the author's characterization.

Indexical expressions can convey the characteristics of people and places, their cultural background, and even foretell their fate. For Margolin (2002), a proper name (PN) "is like a social insurance number or an identifying tag that follows its

referent wherever s/he goes and whatever happens” (p. 109). It is like a particular file on the persona. Like a key that unlocks more profound layers of a character’s identity, a well-chosen name can reveal hidden truths and enrich the reader’s understanding of the story. In this way, PNs become powerful tools that shape not only the characters but also the overall thematic fabric of the literary work. This statement sums up the tattoo on the ankles of the Handmaids in the novel. Offred interprets it as follows,

I cannot avoid seeing, now, the small tattoo on my ankle. Four digits and an eye, a passport in reverse. It’s supposed to guarantee that I will never be able to fade, finally, into another landscape. I am too important, too scarce, for that. I am a national resource. (Atwood, 2017, p. 65)

The pure indexical shown here as PNs, namely ‘I’ and ‘now’, indicate Offred’s awareness. With ‘I’, which she repeats four times, she observes that there is a tattoo on her body that she still thinks is hers, and she observes that she is in the moment with ‘now’. The foregrounding, which occurs by ‘now’, allows Offred’s current situation to be compared with the past. At this point, it is not known whether ‘seeing’ is an action deixis in the sense of sight or a cognitional deixis in the sense of understanding. When this expression is a physical act, it creates sensory and tangible witnessing, whereas when it is a state of mental cognition, it often takes the character back in time. Mental seeing shows that Offred not only witnesses the tattoo being there but also recognizes and accepts the underlying reality.

The tattoo on her ankle, which she is unable to see, perhaps even forget its existence, unless she undresses in the bathroom or changes her clothes at night, is the symbol of that particular naked moment. At the same time, ‘I’ reveals Offred’s egocentric speech and shows that she is very important and rare a person to be marked by this tattoo. Offred’s ego, which is still present, declines towards the end of the speech, and she reduces herself from a superior figure to a national symbol. The pure demonstrative part of the indexical expression, ‘that’, used here is a way of saying tattoo. Using ‘that’ instead of a description such as a tattoo or a figure implies contempt and inability to accept it. The character is confident at the beginning of the conversation but, later on, feels down, and this is due to expanded awareness.

The symbols on the tattoo form social and individual identities. Even though every Handmaid has the same symbol, each has unique digits, just like the barcodes on receipts. These make it easier to identify which Handmaid attempts to escape. Therefore, the first thing determining individual identity in the novel is the tattoo, or as Feuer (1997) puts it, “lack of privacy and constant surveillance” (p. 84) by the secret police, Eyes.

Similarly, earlier in the novel, when Offred’s sense of self is still intact, and she still feels like an independent individual, she says, “The door of the room – not *my* room, I refuse to say *my* – is not locked” (Atwood, 2017, p. 8). The fact that the room does not belong to her is also due to the lack of a key to secure her privacy. The refusal to say *my*, which is the PN that provides an indexical expression, is also a refusal of social expectations. The key here is not so much about keeping herself safe inside as it is about wanting, but not having, a moment of mental relaxation that allows one to keep others out. However, this changes later on when Offred, who has strict control over her own language, realizes her powerlessness in the face of the Gilead hierarchy, and she mentions the room that is her escape from the outside world, “Was he in my room? I called it *mine*?” (p. 49). She says this when she thinks that the Commander has entered her room, which is when she thinks that her private life has been compromised. Personal pronouns, which have now become a habit, gain a new awareness here with PN, ‘mine’. The power of language and words sometimes connects Offred to her old self and sometimes isolates her from herself.

Offred initially uses the term “household” (Atwood, 2017, p. 81) for the Commander’s house, and “Then she joins herself to the false and splintered community of the Commander’s household” (Stillman & Johnson, 1994, p. 73). The transformation of the house into a “home” (p. 287) draws the sharpest image of her loss of self. This appears to be a kind of habituation or acceptance. When Offred asks the Commander for hand cream, she confirms her indexical expression: “Our skin gets very dry. For some reason I said *our* instead of *my*” (Atwood, 2017, p. 157). All the PNs are now intertwined, and even though Offred is aware of all this, what comes out of her mouth makes her part of that community. It is no longer ‘me’, ‘you’, and her. It is ‘us.’ That is exactly what Gilead wants: a sense of belonging to a community and serving a single purpose. In this situation, Offred

accepts all the pressure Gilead puts on her and says, “Everything they taught at the Red Center, everything I’ve resisted, comes flooding in. I feel...their true power” (p. 288) and isolates herself. The most crucial change in her character is the change in her language. As the individual isolates themselves from society, their own thoughts shrink with the decreasing language.

On the other hand, the other thing that determines the individual identity is the names given to the characters. Margolin (2022) argues that naming characters and objects in a novel is not merely a superficial or arbitrary decision but a crucial aspect of narrative structure (p. 120). The characters’ names can reveal much about their personality, background, and even their societal place. Dunn and Morris (1983) write, “In the beginning is the namer, and the namer is the narrator, and the naming is his strategy” (p. 29), referring to the biblical verse, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1, NIV). With this reference, they ensure that the author names the characters he creates, just as God does, so that their actions coincide with the plot. As a result, naming in the novel is not a random process and is done with care.

Offred, the narrator, expresses the danger of carrying something more than the name itself when she says, “...a Handmaid in more than name. I can’t take the risk” (Atwood, 2017, p. 19). Thus far, their names are “...like...telephone number[s], useful only to others” (p. 84). Offred is referred to by a surname based solely on the Commander’s name to whom she is assigned, her real name being taken from her. In a concrete context, her name combines the prefix ‘of’ and the name ‘Fred’, indicating that the character is the property of a man named Fred. If the Handmaid is assigned to another Commander, the name of that Commander is placed after the prefix ‘of’, and that name calls the Handmaid. Offred’s name is not even in the title of the book. She is just a Handmaid. Neither her pre-Gileadean name has any value in dystopia, nor does her name in Gilead in real life. This name reveals the character’s status and ineffectiveness in the novel’s world.

From an abstract point of view, the character’s name, as an ‘Off-red’, evokes the phrase ‘turn the red off’ and could refer to a character who will end all things red, such as the red clothes she wears or the Red Center. In addition, Offred, who discovers the inscription “*nolite te bastardes carborundorum*” (Atwood, 2017, p. 52)

and breaks the law by playing Scrabble with the Commander, creates an ‘off-read situation’, thus it is understood from her name that she will break the reading rule. On the other hand, it is possible to say that the name of the Handmaid, Offred, evokes the words ‘afraid’ and “offered” (Atwood, 2017, x1) because women live afraid of the new regime and are offered to other men. To be offered is also to be sacrificed, denoting a religious offering; hence, “Offred is a victim forced to sacrifice her name, husband, daughter, life, body, and freedom for Gilead’s religious society and its desire for children” (Tennant, 2019, p. 2). This elimination of identity is a deliberate choice by the repressive Gilead regime, which aims to diminish women’s reproductive functions and erase any sense of individuality or agency. Therefore, Offred symbolizes the character’s subjugation and loss of selfhood.

Aunt Lydia, a character frequently mentioned in the novel and whose name appears in the Bible, points to the religious nature of the society in which the novel is set. In the New Testament, Lydia is the name of a woman whom Paul encounters during his missionary activities. Her story is presented in the Gospel as an example of conversion to the Christian faith (Acts 16:14-15, NIV), being “the first person converted to Christianity in Europe” (Tennant, 2019, p. 7). In this case, Aunt Lydia may be among the first people to convert in the novel. She is as devout as Lydia in the Bible, who attends Paul’s talks and welcomes him into her home to listen to Jesus’ teachings. By choosing this name, Atwood creates a sense of identity for her characters firmly rooted in their world. The name, therefore, highlights the idea that the primary purpose of the Aunts in Gilead is to follow the Gileadean rules and fundamentalism.

The names and places in the novel are carefully chosen to reflect the themes and ideas. Biblical references augment the patriarchal and oppressive nature of Gilead while also emphasizing the resilience and resistance of the characters who struggle against it. The names Offred and Lydia have important biblical meanings, and their use in the novel adds layers of meaning and depth to the story.

Naming is used as a means of world-building as well as character development. The Rachel and Leah Center is named after two biblical figures, the Wives of the patriarch Jacob. The name suggests a religious connection and underlines the idea that women in the novel’s society are valued primarily for their

childbearing abilities. The Rachel and Leah Center references the biblical story about Jacob and his two wives who competes for his love and bare him children. The Center is a place where the Handmaids are trained and brainwashed, just as Rachel and Leah were used as pawns by their husbands in their quest for power.

Similarly, the ruling class in the novel, The Sons of Jacob, is named after the biblical figure, the father of Israel's twelve tribes. According to the Bible, God oaths Jacob, "Your descendants...will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through your offspring" (Genesis 28:14, NIV). This name deepens the idea that the novel's society is a theocracy and that the ruling class sees itself as chosen by God. In this situation, the new Gilead authority intends to invade, blockade, spread out, and grow everywhere, just as God promises, reinforcing the idea of a patriarchal society.

The name Jezebel, given to a secret brothel where the ruling class indulges in forbidden pleasures, refers to the biblical figure, the queen of Israel, famous for her defiance and promiscuity. According to the Bible, "Jezebel was killing off the Lord's prophets" (1 Kings 18:4, NIV) and killed after "she put on eye makeup" (2 Kings 9:30, NIV). From this, it is concluded that Jezebel is a rebellious and idolatrous woman. Therefore, this name is associated with a cursed woman in the novel, making the place sinful. The place full of women like Moira, who has to work there as a last resort because she does not submit to the regime, suggests that the ruling class in the novel is hypocritical and that their religious beliefs are only a front for their desires. In the novel, Jezebel symbolizes forbidden pleasures, emphasizing the hypocrisy and corruption of the regime.

The word 'Gilead' initially emerges in the Bible under the same name as the place where the tribes of Israel live. Jacob, whose family was living under the rule of his brother-in-law Laban for many years, secretly heads for "the hill country of Gilead" (Genesis 31:21, NIV). Learning of this, his brother-in-law, Laban, tells Jacob, "The women are my daughters, the children are my children" (Genesis 31:43, NIV). As Tennant (2019) emphasizes, Gilead in this case is "the land of stolen daughters" (pp. 17-18). Just as Laban claims the children, so the Gilead government claims all the fertile Handmaids. By using biblical names in this way, Atwood can subtly and complexly explore themes of power, religion, and hypocrisy. Gilead

implies that the novel's society is founded on religious belief in the power of miracles and that the ruling class sees itself as an instrument of God's will. From this point of view, naming is not limited to the author's choice of words but also includes the reader's interpretation and understanding of these names. Therefore, the importance of naming goes beyond the surface level and significantly impacts the reader's experience of the story.

In conclusion, the development and significance of identity in naming places in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017) is essential to the novel's world-building and characterization. Using names, Margaret Atwood creates a sense of identity for her characters that is firmly rooted in their world. The names Rachel and Leah Center, Sons of Jacob, Jezebel, and Gilead all have significant symbolic value and contribute to the overall themes and messages of the novel. The names of people and places in the novel are chosen for their symbolic value and historical and cultural significance.

3.2. Thus Said Aunt Lydia

In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), Aunt Lydia physically represents the state regime. The functioning of the regimes such as what and how it should be done with its punishments is reported chiefly through her mouth. Through her, it becomes clear that a totalitarian, biopolitical, and fundamentalist regime governs Gilead. Aunt Lydia, who expresses all the ideologies directly through language and language games, is an unforgettable figure for the Handmaids.

Offred often goes back to the past in her mind in response to specific events and remembers what Aunt Lydia said at the Red Center. The fact that she recalls so much of what she said shows how much the active nature of language influences her. Thomas (2004), speaking about the effects of language, states, "It might be possible to use language to manufacture an ideology which could steer the way people think" (p. 39). What one believes and learns is possible through language, the most crucial instrument of power. Since freedom of speech leads to freedom of thought, which in turn brings freedom of action, Gilead first restricts speech. That makes it a totalitarian state. Totalitarian regimes have long recognized the power of language to control and manipulate individuals.

Arendt (1973) sees totalitarian domination as an ideology that aims “at abolishing freedom, even at eliminating human spontaneity in general, and by no means at a restriction of freedom no matter how tyrannical” (p. 405). The totalitarian movement, whose main aim is to organize people (Arendt, 1973, p. 308) and does not hesitate to punish those who do not want to be part of the movement, does not like individual diversity. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), the place that makes the Handmaids uniform is the Red Center, where the Aunts train them. In the totalitarian Republic of Gilead, the brainwashing of the Handmaids is the first element, and this is incumbent on the Aunts. Aunt Lydia is a prime example of the state's totalitarian ideology, using language to control and manipulate the women under her care. Through her carefully crafted sentences, she instills fear, obedience, and a sense of duty in the Handmaids, effectively stripping them of their agency and autonomy.

Offred's recollection of Aunt Lydia's words spoken at the Red Center in response to certain events gives clues about the totalitarian nature of the regime. Firstly, “Think of it as being in the army, said Aunt Lydia” (Atwood, 2017, p. 7), reveals the close connection between totalitarianism and the army. Everything is uniform in the Red Center: the chairs, the curtains, the beds, what the women wear. Furthermore, the women are being trained to serve. Aunt Lydia's comparison of the place of education to an army proves how seriously Gilead takes its work and how it ensures standardization, one of the most essential elements of totalitarianism. At this point, the ideology of sovereignty is in cooperation with language to erase old selves and change behaviors and clothing styles.

Moreover, Aunt Lydia says, “Yours is a position of honour” (Atwood, 2017, p. 13), as if reminding the Handmaids of their duty in the army, reinforcing the understanding of obedience to the regime and even jihad. The men, to whom the women are subservient, are in a sacred position to save the country and establish the new religious order. In the novel, which in a way describes fighting for the sake of God, the subject of jihad is implicitly conveyed through Aunt Lydia, who says, “There is a war on” (p. 89). However, the Handmaids do not know if this war is real. Television, used as propaganda, makes it seem like Gilead is constantly at war. Offred says, “They show us only victories, never defeats,” about the conflict she

sees on the news and “possibly he’s an actor” (p. 83) about a prisoner shown on the screen. Here, propaganda, as one of the greatest weapons of totalitarian regimes, is shown through the media to manipulate people.

Using language as a manipulation tool is a hallmark of totalitarianism because it allows those in power to shape the narrative and control the thoughts and actions of the masses. Aunt Lydia’s words emphasize the connection between language and the ideology. She uses language to control and subjugate the Handmaids. Wittgenstein’s (2021) ideas about language are relevant here, as he argues that it is not only a means of communication but also a means of “internal relations to the world” (p. 258). Aunt Lydia’s use of language is a clear example of this, as she carefully chooses her words to create a specific narrative that justifies the regime’s actions and reinforces its power.

The novel also explores the themes of biopolitics and thanatopolitics, which play an essential role in the regime’s control over its citizens. Biopolitics is the use of political power to regulate and control human life’s physical and biological aspects (Foucault, 2003, p. 256). At the same time, thanatopolitics is the use of power to regulate and control death (Agamben, 1998, p. 122). In the novel, the Gilead regime uses biopolitical tactics to control women’s reproductive rights and thanatopolitical tactics to maintain power through fear and violence. According to Wittgenstein (2021), meaning is not present within the words but is constructed through social practices and conventions. That means that the meaning of Aunt Lydia’s sentences is not fixed or objective but somewhat shaped by the context in which they are used and the power dynamics at play. This exploitation of language is a form of biopolitics as it allows those in power to shape the lives and bodies of the Handmaids, and a form of thanatopolitics as it develops the idea of death as a punishment for disobedience.

Moreover, Aunt Lydia’s words strengthen the regime’s message that the only purpose of Handmaids is to bear children and that any resistance may result in their death, “Remember, said Aunt Lydia. For our purposes your feet and your hands are not essential” (Atwood, 2017, p. 92). These words emphasize that the state sees bodies only as tools to be used for its own purposes, without regard for the autonomy or agency of the individual. Women are seen in society only as breeding tools, while

other abilities or freedoms of their bodies are trivialized. Women's value is limited to their reproductive abilities. Aunt Lydia's statement also shows that the state is ready to use any means necessary to achieve its goals, including sacrificing individual lives.

Aunt Lydia's words can be seen as an example of biopolitics as she instructs the Handmaids to suppress their individuality and become part of the more extensive system of Gilead. "She said, think of yourselves as seeds" (Atwood, 2017, p. 18), in which she emphasizes the necessity of conformity and obedience as seeds are uniform and predictable. This consolidates the idea that breeding is not an individual but a collective resource that needs to be managed and controlled for the benefit of the state. Also implicit in this statement is the use of women as seeds, that is, only to reproduce and create other seeds, children.

