T.C.

EGE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

GENDER, MEMORY AND ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS IN DYSTOPIAN NOVELS

PhD Dissertation

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Department of English Language and Literature

English Language and Literature PhD Programme

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL COMPLIANCE

I hereby declare that in the dissertation “Gender, Memory and Ecological Concerns in Dystopian Novels ” that I present to Ege University, The Graduate School of Social Sciences, all information has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that I have fully cited and referenced all the materials and results that are not original to this work.

Duygu YAVUZ

PREFACE

In this very twenty-first century, as I reflect on my innermost thoughts and societal aspirations along with the meaning of my existence, I have found myself profoundly affected by the growing dystopian nature of our world. Witnessing the firsthand outcomes of the global issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, source scarcity, hunger, inequality and the prevailing atmosphere of fear and pessimism has prompted me to conduct research on how ideal and non-ideal societies are presented in literature. Even though the concept of 'ideal' is quite subjective, I have always been curious about the measurement of 'ideal' in different societies if there exists any. Similarly, I wondered how humankind went through increasingly pessimistic experiences as centuries passed by.

Speculations, conspiracy theories, the outbreak of pandemic, seeing each decade is getting worse than the previous one led me to make comparisons among societies in centuries. After all, the anxieties of our ancestors were alike, and their experiences would also be quite similar. As a result, I began to research utopian and dystopian societies in literature and engage in reading utopian and dystopian works. Ultimately, I have found that one of the most significant catalysts of the formation of non-ideal civilizations has been global politics, which led to our ruthless detachment from nature in the middle of concrete jungles, and our attempt to gain control over it.

Through the process of discovery, invasion and technical advancements, humanity in its insatiable pursuit of progress, ironically evolved into beings that inflict destruction by displacing other individuals, exploiting resources, displaying aggression and exhibiting malicious behavior. While contemplating how humans could become so malevolent and how those subjected to all this mistreatment could endure it, the concept of memory began to preoccupy my mind. For instance, while George Orwell's well-known dystopia makes its readers witness how human memory can be severely manipulated, I have repeatedly observed during my research that how crucial it is to preserve individual and collective memory. If memory is not preserved, horrific events are repeated in history and are intentionally made acceptable by creating the perception that they are insignificant or they are even totally forgotten. I have frequently observed

notable proof of organized endeavors and policies of ‘erasing memories’ according to the interests of the privileged classes in a broad variety of historical and literary resources.

Along with the aforementioned reasons, as a woman, both my personal life experiences and interpersonal interactions, as well as societal expectations and the firmly rooted comparison between nature and women, inspired me to explore the themes of gender, nature and memory within utopian literature as a whole. Therefore, it is no coincidence that I opted for female writers. In addition, I wondered whether it would be likely to find an escape, a glimmer of hope, and a way out in such pessimistic dystopian worlds. My pursuit of hope in the works led me to the concept of ‘critical dystopias’ and encouraged me to research this genre further. These readings prompted me to explore the topic of ‘utopian plasticity’ and enhanced my comprehension and perspective on utopian literature. The female writers I have chosen to analyse allowed me the chance to scrutinize all of these topics simultaneously as a whole. Initially, tackling all these themes — each of which could be a dissertation topic on its own — extended the process a bit. However, as I quest for in my thesis, the belief that there can possibly be hope under any circumstances strengthened my enthusiasm and faith to go on with all these topics together and complete my dissertation.

Throughout this long, arduous but priceless learning journey, I would like to sincerely thank my distinguished thesis advisor, Prof. Dr. Nevin Yıldırım Koyuncu for her support, understanding and pleasant demeanor. I have gained a wealth of knowledge from her during my undergraduate years and PhD studies. I also wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed mentor, Prof. Dr. Dilek Direnç who recommended that I work on *The Memoirs of A Survivor*. She has never withheld her support throughout my undergraduate and doctoral studies and always believed in me. I have acquired a vast amount of knowledge from her. She has been a role model whose affection and concern I have always felt.

I would like to express my profound appreciation to my beloved family for their tireless efforts, support, encouragement and unconditional love. They have been there for me every step of the way.

I dedicate my thesis to my beloved grandmother, whom I lost in 2014, one of the most selfless and visionary woman I have ever known, who always encouraged me to follow my passions and whom I miss dearly; and to my dear uncle, who was a great teacher and dedicated himself to his students throughout his short life.