"All of us here will lick you into shape, says Aunt Lydia" (Atwood, 2017, p. 114), suggesting that the Handmaids' existing selves are flawed and need to be fixed in order to be helpful. Examples of this include Aunts having cattle prods that they use when the Handmaids misbehave (p. 14) or women hitting them when they do not stand up straight and put their hands in front of them as "ladies" (p. 204). This statement is an example of biopolitics, as Aunt Lydia uses her power to direct and control the biological life of the Handmaids. It shows that individuality and autonomy are not valued in Gilead and that conformity and obedience are necessary for survival.

Aunt Lydia says, "All flesh is weak... [God] didn't make you that way. He made you different. It is up to you to set boundaries" (Atwood, 2017, p. 45). Her statement that God created individuals differently contributes to Gilead's use of theocracy and Christian fundamentalism. By imposing strict gender roles and restricting the roles women can play in society, Gilead maintains its power and control over its citizens. This statement also affirms the belief that women are solely responsible for reproduction and that their value depends on their ability to bear children. Her statement that it is the responsibility of individuals to set boundaries under the Gilead ideology stresses that everyone is responsible for their actions and that any deviation from the ideology is a personal failure. By placing the responsibility for supporting the ideals on individuals, Gilead avoids taking

responsibility for its oppressive policies and practices. This explanation also shows that any opposition or resistance to Gilead's teaching is a personal failure rather than a legitimate criticism of the regime. In this case, Aunt Lydia, by invoking Christian fundamentalism and the idea of divine punishment, instills fear and guilt in the Handmaids, making them more obedient.

Aunt Lydia says, "You get too attached to this material world and you forget about spiritual values. You must cultivate poverty of spirit. Blessed are the meek" (Atwood, 2017, p. 64). The emphasis on spiritual values creates a society where people are more concerned with their spiritual well-being than their physical comfort. By encouraging people to prioritize spiritual values, Gilead's authority has an iron grip on its population, as they are less likely to question the regime's authority. By enabling spiritual poverty, Gilead can create a society where people are more willing to accept their suffering and the anguish of others, as it is seen as a way to achieve spiritual purity. The blessing of patience and meekness is significant in the context of a patriarchal society because they are used to reinforce gender roles and maintain male dominance. By promoting these virtues, the state can shape a society where women are more willing to accept their subordinate position and less likely to challenge the patriarchal power structure. At this juncture, Aunt Lydia's use of language is used to create a sense of moral superiority and to portray the regime's actions as a divine command.

In "What we're aiming for, says Aunt Lydia, is a spirit of camaraderie among women" (Atwood, 2017, p. 224), Aunt Lydia uses language to create a sense of fellowship between the Handmaids, pitting them against each other and encouraging them to control each other's behavior. It creates a sense of internalized oppression among the Handmaids, further reinforcing their status as subjugated individuals. By fostering a false sense of companionship between the women, Aunt Lydia encourages them to turn against each other and compete for the limited resources and opportunities. It further augments the patriarchal power structure of Gilead society, and in result, the cycle of oppression and abuse is being perpetuated. The word 'camaraderie' in the sentence secretly describes the state's attempt to suppress those who do not conform. Atwood's skillful choice of the root of this word, comrade, "meaning a member of the same political group" ("Comrade," n.d.),

emphasizes that the state also creates a union for political reasons in Gilead. This manipulation of language serves to divide women, preventing them from organizing and resisting the repressive policies of the regime.

The characters in the novel, who are part of the transitional generation, are deeply affected by the social changes around them. Offred is constantly reminded of her position as a woman in Gilead and what is expected of her. Her friend Moira rebels against the system and tries to escape. She represents the hope that change is possible even in the most oppressive circumstances. Not only do the transitional generation bear the burden of society's expectations, but they also have the potential to create change. Aunt Lydia reminds them of their situation when they are caught between the past days of anarchy and the future Gilead,

You are a transitional generation, said Aunt Lydia. It is the hardest for you. We know the sacrifices you are being expected to make. It is hard when men revile you. For the ones who come after you, it will be easier. They will accept their duties with willing hearts. (Atwood, 2017, p. 117)

The significance of the term 'transitional generation' extends beyond the individual experiences of the characters in the novel. It reflects the broader societal consequences of living in a time of change. The transition generation is caught between the pre-Gilead world and the new one, and they are expected to make sacrifices for the greater good. However, their sacrifices may not be enough to bring about the needed change. The term also emphasizes the importance of generational change and each generation's role in shaping the future. The transition generation may face challenges, but they are also the ones with the potential to create a better future for those who come after them.

Perhaps the most effective expression Offred remembers is, "The pen is Envy, Aunt Lydia would say" (Atwood, 2017, p. 186). This expression reflects the patriarchal society's fear of women's literacy and knowledge. It implies that writing and literacy are dangerous for women because they can lead to jealousy and rebellion. By denying women access to knowledge, Gilead prevents them from questioning their situation or seeking a way out of it. The capital 'E' in Envy represents one of the cardinal sins in Christianity, making it even more prescriptive and sinful.

Furthermore, Aunt Lydia's remark that "What you don't know won't tempt you" (Atwood, 2017, p. 195) further emphasizes that knowledge is dangerous and can lead to disobedience. Her statements reflect the oppressive nature of Gilead and the importance of knowledge and education in resisting patriarchal and authoritarian regimes. She suggests that women should not be curious or seek knowledge because it can lead to temptation and sin. These phrases are used to reinforce the idea that women are inferior and should always be controlled and monitored.

The Handmaid's Tale (Atwood, 2017) highlights the power of language as a tool of control and manipulation in Gilead propaganda. The regime's language is carefully crafted to shape the beliefs and behaviors of its citizens; words like freedom and security are redefined to fit the regime's repressive agenda. This manipulation of language is essential to Gilead's control over its citizens because it allows them to maintain power and suppress dissent. Women are stripped of their ability to read and write, and their language is limited to approved patterns and expressions. This restriction of language further disempowers women, making it difficult for them to communicate their thoughts and feelings or organize resistance to the regime. Aunt Lydia, one of the regime's enforcers, plays a vital role in this language control and uses her position to brainwash and manipulate the Handmaids into accepting their submissive roles.

3.3. Don't Let the Scrabble Grind You Down

Reading, writing, having, creating. These are all actions forbidden to women in the Republic of Gilead. In a totalitarian society where even the name of the supermarket is drawn instead of written (Atwood, 2017, p. 25) so that the Handmaids cannot read it, even seeing a letter is considered a big step. Therefore, when Offred sees for the first time the note "nolite te bastardes carborundorum" (p. 52) written on the darkest edge of the wardrobe, she shudders with surprise. The Handmaid, who was in the room before Offred and ended her life by hanging herself, had written it under the darkest shadow because she did not want anyone to see the note. It is written only for those who carefully investigate it, pay attention to the shadow, and find the light in the darkness. Since writing is forbidden and sinful, the darkness hides hope along with the words, even if it is not black enough.

The Latin sentence emphasizes Offred's plight and her rebellion. For characters who are oppressed and persecuted under a totalitarian regime, it is way too risky to rebel and express themselves. Therefore, the message of rebellion or a secret note is written in invisible or unnoticed places. The darkest shadow is inconspicuous, creating a safer space for messages of rebellion to go undiscovered. This sentence in Offred's closet helps keep the fire of revolt and resistance alive. It also shows how individuals living under the strict regime can resist in small but effective ways.

On the other hand, the closet is a place of confinement, and the darkest corner represents Offred's life's most repressed and hidden aspects. The fact that the writing is carved into the floor further emphasizes the necessity of secrecy in a society where resistance is punishable by death. It represents a ray of hope and reminds us that opposition is possible even in the darkest circumstances. The most important part of this phrase is that it becomes a symbol of defiance and strength for Offred, even if she does not know what it means at first, and it gives her some comfort to know that she is not alone in her struggle. The power of this simple phrase lies in its ability to inspire and empower individuals to resist oppression and fight for their rights and freedoms, even in the face of overwhelming odds. This is the first time Offred challenges the off-read and is not afraid.

The irony in this part of the book is the use of Latin. More precisely, it is the mocking and deliberate misuse of Latin. This use includes an expression called dog Latin (or Mock Latin or Pig Latin), which combines terms or phrases from English into Latin for humorous purposes, regardless of the rules of noun declension or conjugation ("Dog Latin," n.d.). In this type of language blended with humorous English, Halle (1962) refers to Pig Latin as "a secret language" (p. 62). This language game, which children mostly prefer because it is secret, is used to talk among themselves about things they do not want adults to understand. Moreover, Pig Latin "must preserve comprehensibility for the rest of the speech community" (p. 66). The fact that Latin appears in the novel as a language created so that no one can understand it, but with a single word (*bastardes*) giving a small detail about what is meant, makes this language both secret and accessible for the rest.

For a Handmaid in Gilead, Dog Latin violates the rules in every respect, both to write a sentence, create a new language, and read and own what is created. Attributing that language to oneself and spreading it through other women is the book's most prominent element of rebellion. This language style can also be seen in the fact that Atwood adapts the phrase 'cogito ergo sum' (I think, therefore I am) into smooth English and writes it as "I tell therefore you are" (Atwood, 2017, p. 269), as Dog Latin in reverse logic. This makes the Latin not only appear in the secret note Offred found, but also throughout the book.

Latin, which is used as a sign of devotion, is the language of philosophy. Atwood has embellished this with language games, and as befits Gilead worthily, she does not use language directly because Gilead does not even deserve a proper sentence. The dead language used in the narrative has entered a paradoxical cycle within itself, and the woman who wrote the dead language killed herself and gave life to another woman. The use of this language in the novel is essential in terms of emphasizing the historical and repressive structure of the society Offred lives in.

Latin is a language associated with science, privilege, and education, and its use in the novel reinforces that the society values knowledge and education, but only for a chosen few. Offred sees the forbidden letters for the first time and gains power every time she not only sees them but also touches them and repeats the Latin phrase. Her realization of the liberating power of language makes this sentence a prayer for her: "I pray silently: *Nolite te bastardes carborundorum*. I don't know what it means, but it sounds right, and it will have to do, because I don't know what else I can say to God" (Atwood, 2017, p. 91). She first utters this sentence on the night of the Ceremony in a mood of resistance with a feeling of hope mixed with fear. Since previous Handmade was also forbidden to use a pencil, she scratched this sentence with her fingernails to give hope to other women. She then sacrificed herself for the sake of all the other Handmaids, knowing that she will create a spirit of solidarity. So much so that when Offred says of her in the last chapter, "Behind me I feel her presence, my ancestress" (Atwood, 2017, p. 295), this spirit of solidarity is ignited, and the Handmaids join forces for a common cause.

The second time Offred touches letters is when she secretly plays Scrabble in the Commander's room at night. The feeling of defeat, mixed with fear, takes on

another dimension within her. Here, Offred gains a sense of confidence as she derives words. As she plays with forbidden letters and creates words, she not only defies the rules but also gains a sense of empowerment. Through the act of playing, she experiences a transformation, moving from a state of helplessness to a state of power and agency. Scrabble serves as a metaphor for the power of language and literacy in an oppressive society. Offred's ability to create words and express herself through language represents a form of resistance to the oppressive regime she lives in. Each word she creates becomes a symbol of her defiance and a source of her inner strength. The act of reading, writing, and word creation becomes a means by which Offred reclaims her sense of autonomy and identity in a world that seeks to deprive her of both. The act of playing Scrabble becomes a transformative experience for Offred, allowing her to transcend her circumstances and assert her individuality in a dehumanizing environment. The game becomes an image of resistance, resilience, and the enduring power of language to transcend borders and reclaim her humanity.

The psychological experience behind the touch of words creates an unexpected scene for Offred as she returns to her room at night and relays an intense and surreal experience. This experience is discussed in two parts. Before and after seeing the Latin script,

I stand up, in the dark...Then I hear something, inside my body. I've broken, something has cracked...Noise is coming up, coming out, of the broken place, in my face. Without warning: I wasn't thinking about here or there or anything: If I let the noise get out into the air it will be laughter, too loud, too much of it, someone is bound to hear... I cram both hands over my mouth as if I'm about to be sick, drop to my knees, the laughter boiling like lava in my throat. I crawl into the cupboard, draw up my knees, I'll choke on it. My ribs hurt with holding back, I shake, I heave, seismic, volcanic, I'll burst.... Red all over the cupboard, oh to die of laughter. I stifle it in the folds of the hanging cloak, clench my eyes, from which tears are squeezing. Try to compose myself. After a while it passes, like an epileptic fit. (Atwood, 2017, p. 146)

The images of Offred's physical and emotional turmoil when she returns to her room at night after a game of Scrabble, which makes her feel strong, paint a vivid picture of her inner struggle. Since this game, Offred has started to use her senses better. As she touches the letters, she remembers her sense of feeling; the more she touches, the more she feels. The more she feels, the deeper she learns to look and the better she sees in the dark. In this way, Offred, who now sees her

feelings better in the dark, feels and hears that something is broken inside her, and although it hurts, it shows that she has achieved something. This seemingly preposterous and inappropriate burst of laughter hints at a deeper psychological turmoil lurking beneath the surface. The juxtaposition of laughter and her intense physical reactions underlines the depth of Offred's inner disquiet.

According to Henri Bergson (2014), the person who truly sees and comprehends with reason finds something ridiculous. Laughter is a path away from emotions; in fact, it "has no greater foe than emotion" (p. 4). He believes that to laugh, one must numb the heart, even briefly, because laughter appeals to the pure intellect. It is no coincidence that Offred's first moment of laughter comes after she touches letters after she uses her mind in an oppressive society. Before she laughs, she spends time with the Commander, with whom she regularly plays Scrabble at night, thus escaping isolation and invisibility. The relationship between the Commander and the Handmaid forms the smallest community in Gilead. Without interaction, then, nothing can be laughable because laughter "must have a social signification" (Bergson, 2014, p. 7). The noise threatens her to run away, to expose her inner turmoil to the outside world. Offred is acutely aware of the need to suppress her emotions to maintain the appearance of obedience and control in a society that thrives on repression and silence. As she struggles to suppress her laughter, she gives in to an irresistible urge to express forbidden emotions. Laughter threatens to brood over her, to expose her defiance and resistance to the oppressive regime that seeks to silence her.

As Arendt (1970) declines "The greatest enemy of authority...is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter" (p. 45). Offred's laughter is a form of rebellion through disdain, a challenge to the rules and expectations that govern her existence. In a moment of vulnerability and truth, she allows herself to be depleted by her emotions, to embrace the cathartic release of laughter in a world that seeks to crush her spirit and suppress her humanity. Her laughter is also a form of resistance; she refuses to be silenced and repressed by a society that seeks to efface her identity and autonomy. In a society that seeks to dehumanize and oppress women, Offred's laughter is a defiant assertion of her own humanity, a refusal to be reduced to a mere reproductive tool. In a moment of deep vulnerability and

authenticity, she embraces the power of her own voice by using laughter as a shield against the pressure authority that seek to control her.

When Offred retreats into the darkness of the closet, she confronts her own vulnerability, tenuity, and thirst for knowledge,

Here I am in the closet. *Nolite te bastardes carborundorum*...I trace the tiny scratched writing with the ends of my fingers, as if it's a code in Braille. It sounds in my head now less like a prayer, more like a command; but to do what? There's no way out of here. I lie on the floor, breathing too fast, then slower, evening out my breathing, as in the exercises, for giving birth. All I can hear now is the sound of my own heart, opening and closing, opening and closing, opening. (Atwood, 2017, p. 146)

The darkness surrounding Offred, consumed by fear and uncertainty, reflects the bleakness of her existence, the sense of helplessness and hopelessness that pervades her life. She refuses to be repressed by a biopolitical society that seeks to eradicate her autonomy by touching the writing on her closet because she is forbidden to read it, not touch it. She wants to feel the writing that strengthens her even if she cannot see it. When her laughter ends, she eventually returns to her old emotional state and hears the voice of her heart. So, when she becomes sentimental, her mind, so-called laughter, is replaced by her heart opening up.

The fact that the Latin phrase is no longer seen as a prayer, but as a command used against her, leads Offred to feel even more frightened and unable to be saved from this totalitarian world. The inner turmoil and helplessness that is the psychological cost of living in a dystopian society lies deep in the pain that stabs her in the chest every time she breathes. Every time she exhales, she is reminded that she is being used as a breeding machine. The end of the sentence identifies with the phrase 'open one's heart' which means to open up, to share one's secrets ("Open One's Heart," n.d.). She remembers once again that she records her story to tell everything that happens to her, to open her heart to for those who will listen to her story.

Consequently, the use of language, the careful choice of words, and the inclusion of Latin in the novel reveal how the elements of power manipulate women and show the need for the part of the whole.

4. LEGITIMIZATION OF VIOLENCE AND THE RIGHT TO DISOBEY

The right to self-regulation is a fundamental human right, referring to the individual's ability to freely determine his or her life, thoughts, and behaviors. However, in some cases, the state may interfere with and restrict these. It has the effect of limiting individuals' freedoms and forcing them to conform to social norms. People who do not comply with the government's rules and specific norms of society may be ostracized and oppressed. In this situation, citizens show resistance by organizing various activities against the restrictions and sanctions imposed on them. Under certain circumstances, they can realize their rights without resorting to violence or demonstration, which is called passive resistance.