To those who have left an everlasting impression on my memory…

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Doris Lessing ve Margaret Atwood'un öne çıkan distopik romanları *The Memoirs of A Survivor* ve *The Handmaid's Tale*'de Ernst Bloch'un kavramsallaştırdığı 'ütopik umut'u ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır; buna binaen, Lessing ve Atwood'un anlatı tarzlarını temel eleştirel distopya unsurları ışığında incelemektedir. Çalışma, bu amacı gerçekleştirmek için, kadın anlatıcıların anılarına/kayıtlarına ve yaşadıkları acı deneyimlere odaklanmaktadır. Her iki romanın da cehennemi andıran dayanılmaz ortamı, insan türünün politikaları ve özellikle ayrıcalıklı sınıfların oluşturdukları kurumların neden olduğu ekolojik felaketlerle yakından ilişkilidir. Bu nedenle, tez, her iki romanda da kadınlar ve doğa gibi ötekileştirilmiş/metalaştırılmış gruplar ile bu gruplara karşı uygulanan, Platon'dan günümüze kadar olan yayılmacı, sömürgeci, kapitalist politikaları deşifre etmeyi ve bu politikaların ataerkil yapıyla bağlantısına ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Serpil Oppermann, "Eco criticism: Natural World in the Literary Viewfinder" isimli makalesinde, edebiyatın; çevrenin estetik ve kültürel olarak inşa edilmiş bir parçası olarak algılanabileceğini; anlam, değer, dil ve hayal gücü gibi insan inşalarının sorunlarını doğrudan ele aldığını ve bunun da daha sonra ekolojik bilinç sorunuyla ilişkilendirilebileceğini ortaya koyar. Edebiyat, ekolojik düşünceye katkıda bulunan değerleri aktarır ve buna paralel olarak, çevre krizi de edebiyat araştırmalarında göz ardı edilemeyecek bir sorundur (32). Tezimde incelediğim romanların distopya niteliği taşımasının nedenlerinden biri de tam da çevre kriziyle alakalı olmalarıdır. Bu bağlamda bu çalışma, edebiyatın ve hikaye anlatıcılığının, bireysel ve kolektif hafızaları, ezilen grupların sesi olarak direniş ve dönüşüm aracı olarak kullanma gücünü vurgulamaktadır. Romanlar sadece toplumun kabusa dönüşmüş atmosferini ortaya koymakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda, bireysel ve toplumsal kimliklerini, bozulmuş/çarpıtılmış gerçekliğe karşı korumak için anılarına tutunan güçlü kadın kahramanların inşaasıyla çözümü de içlerinde barındırır. Her iki romanda da hikayelerini anlatan ana karakterlerin yapmaları gereken en önemli şey, gerçekleri unutmamak ve anılarını 'Crisis' ortamının ve 'Gilead Rejimi'nin kontrolcü, yıkıcı, yok edici atmosferlerine rağmen diğer nesillere aktarmaya çalışmaktır.

Kaynakların tükenmesi; insanların işlevlerine/görevlerine göre kategorize edilmeleri ve kimliklerinin buna göre şekillenmesi; ev içinde başlayıp tüm topluma yayılan sınıflı toplum yapısı; bireyselliğin ve orijinalliğin ortadan kalkması ve tektipleşme romanların ele aldığı ciddi toplumsal problemlerdir. Her iki romanda da Lessing ve Atwood bireysel ve toplumsal sömürüye güçlü bir şekilde direnmekte ve kadınların bedene indirgenmesine karşı sağlam bir duruş sergilemektedir. Böylece, ilerlemeci sosyo-ekonomik-politik-kültürel ve edebi geleneğin altını oymaktadırlar. Ayrıca kapitalist ve faşist sistemlerin neden olduğu, kontrolcü, seçime izin vermeyen ideolojik çizgisel zamanın oluşumuna, hafızanın çarpıtılmasına, kimlik çatışmasına ve güvensizlik duygusu gibi yıkıcı sonuçlara, belleklerini sürekli taze tutmaya çalışarak ve hikaye anlatımı aracılığıyla karşı durmaktadırlar. Bu karşı duruşun en önemli örneklerinden biri, yazarların romanlarında, geçmiş ve şimdi arasında zamansal sıçramalar, hatırlama ve unutma sekansları kullanarak, çizgisel zaman unsurunu bozup ilerlemeci anlatıları eleştirmeleridir. Bu anlamda, bu çalışma aynı zamanda Lessing ve Atwood'un anlatı tarzlarını Walter Benjamin'in 'Mesiyanik zaman' kavramıyla ilişkilendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Lessing ve Atwood kelimelerinin gücüyle okuyucuyu sarsmakta, kadın anlatıcıların direnme güçleri ve romanların beklenmedik sonları, okuyucuyu en distopik senaryolarda bile umutlu olmaya davet etmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, Lessing ve Atwood'un romanlarını, klasik distopyalardan farklı olan eleştirel distopyanın temel unsurları ışığında, ütopya edebiyatının 'plastisite', 'yenilik (novum)' ve 'ütopik umut' kavramları üzerine kurmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ütopya edebiyatı, eleştirel distopya, ütopik umut, novum (yenilik) öğesi, ütopya plastisitesi, ekofeminizm, bellek, kimlik, çizgisel zaman, 'Mesiyanik zaman'

ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal ‘utopian hope’ in Ernst Bloch’s sense in Doris Lessing’s and Margaret Atwood’s outstanding dystopian novels: *The Memoirs of A Survivor* and *The Handmaid’s Tale* by examining the narrative styles of Lessing and Atwood in light of the fundamental elements of critical dystopias. To achieve this end, the study focuses on the memoirs/recordings of female narrators and the suffering experiences they went through. The miserable, hellish dystopic settings of both novels are thoroughly associated with ecological disasters caused by humans and the institutions they constructed. That is why the thesis attempts to analyse the connection between the marginalized groups such as women and nature; and the capitalist-expansionist-exploitative policies of patriarchal structure from Plato to present day.

As Serpil Oppermann suggests in her article "Eco criticism: Natural World in the Literary Viewfinder” that literature can be perceived as an aesthetically and culturally constructed part of the environment; it directly addresses the problems of human construction such as meaning, value, language, and imagination, and this can later be associated with the problem of ecological consciousness. Literature conveys the values that contribute to ecological thought, and in parallel, the environmental crisis is a problem that literary research cannot ignore (32). One of the reasons why the novels I have studied in my thesis can be categorized as dystopian is the fact that they are related to the environmental crisis. In this regard, this study pinpoints the great power of literature and storytelling to give voice to the individual and collective memories of the oppressed groups as a means of resistance and transformation. The novels not only reveal the process of arriving at that nightmarish atmosphere but also involve the solution in itself by the construction of strong female protagonists who hold on to their memories to preserve their individual and societal identity against the distorted reality. All they need to do is not to forget and transfer their messages to the next generations in the destructive, controlling atmospheres of the ‘Crisis’ and the ‘Gilead Regime’.

The novels focus on major social problems including the scarcity of resources, classification of individuals determined by their gender and societal functions, class-based formation of society both in the private and public spheres and the loss of

individuality and uniqueness. In both novels, Lessing and Atwood are strongly criticising individual and social exploitation and standing firm against the reduction of women to the body. In addition, they withstand the implementations of the capitalist and fascist system's outcomes such as the ideological formation of linear time, the distortion of memory, identity conflicts, and the sense of insecurity. By creating strong female narrators, Lessing and Atwood challenge the progressivist narratives by disrupting the linear time element by using analepsis, flashbacks and forwards, remembering and forgetting scenes. This study aims to shed light on the reasons why the narrators use disruption of linear time and relate their narrative styles to Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" and his concept of 'Messianic time'. Thus, the study will elucidate how Lessing and Atwood undermine the progressivist socio-economic-political-cultural and literary tradition.

Lessing's and Atwood's narrative styles and the power of their language profoundly affect the readers by means of which the resisting efforts of female narrators and the novels' unexpected endings invite the reader to be hopeful even in the most dystopian scenarios. Thereby, Lessing and Atwood's novels build on the 'plasticity' of utopian literature, the concept of *novum* (the element of innovation), and the 'utopian hope', which reveal the essential components of critical dystopias.