In explaining the relationship between power and violence, Arendt (1970) considers power a phenomenon based on numbers and violence on means (p. 42). The role played by the ruling class in society defines its de facto power, and even if this power is exercised by a tyrant consisting of a single person when violence is involved, he or she needs a work force. Because government itself is based on opinion, and because public opinion has a practical effect on the power of government, power "acquires firmness and confidence in proportion to the number with which it is associated" (Hamilton et al., 2009, p. 257). At this juncture, the main reason that distinguishes power, which belongs not to the individual but to the group, from violence is that "power always stands in need of numbers" (Arendt, 1970, p. 42) and derives its power from plurality. Therefore, the state alone maintains its power as all against one within the whole group, which binds the organs of power, such as the police force and the media, to itself.

For Arendt, "violence is by nature instrumental" (Arendt, 1970, p. 51). The violence it uses to legitimize its purposive existence has the power to end the power of the state. It makes violence more potent than the state and destroys it, which confirms the assertion that "power and violence are opposites" (p. 56) because where one is, the other cannot exist. The violence that power unleashes when it feels threatened makes it part of the totalitarian regime. This regime, which sees violence as indispensable, commits crimes not only against its enemies but also against its supporters. To illustrate, in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), Gilead does not even give weapons to the Aunts, one of its biggest supporters, because they are

untrustworthy (p. 4). In addition, even the Commanders, who had great support in establishing Gilead, sneak into Jezebel, even though they can pay with their lives if this is found out. Therefore, the regime, which does not hesitate to use violence against the people and legitimizes it, is feared by its friends as well as its enemies. Violence is then “One against All” as the opposite of power (Arendt, 1970, p. 42).

As for the legitimacy of violence, Arendt (1970) finds it legitimate under certain conditions. Violence and rage are natural human emotions, so treating them means dehumanizing the individual. Violence can be considered rational because it serves a particular purpose. For instance, the Republic of Gilead’s intervention in women’s bodies in order to increase the birth rate by using biopolitical aims is rational in Arendt’s view because the violence used here is used for a noble purpose and, most importantly, it works. Naturally, since the Gilead regime is a regime that achieves its goal, violence can be legitimate to some extent.

Arendt’s (1998) statement, “The end justifies the violence done to nature to win the material, just as the wood justifies killing the tree and the table justifies destroying the wood” (p. 153), can be adapted to the Republic of Gilead, where the state that feeds on pluralism uses the method of birth in order to breed even more. The wood here is the Handmaids, and the tree is their natural and unique identity. Just as wood is obtained by cutting down trees, the Handmaids are separated from their original identities, and their potential to improve themselves is taken away. The table, which is obtained by shaping the wood, is all other women; Aunts, Marthas, Widows, Wives, and Unwomen. Although each woman in Gilead society has a different potential, just like the table, she is shaped by the state, which tries to bring her into line by frightening her with violence and death. The tree, the wood, and the table are all part of nature. Just as the Handmaids, the other women, and all their hidden potentials stand under the roof of the totalitarian regime. The wood serves the tree, and the table makes concessions by serving the wood. In this case, all women serve nature, which is the state, and pay for it with violence. This violence is justified on some religious grounds. No person or group can then be held responsible for the violence that is justified. Arendt (1970) expresses this in the following words: “Where all are guilty, no one is” (p. 65).

South Korean cultural theorist Byung-Chul Han (2018), who provides a topological illustration of violence, makes very original statements about it, differing from Arendt on some points. In *The Topology of Violence*, Han (2018) characterizes violence as an immortal entity that will continue to be practiced in the future (p. vii). In the modern era, violence has increased exponentially and continues in more closed, private spaces. He gives the example of concentration camps to which the public has no access. Considering the thanatopolitics in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), there are Colonies like concentration camps. The ones who are old and non-fertile, do not conform to social norms, and do not accept the dictates of power do every conceivable job in the Colonies and eventually die (p. 250). The fact that the thanatopolitical government maintains the same killing power in modern society, hidden but known, makes it part of the topological transformation. From this point forth, Han (2018) no longer sees violence as part of political and social communication because “the perpetrators make themselves invisible” (p. 6).

Violence is united with the act of sacrifice. Han's (2018) emphasis on violence as “the first religious experience” (p. 10) recalls the biblical story of Cain and Abel. God's acceptance of the offspring of the shepherd Abel's flock as a sacrifice instead of Cain's harvest (Genesis 4:4, NIV) and Cain's subsequent murder of Abel (Genesis 4:8, NIV) both show that the victims are living beings. Girard (1979) emphasizes this relationship between violence and sacrifice by stating that “Cain's ‘jealousy’ of his brother is only another term for his one characteristic trait: his lack of a sacrificial outlet” (p. 4), emphasizing that violence is in constant need of a sacrifice and linking the primary means of religious communication within the victim-violence circularity. As a matter of fact, the fact that violence is a means of a thanatological service (Han, 2018, p. 25) indicates its necessity in the face of the act of killing. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), women always sacrifice something. Atwood calls Offred “a religious offering or a victim offered for sacrifice” (p. xi) because she sacrifices her own soul and body for the so-called “common good” (p. 222). Serena Joy sacrifices her voice and gives up singing for theocratic society (p. 45). In a fundamental society's theocratic structure, something must be sacrificed for the joint interest.

The ubiquitous presence of gender discrimination, inequality, injustice, condemnation of authoritarian power, and the normalization of insults everywhere, and the fact that they bring despair in society alongside the impossibility of a solution to all these. Therefore, with the normalization of the unvirtuous, people will have to accept this mentality by falling into the logic of herd psychology and will be silent because it is ill-striving against the stream for them. With this effect, which brings with it learned helplessness, the power managed by the powerful is under the domination of the masculine. Gilead, which says that everything is done in the name of God, sacrifices women for the sake of its interests, and women do not perceive this as violence. So much so that Offred refuses to see the sexual intercourse called the Ceremony as rape, saying, “Nor does rape cover it” (Atwood, 2017, p. 95). This situation called the self-fulfilling prophecy, means that the person starts to exhibit behaviors that correspond to the expectations of the person he/she considers superior (Schaedig, 2024). Just as this situation, which cannot be called rape, is now normalized, the clothes of the Japanese tourists who come to Gilead seem very immoral to Offred, and she thinks that they are almost naked (Atwood, 2017, p. 28) is the most accurate example of this prophecy. In this case, the power-violence bond primarily normalizes violence with a target it chooses for itself and a victim it uses for that target.

Seeing as Girard (1979), who views violence and the sacred as inseparable, says that every time an animal intervenes between violence and the human targeted by violence (p. 6), in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), women, whose duty is to give birth continuously, are animalized by being seen as reproductive tools. Considering that the Handmaids wear uniforms and hats that function as blinders like horses so they cannot see their surroundings and are constantly attributed anonymously by having different names are the main things that destroy their human feelings. In the novel, Offred describes this nature evolving from human to animal as follows, “The room smells... The smell is of our own flesh, an organic smell... more animal, that's coming, it must be, from Janine... the smell of the plaid blanket on the bed when the cat gave birth on it” (Atwood, 2017, p. 123). For women who, like animals, can only survive by eating what is given to them, mating, and giving milk, in the theocratic Gilead state, these animals (women) are sacrificed as instruments of violence Godward. The fact that the Commanders and the

Handmaids perform a short religious ritual and pray before coming together shapes the fundamentalist structure of Gilead and the understanding of God-violence-sacrifice.

In a totalitarian regime, opposing the state's policies requires courage. The reason for opposition stems from an impulse called conscience. For instance, in the novel, when Nick sees Offred in the middle of the hall at night (p. 109), he can tell the Commander because the rules require it. Taking into account that Nick does not say this, or instead chooses not to say it, means that he listens to the voice of his conscience. According to Freud (2004), conscience is a mechanism where violence is inverted inwardly (p. 55). In this way, Freud makes conscience the antithesis of violence and provides individual self-control. In such a manner, those who are devoted to the Gilead regime do not hesitate to use violence because they do not use their conscience. Conscience is an example of passive resistance in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017). This instinct, which is closely linked to violence, namely conscience, nurtures repressed aggression. This instinct cannot be considered independent of consciousness. So much so that Freud draws attention to the connection between conscience and consciousness by saying, "Conscience...is related to that of which one is most certainly conscious" (Freud, 2001, p. 79). Accordingly, conscience not only shapes one's identity but also acts as a force that pushes the individual to make judgments. In other words, in a totalitarian society, conscience is responsible for resisting a state that restricts all rights of the individual.

In the words of Henry David Thoreau (2009), the law of conscience, which takes precedence over the laws of the government (p. 7), is a system of discernment that allows one to weigh up good and evil, virtuous and unvirtuous, just and unjust. In line with this approach, a person can effortlessly know right from wrong, and when the voice of his conscience conflicts with the state's laws, s/he can rebel against the statutes by risking the consequences of his/her action. While the opposing views that cultivated in an expressionist way under the umbrella of domination of individuals to the institutional authority or governmental structure continue to take shape, the resistance within the framework of certain ideologies continues to exist, enabling society to look at events from different perspectives.

The view that authority, society, and materialism restrict the individual brings along concepts such as rights and freedom and makes people expect within certain doctrines. For instance, the expectation that a woman is an altruistic mother, wife, or sister alienates those who are not way off the beam in a patriarchal society. If the current authority does not legislate on this issue, marginalization may lead to ostracization and self-annihilation. For Thoreau (2009), conscience is a means of nonviolent resistance to unjust political power, which in turn promotes social change. He sees it as a way to promote social justice (p. 9), arguing that in a democratic system, individuals have the right to resist unjust laws or policies nonviolently. Believing that conscience is a guiding force for individual action, Thoreau (2009) states that “the state...confronts a man’s...body, his senses. It is not armed with superior wit or honesty, but with superior physical strength” (p. 21), supporting that violence breeds resistance.

Arendt (1970) argues that a state that survives only by means of violence “has ever existed” (p. 50). However, she finds Thoreau’s conception of civil disobedience problematic because the demand for civil disobedience here is the demand for individual conscience. She argues that disobedience to the law is inexplicable on the level of personal morality because “conscience is unpolitical” (Arendt, 1972, p. 60), that is, subjective. For Arendt, conscientious objection and civil disobedience have different dimensions. While conscientious objection is the product of a conflict with the self, civil disobedience is collective; that is, it requires the existence of a group. Civil disobedience requires organized minorities as it requires a common thought. Conscience, which is apolitical and subjective, is individual, but actions that oppose regulations that do not align with policies are based on consensus. Therefore, for Arendt, acts of conscience are not grounds for civil disobedience since they do not carry public value (p. 56). Since the person who resorts to civil disobedience encounters consciences other than his or her own in the public sphere, the conscience is no longer individual. However, it becomes a public conscience, and regardless of this conscience, disobedience is a civil disobedience in which the plurality comes together on a common ground.

The struggle of women who are victims of tragicomic endings, from passive resistance to collectivist oppression, is engorged on the idea of a liberal person. In

this context, the behavior of women whose consciences do not suffer under the law in improper action of legal and social obedience is not a scourge but a reward. Mary Wollstonecraft (1985) emphasizes the importance that “the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex” (p. 20). When stumbled upon an unresolved obstacle on the arduous path to absolute existence in the great chain of being, humans, deprived of reaching the divine step in the future, must defend their virtues to not fall from there. Considering that the basis of conflicts in societies up to this time has been over the male-female sex, the dominant patriarch somehow antagonizes the woman and attributes the human part of the chain to the man. The authority and society resort to multiple means of violence and destroy the woman’s defense mechanism to end this.

Given the totalitarian state, which sees itself as having the right to restrict society in every way,

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailers, constables, posse comitatus, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgement or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. (Thoreau, 2009, p. 8)

The state’s use of the citizen for its own benefit serves to sustain its policies as a means. Indeed, what Thoreau calls the ‘wood and earth and stones’ of man serves the biopolitical vision of the totalitarian state. The person (obviously a woman in such a regime) who is created without consciousness sacrifices her body for the state, an image that is echoed in *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 2017). The service of the Handmaids’ bodies as a means for Gilead’s interests mechanizes them. The totalitarian regime, then, takes away women’s minds and all their moral judgments and imposes its own judgments, using coercive elements to do so. At this point, Thoreau follows the path of “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 2012, p. 86) and justifies passive resistance in all circumstances. To illustrate, despite Gilead’s overwhelming power and use of violence, the Handmaids offer non-violent resistance to this violence. Through small acts of rebellion and defiance, such as forming a secret alliance (Mayday) and sharing forbidden information, they challenge the dominant power structures that seek to control them.

In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), passive resistance pervades the entire novel. Offred's reading of the Latin script enables her to gain power. For her, reading is a rebellion against violence, a power of action, and a possibility of thought. Just as every rule has an exception, Offred's illegal game of Scrabble with the Commander at night, breaking yet another prohibition to derive words, is a form of passive resistance. As a woman, going beyond touching letters and forming words with them, and doing so in front of the Commander, is directly a mute rebellion to the Patriarchy. The Commander's acceptance of this situation is again illegal according to the rules of the Republic of Gilead, making him a rebel as well.

Serena Joy's giving Offred cigarettes (Atwood, 2017, p. 206) is also an act of civil disobedience. Although it is forbidden for Handmaids to smoke for a healthy pregnancy, Serena Joy, who both gives her cigarettes and takes the risk to let Offred have matches to light the cigarettes, is here organizing a rebellion against the biopolitical state. In this quiet but dangerous rebellion, Offred runs the risk of using a match not only to light a cigarette but also to ignite something and cause a catastrophe, as she says: "I could burn the house down. Such a fine thought, it makes me shiver. An escape, quick and narrow" (p. 210), but she does not. What stops her means that she listens to the voice of his conscience.

Furthermore, Serena Joy helping Offred get pregnant by Nick (Atwood, 2017, p. 216) means that Gilead's authority is being undermined because it is not just the Waterford family. This passive resistance means that the rules of the Republic of Gilead are being broken, and it is becoming increasingly powerless, which has already debilitated its authority. As Hannah Arendt says, "To substitute violence for power can bring victory, but the price is very high [and] violence itself results in impotence" (Arendt, 1970, pp. 53-54).

4.1. Symbolic Violence

Violence plays an essential role in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), and all the characters in the story feel its impact. Although the Gilead regime uses various methods of violence to maintain its control, the most effective one is symbolic violence, where bodies and populations become objects of political goals. As a concept coined by Pierre Bourdieu (2001), symbolic violence serves as a means of legitimization in establishing domination over individuals in almost all areas of

life (p. 31). This notion, which gives rise to a somewhat domination-submission system, is an essential concept regarding how non-physical violence can find a response in practice. This type of violence is integrated into a particular social order and has roles and functions for people in all segments of society.

Symbolic violence exists within symbolic systems such as language, religion, and ideology to exert power and domination over certain groups of people. This type of violence, an indispensable tool for the state to maintain social order and hierarchy, refers to non-physical forms of violence integrated into a particular social order and have roles and functions for individuals in all segments of society. The central part underlying Bourdieu's definition of this kind of violence is masculine domination. According to him (Bourdieu, 2001), violence is rooted in androcentrism (p. 32), which manifests itself primarily in the understanding of biological differences. This violence, which is "soft [and] sometimes almost invisible" (p. 32), is firmly grounded in the socialization of the biological, that is, the attribution of the masculine as man and the female as woman. The fate of biological exclusion of women is most evident in *The Handmaid's Tale* through the term "Unwomen" (Atwood, 2017, p. 10). Through language, the regime considers women who do not conform to social expectations (infertile, had their tubes tied in the pre-Gilead era, menopausal, sick, cancerous, too old...) as inadequate to be women. Women who are Unwomen are destined to work in Colonies until they die. This sexist language for women emerges as a form of symbolic violence. Also, it serves to strengthen the power of the ruling class to maintain patriarchy and reinforce the subordination of women.

Another example of the body as a tool that makes symbolic violence effective, feeding the androcentric structure in society and spreading the language of the masculine throughout society, lies under the word "Sterile" (Atwood, 2017, p. 60) in the novel. This expression, which is used instead of the word infertile, is forbidden for men. Gilead's avoidance of scientific facts and attribution of all the negativities in the nature of man to women alone gives the regime the tremendous power of symbolic violence, the symbolic power. Bourdieu (2001) points out that linguistic domination is so invisible and insidious that an early but long-term

experience strengthens it and causes physical and psychological changes in the individual,

The practical acts of knowledge and recognition of the magical frontier between the dominant and the dominated that are triggered by the magic of symbolic power and through which the dominated, often unwittingly, sometimes unwillingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting the limits imposed, often take the form of bodily emotions — shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, guilt — or passions and sentiments — love, admiration, respect. These emotions are all the more powerful when they are betrayed in visible manifestations such as blushing, stuttering, clumsiness, trembling, anger or impotent rage, so many ways of submitting, even despite oneself and ‘against the grain’ [à son corps défendant], to the dominant judgement, sometimes in internal conflict and division of self of experiencing the insidious complicity that a body slipping from the control of consciousness and will maintains with the censures inherent in the social structures. (pp. 38-39)

As Bourdieu (2001) points out, symbolic violence has a profound effect on those who break the prohibition, leading to many physical and internal effects (p. 38). An example is the disturbance scene in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2007) when, during the examination, the doctor tells Offred that the Commander is Sterile. In this scene, Offred is greatly alarmed by the word Sterile, “I almost gasp: he’s said a forbidden word. Sterile. There is no such thing as a sterile man any more, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that’s the law” (pp. 60-61). The reason why Offred is physically out of breath and feels uneasy is that symbolic violence is the physical manifestation of the psychological depression she feels. In this context, since no physical violence is used to maintain oppression and the status quo, the legitimacy of symbolic violence cannot be questioned.