Key Words: utopian literature, critical dystopia, utopian hope, novum, plasticity of utopias, ecofeminism, memory, identity, linear time or 'homogenous empty time' vs. 'Messianic time'

CONTENTS

CHAPTER THREE

UNBOUNDING THE CONFINES OF THE MIND'S LABYRINTH,

THE MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR

CHAPTER FOUR

EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY THROUGH *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*

BY MARGARET ATWOOD

INTRODUCTION

Narrating the development of utopia seems to be a difficult task, particularly due to both the complex nature and the variety of utopian works. This being said, in spite of such diversity in cultural contexts and political agendas, literary utopias do have certain common features. In this context, there are four primary aims of the first theoretical chapter: first, it aims at giving the definition of utopia as a concept, the common features of literary utopias subsequently, and its evolution by centuries up until the recent days of the 21st century. It also includes analysis sections of *The Republic of Plato* and Thomas More's *Utopia*. Secondly, the ensuing goal is to explain how utopias are categorized in terms of their static-dynamic; abstract-concrete structure. Thirdly, its objective is to contribute to the utopian studies by investigating the plastic nature of utopian works. In other words, this dissertation contends that one of the principal characteristics of literary utopias is plasticity (and differance in Barthes' sense), which becomes quite visible in their strong demand for cultural and political transformation, regardless of the direction of the change. Finally, the following purpose of the chapter is to define Ernst Bloch's 'utopian hope' and explain how literary utopias all inherently possess it in Bloch's sense. Expressly, literary utopias and dystopias invariably retain or at least call for plasticity, and such plasticity contains a considerable amount of utopian hope, which is substantially diminished in some utopias from Plato and Thomas More, but visible in recent critical dystopias by Doris Lessing and Margaret Atwood.

In parallel with the first chapter, the first section of the second chapter traces the emergence of dystopia within utopian fiction, clarifies the etymology of the word, and explores the reasons why dystopias resolve around ecological catastrophes and its devastating consequences, and puts forth the themes that are prevalent in dystopian literature. The second section elucidates the connection between critical dystopias and hope. The third section of the chapter analyses the link between dystopia, gender and nature by focusing on the dualist approach of Western Philosophy and the perception of nature including the conceptual framework of "the logical structure of dualism" and

inquires such concepts of Western dualism as "denial," "radical exclusion," "incorporation," "instrumentalism," and "homogenization or stereotyping ". The fourth section of the chapter continues with the exploration of Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" and his concept of 'homogenous empty time' versus 'Messianic time' to establish the connection between memory, progress and historical narration in its relation to the critique of modernity and its dystopian outcomes. The last section of the chapter compares the narrative styles of Doris Lessing and Margaret Atwood in their dystopian novels and analyses how their works intersect with Benjamin's conception of memory.

The third chapter is on the Nobel Prize winner, Doris Lessing and her outstanding novel, *The Memoirs of A Survivor* (1974). It starts with a brief glimpse at Doris Lessing's biography and her literary areas of interest. It continues with the narrator's ambiguous description of the crisis by the word 'it' and the portrayal of the dystopian setting. The next section focuses on the protagonist Emily Mary Cartright's cat-like dog, Hugo to explore the relationship between human and living things — belonging to nature — followed by blurred and symbolic representation of the animal. The succeeding section in the chapter reveals the narrator's dream world beyond the wall by means of which the reader enters the rooms of the subconscious world of the narrator. The section focuses on the reasons of the fact that the narrator's perception pendulates between her past and present and that the linear concept of time — where each moment is similar and ordinary — is distrupted. The following part discusses the clues of the narrator's identity and unveils my view that Emily, her younger image in the narrator's mind, and the narrator are all the same person, manifesting that the narrator is experiencing an identity conflict and trying to find her integrated self in her remembering-forgetting process.

The fourth and final chapter starts with exploring Margaret Atwood's life briefly, succeeded by the clarification of the differences between classical and critical dystopias in that the latter is written for the purpose of warning the reader and by having an open ending enables the readers to create new alternatives, which are hopeful to some extent. The next section of the chapter goes on with Atwood's outstanding novel

The Handmaid's Tale and its gloomy atmosphere of the totalitarian Gilead regime and its class-based socio-political standards. The subsequent section in the chapter attempts to argue the instrumentalization of the body in the regime in light of Western dualism and its end result, followed by the examination of the part in which how the regime renders its citizens ignorant by endavouring to erase both individual and collective memory. It is such an atmosphere where exchanging news along with reading and writing activities are firmly prohibited. The final part of the chapter examines the survival strategies of the protagonist, Offred and the other female characters in particular, by focusing on issues such as sexuality, the power of naming, memory, imagination and storytelling followed by the conclusion part.

CHAPTER ONE

UTOPIAN LITERATURE

1.1. The Definition of the term "Utopia" / The Historical Background of the Term's Etymology and Utopia as a Literary Genre

To start with, Sir Thomas More brought the term "utopia" into existence in order to name the island of his imagination that he described in his book in 1516. Before creating this word, he used another word "Nusquama" in Latin, meaning "nowhere", "no place", "on no occasion" (Vieira 4). However, as Fatima Vieira puts it, Thomas More did not want the presence of this imaginary place to be questioned because he believed in the Renaissance humanism which encouraged him to imagine a place to be taken as a model and if humans follow the spirit of "humanist logic, based on the discovery that human beings did not exist simply to accept his or her fate, but to use reason in order to build the future", they can make progress (4). For More, invention of other places with different forms of societies was possible; for, he witnessed the discoveries of new geographical places and people, and was inspired by the letters of 'Amerigo Vespucci and Christopher Columbus'. As a consequence, More created his neologism (i.e. coinage) from Greek words 'ouk/u'(not) and topos (place) and suffix 'ia' showing a place: "Etymologically, utopia is thus a place which is a non-place, simultaneously constituted by a movement of affirmation and denial" (4). However, More invented another neologism due to the fact that he believed his utopia state has excellent laws and residents and instead of saying "utopia", he should say "eutopia" which means "a good place"(6). So, one can see "the dual meaning of utopia" which is both "a non-place" and "a good place" at the same time (6). Twentieth century theorist Lyman Tower Sargent, on the other hand, has a more specific definition for the word 'Utopia' which is "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space", and 'Eutopia' which is " a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author

intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which that reader lived" ("Three Faces Revisited" 9).

Drawing upon Glenn Negley and Max Patrick who made the description of the 'literary genre of utopia' in the 1950s, Tom Moylan gives place to their identification of the features of a utopian text: Firstly, "it is fictional"; secondly, "it describes a particular state or community"; thirdly, "its theme is the political structure of that fictional state or community" ("The Literary Utopia" 32). However, Moylan finds these characteristics of literary utopia insufficient in that they only focus on "political structure" and "the deeper ideological contest at the core of utopian expression" is missing (32). Moylan also allows for Raymond Williams's distinction of texts that can be categorized as utopias at different times: "the paradise, in which a happier life is described as simply existing elsewhere"; "the externally altered world, in which a new kind of life has been made possible by an unlooked-for natural event"; "the willed transformation, in which a new kind of life has been achieved by human effort"; "the technological transformation, in which a new kind of life has been made possible by technical discovery" (32). Yet, Moylan then explains that Williams eliminates the first two components due to the fact that they are not flourished by humans but via a supernatural element, which is the main component of the science fiction genre separating itself from that of utopianism.

1.2. The Concept of Utopia by Centuries/ Plato's *Republic* / Thomas More's *Utopia*

Utopias are products of their times. To be more specific, literary utopias develop perspectives in response to socio-political conflicts in their epochs. Class-based social structure and the relative strictness of these classes as proposed in Plato's *Republic*, for instance, may look outdated today**,** but one should consider the socio-political context in which utopias are produced. In other words, the understanding and the concept of utopia may change in time and by geography. Literary utopias are not simple blueprints for immediate political action, but are cultural products that help question current political structures. In this respect, even the most criticized utopias contribute to the effort for betterment of socio-political conditions. Surprisingly though, the class-based hierarchical structure and the way people view women have barely improved since then.

In light of this, it seems that it is crucial to scrutinize both historical and contemporary utopias in order to uncover the obstacles preventing the realization of the anticipated idealized, egalitarian societies. Such a scrutiny will hopefully enhance our awareness and shed light on potential difficulties. For that reason, in the paragraphs that follow, I intend to discuss the oldest utopia ever, *The Republic* written by Plato around 375 B.C.

Plato's *Republic* pictures a class-based utopian society with the existence of strict class divisions defined by distinct social strata of Philosopher Kings (the rulers), guardians, workers including craftsmen, and farmers. Plato describes this division through a myth, declaring that "The God, in fashioning those of you who are competent to rule, mixed gold in at their birth; this is why they are most honored; in auxiliaries, silver; and iron and bronze in the farmers and the other craftsmen" (Book iii, 415a). Accordingly, despite the fact that they are "all related", they will primarily generate offsprings that are remarkably similar to them (Book iii, 415a). This passage points out the notion that one's social position is determined by the divine power and birth, signifying a natural order that reinforces the hierarchy inside the society.