Another example of Bourdieu’s explanation is Offred’s feelings when she goes to her room at night after playing Scrabble with Commander,

Judgement: emotion inappropriate to the occasion. I cram both hands over my mouth...drop to my knees, the laughter boiling like lava in my throat. My ribs hurt...mirth rhymes with birth, oh to die of laughter. After a while it passes, like an epileptic fit. (Atwood, 2017, p. 146)

The source of Offred’s physical and psychological pain is the oppression of power using symbolic violence. This laughter, which is the result of the restrictions that slowly and insidiously seep into the women’s blood, shows that mentally Offred is not well, that she has committed an act that is not at all appropriate to the situation

in the Gilead regime, as she herself states. Offred feels “humiliation, anxiety [and] guilt” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 38-39) (Bourdieu’s bodily emotions), and as a result, she feels burning in her throat and stinging in her ribs in order to hold back her laughter. The implicit violence of the masculine is manifested in the overwhelming power of the limited freedom he gives her by making her do forbidden things (being alone with the commander, playing Scrabble). Offred’s desire to laugh even more after saying, ‘mirth rhymes with birth,’ shows that she subconsciously accepts herself as a Handmaid overflow because she cannot fit into her obligations. That domination is engraved on her body.

Bourdieu (2001) states that symbolic power survives thanks to the contributions of those subjected to it by preferring to blame the victim (p. 40). In *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 2017), those who do not want to adopt Gilead’s values confess this and are either taken to the Colonies or somehow escape and work in a brothel called Jezebel. In this case, some women rebel against symbolic violence, and they do not want to be victims by their own choice, so they do not become victims. Therefore, the main element of masculine domination’s success in the tyranny it insists on is, as Bourdieu states, the people’s own choice. Viewing women who accept this form of violence as masochists, the philosopher states that adopting practices of obedience feeds symbolic violence. The secret of Gilead’s success of domination, then, is women’s acceptance of domination.

Another symbolic violence used by the regime to legitimize its actions is religion. Gilead is based on Christian fundamentalism, and the regime gives the image that everything it does is for the sake of God. This type of violence maintains power dynamics and social hierarchies to ensure that those in power retain control. The fact that the Handmaids are uniformly dressed in red clothes is linked to the religious inappropriateness of showing their bodies. The clothes cover every part of the body. They also wear hat-like headdresses so that they do not look around. Both the dress and the headdress are symbolic instruments of violence as they are symbolic embodiments of moral values on women, and the violence is used to maintain the power and control of a select few rather than to achieve a common goal.

The hostile atmosphere given by red, which is integrated with blood, reveals a symbolic violence that contradicts itself. While the red dress worn by the Handmaids symbolizes birth and evokes a positive atmosphere for Gilead, it also evokes death. Offred's statement, "Each month I watch for blood, fearfully, for when it comes it means failure," (Atwood, 2017, p. 73) emphasizes the polarity here. Offred's menstruation after the ceremonies, by the arrival of blood, shows her failure to be pregnant. The menstrual blood, which could sign her death warrant, also indicates her continued fertility. The regime, which selects fertile women as Handmaids, shows here that Offred is fertile with her menstrual blood but justifies with the same blood that she will be sent to the Colonies if she does not give birth to a child. Being fertile or not has biological reasons. To separate a woman by fertility is to ignore her nature, and to do so in a theocratic state is to ignore God. Finally, it makes the states theocratic management contradictory.

The physical and biological superiority of the male has a history dating back to Ancient Greece. The mentality of Aristotle and its reflection on his works has many false notions that criticize and standardize women. The famous philosopher writes in his book *Generation on Animals* (Aristotle, 2020) as follows;

The females have less body hair...rough skin...an evident deficiency of body as compared with the males...since it is not possible for two spermatric secretions to be produced at once, it is evident that the female does not contribute seed to generation. For if there were seed there would be no menses. (GA 727.a-b.15-29. p. 63-64)

In addition to creating aesthetic perception through the female body, Aristotle explains that female genitalia differ from male with the concept of 'deficiency.' While what makes an animal male is that it plays a superior role by completing the concoction of matter, what makes an animal female is the failure to produce sperm due to a lack of heat. In the sentences where the perception of seeing a man as superior is clearly stated, a male's semen is identified with a female's menstrual blood, and a male shapes the substance that causes reproduction, that is, the menstrual cycle, which makes a female less perfect.

Some of the reasons why it was thought that the male and female bodies were in a hierarchical structure in the Middle Ages were "its [the body of the woman] moisture...uncomfortable heat and its disturbing uterus" (Bonnard, Doherty, & Cuchet, 2013, p. 33). In addition, the act of copulation described by Aristotle as

divine especially gives direction to medieval medicine. A saying in medieval medicine, “The hottest woman is colder than the coldest man” (Spongberg, 1997, p. 20), illuminated by Aristotle’s books, which contain partially incomplete and biased information, is evidence of prejudice against women. There is a false belief that a woman’s menstrual period is toxic and that her body temperature spreads diseases such as syphilis or gonorrhea to a man every month because menstruation indicates blood putrefaction. His emphasis on male fertility shows a parallel approach to Greek traditions. The control of the soil, the provision of agriculture using power, and the control of fertility by men by explaining the productivity of the plant seed in the soil by the male on the female (Connell, 2016, p. 377) does not make his work prescriptive.

The regime relies on such narrow and repressive practices to justify its violence and silence dissent by framing its actions in religious and moral terms. The authority is fundamentally flawed for the same reason, but what makes it fundamentally flawed is its lack of compassion and love, forbidding access to the Bible, teaching religion and morality through the penal system, ruthlessly attacking other faiths and religions, organizing on a theocratic level under the umbrella of religious fundamentalism.

The use of the media is also seen as a form of symbolic violence. The regime’s tight control over communication channels allows it to shape the thoughts and emotions of its citizens, creating a culture of fear and obedience. With the media portraying the image of a constant war, women feel hopeless, thinking that something terrible will happen at any moment. At the same time, the system that serves to consolidate its power through surveillance and suppress dissent creates an atmosphere of pervasive violence. This form of violence is particularly insidious because it works on a subtle level in the subconscious, making it difficult for individuals to resist. So much so that Handmaids do not know who the Eyes are, are suspicious of everything, and cannot easily share their opinions with anyone, even themselves. The fact that these Eyes are tattooed on the ankles of women (Atwood, 2017, p. 75), in particular, shows that they are afraid to even think about being watched.

The way misogyny is displayed is another form of symbolic violence. What makes this violence is not men's hostility towards women but the way women's hostility towards women is displayed. Although men are the mechanisms that keep everything under control in the novel, looking at the power relations, the Aunts at the Red Center exercise power over women. An example of this in the novel is when Aunt Helena organizes the Handmaids and accuses Janine of being raped. In the pre-Gilead era, the past is never in the past, just like the accusation because Janine's raped by a group and then having an abortion. According to the Aunts, she is guilty of two crimes, being raped and having an abortion. In the chapter where the Handmaids form a circle around Janine, Aunt Helena asks the women whose fault the rape is. The women then point their fingers at Janine and have to repeat, "Her fault, her fault, her fault" (Atwood, 2017, p. 72). Then, when Aunt Helena asks who encouraged them, the Handmaids say, "She did. She did. She did" (Atwood, 2017, p. 72) three times. Then Janine cries, admitting her mistake, which makes her less of a woman among the women. The biggest enemy of women, who have to take responsibility for even being raped, is, again, women. Offred's statement, "For a moment, even though we knew what was being done to her, we despised her" (Atwood, 2017, p. 72), reveals the effect of the power of the Red Center on women.

Considering that the women's body, which the patriarchy has a say in, is blamed by women again identifies with the idea that power is not concentrated in a center and embodied there. However, instead, power is everywhere (Foucault, 1997, p. 283).

5. WHAT IS LOST AND GAINED IN THE DARK

A rat in a maze is free to go everywhere, as long as it stays inside the maze.

—Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

Darkness is frequently provided as a metaphor for ignorance and oppression. This use emphasizes that people in the dark are unaware of the truth and are often subject to manipulation and control. The metaphorical use of darkness in society can be seen in the term 'Dark Ages', which refers to a period when knowledge and progress were blocked, and society was characterized by ignorance and superstition. In daily life, when a person wants to show the negative side of something, s/he emphasizes its 'dark side', or when one wants to hide something, s/he 'keeps it in the dark'. This expression has reached such a level in everyday life that the fear of darkness has no equivalent to the fear of light, or a black cat, a superstitious animal that brings bad luck, can never be a white one. All this shows that what belongs to the nocturnal does not remain only in the dark but gains permanence in the thought structure of the individual and society through language.

Darkness has religious references repeated about two hundred times in the Holy Scriptures (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman, 2005, p. 678). First, when the universe was dark, God created light to separate it from the darkness. In the physical sense, God explains the evening hours by the coming from job to home and the beginning of the waking hours of the animals (Psalms 104:20,23, NIV). Similarly, Paul repeatedly emphasizes to the apostles the need to avoid doing things in the dark (Ephesians 5:11,12, NIV), just as Solomon says that darkness is the time when fornication is encouraged (Proverbs 7:8-9, NIV). In Christianity, darkness is also a figurative stage of sinfulness that precedes light and forgiveness. It brings ignorance (Psalm 82:5, NIV), stupidity (Ecclesiastes 2:13-14, NIV), and blindness (1 John 2:11, NIV). Darkness, whether physical or symbolic, is, according to Christianity, what Christ redeemed from humanity and brought them to the light, the right path.

As one of the two terms associated with darkness in politics, black is often used as a metaphor for corruption and secrecy. 'Black money' describes "money that is earned illegally" ("Black Money," n.d.). This use of darkness highlights the lack of transparency in the political process, where powerful interests can influence policy decisions without being held accountable. The metaphorical use of darkness

in politics is also seen in the related term shadow and the phrase ‘shadow state’, which refers to a group of individuals exercising power behind the scenes (Peter et al., 2018, p. xi), often without public knowledge. Politically, darkness also includes rebellion, opposition, coup, and resistance. It evokes negative situations such as loneliness and feeds crime and escapes. In a way, the person who escapes or commits the crime makes the night quite positive. For a group that does not want to adopt current policies in a bit state, the most critical time for a coup d’état is when the majority is asleep or vulnerable to a counterattack. Likewise, for a group living under oppression, the safest time to flee the area is in the evening. Darkness is not only a time of negativity but also of struggle for survival and renunciation. It has its characteristics; as such, everything related to the night provides different feedback for everyone.

Kügler (2005) refers to darkness as the absence of light (p. 95), but to say this is like describing black without white, or vice versa. Light is a part of darkness, yet they seem to be opposites. Darkness is not something that does not exist but something that is complete in itself. So light is not the opposite of darkness, but what exists through it. When dark thoughts are trapped in the night, the dark is present in the night itself, and the fire rests in the shadow of thoughts. That is why fire has no shadow. Darkness does not compromise itself and ignores the slightest enlightenment. Therefore, light complements darkness, and darkness complements light, just as the empty complements the full and the full complements the empty, rather than seeing the glass as full or empty. These two words and their connotations, taken as a whole, can have negative and positive meanings. Both can contain linguistic, religious, political, or sexual symbols that profoundly affect the individual and society. It is not only unnecessary but also impossible to distinguish between the two. The simple switching off electricity does not mark the transition from light to darkness but the end of light and the beginning of darkness. Although these two phenomena often change places, they are not interchangeable and do not transition into each other. Day and night are equivalent.

In *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 2017), the recurring motifs of darkness, night, black, and shadow have an important symbolic significance. These motifs are used to create a sense of foreboding and emphasize the oppressive nature of the

society where the story takes place. Night and darkness are often used to represent fear, uncertainty, and the unknown, while black and shadow are associated with negativity and the suppression of individuality. In the novel, darkness is used in a figurative sense. The novel uses darkness to symbolize an oppressive society in which women are deprived of their freedom while simultaneously emphasizing the only moment women are free. Darkness and its connotations both symbolize the oppressive regime that has taken over and the free time when the characters are constantly trying to find a way out of it. The role of darkness in the work is essential in the protagonist's journey and development.

5.1. Night and Darkness

In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), the use of night and darkness as a symbolic element is prevalent throughout the book. It is often used to represent darkness, fear, and freedom, the novel's central themes. The word night is the title of the novel's first and last chapters and appears in seven of the fifteen chapters. Its use as a recurring motif also emphasizes the cyclical nature of the story, with each night bringing with it the same anxieties as the last.

The novel's first chapter is entitled 'Night', which sets the tone for the rest of the story. It introduces the reader to the protagonist, Offred, and her situation as a Handmaid in Gilead. The word night in the title of the first chapter symbolizes the darkness and fear that permeates Offred's life, as well as the loss of freedom and agency she experiences. The title also foreshadows the repeated use of the word night throughout the dystopia, emphasizing Offred's situation's cyclical and unchanging nature.

The use of 'night' seven times as a chapter title symbolizes the world's biblical creation in six days and the seventh day of rest, "By the seventh day God had finished the work...so on the seventh day he rested from all his work" (Genesis 2:2, NIV). Hence, "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy" (Genesis 2:3, NIV) and the seventh becomes a sign of completion, perfection, and divine wholeness. In this case, in a novel with an ambiguous ending, there is high hope, as the possibility of Offred being saved is hidden in the divine whole of seven.

On the first day, when the world is created, darkness dominates everywhere. Then, God creates light and separates it from the darkness. After that, there is the

first evening and then the morning. The novel begins with the darkness that God created before everything else. Offred receives the first sound recording at night, and the setting of the first events is semi-darkness. The first night in the novel is when everything begins, just like the world's creation. The opening sentence of the book, "We slept in what had once been the gymnasium. The lights were turned down but not out. When the Aunts weren't looking...we exchanged names, from bed to bed..." (Atwood, 2017, pp. 13-14) is a past-tense recollection, an order that will no longer be the same, a first longing and a first reminiscence. Offred describes how she and the other women are forced to sleep in an old gymnasium, now the sleeping quarters of the Handmaids. The lack of total darkness in their room means that the Aunts can fully observe them, and the women are not trusted. Names are learned in a semi-dark room. Freedoms reveal themselves in the transition to darkness. The Handmaids communicate semi-darkly by understanding whether the Aunts are looking at them. In this case, the dim environment is in the Handmaids' favor, and the first communication is the thing that determines their identity in the pre-Gilead free world: their names.

The importance of the night for Offred is revealed in the following sentences, "The night is mine, my own time, to do with as I will, as long as I am quiet. As long as I don't move. As long as I lie still. The difference between *lie* and *lay*" (Atwood, 2017, p. 37). Here, darkness represents the limited freedom Offred has in this oppressive society where she must remain silent and immobile to avoid punishment and a situation where she takes control of her own time and actions. The difference between lying and being laid down is vital to understanding Offred's statement. 'Lie' is a voluntary act that implies that one has authority and control over one's body as a deliberate choice. 'Lay', as a passive expression, means to be forced to lie down by an external force. In these ambiguous expressions, 'lie' also means to deceive. 'Lay', as a homonym, also means to lay eggs. Offred's rendering of this sentence as 'lie' and 'lay' instead of 'to lie' or 'to be laid' confirms this ambivalent meaning. It can be asserted, then, that the Handmaids will either tell lies nonstop to avoid punishment or lay eggs like a hen to produce healthy offspring.

For Offred, night is when she can lie down and take control of her body and time, even briefly. This statement emphasizes the importance of agency and

autonomy in one's life, which is disputed in Offred's everyday life. Her choice to lie and use the night as her own time represents a kind of resistance to the oppressive totalitarian regime. By choosing to remain still and silent, Offred retains control over her body and her time, albeit in small ways.

Darkness can also be a source of fear and danger, as it allows the oppressive regime to carry out its violent and repressive actions in the dark of night. There is always the possibility that the all-watchful Eyes will quickly punish Offred if she does something wrong at night. Despite her limited authority during the day, she feels better about having a chance to have temporary autonomy she can experience at night. She finds free time to travel back in her mind by saying, "But the night is my time out. Where should I go?" (Atwood, 2017, p. 37). This freedom, however limited, is essential in a world where individual agency and autonomy are severely restricted.