Nevertheless, Plato additionally recognizes the likelihood of individuals being born into a social group to which they do not innately belong, though such cases are not frequent. This possibility for misplacement demands society to watch over and train its youthful population in the way that is right for them, thus facilitating the promotion of individuals to a more appropriate class, irrespective of whether it is higher or lower. A subtle component of utopian optimism is brought in by the mechanism of mobility between classes which suggests that the position one holds in society is not completely permanent, but instead based on observation and achievement.

In spite of the sparkle of utopian potential, the dialogue discloses a more deceptive facet of Plato's imagined society. The very idea of succumbing to manipulation and deceit for the benefit of social order is suggested by this gripping question: "So, do you have some device for persuading them of this tale?" (Book iii, 415c). The question in which "them" refers to the citizens, indicates that the ongoing existence of this 'perfect' community depend on the deliberate distortion of beliefs and perceptions. Plato proposes that the state will make up stories to make sure that the following generation adopts the social structure as an inherent and indisputable reality.

The deliberate use of deception to secure the state's interests and authority signals a menacing and dystopian undertone to Plato's utopian vision, whereby the ideal society remains intact through the implementation of manipulation and control more than through authentic knowledge.

Plato's notion of Philosopher Kings (rulers) who hold the most distinguished position in the state constitutes the backbone of his ideal society in *The Republic*. Plato contends that philosophers need to acquire exemplary knowledge and wisdom, which qualifies them to rule and positions them as the natural authorities of the republic (Book v, 473d). Considering their superiority over other classes, it is not surprising that the way they live mirror their superior position. An essential prerequisite for Philosopher Kings is a deep passion for science, learning and wisdom. Their intellectual pursuit is not arbitrary, but rather, emanating from an organized upbringing, which ensures that they adhere to the quest for knowledge over the bodily pleasures (Book vi, 485b).

In addition, Philosopher Kings possess the ability to perceive the truth, an essential attribute for efficient governing. The ability to make a distinction between truth and deception draws emphasis to a paradox in Plato's notion. Even though the rulers have an obligation to persistently seek the truth, they are also the only group that is entitled to use deceit for the best interests of the state. This privilege exposes the multifaceted ethical standards imposed upon these rulers, as they have to maintain the fragile balance between honesty and the need for manipulation so as to accomplish a higher goal. Philosopher Kings need to possess not only intellectual attributes, but also the absence of greed and heedlessness, cowardice and incompatibility (485 d, 486 b). Their ethical standing is additionally bolstered by their strong memory (486d), which allows them to successfully maintain and employ their vast knowledge. Plato proposes that these qualities are vital for the Philosopher Kings to reign with wisdom and righteousness, rendering them the perfect rulers in his utopian ideal.

The other group, Guardians, is in the second rank in terms of superiority and class distinction. They will be responsible for protecting the state and citizens. They will earn little wage from the citizens and have a life similar to that of "soldiers in a camp". They cannot possess or touch any gold or silver (Book iii, 416e). They cannot own any kind of private property. Otherwise, "they will become masters and enemies instead of

allies of the other citizens, hating and being hated, plotting and being plotted against, they will lead their whole lives far more afraid of the enemies within than those without" (Book iii, 417b). They are to do only their task so that they can be useful to society by concentrating solely on their protecting duties. It is forbidden for them to deal with other engagements. They can only imitate "courageous, moderate and holy" deeds (Book iii, 395c).

Good guardians and the ones who want to be good people also should not imitate a woman, who is "abusing her husband" or another "one who is striving with Gods and boasting because she supposes herself to be happy, or one who is caught in the grip of misfortune, mourning and wailing. And we will be far from needing one who is sick or in love or in labor". They will not play the role of slaves, either (Book iii, 395e) like a woman. As it is given, women are worthless and inferior and they do not only have the right to be weak but also to be happy. In addition, being in love is likened to being sick, which is a sign of lowness and is equal to being a woman. As a consequence, all guardians should avoid from all these traits, which would make them womanlike.

Another disturbing fact of Plato's regulations is that women and children are seen as commodity in the society. For instance, by examining the education of the guardians, one can see women and children's place in relation to the guardians. The souls of the latter group must be educated and elevated by the help of music along with speech and gymnastics. (Book ii, 376e). Moreover, "if by being well educated they become sensible men, they will easily see to all this and everything else we are now leaving out; the possession of women, marriage, and procreation of children must as far as possible be arranged according to the proverb that friends have all things in common" (Book iv, 424a). So they learn to live in a commune in which women and children are common to all. Plato, by words of Socrates, expresses the supposed benefits of the system:

> So, as I am saying, does not what was said before and what is being said now from them into true guardians still more and cause them not to draw the city apart by not all giving the name 'my own' to the same thing, but different men giving it to different things one

> man dragging off to his own house whether he can get his hands on apart from the others, another being separate in his own house with separate woman and children, introducing private pleasures and grieves of things that are private? Rather with one conviction about what is their own, straining toward the same thing, to the limit of the possible, they are affected alike by pain and pleasure. (Book v, 464d)

According to Plato, men should not suffer from or have pleasure of private things separately but go through similar experiences. His solution is ironically practical. If the guardians become very successful in their jobs in a war for instance, they will be rewarded accordingly. "And presumably, along with other prizes and rewards, the privilege of more abundant intercourse with the women must be given to those of the young who are good in war or elsewhere, so that under this pretext the most children will also be sown by such men" (Book v, 460b). This quotation shows that the status of women in Plato's *Republic* is considered to be troublesome because Plato's state considers women to be of secondary value in comparison to men of a similar status.

The nature of women is also convenient to perform the same job along with men as guardians (Book v, 456 b). They get the same education as men, which might be seen as the utopian part of the text. They take part in 'gymnastic, music not the least in the bearing of arms and the riding of horses' (Book v, 452c) even though they look funny according to Plato. However, it does not mean that women are seen as equal to men; they are merely utilized in an unfair way.

The issue concerning women is particularly important since the women in Plato's *Republic* do not look much different from the women in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* — a 20th century dystopia — upon which special emphasis will be put in the following chapters. To make a strong connection between the women in 375 B.C., and the women in the late 20th century dystopian novels; to find out the interpretative changes of understanding utopian/dystopian concepts depending on time and place, more attention has been given to the similar regulations of the periods concerning specifically women and alleged lower classes. Due to the similar rules and implementations, one gets the idea that the presence of social hierarchies remained constant, but the circumstances and the way of interpreting and categorizing the works

in utopian literature have changed in time. *The Republic* is a good example of the unchanging status of women in societies. It is obvious that Plato constructed the work in a paternalistic pattern in his time. Even when women are given the same rights regarding some societal duties, the humiliating attitude towards women draws attention. It is the same for the men of lower classes:

> There is a need for the best men to have intercourse as often as possible with the best women, and the reverse for the most ordinary men with the most ordinary women; and the offspring of the former must be reared but not that of the others, if the flock is going to be of the most eminent quality. And all this must come to pass without being noticed by anyone except the rulers themselves if the guardians' herd is to be as free as possible from faction. […] So then, certain festivals and sacrifices must be established by law at which we will bring the brides and grooms together, and our poets must make hymns suitable marriages we will leave to the rules in order that they may most nearly preserve the same number of men, taking into consideration wars, diseases and everything else of the sort; and thus our city will, within the limits of possible, become neither big nor little. (Book v, 459e)

Organizations concerning reproduction are arranged by the rulers of the state. "I suppose certain subtle lots must be fabricated so that the ordinary men will blame chance rather than the rulers for each union" (Book v, 460a). As it is seen in the quotation, the state is the omnipotent power having a natural right to arrange "subtle lots". Furthermore, women are supposed to give birth between the ages of twenty and forty. Similarly, men have a right to be a father "when he passes his swiftest prime at running […] up to his fifty-fifth year (Book v, 460 e). When they get older, they lose their chances to be parents. If it accidentally happens, the child is going to be "a bastard, an unauthorized and unconsecrated child, on the city" (Book v, 461b), and there is to be no rearing for such a child (460c). Besides, the parents will be accepted to have committed a great crime against the government. As a result, children will not know their parents, so they need to be careful about being respectful to the elder ones in the society because anyone might be their parents (Book v, 465a).