The importance of names and identity is a central theme in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017). Offred's original name is never revealed in the novel, but it is clear that she is haunted by memories of her past life and identity. Her identity crisis and emotional turmoil reappear later in the novel with her sentences: "I lie in my single bed at night, with my eyes closed, and the name floats there behind my eyes, not quite within reach, shining in the dark" (p. 94). Here, Offred is trying to reconcile her past identity with her present reality, as her name and sense of self have been taken away from her by the oppressive regime of Gilead. The sentence suggests that she is thinking about her name, but whether she is thinking about her pre-Gilead name, or her current assigned name is unclear. In any case, this sentence emphasizes the psychological cost of living in a society where personal identity and autonomy have faded and the struggle to maintain a sense of self in the face of such oppression. If Offred is thinking here of her pre-Gilead name, then her old name is a reminder of her past life and the freedom she once had, which she longs for in her current situation. Still, Offred does not use a specific name in her sentence; instead, she refers to 'the name.' This deliberate choice of language emphasizes the importance of identity and individuality in the face of oppressive regimes. The fact that her name hovers behind her eyes in the darkness represents a conflict between her past and present identities, as well as how both shape her sense of self.

The contrast between day and night underlines the sharp differences between the two worlds. During the day, Offred is forced to wear her red Handmaid uniform and participate in the rituals of the regime, while at night, she sheds this identity and engages in more human and intimate interactions. This is confirmed one night when Offred goes to the parlor instead of sleeping, “He too is illegal, here, with me, he can’t give me away. Nor I him; for the moment we’re mirrors. He puts his hand on my arm, pulls me against him...what else comes from such denial?” (Atwood, 2017, p. 99). Here, Offred’s illegal incident represents a time of freedom and individuality in which she has some agency and control over her own life. The concept of night serves as a symbol of privacy and danger, emphasizing the secretive nature of Offred’s relationship with Nick. The nighttime provides a cover for their forbidden interactions. All this makes the night more potent than anything else.

In a pornographic film that the Aunts at the Red Center force the Handmaids to watch, Offred observes a detail of great importance:

The camera pans up and we see the writing...: TAKE BACK THE NIGHT. This hasn’t been blacked out, even though we aren’t supposed to be reading. Or is this a thing we’re intended to see, to remind us of the old days of no safety? (Atwood, 2017, p. 119)

The symbolic meaning of the night is often associated with darkness, uncertainty, danger, and change. In this case, the phrase ‘TAKE BACK THE NIGHT,’ stated explicitly in capital letters, points to a dark period in the novel as a warning sign. This motto aligns with the second-wave feminism of the 1970s. The marches of the period fought against violence against women, and whose slogan is Take Back The Night (TBTN) (Valk, 2017, p. 188) is one of the most extensive mass actions that tried to overthrow the patriarchal structure. In particular, groups that come together to make sexual violence apparent reinforce the hope of living in a world where women can walk freely at night, are not viewed as sexual objects, have equal rights with men, and rape is not normalized. This issue is of such a magnitude that Roxane Gay (2014) explains the seriousness of the matter as follows, “Sexual violence is so problematic that there is a Sexual Assault Awareness Month [,and] we live in a society where the phrase “rape culture” exists because the culture itself exists” (p. 152). This egalitarian structure is a movement that the Republic of

Gilead wants to destroy, to leave behind. They show this movement to the Handmaids, telling them once again that absolute freedom begins with Gilead.

The common point of the marches is the call for women to be able to be on the streets whenever they want, to have the right to defend themselves, to be over to all forms of abuse, to have the right to control their own bodies and to have the right to economic independence. Considering all this, Gilead pursues the opposite goal, first by ending the economic rights of women and laying them off. Then, in a biopolitical framework, the totalitarian state takes over the control of women's bodies. TBTN, which started as an awareness march and then became a worldwide mass movement, is a violation and an exception to the rule in the novel. Although the Handmaids are forbidden to read it, the fact that this slogan is shown to them shows the controlling power of the Aunts, the totalitarian regime of Gilead. Manipulatively shown, it is a call to question and change the existing order, to repeat or correct something that happened in the past. This text wants to emphasize the control mechanisms and oppressive structure of Gilead society. Returning the night can mean detaching individuals from their past and taking them under control. The Gilead regime tries to make women forget their past and depend on the existing order. The message Offred witnesses in this chapter is that the headstrong women of the past are now docile Handmaids.

Aunt Lydia's authoritarian stance in favor of the repressive regime is shaken with great irony, making her a feminist in a way. The most crucial feature of TBTN movements is the solidarity of women together. Similarly, Aunt Lydia tells the Handmaids, "For the generations that come after...the women will live in harmony together...women united for a common end!" (Atwood, 2017, p. 161) and "What we're aiming for... is a spirit of camaraderie among women" (p. 224), evoking a sense of solidarity and organization. Aunt Lydia's belief in women's solidarity reveals her feminist side even if she does not want to admit it, as in TBTN "that bring people together around a common goal" (Currans, 2017, p. 39).

In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), the darkness surrounding Offred is not just the absence of light but a tangible force weighing on her. It appears as a metaphor for the totalitarian regime's ignorance and powerlessness.

Night falls. Or has fallen. Why is it that night falls, instead of rising, like the dawn? Yet if you look east, at sunset, you can see night rising, not falling; darkness lifting into the sky, up from the horizon, like a black sun behind cloudcover. Like smoke from an unseen fire, a line of fire just below the horizon, brushfire or a burning city. Maybe night falls because it's heavy, a thick curtain pulled up over the eyes. Wool blanket. I wish I could see in the dark, better than I do. (Atwood, 2017, p. 191)

In her world, the night is not a time of solace but a burden. In this context, the night symbolizes the absolute darkness that envelops her and the psychological and emotional darkness accompanying her existence as a Handmaid. Offred's questioning of why the darkness is called falling in these sentences, which make us feel the weight of dystopia, tells us that the human perspective on darkness is inherently harmful and shows that she still resists the current regime. The darkness falling emphasizes that hopes are diminishing further, while the fact that it has already fallen indicates that the foundation has been shaken.

The imagery of darkness as a black sun evokes a pervasive sense of foreboding and oppression, alluding to the pervasive control and surveillance that characterizes the regime in which Offred lives. This imagery embodies resilience and helplessness, a contrast read into nature. This implies strength in difficult times, hidden or masked like the sun under the clouds, yet still present. The paradox of the black sun symbolizes a sun that does not shine, showing that although Gilead is as great as the sun, its influence is less than the resilience of women. Although their bodies change and identities fade, their souls hope to be enough to see in the darkness. In other words, here, the black sun does not give light because it mourns the women who have died or will die based on Thanatopolitics, the killing power of the regime.

5.2. Black and Shadow

In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), black is used extensively to convey a sense of foreboding and oppression. The color black is often associated with negative emotions, and its use in the novel proves that the world of Gilead is bleak and oppressive. The use of black is not only limited to clothing and objects but also to describe the environment and atmosphere of the world in which the characters live in terms of grief, oppression, and censorship. On the other hand, the shadow is used to depict the hidden nature of Gilead and the uncertainty experienced by the

oppressed women, as it represents the inability to see or perceive something that exists entirely.

In the novel, the color black is used to symbolize power, authority, and control. An example of this is the Commander's black umbrella (Atwood, 2017, p. 9). The umbrella serves as a status symbol representing his position of power in society. It is also a reminder of the oppressive nature of the regime, as the Commander's power stems from the subjugation of women. In this context, black demonstrates his dominance over the women in the narrative and reinforces that the characters live in a world where power and authority are concentrated in the hands of a few.

In dystopia, the color black is used to create a sense of foreboding and darkness, especially in the depiction of cars and vans. The black cars and vans used to transport the Handmaids and other characters symbolize the oppressive regime controlling their lives. This proves that the government has complete control over the lives of its citizens. The use of black cars in the narrative also evokes a sense of secrecy and mystery, as the characters are often taken to unknown places in these vehicles. The black cars and the van's windows suggest a lack of transparency and freedom, and the use of black in these examples indicates that the characters live in a world where their movements and actions are tightly controlled.

The Widows in the novel also wear black. As they are grieving the loss of their husbands, this use of black serves to symbolize the idea of mourning and loss. However, it also serves as a symbol of the repressive nature of the regime, as Widows are forced to follow a strict dress code that reinforces their subjugation. In this context, the use of black reinforces the idea of Widows' powerlessness without a man (husband) around them and the inability to challenge the status quo.

The shadow that Offred refers to when she says, "Only me and my shadow, walking away from the two men" (Atwood, 2017, p. 22) while walking away from the Guards involves deep meanings. First, this shadow is the darkness that Offred projects into herself as a symbol of the darkness of the regime. In psychology and literature, the concept of shadow often represents the hidden, repressed aspects of an individual's personality. Here, Offred represents the repressed desires and emotions that she must hide in the oppressive society of Gilead. Just as the

totalitarian regime has many rules that it has not yet shown and hides, the Handmaids also have emotions that they are afraid to show. The shadow symbol becomes unconscious and shows the hidden desires that need to be hidden because of the emotions the women cannot show. So, here, Offred is forcibly trying to reconcile her inner world with the expectations and demands of her society.

The shadow also represents the idea of being followed or stalked, which adds to the story's sense of danger and oppression. It suggests that Offred's pre-Gilead identity is still with her and that she struggles to maintain her identity and sense of self in a society that seeks to erase individuality. The shadow represents the physical manifestation of her individuality and reminds her that she exists beyond the confines of Gilead's oppressive regime. In this case, it represents the old U.S. before the regime took over and preaches survival in hiding in this new society. By referring to her shadow, Offred can still exist as a unique individual, separate from the role assigned to her by the state.

In the novel, the black-cassocked priest (Atwood, 2017, p. 43) hanging on the execution wall represents the religious authority overthrown by the oppressive regime of Gilead. It is a symbol of rebellion and subversion against the theocratic rule of the state. By wearing the black cassock, the priest asserts his identity as a religious figure and refuses to comply with the state's demands to renounce his faith. Thus, it becomes a powerful symbol of resistance to the oppressive regime and represents the priest's unwavering commitment to his beliefs even in the face of death. The fact that his sin is simply being a priest emphasizes the extreme religious persecution under the regime and makes the cassock a powerful symbol of resistance and martyrdom. Judges and lawyers traditionally wear the black cassock, symbolizing their authority and impartiality. In this context, the cloth on the priest can be seen as a symbol of his moral authority and integrity, unjustly stripped away by the totalitarian regime of Gilead. Consequently, the priest figure represents society's hypocrisy and hypocritical religious practices. While the black cassock symbolizes the power and evil intentions of religious institutions, the wall on which the priest hangs from represents society's judgment and punishment mechanisms.

The phrase "black mirror wall of the elevator" (Atwood, 2017, p. 59) uttered by Offred in the doctor's room evokes the idea of surveillance and control, further

reinforcing the idea that black is used in the novel to symbolize power and authority. The black mirrored wall in the doctor's room evokes an environment where she is uncontrollably observed, and her privacy is violated. This underlines the control and restrictions on women's bodies through the metaphor of a biopolitical regime. The black mirror here suggests that Offred's reflection is distorted and ambiguous, reinforcing the idea that she is not in control of her body or destiny. The use of black shows Offred's lack of transparency and honesty, as she cannot see herself clearly in the mirror.

The shadow represents the darkness and oppression in society, while the light represents the hope and possibility of change. The metaphorical connection between resistance, light, and shadow in Offred's statement, "I believe in the resistance as I believe there can be no light without shadow" (Atwood, 2017, p. 105), emphasizes the importance of resistance in bringing about change. The metaphor of light and shadow demonstrates that resistance is necessary to bring about change, just as there can be no light without shadow. Resistance becomes the key to bringing about change and shedding light on the darkness in society because "This is the only means by which the minority view can exist" (Tolan, 2005, p. 30). Offred's belief in resistance, even in the face of darkness, shows that she sees the potential for change and transformation even in the most challenging circumstances. By embracing resistance and recognizing the duality of light and shadow, Offred can maintain her sense of self and belief in a better future, even in the darkest times.

The shadow can also be seen as part of the human coping mechanism for pain. Offred's, "But who can remember pain, once it's over? All that remains of it is a shadow, not in the mind even, in the flesh. Pain marks you, but too deep to see" (Atwood, 2017, p. 125), what Offred defines as a shadow is a memory left behind by the pain, a memory that leaves deep traces in one's soul. However, as she emphasizes, these painful memories fade in the mind as time progresses, leaving only a physical trace in their place. Rather than keeping the pain alive in the mental dimension, it remains as a physical scar over time, allowing the person to focus on the process of moving on and healing. Offred sees physical pain as easier to remember than emotional one. The body has a way of holding on to pain and leaving a permanent mark that is not easily forgotten. Offred's reference to the shadow on

the body suggests that physical pain is easier to forget than emotional pain. This may be because the body has a way of adapting to pain and eventually becoming numb to it, whereas emotional pain can linger in the mind for much longer.

The shadow left on the body is a reminder of the pain once endured. She notes that once the pain is gone, it is difficult to remember its intensity. It represents the remnants of pain that persist even after the pain has subsided. It is a metaphor for the emotional scars left behind after a traumatic experience. Although the memory of the pain fades, its emotional impact remains. The shadow represents emotional pain that is invisible to the eye but felt deep inside. Offred's explanation emphasizes the complexity of pain and its impact on the physical and emotional human psyche. The psychological consequences of living in a society that seeks to control and subjugate women make her feel disconnected from her own emotions and memories, leading her to rely more on the tangible sensations of her body.

Ultimately, Offred's belief that pain only remains in the body may also be affected by the limitations of memory and the body's ability to hold on to trauma. While the mind struggles to process and remember traumatic experiences fully, the body can retain physical sensations and reactions long after the event has passed. This 'shadow' of pain can remain in the body even as memories fade or deteriorate over time. Offred's observation highlights the complex interplay between physical and emotional pain, memory, and the ways in which individuals cope with trauma.

The novel's conclusion with Offred's uncertain fate underlines the precarious nature of freedom in a society based on repression and surveillance. In the final chapter, which ends with the sentence, "And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light" (Atwood, 2017, p. 297), Offred's journey does not come to a definitive conclusion. Whether she is rescued or captured and punished for going to Jezebel is unclear. This ambiguity emphasizes the ongoing struggle for freedom and the constant threat of oppression in Gilead. The ambiguity of the ending is essential in that it leaves the reader with a sense of unease and discomfort. It forces the reader to face the harsh reality that there are no easy answers or happy endings in a society like Gilead. Offred is faced with two unknowns.

Feuer (1997) attributes this ambivalent ending to "This distrust of certainty" (p. 92). All this reading would soon be forgotten if it had a definite and happy

ending. Nearly two hundred years after the fall of the Gilead Republic, Gileadean Studies researchers imply that Offred survived for some time, which is why the tape with her voice recordings is available. However, the fact that the researchers who say this are also men shows that even after two hundred years, masculine power still exists in the world, even if it is not called Gilead.





6. GARDEN OF EDEN IN THE REPUBLIC OF GILEAD

Frequent floral references recur throughout *The Handmaid's Tale*. The most important of these is Serena Joy's garden, a metaphor for the biblical Garden of Eden before the expulsion from paradise. In the biblical story, Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden after disobeying God's command not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, deprived of the pleasures of paradise. Similarly, the women in the novel are denied access to the pleasures and freedoms of the outside world, confined to a small, controlled space. Serena Joy's garden, "which is large and tidy: a lawn in the middle, a willow, weeping catkins; around the edges, the flower borders, in which the daffodils are now fading and the tulips are opening their cups, spilling out colours" (Atwood, 2017, p. 12), is ironically linked to her family name, contrasting her personality. The fact that this garden, which represents an alluring image of an unattainable world, belongs to her makes it a reverse Eden because God commands Adam and Eve to "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28, NIV). However, Serena Joy is unable to bear children. This shows that she is subjected to the Gilead system, although the thought of having a child without being a mother offends her feelings. She wishes to return to paradise (her old life), but since this seems impossible, she plays the game of joy in the small pseudo-paradise she has created. This connection to the biblical story underlines the themes of despair, power, control, and oppression throughout the novel.

The use of floral imagery reflects the Gilead regime's tight control over the female body and reproductive rights, so much so that Offred compares the tulips to herself when she says, "The tulips are red...as if they have been cut and are beginning to heal there" (Atwood, 2017, p. 12), emphasizing their need to heal as Handmaids condemned to live the same lives in different houses from the beginning, but Gilead continues to break them. Floral expressions describe the life that is lost. Offred, seeing the floral embroidered details on Serena Joy's dress, emphasizes that she is too old to wear it: "You can't use them anymore; you're withered. They're the genital organs of the plants" (Atwood, 2017, p. 81). The idea that the Wife is too old to bear children and that she can stay away from flowers stems from the fact that flowers represent reproduction. Just as before the expulsion

from paradise, in the pre-Gilead period, the beauty taken away from women is waiting to be consoled in Serena Joy's garden.

The garden also serves to remind Offred of what she is there for. Her statement, "I once had a garden" (Atwood, 2017, p. 12), while making her past garden a paradise, has landed her in Gilead due to her alleged sins, turning Serena Joy's garden into a false paradise on earth. In a regime where such a falsity aspires to a totalitarian system, Offred's surprise when she says, "flowers are still allowed" (Atwood, 2017, p. 7) points "to flowers as inherently antithetical to all that Gilead represents" (Hooker, 2006, p. 287). Flowers represent the life that women have lost, the beauty that has been taken away from them, the loss of their autonomy at the hands of the oppressive regime, and their use as instruments of control. They exemplify the idealized version of womanhood that the regime tries to impose on women.

The garden is a place of confinement and control where women are forced to conform to strict gender roles and expectations. This pseudo-paradise is a microcosm of the larger society in which women are similarly confined and controlled. Offred's constant thoughts about flowers reflect her sense of imprisonment and loss. Although this emphasizes the sharp contrast between the beauty of nature and the harsh reality of the dystopian society in which she lives, Offred's statement, "Where would we be without [flowers]" (Atwood, 2017, p. 269), shows how she longs for hope and renewal.

The garden, which maintained its perfection until the first humans fell from paradise, still maintains its perfection with the transgression of the forbidden. It is not the act of transgression that changes, but the change of the place. Falling from that perfect paradise to earth, human beings, just like Serena Joy, are trying to create their paradise on earth, even though it is not perfect.

However, even this garden and the flowers in it have not made Gilead less barbaric. The Republic of Gilead, ruling in reverse chronology, drags civilized society backward into the past, positioning it in primitive times. As Engels (2010) states, "The characteristic feature of the period of barbarism is the domestication and breeding of animals and the cultivation of plants" (p. 78). All women in the novel are domesticated in some way. This is sometimes evident invisibly, while at

other times it is apparent. For instance, Serena Joy is calmed and educated by her garden and the flowers she tends. Her constant knitting (Atwood, 2017, pp. 21, 24, 64, 213) as a pastime is also an activity that restrains her in many ways.

6.1. Women in Adam's Apple

The story of Adam and Eve's fall from paradise is one of the Bible's most well-known and frequently referenced narratives. After Adam's creation, God places "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9, NIV) in the center of the Garden of Eden. What is on this tree is forbidden for both Adam, the first human created, and Eve, his "helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18, NIV). After a while, Eve and Adam, deceived by the serpent, eat the fruit, which causes them to fall from paradise. The first thing that draws attention here is the fruit of the forbidden tree. Although the Bible does not explicitly name the fruit that led to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, today's widely accepted interpretation is that it is an apple. At this point, the apple is the fruit that led to Adam and Eve's fall and is considered a symbol of both knowledge and sin. The fruit is considered a symbol of knowledge because the tree that bears it is the tree of knowledge. Although it is not proven today, it is thought to be the tree that caused Newton to discover gravity by dropping an apple on his head. Perhaps this hypothesis, which was never confirmed, stems from the fact that the apple acts as an image that reflects knowledge.

On the one hand, there is a human being who broke a prohibition and fell in defiance of knowledge, and on the other hand, there is an apple that fell in defiance of nature. In any case, this fruit, which Adam and Eve are ashamed of because they are naked on the earth, also symbolizes sin.

The idea of the fruit depicted in the Bible as a red apple coincides with the color of the Handmaid's clothes. Based on Adam and Eve's embarrassment at being naked, the fact that the Handmaids' clothes are covered all overdraws an image of a perfect false paradise in a way that leaves no room for embarrassment in the new regime. The creation of woman after man and his fall from paradise after her creation is an "interpretation of the double weakness of Woman —created second and sinned first" (Sakenfeld, 1975, p. 224). Like the apple, representing the fruit of knowledge and temptation, women in the novel are kept ignorant because

knowledge is seductive. Therefore, Adam and Eve, representing the first humans and the origin of sin, can be seen as embodied by the entire society where Offred lives, built on the foundations of oppression, exploitation, and deception.

Although both Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, the woman is condemned as the first female sinner and as the first temptress (Higgins, 1976, p. 639), and this is also perpetuated through mythical figures. In Greek mythology, the apple is replaced with a jar and becomes a material for the marginalization of women. Pandora, mentioned in one of the earliest known Greek poets Hesiod's poems, *Theogony* (1959a) and *Works and Days* (1959b), is a mortal woman created by the gods. The first created mortal woman is naïve, and the deities need to teach her things (Hesiod, 1959a, line 585). Zeus gives her a jar of evils and diseases to teach everyone a lesson, and she opens it and releases pain, illness, and misfortune into the world (Hesiod, 1959b, line 102). Although she manages to close it, all bad luck is now spread worldwide by the ancestress of women. The poems do not clarify whether Pandora opens the jar out of curiosity or because she is ordered to do so. It is unclear whether the mythological figure knows what is in it because of a lack of communication. Undeniably, for a woman to conceptualize an idea, perceive herself as an individual, and effectively communicate, she must be exposed to her environmental factors. A woman who does not have enough freedom to keep in touch with her surroundings becomes passive because she accepts what she is given beyond question.

In her book *Pandora's Jar*, Haynes (2022) identifies a correlation between Pandora and Adam and Eve. On one side, there is a jar with an unknown what is in it, and on the other side, there is a forbidden apple that is unpredictable about what will happen when it is eaten. Pandora opens the jar after hearing from the gods, and Eve bites the apple after talking to the serpent, the tempter. She relates that, although Eve and Adam have everything in heaven, they do not obey the only rule they should be abided by because they are tempted by the forbidden. Haynes (2022), who says, "If a phrase has come out of the Eve story to rival 'Pandora's box,' it is perhaps 'forbidden fruit' (p. 36), attributes the fruit's tastiness to the fact that it is forbidden because prohibitions make it more tempting. At this juncture, there is a psychological reaction in which restricting the individual's freedom leads to the

opposite scenario. In fact, the themes of sexuality and sin presented in Adam and Eve and Pandora demonstrate a high level of overlap, considering that an apple or a jar can represent them. Both contain details that arouse curiosity or obscurity and are being itched to taste or open. In both stories, the sexual drive alludes to a societal taboo because people are not yet outspoken against sexuality (Glenn, 1977, p. 185). The chief point is that restricted behaviors may become punishment by creating a reactance in the person.

According to Freud (2001), taboos are prohibitions that have survived since ancient times, are protected by authority, are passed from generation to generation, and have been attempted to be imposed by force (p. 37). Restrictions, the exact causes of which are unknown, show a kind of impulse and tendency towards an object or action in a person. After a while, when the internalized prohibitions are violated, a person attributes himself/herself as guilty. Impulses arising from forbiddance may take the form of traditions and present an unquestioned taboo of sexuality around a belief. Gradually, it becomes an obsession and neurosis and is restrictive in almost every sphere of life. However, these forbiddances are shaped mainly around females. Against the backdrop of Genesis, for example, the earliest humans in the Bible become aware of their nakedness after eating from the forbidden tree, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked” (Genesis 3:7 NIV). In this case, this story, in which the apple is compatible with sexuality, sanctifies it by giving direction to the taboo. When this situation is violated, the likelihood of feeling remorse increases. While the serpent bases the woman’s inclination towards sexuality and her inability to remain unresponsive, bodies censored with fig leaves are considered a sign of shame and regret.

Forbidden desires and the struggle against social taboos imposed on women are frequent themes in *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 2017). One of the most prominent taboos in the novel is the suppression of physical intimacy, including kissing and all forms of sexual expression. The society depicted is the one in which women are reduced to their reproductive capacities, and any physical intimacy outside the prescribed act of procreation is strictly forbidden. This taboo serves to further oppress women and men by denying them not only their autonomy but also

their basic human needs for connection and intimacy. In some cases, however, physical intimacy, notably kissing, is used as a form of rebellion and resistance to the oppressive regime. For instance, Offred has a secret affair with Nick, and their stolen moments of affair serve as a means of defiance against the totalitarian rule that seeks to control every aspect of their lives. Similarly, when the Commander takes Offred to Jezebel and has physical intimacy with her, the act of kissing becomes a powerful symbol of resistance, representing the characters' refusal to accept the oppressive status quo and their desire for human connection and liaison.

As mentioned in *Totem and Taboo* (2001), there are prices to pay for the repressed desire that leads to action (p. 83). As a result of disobedience, God informs Eve that she will suffer in labor and must obey her husband (Genesis 3:16, NIV). In a sense, the Old Testament forms the starting point of a man's domination over a woman and the punishment for a woman's physical pains. Furthermore, the Old Testament's legitimization of rape leads to the perception of women as passive and men as more active. In Deuteronomy (22:28-29, NIV), the punishment for a man to pervert a single virgin and lay with her is to pay fifty shekels to the father. She is expected to marry the man who captured her in return for the money he gives. It is discernible that women have been subject to pacification from the outset and that this subjugation is instituted as a form of punishment meted out to them by men.

One of the most vivid examples of the pacification of women is the following dialogue between the Commander and Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*,

Women can't add, he said once, jokingly. When I asked him what he meant, he said, For them, one and one and one and one don't make four. What do they make? I said, expecting five or three. Just one and one and one and one, he said. (Atwood, 2017, p. 185)

Given Gilead's totalitarian and biopolitical nature, one plus one means two Handmaids. One plus one plus one now form a group. More women mean more thoughts and more thoughts mean more rebellion. So, for the Commander, even if women come together, they must not increase, they must not reach a certain number, and they must remain as they are, obedient. For him, one plus one plus one plus one is four Handmaids standing side by side, but still not enough to form a group. For Gilead, the danger is that more than one makes people, more than two makes groups, and more than three makes a mass.

The Commander's statement also reflects that women are not valued as individuals but as a collective group. Even if they form a group, they can never be a mass because the system will never allow it. This idea is rooted in a biopolitical perspective that sees individuals as part of a larger population, where their value is determined by their ability to contribute to society. The Commander's statement reinforces the idea that women are valued not according to their individual qualities but their ability to fulfill a specific role in society, that is, to bear children. No Handmaid is then any different from any other. In other words, Offred can be replaced by another Offred and Ofglen by another Ofglen because, in each household, the women take on the identity of the previous Handmaid. Offred is aware of this and explains it: "She's like my own reflection, in a mirror from which I am moving away" (Atwood, 2017, p. 44). Serving the same purpose, the Handmaids can never be individual; they are collectivized into a common denominator and substitute for each other.

Through this simple mathematical logic, Offred realizes that she is in a system that sees her as nothing more than a means of reproduction. This regime denies her the right to make choices for herself or to form meaningful connections with others. This lack of agency and individuality is an essential aspect of the oppression women face and has far-reaching consequences for their mental and physical health. The focus here is the invisibility of the individual life in the woman, which is the attempt to affirm this situation by abstracting and destroying the woman with the will of the masculine and ignoring her uniqueness (Feuer, 1997, p. 87).

Another example, in the novel, of the degradation of women is Jezebel. The women in Jezebel show a visible animalization. To illustrate, when Offred sees Moira there, she says of her costume, "She's dressed absurdly... I realize that it's supposed to be a tail. Attached to her head are two ears, of a rabbit or deer" (p. 240-241). These expressions are reminiscent of the stories of the evolution from human to animal, as in the Ovidian metamorphosis. This animality is also seen in the ambivalent word in the title of the novel because it is the tail of the Handmaid that is the main thing since the tale ends with the animalization of the woman.

Going back to both stories, they show the consequences of rebellion and the search for knowledge. In the biblical story, Adam and Eve's disobedience leads to

their expulsion from paradise and a life of hardship and suffering. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), those who rebel against the regime face severe punishment, including execution or exile to the Colonies. The oppressive regime of Gilead can be seen as a serpent that encourages individuals to submit to their authority and follow their strict rules. The Handmaids themselves are forbidden fruit, as their fertility is considered valuable to the regime. Like Adam and Eve, the Handmaids seek knowledge and resistance, risking punishment and death. The desire for freedom and the ability to make choices is a powerful motivator, even in the face of great danger. In both stories, the characters' desire for knowledge and freedom ultimately leads to a better understanding of themselves and their place in the world. Pursuing knowledge and making one's own choices is a fundamental aspect of human nature, and both stories demonstrate the power of these desires to shape the course of history.

6.2. Action and Reaction

Newton's 'Third Law of Motion' states that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. This means that when one object or person exerts a force on another object or person, the second one(s) exerts an equal and opposite force on the first (Newton, 1966, p. 13). For instance, when writing something on paper, the pen applies a force on the paper, and the paper reacts by exerting an equal and opposite force on the pen so that the act of writing can take place. The same can be considered for *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017). The Gilead regime exerts a force on the Handmaids by forbidding them to read. However, Offred reads, "Nolite te bastardes Carborundorum (p. 52)," exerting an opposite and an invisible force against the action. Gilead also forbids them from writing, but Offred writes it in Latin on paper in the Commander's room, again exerting a reaction against the regime. The totalitarian regime forbids kissing and sexual pleasure, but Offred has secret affairs with Nick and the Commander. In addition, the smoking ban, which is thought to affect women's pregnancies in the novel negatively, is also violated by Offred. Since action and reaction are applied in equal proportions, there is no clear winner in these elements of power. In other words, the more the Handmaids resist, the more pressure Gilead will exert, and as a result of this pressure, the more the Handmaids will resist.

On the other hand, Offred has an inner urge to resist the multifaceted influences exerted by the regime. The Handmaid, who has violated many prohibitions through her actions so far, has developed an internal desire to steal various objects when she is unable to do so. In a world that seeks to control and subjugate her, stealing represents a desire for autonomy as well as a desire for agency. This dynamic is central to the novel's exploration of power, gender, and identity, and Newton's Third Law of Motion's use as a metaphorical framework shows how these themes are intertwined and interconnected.

The first of the three instances of the urge to steal occurs when Offred is on her knees waiting for the Commander to arrive at the time of the Ceremony:

I would like to steal something from this room. I would like to take some small thing, the scrolled ashtray, the little silver pillbox from the mantel perhaps, or a dried flower...Every once in a while I would take it out and look at it. It would make me feel that I have power. But such a feeling would be an illusion. (Atwood, 2017, p. 80)

The first impulse to steal occurs when she is in physical danger because in a few minutes Offred will have an unwanted sexual intercourse. In the stress of this, her first impulse is to steal an ashtray in order to break the smoking ban. Since Offred has a grudge against rape at that moment, the first thing that comes to her mind is the thing that most negatively affects pregnancy. Then her desire to steal the medicine box shows an attempt to commit suicide, again an act forbidden by Gilead. In order to prevent suicide, Gilead removes everything that can be hung with a rope. However, there are still things that can be used to commit suicide. Feeling the pressure of the Ceremony, Offred sets her sights on the medicine box on the table as a weapon and agrees to commit this sin.

The dried flower is an indicator of infertility. The flowers bud and sprout and form new ones. The bedroom, the Ceremony room, is Serena Joy's private. Serena Joy, who has a vast pseudo-paradise garden, does not take care of the dried-up flowers in her own room. Therefore, this shows that she has not fulfilled her duty as a mother. The Wife does not want to remember her inadequacy, and Offred wants to steal the dried flowers, hoping Serena Joy will become pregnant. The act of stealing that Offred feels is a direct reaction to the oppressive environment she is in. The regime in Gilead has stripped Offred of her individuality and autonomy, leaving her with little control over her life. By feeling the urge to steal the ashtray, the

medicine boxes, and the dried flowers, Offred demonstrates her trust in her own will and defies the system that seeks to suppress her.

The second time Offred feels the urge to steal, this time it is a physical act. She leaves her room at night and goes straight to the parlor, ready to steal something there,

I want to steal something. Down past the fisheye on the hall wall, I can see my white shape, of tented body, hair down my back like a mane, my eyes gleaming. I like this. I am doing something, on my own...What I would like to steal is a knife, from the kitchen, but I'm not ready for that...What should I take? Something that will not be missed. In the wood at midnight, a magic flower. (Atwood, 2017, pp. 98-99)

Offred's stealing manifests her desire for agency and control in a world where she herself owns nothing. By taking something that does not belong to her, she wants to exercise a small measure of power over her own life. The fact that she sees her silhouette on her way to steal something empowers her even more. Since there are no mirrors anywhere, including in the Commander's house, it is rare for the women to see their silhouettes, so much so that the Handmaids cannot physically see themselves. Since they always go out in pairs, they are like mirrors of each other. There is nothing worth seeing for the mass-produced breeder-like Handmaids, none of whom is different from the other. Even so, Offred wants to see herself in the mirror, which reminds one of oneself. It is reflection; it drives one to rebellion. Offred's looking in the mirror makes her more aware and conscious. Looking in the mirror is the same as reading and writing. Each of these reminds them that they are human beings, in terms of Gilead or, worse, individuals.

The object Offred wants to steal is a knife. This means that she feels in danger. Even if she steals the knife, Gilead will feel in danger because the last thing the regime wants is for a Handmaid to commit suicide, especially if she is pregnant. Offred, who says, "[What they are afraid of] is those other escapes, the ones you can open in yourself, given a cutting edge," (Atwood, 2017, p. 8) knows this exceptionally well. Her cutting herself means that the regime weakens itself in response. Since the regime is still robust, Offred needs to remain strong in reaction, so stealing a knife is out of the question.

With the magic flower she wants to steal, Offred remembers that she has the honor of giving birth to a child by taking part in a critical mission. Offred is the

magic flower here. Her desire to steal something from the forbidden forest in the middle of the night further emphasizes her desire for freedom and connection with the natural world. The flower serves as a metaphor for the resilience of life and hope in the face of oppression and despair. In Gilead, women are forced to conform to standards and expectations. Offred's passion for the flower represents her longing to connect with something beautiful and meaningful, something that transcends the dreariness and monotony of her daily life. By wanting to steal the flower, she can reclaim a small part of her identity and assert her urges and needs in a society that seeks to blot out women's feelings.

As women are deprived of their autonomy and reduced to reproductive functions, Handmaids have little authority or control over their lives. They are constantly monitored and restricted; any violation is punished with severe consequences. This powerlessness is reflected in Offred's desire to take something, even if it is a magical flower from the forest at night. The need to take something unnoticeable stresses peaks to the sense of invisibility and insignificance that women feel in society.

The two opposite things Offred wants to steal, the knife and the flower, cannot coexist, and Offred expresses that she does not want to steal the knife. The two opposite armaments push each other away, leaving room for only one. There is a desire for physical armament with the knife and emotional armament with the flower. However, Offred does not care much about physical armament and prefers to prepare emotionally for the challenges she knows lie ahead. She also reminds herself of her physical defeat by saying, "I resign my body freely, to the uses of others" (Atwood, 2017, p. 288). This statement is also a reaction to the regime. She is not saying that she is forced to give up her body for biopolitical reasons, but that she is giving it up of her own free will. In this case, Newton's law is still valid in the body. Since she voluntarily gives up her body, there is no need for her to display a physical defense with a knife.

The third moment of impulse to steal occurs when Offred is in the Commander's room:

Pen Is Envy, Aunt Lydia would say, quoting another Centre motto, warning us away from such objects. And they were. right, it is envy. Just holding it is

envy. I envy the Commander his pen. It's one more thing I would like to steal. (Atwood, 2017, p. 186)

The impulse to steal the pen is important in the context of the novel because it represents Offred's growing awareness of the power dynamics at work in Gilead. The pen symbolizes the Commander's authority and control, and Offred challenges his dominance by wanting to steal it. This action directly reacts to the oppressive regime in which she finds herself. Ironically, agreeing with Aunt Lydia's words, she realizes that the pen is the biggest step against the system. While her sense of stealing was initially abstract, it is now quite concrete. The pen is sharper than a flower, a medicine box, or a knife. None of the other objects Offred wants to steal are as powerful as the pen because it contains power, authority, and reason.

In the novel, Offred's desire to steal objects has a symbolic meaning that goes beyond the simple motive of theft. Each object she wants to steal represents something more potent than itself, whether a symbol of rebellion, protection, or power. The ashtray, the medicine box, and the dried flowers represent a small act of rebellion against the oppressive society she lives in. The knife and the magical flower represent a wish for protection and a potential escape route. The Commander's pen represents a means of communication and a possible power source. These objects serve as symbols of Offred's desire for representation and control in a world where she owns nothing, and her instinct to steal them shows her willingness to take risks and challenge the status quo.

According to Zulliger's (1951) experiment, if the person who steals or attempts to steal thinks that he or she will be punished, "the unconscious motive for theft becomes more powerful instead of being subdued or dissolved" (p. 203). In the feeling of stealing, which becomes a symbolic character and identifies with a mixed state of mind of which the person is unaware, Offred is aware that she will be punished if she commits a physical act of stealing. Therefore, the urge to steal has never gone away. Seen as a kind of rebellion, it is a small act of defiance that allows her to regain some sense of authority and control in a society where her body does not belong to her and every move is monitored. In a totalitarian society like Gilead, even small acts of resistance, such as reading, have a significant impact because they inspire others to resist and rebel against the regime, just as Offred is

empowered and inspired by the previous Handmaid who wrote “Nolite te bastardes Carborundorum” (Atwood, 2017, p. 52) on the closet.

Offred’s invisible reaction to Gilead’s visible violence prevented one side from winning, as both are equally strong. Therefore, she emphasizes an open-ended ending at the novel’s end by saying, “into the darkness within; or else the light” (Atwood, 2017, p. 297). If she steps into the darkness, which is the tyranny of the regime, she will continue to resist just as much. If she steps into the light, which is into salvation, it is because the regime helps her to the same extent (thanks to Nick). The open ending justifies Newton’s law because “the action and reaction [are] always equal” (Newton, 1966, p. 24) by offering equal resistance.

Ultimately, there is no winner or loser in the Republic of Gilead. The innocent and the executioners win and lose because of a state of equilibrium. The force that corresponds to the force exerted by the regime maintains the balance. Like the law of physics, “A balance is in equilibrium if the moment of the applied force is equal and opposite to the moment of the resistance” (Lenzen, 1937, p. 260). Both the politics of death (thanatopolitics) and the power of life (Handmaids) are intertwined. The regime restricts women, but women form a secret organization (Mayday) in response. In this situation, the principle of equality will never be broken. Both the government and the women oppress each other equally. If one side breaks this, the other side is defeated, just as force augments when velocity diminishes.



7. THE REAL-LIFE REFLECTIONS OF THE HANDMAID'S TALE

Women have been pushed into the background of society from past to present due to their biological destiny means that their fate is sealed before they are even born. Considering that a woman is female before she becomes a woman, with such an unfortunate struggle for existence, is quite enough for the patriarchy to despise her. The femininity hidden inside the woman's body is the passive resister of masculine domination.

7.1. History Repeats Itself

The fact that many things associated with women are seen as taboos goes back many years. Berkowitz (2013) argues that the first examples of taboo in prehistoric traditions are sexual drives. For instance, according to St. Augustine, these drives are a curse given to mankind as a result of the sins of Adam and Eve (Augustine, 1998, p. 65) because, in early Christianity, "sexual love brings spiritual death" (Berkowitz, 2013, p. 123). The idea that even a child born as a result of sexual pleasure is sinful is not surprising given that the birth of Jesus was from the Virgin Mary (Berkowitz, 2013, p. 126).

Similarly, Schopenhauer (2010) argues that sexual impulses should be completely resisted (p. 413). At this juncture, Berkowitz (2013) describes sex as a man's "[reconciliation]...to the mystery of the female" (p. 21) and says that blood was considered a dangerous taboo in ancient times. He, therefore, suggests that the first sexual prohibitions may have manifested as taboos against having sexual intercourses with women during menstruation.

The concept of menstrual blood as unclean can be explained by an example from today's Orthodox Jews. The Hebrew terms 'niddah', meaning menstruating woman and 'mikveh', meaning cleansing (Wasserfall, 1999, p. 1), describe the importance of a woman's biological fate in determining her place in society. When a woman is in her niddah period, she is considered unclean (depending on the sect) and does not sleep in the same bed with her husband, and when her menstrual period ends, she gets rid of her uncleanness by doing mikveh, that is, by cleansing herself with water.

According to Steinberg (1997), in Talmudic traditions, during menstruation,

the husband and wife cannot touch each other or exchange objects (p. 9). As a result of this taboo of blood and its association with dirt, the concrete distinction within the household subordinates women (Atwood, 2017). Just as menstrual blood is considered a taboo in *The Handmaid's Tale* because it represents a failed birth, in Orthodox Judaism any contact with a menstruating woman is a taboo or a sin. The Old Testament explains this as follows,

...anyone who touches [women] will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Anyone who touches her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. Anyone who touches anything she sits on will be unclean...and they will be unclean till evening. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, they will be unclean till evening. If a man has sexual relations with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean. (Leviticus 15:19-24, NIV)

As a matter of fact, the man is also penalized for the natural flow of the woman's body makes these rules all the more acute. The parallelism between the woman's reproductive function and her social status reinforces the idea that she is inherently inferior to the man, thus contradicting gender equality. Charlotte Perkins Gilman (2008) argues that women live in a man-made world at all stages of life, such that the world is always "mankind meant men-kind" (p. 18). Simply looking at the use of language, the word 'effeminate', which is used to mean too feminine, carries a sense of inferiority that is unacceptable in a masculine world, whereas it is okay to be too masculine. Femininity, then, is a defect. Or, as the author puts it, even in animal nomenclature, the species name exists as male, and what makes it female is the suffix at the end of the name, as in "lion, lioness; leopard, leopardess" (p. 20). Therefore, the woman is always indexed to the man.

There are duties assigned to women as their femininity already dictates. In the androcentric world, a woman is primarily the wife of her husband. Gilman (2008) explains the masculine restriction of women in all aspects of life as follows, "The dominant male, holding his women as property, and fiercely jealous of them, considering them always as his, not belonging to themselves, their children, or the world; has hedged them in with restrictions of a thousand sorts" (p. 38). The most common of these restrictions is physical. For instance, foot-binding, as a perception of beauty that is prescribed for women, is a form of physical violence. A concrete

example of patriarchal oppression of women, foot-binding was used as a symbol of beauty in past Chinese culture. If a woman's feet were not bound, she was not considered a woman, no matter how beautiful her face or body was (Ping, 2000, p. 226).

The shrinking of the feet, which emerged as a result of the identification of beauty with pain and disability, means that the female body was fetishized. The practice of lotus feet, which hindered women's mobility for the rest of their lives, lasted for nearly a thousand years, making it difficult for them to run, walk, and balance, confining them to the house (Bossen et al, 2011, p. 348). The foot binding shows not only the oppression of women but also the man's view of himself as a source of fulfillment and superiority.

Although there are many reasons why men do not see themselves on the same level as women, the main reason lies in Gilman's (2008) phrase, "jealous of them" (p. 38). Men, then, restrict women because they are envious. Although Gilman does not elaborate on the reason for jealousy here, Berkowitz (2013) explains it as follows, "perhaps the sudden appearance of menstrual blood reminded men that...they could not generate human life on their own" (p. 22). From this perspective, the masculine sense of inferiority and the idea of being incapable of dominating the female may have brought about a kind of fear that led to the stigmatization of women as unclean. Hence, taboo may not only arise from the biological phenomenon in women but also from the male's way of thinking in the subordinate-superior relationship.

This jealousy is explained by 'womb envy', a concept coined by Karen Horney. In psychology, womb envy refers to the jealousy that men may feel towards women's biological functions such as pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding (Horney, 1993). Horney introduces this concept as an alternative to Sigmund Freud's 'penis envy' theory. While Freud (2000) believes that women are jealous of men's genitals and the power it represents in penis envy, which he explains with the Castration Complex, Horney argues that men are envious of women's reproductive abilities. Horney's concept explains the social pressure and restriction that men place on women because they may feel threatened by women's ability to bear children and sustain life. Freud, on the other hand, reinforces the idea that

masculinity is superior to femininity by emphasizing that the jealousy of little girls “[culminates] in the wish...to be boys themselves” (Freud, 2000, p. 61). In other words, the main difference here is that Horney, unlike Freud, draws attention to the fact that functions, not sexual organs, are envied.

The concept of womb envy is rooted in the historical and social context of gender relations. Throughout history, women have been relegated to submissive roles in society, while men have occupied positions of power and privilege. This power dynamic has led men to feel threatened by women’s reproductive abilities. In gender relations, “the one sex always seeks in the other that which is complementary to it or of a nature different from its own” (Horney, 2015, p. 247). This search manifests as a hidden unconscious emotion, and men in particular are jealous of women’s fertility abilities, which leads them to act to limit their potential abilities.

An example of womb envy can also be found in the context of Greek mythology. The myth of Zeus giving birth to Athena from his head can be interpreted as a manifestation of this jealousy, as it suggests that men desire to experience the creative power of birth.

In *Theogony*, Hesiod primarily focuses on how Zeus unites Metis within himself and how Athena was born. Zeus chooses Metis as his wife. When Metis is about to give birth to Athena, Zeus swallows his wife (Hesiod, 1959b, lines 886-890). Here, the woman is not allowed to give birth and the male is necessarily included in this situation before birth. This fear of the female is “the desire to escape from the female genital, or to deny its very existence” (Horney, 2015, p. 244), which Horney also mentions. In *Theogony* it is Metis who is pregnant, but since Zeus swallows her, the masculine takes on the task of giving birth: “Then from his head, by himself, he produced Athene of the gray eyes...” (Hesiod, 1959b, line 925). Here, the choice of the head for childbirth instead of the womb or the penis exemplifies the concept of a man trying to imitate the creative power traditionally associated with women.

The myth reflects the long-standing cultural admiration for women’s ability to conceive and nurture life. Moreover, the feminine is disregarded by additionally stating that the masculine gives birth “by himself” (Hesiod, 1959b, line 925). While

Metis and Zeus are united in one body, it is Zeus alone who gives birth. This is the myth that refers to the devaluation of women's reproductive abilities and its impact on gender roles. In this case, Zeus seems to have desired that the most valuable thing should be completely out of male domination.

The fact that men have historically occupied positions of power and authority in society can be seen as a manifestation of a desire to compensate for the lack of biological functions specific to women. Horney's theory of womb envy underlines the need for a more inclusive and egalitarian society by shedding light on how gender roles and social expectations are constructed.

When *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017) is analyzed in terms of womb envy, the book suggests that the categorization of women according to their reproductive abilities and the management of their reproductive capacities arise from a desire to control social power stemming from gender-based jealousy of fertility. In the Republic of Gilead, where fertility is declining due to environmental factors, the Commanders feel inadequate because they cannot procreate, which leads them to symbolize fertile women and desire to control their bodies. During the Ceremony, the fact that Offred lies on the bottom, Serena Joy sits behind the Handmaid with legs around her head, and Offred and Wife hold hands during the union (p. 104) shows the inadequacy of a single woman. Especially after childbirth, giving the baby to the supposedly infertile woman instead of the biological mother is another sign of masculine hatred. In a way, this is similar to Zeus swallowing Metis and giving birth to Athena. In this respect, when the Commander transfers his offspring to the Handmaid, he symbolically sends the sperm from Offred's head to the Wife's womb through the head between the Wife's legs. Thanks to the masculine, the birth is again realized through the head, which endows him with great power.

The inadequacy of a woman is reflected also in the Qur'anic debt contract and is observed in many countries where Sharia law is practiced. A verse in the Qur'an says, "Call upon two of your men to witness. If two men cannot be found, then one man and two women of your choice will witness—so if one of the women forgets the other may remind her" (Al-Baqarah, 2:282). Accordingly, the testimony of one woman is not accepted in the eyes of the law; at least two women must be witnesses.

A woman who is half as one alone is dependent on another woman and is more forgetful and defective than a man. The fact that a woman is not meaningful unless she is a couple is clearly stated in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017) when the Commander says: "One and one and one and one don't make four" (p. 185). Since a woman has no qualifications on her own, the Handmaids go out of the house in pairs.

Hoffman (2019) states the following on behalf of gender inequalities in the Qur'an,

Regarding crimes that have specified punishments in the Qur'an and Hadith, such as murder, adultery, slander, and theft, women's testimony is disallowed altogether. This prohibition creates problems in the case of women who are raped, because the testimony of four adult Muslim male eyewitnesses to the act of penetration is necessary to prove such an allegation. If such proof is not available, a woman who accuses a man of rape opens herself to a charge of slander, which is punishable by eighty lashes. (p. 294)

These practices, which Hoffman cites as contrary to modern human rights understanding, place an unfair burden of proof on women and reinforce patriarchal structures that prioritize women's testimony over men's testimony and authority. It also perpetuates the myth that women often make false accusations of rape, effectively silencing women survivors of sexual violence and denying them access to justice and protection from perpetrators. It is a clear example of the systemic pressure on women to prove that they have been raped.

The life of Iraqi human rights activist Nadia Murad is one of the most recent examples of the abuses based on the Qur'an mentioned by Hoffman. Murad, who was kidnapped, raped and then sold by ISIS, writes in her Nobel Prize-winning memoir *The Last Girl* (Murad, 2017) that ISIS has booklets that supposedly follow Quranic verses and Islamic law (p. 124). According to these booklets, "It is permissible to have intercourse with the female slave who hasn't reached puberty if she is fit for intercourse... to buy, sell, or gift female captives and slaves, for they are merely property" (p. 11). The fact that all this is happening in the twenty-first century and is legitimized by distorting a centuries-old holy book shows that the status of women in society has never improved and never will. Hundreds of thousands of women who are not as lucky as Nadia Murad and cannot escape persecution are showing a form of resistance. Most of them are not heard because

they are buried beneath the earth, but while there are still women who can make their voices heard, gender inequality is the most important social issue that needs to be addressed for both men and women.

In the Republic of Gilead, women are denied basic human rights and subjected to sexual slavery, forced to bear children on behalf of their assigned Commanders. This is similar to the real-world experience of women who experience sexual violence and are often blamed and shamed for their own victimization. Even though there is a perpetrator, the woman does not need to prove it because power implicitly does not recognize this rape as a crime. The issue of gender and power dynamics is, therefore, central to discussions of sexual violence and rape. The act of rape is not only a physical violation but also a way of establishing power and control over the victim. This power dynamic is exacerbated by cultural and social norms that reinforce gender roles and expectations that often place women in subordinate positions. In the novel, women are stripped of their agency and reduced to objects to be used and abused by those in power. The use of sexual violence as a means of control is a particularly insidious manifestation of this dynamic, as it leaves lasting physical and psychological scars on the victims. Both Hoffman's words and Atwood's dystopia are powerful reminders of the need to address gender inequality and the importance of fighting against the use of violence and oppression as instruments of control.

Another detail that makes *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017) current in many respects lies in the information in a database found by a Dutch hacker in 2019. According to this data, women in China are recorded per their fertility status (Kuo, 2019). The interesting point here is the name, age, education, and political status of 1.8 million women in the database, as well as the section called 'BreedReady' at the end of the list. While this title, which is used in the face of the country's rapidly aging population, raises many questions, the comments on this situation are "A real-life Handmaid's Tale" (Leung, 2019). BreedReady can be a report that a woman who has given birth before or is entered into the hospital database after a gynecologist's examination is fertile. It could also be that the women have been entered into the database through facial recognition, which is widely used in China. In any case, the fact that the state media did not make any statement about the

disclosure of women based on their fertility (Leung, 2019) reinforces the belief that the state once again plays the most active role in gender discrimination. Although this situation may seem immoral, it reveals the patriarchy in society as blatantly obvious.

The Feminine Mystique (Friedan, 1977) notes that feminist historians require direct access to sources to understand better the historical events and the injustices perpetrated against women. In other words, referring to written and oral sources to confirm instances of sexism and ensure coherence between different events is essential. Just like Malala Yousafzai, who was brutally killed for defending the right to education in Pakistan, personally mentions inequality, the right to education, and the use of religion on women in her autobiographical book, *I Am Malala* (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013). Malala's decision to name her book can be seen as a symbolic tribute to the Handmaids prohibited from using their names under the new government and as a representation of the countless unnamed women who have suffered similar oppression.

As Atwood points out in an interview, the dystopia she wrote about is real-life events that have happened and continue to happen (Business Journal Daily, 2017). Considering the period in which the novel was written, the social change brought about by the Iranian Islamic Revolution, which significantly restricted every movement of women in the Middle East (Nashat, 1980). In 1979, with the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took over the country's leadership and began enforcing Sharia law, which led to significant restrictions for women in almost every aspect of life. According to the laws of the Khomeini (1985), girls who want to get married in Iran must get permission from either their father or their paternal grandfather (p. 53). The leader completely invalidates the permission received from the mother; in addition, male and female students can perform temporary marriages with classmates in order to legally be in the same classroom (Khomeini, 1985, p. 70).

Ayatollah Khamenei, who followed him, also mentioned in a meeting with women that Western thoughts and views on women could not bring society happiness and could never guide people (Ayatollah Khamenei, 2014). Stating that the female figure in the Western mentality is materialistic and wrong because it has

no religious meaning, that Europe sees woman as a means of satisfying lust, and that women lead men into sin as long as they do not wear modest dresses, he has paved the way for women's rights resistance initiated by Mahsa Amini, which is taking place in Iran today within the framework of all these discourses.

When eyes are turned towards the Western world, during the Ceaușescu period, the number of women who died and got arrested because of illegal abortions in Romania rose dramatically (Thompson, 2018, p. 278). Atwood refers to the compulsory monthly pregnancy testing, a minimum requirement of four children, and lack of government financial support for families as a “cruel, inhuman... recipe for despair and death” (“Worth Quoting: Margaret Atwood,” 2018) regarding women. Despite the striking parallels between the dystopian society depicted in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017), where women are disempowered and silenced, and the situation for women in Romania during the communist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, men did not appear to draw any inspiration from the novel, four years after its publication. During the communist regime, gender inequality was widespread, and women had limited rights. Ceaușescu implemented policies that reinforced traditional gender roles, such as promoting motherhood as the primary role for women and not allowing women to work specific jobs that often paid less than men for doing the same work.

Despite the striking parallels between the fictional Republic of Gilead and the real-life situation of women under Ceaușescu's regime, gender inequality continued to be pervasive in Romania for many years. Despite all this, Elisabeta Rizea of Nucșoara, one of the women who did not lose hope, was detained and imprisoned by the secret police due to her working with anti-communist groups and rebelling against the state (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2010, p. 18). It is evident that the period's secret police are the Eyes in Atwood's novel, and these eyes are still controlling women in many countries in 2024.

The most contemporary reflection of the novel is the ban on abortion in the United States. With the US Supreme Court's striking down of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, which had guaranteed the constitutional right to abortion since 1973, “in 2022 alone, state legislators introduced 563 provisions to restrict access to abortion, and 50 of those restrictions were signed into law the same year” (Damante & Jones,

2023).

As of 2024, abortion is prohibited in fourteen states, with some states permitting it up to a certain number of weeks. Nine of these do not accept abortion in pregnancies resulting from rape and/or incest under any circumstances (Choi & Cole, 2024). It is also stated that in West Virginia, the sale of abortion pills might be banned. The restrictions here are the same as in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 2017). In the novel, anything that could affect the health of the child is avoided, and the use of the abortion pill, the morning-after pill, or the contraceptive pill is discontinued. Abortion itself is banned (because it is a sin) in the Republic of Gilead.

Joe Biden, the second Catholic president of the United States after John F. Kennedy, appeared to support the abortion ban by saying, "Life begins at conception, that's the Church's judgment. I accept it in my personal life" and then made an ambivalent statement by saying "But I refuse to impose it on equally devout Christians and Muslims and Jews, and I just refuse to impose that on others" (Bukuras, 2022). Also, former President Donald Trump who "avoided stating whether he supports or opposes a specific number of weeks" (Kim & Ibssa, 2024) stated that abortion up to a certain number of weeks is acceptable, with some exceptions. These contradictory statements must have seemed contrived to the public, as an online humor and satire website's headline for an article titled "Life Begins at Conception, Unless It's an Election Year" (Blachor, 2024) underlines the dominance of the government over the female body for ruling more. The fact that it is a woman's womb that is in question, that a woman's right over her own body is granted by men, and that even more restrictions are placed on prohibitions emphasizes the extent to which state policies have a say over gender.

The strength of public reaction to restrictions on abortion is evident from the protests organized across the country. In 2022, one notable form of protest was the use of costumes inspired by *The Handmaid's Tale*, the TV series of the same name that emerged as a result of the impact of the book on society. These protests were a powerful show of solidarity and resistance, emphasizing the importance of reproductive rights and the need to protect them. By wearing the clothes of the Handmaids, women reacted against interventions against their bodies. One of these protests took place in Boston, Massachusetts. Wearing red dresses and white caps,

the women gathered in front of the Massachusetts State House holding banners that read 'WOMEN ARE NOT PROPERTY,' 'NO FORCED PREGNANCY,' 'NO FORCED SEX' (Crimaldi & Stoico, 2022). These banners tied on cloth hangers are seen as an effort to raise awareness by using women's passive resistance rights that have not yet been taken away from them. These hangers show how dangerously abortions were performed by women previously when abortion was forbidden. The writings on the banners held by the women amply demonstrate how far-sighted and realistic Atwood was.

The Handmaid's Tale (Atwood, 2017) was banned at the time due to its sexual content and the danger of emulating women's resistance, and it has become a work so memorable that it is used in today's protests, so much so that in May 2022, Penguin Random House made an unburnable edition of the book. This edition was made "to raise awareness about the proliferating book banning and educational gag orders in American schools nationwide" (Margaret Atwood & PRH, 2022). What does not burn here is not only the book itself but also its content. What does not burn is women's resistance, the oppression brought about by masculine domination and women's rights.

In the nineteenth century, women carried banners reading 'VOTES FOR WOMEN' to have the right to suffrage. In the twentieth century, they carried banners reading 'TAKE BACK THE NIGHT' to avoid harassment on the streets. In the twenty-first century, they carry banners reading 'ABORTION IS A WOMAN'S RIGHT', which means that history is repeating itself for women. Women have gained rights and lost rights in every aspect of life. The answer to the question of whether history repeats itself is yes! It repeats itself for women under masculine domination. In this world, women will always be sufferers until Zeus stops eating Metises. When they stop, then will women be able to give birth to those of who will not kill them.



8. CONCLUSION

The main argument of this research, that gender inequality is based on state monopoly, is explained throughout the research with examples from the novel and real life. The reason why gender discrimination has persisted for centuries is due to the effects of the state and its ideologies on the individual and society. The four ideologies of the state discussed are totalitarianism, biopolitics, thanatopolitics, and Christian fundamentalism on the theocratic level.

To sum up, while the state acts as a potential catalyst for social change, it also recognizes the potential to use its power for domination and control. One of these elements of power is totalitarianism, which is exercised over individuals and has a broad social scope. It is a system that restricts the individual, takes away their freedoms, brainwashes them through propaganda, puts pressure on them with secret police, and punishes all kinds of resistance (Arendt, 1973, p. 471). This system is seen directly in the novel. The Republic of Gilead restricts women by forcing them into certain molds, restricting their freedom by making them wear uniforms and preventing them from looking around. Also, media is used as a propaganda tool, and the regime is tried to be maintained with the constant state of war. Those who do not obey the regime are severely punished, executed according to their crimes, or sent to exile zones called Colonies. Here, the state, which directs the society, is the dominant power regarding which ideas are taught to the people by using all its components in the way it desires. This shows that “the represented subject always runs the risk of being transformed into an object or a plaything” (Mbembe, 2019, p. 139). This ideology is a progressive method of strict management by consolidating social balance and stability with hierarchy and ensuring no deficit in power distribution.

The Republic of Gilead’s most important weapon is biopolitics, which gives it control over bodies. The totalitarian state uses the domination of biopower to force women to give birth to create the desired population. To Foucault (1995), “If one intervenes upon [the body] to imprison it, or to make [the body] work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property” (p. 11). The woman’s body has become property, and the Commanders own that property. The power that makes the marginalization of the handmade Handmaids

finds the right to kill those who do not follow the rules as a result of the norming society. In this case, Gilead sees life as “death’s medium” (Mbembe, 2019, p. 38), making biopower evolves into thanatopolitics, the politicization of death.

The Republic of Gilead’s belief system is characterized by Christian Fundamentalism, a branch of religious extremism. The thing that makes it conservative is the status of women. Women forbidden to read and write are commodified in the male-dominated world and imprisoned in traditional gender roles. Gilead is centered on heterosexual intercourse and fertility and takes an intolerant approach to the diversity of different sexual orientations and gender identities. By manipulating the dogmas and interpretations of religion, the government forces society to abide by strict religious rules. Christian fundamentalism manipulates religious references to gain control over society and subject women to strict religious rules so that people of all classes must use certain religious words when speaking. People from all strata are expected to adopt these new religious and spiritual teachings. Those who do not obey the rules or oppose the regime’s policies are punished.

In Gilead, morality is universal, so everyone is judged, and the state has systems of punishment to prevent a potential social upheaval. The sexism and hierarchy inherent in the systematics of punishment is not a balance but rather a collection of imbalances. For this reason, in the hierarchical imbalance, women are tried to be stopped by crushing them at the bottom. The existence of a system of punishment that includes execution, exile, or physical violence has made the form of government associated with dictatorship and tyranny. Atwood’s portrayal of the oppressive regime serves as a frightening reminder of the perils of religious fundamentalism and highlights the importance of safeguarding individual rights and freedoms through ongoing vigilance.

The novel’s exploration of the intersectionality of gender, religion, and politics exemplifies the complex nature of societal power structures and their impact on individuals and communities. As such, the novel is an essential piece of feminist literature contributing significantly to the ongoing conversation surrounding gender inequality and the need for social change.

The hypothesis that needs to be confirmed according to the essence of the

research is that the personal is political. In order to reach this conclusion, the injustices encountered in daily life and the role of the government in this are addressed.

Gender is a theoretical framework grounded in egalitarian human rights principles, providing a critical lens for examining sexes and their social attributes. From an academic standpoint, it is essential to consider how gender impacts societal norms and expectations surrounding femininity. Feminists recognize the entitlement of women to equitable opportunities and rights on par with men, intending to contest the conventional gender roles that have been entrenched for centuries. This paradigm advocates for a more expansive and inclusive conception of womanhood, underscoring the importance of women's autonomy and self-determination. If widely embraced, this perspective holds the potential to engender positive societal transformation and foster more significant gender equity. The feminist perspective offers a valuable framework for comprehending and analyzing the intricate matters related to the female body. Examining both conventional and contemporary viewpoints enhances our comprehension of gender roles and expectations, leading us toward a more equitable and impartial society for everyone.

The complex and multifaceted approaches to the female body are shaped by government policies. Understanding these policies is essential to promote gender equality and empower women. Since there is no clear-cut definition of the state, it is necessary to understand it in terms of how it is thought rather than what it is. Foucault (2008) defines the state's lack of definition as follows, "The state is at once that which exists, but which does not yet exist enough" (p. 4). In this sense, the state is not a fixed structure but shaped by power relations that exist in constant change and development. In his definition, Foucault also draws attention to its limitations. Its insufficient existence shows that it is not enough to solve all the problems faced by society. Therefore, the inability of the state to solve social problems shows its limitations in addressing social issues. However, it is always in the process of reform, which is why it is so difficult to get rid of power. Both the impossibility of escaping from the mechanism of power, which directs society in every aspect of its life, and the inability of the government to solve the problems of society mean that the two entities are, as the phrase goes, at each other's throats; society is in need of

the state and the state depends on society.

The illumination of the oppression and simultaneous struggle against women is determined by the way the state treats them. Since the state is the mirror of society and society is the building block of human beings, both concepts are treated about each other. The individual receives his/her freedom of thought and speech within the norms determined by the state in which s/he lives. It forms a whole with its form of government, regime, and laws and takes its place at the top of the balance. Therefore, even though an individual's liberty, private life, and thought structure are shaped within society, they are directly and indirectly affected by how it is governed. The state, which does not exist independently of society, aspires to create an orderly society by referring to the unity of the political community. This desire is based on the relationship between the sovereign and citizen and creates a structure that monopolizes the factors of freedom and restraint, leading the individual to the view that political is personal.

Returning to the novel in the final analysis, In *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017), Offred's statement, "I never looked good in red, it's not my color" (p. 8), which is considered passive resistance, is a strong declaration of rebellion against the oppressive regime where she finds herself in. Her inability to like the color red, which may remind her of birth, or menstruation (blood taboo), reflects her struggle to preserve her sense of self in a regime that destroys individuality. By rejecting this color, Offred reveals her refusal to conform to the expectations imposed on her. This defiance is an essential aspect of her resistance to the regime as she tries to reclaim her identity and agency in an inhuman environment. Her refusal to adopt the color red symbolizes her refusal to accept the predetermined fate imposed upon her by Gilead.

Dark or light, all the paths taken by women are under the labyrinth of the masculine. In this way, the Republic of Gilead is a new old state. It contains the truths of the past and the predictions of the future. Each time it is read, a new gem accompanies new thoughts. Gilead is like a Pandora's box. Once injustice occurs, it spreads out into the world unstoppable. As such, the power declares itself the new sheriff in town. Just like in the past, this is an authority that takes state policies, the use of religion, and the restriction of women to the extreme. The individual who

restricts women has seen this from society at large, and society has learned this from the state's policies, which received this power from patriarchy itself. In other words, androcentrism is a form of belief that makes women have been unfortunate ever since Eve ate the forbidden fruit.

The dystopia, which reflects the misogyny that is not only between the lines, but has been, is, and will be in reality, mentions the inability of women, who are victims of the system, to find a place in society. It announces to the whole world that the woman who cannot find a place for herself in the world, who cannot determine her destiny, is oppressed under the patriarchal system. Maybe in real life, the Offreds will put an end to misogyny. Maybe they do it just because red does not suit them.

Since the marginalization of women is still not over, the novel does not have a definite ending. Not every story has to end well or badly because not every story ends.



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CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Details

Surname, Name : Vural, Merve Sultan
Nationality : Republic of Türkiye

Education

Degree	School	Graduation Year
Master	Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University	2024
Bachelor	Pamukkale University	2020
High School	Şentepe Şehit Volkan Canöz Anatolian High School	2015

Work Experience

Year	Place	Position
2023	AssisTT Guidance and Customer Service Inc.	Customer Service Assistant (Turkish Airlines Project)
2021	American Cultural Association Language Schools	English Teacher
2020-2021	Dorlion Publications	Book Translator
2019-2020	Atatürk Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School	English Teacher (Internship)
2018-2019	Education Volunteers Foundation of Türkiye (TEGV)	English Teacher

Foreign Language

English

Publications

- Frank, A. (2022). *Anne Frank'ın Hatıra Defteri* [The diary of a young girl] (M. S. Vural, Trans.). Tema Yayınları.
- Behn, A. (2022). *Oroonoko ya da Asil Köle* [Oroonoko: or, The royal slave] (3rd ed., M. S. Vural, Trans.). Dorlion Yayınları.
- Casas, B. de las. (2020). *Bir Kara Talih: Kızılderililer* [A short account of the destruction of the Indies and history of the Indies] (M. S. Vural, Trans.). Dorlion Yayınları.
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