When it comes to the training of children in Plato's utopia, they should be told "approved tales" to "shape their souls" from the very beginning of their lives (Book iii, 377c); however, storytellers had better avoid the tales of Hesiod and Homer and other poets. For, these tales have great power upon people and these poets create "false tales" (377d), imitating and demonstrating "Gods and heroes" differently than they really are (377e). In Plato's view, they are liars. However, when it comes to lying, only a statesman can lie to his people for the sake of the well being of the state. Except this, it is a great crime only to be punished for other people to abandon the truth (389c). As it can be seen clearly, there are strict regulations organizing all aspects of life and relations within society in Plato's utopia.

Plato likens operations of the state to that of the human body. The rest of the small parts of the body is like the small units or minor groups of the society. Just as the wholeness of the body is important, "[…] the community of pain and pleasure is the greatest good for a city, likening the good governing of a city to a body's relation to the pain and pleasure of one of its parts" (Book v, 464 a). Hence, the parts only serve to the unity of the body. In that sense, women and lower class people are just a small part of this organism and they serve to the goodness of the state. So, individuals are not important in *The Republic*, which is one of the commonest features of pioneer utopias. The case of guardians exemplifies the lack of value given to individuals and the selfishness of the state in the best way: "The man who is taken alive by the enemy, won't we give him as a gift to those who took him, to use their catch as they wish?" The response is: "Exactly" (Book v 468 a). If the guardian is not successful enough in the end and becomes a captive, then s/he cannot contribute to the state and is not a useful person. That is why s/he is not valuable.

At this point, it is important to underline that there is a modern dispute on how to categorize Plato's *Republic*, considering that the class-based political structure is limiting. Not all scholars agree with Plato that *The Republic* is an ideal society. To illustrate, Gottlieb in *Dystopian Fiction East and West* agrees with Karl Popper on that *The Republic* of Plato is an example of a closed society, and that such a polity based on a teacher-dictator (the Philosopher King) rule is nothing other than domination of "absolute reason" (271). This modern interpretation on Plato's utopia from antiquity

shows that literary utopias are almost always in dialogue with the socio-political conflicts of their times, and critical interpretations must contextualize the work (that is, one must consider the historical and cultural conditions in which a utopian work is produced).

If literary utopias are produced as a response to their socio-political conditions, the same feature may also be observed in *Book viii* as well. When proposing his ideal state, Plato criticizes certain regimes such as timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny and explains their drawbacks or shortcomings. Specifically, Plato's utopia refers to the problem of stagnancy-stability problem in utopias and discusses how a society that tries several regimes runs the risk of destroying its stability. As mentioned above, this Platonic idea supports Popper's and Gottlieb's view that the relatively closed social structure described in *The Republic* of Plato may not be so desirable by modern (specifically, the twentieth or the twenty-first century) standards. In other words, utopias have structures and goals that are shaped by their time.

It is possible to test the idea that literary utopias are shaped by their times, by reviewing another significant European literary utopia. Thomas More in his *Utopia* designs an imaginary idealized society in response to the negative conditions of his time. The work, in fact, includes a very strong critical point of view regarding the sixteenth century European society and its governmental system. In More's *Utopia*, men and women have the same educational rights, in contrast with the real Europe of More's time. The property is common to all; everything is distributed to members of the society equally, including the duties and leisure time. Nobody can be proud of having private property. People live so as to be happy. Happiness and freedom are related to the mind, an escape from the captivity of the body to science and art.

In More's *Utopia*, everything exists for the sake of people's happiness, which is a criterion that would not fit *The Republic* of Plato. The following examples show that More's *Utopia* reserves much more space for individuality in his ideal state. In *Utopia*, enjoyment is acceptable, other than bodily pleasures. Nobody has a right to make any other member suffer. Public health care is available and equal for everyone. Besides, everybody has educational rights and works in equal conditions. Working hours are restricted although people work hard. All members of the society have the responsibility

to work in agriculture and trade. While everyone has the same relaxing time, wisdom and personal development are prior to everything. The intellectually brighter members are exempt from physical duties. Improving one's mind and being cultivated are of great importance. One should spare enough time for intellectual activities. Jealousy is avoided and friendship is of great value. One should be happy with another's happiness. Equality is indispensable, and such a society is only possible with philosophy, a good education and wisdom. People wear the same clothes for the sake of equality. Sovereignty is regarded as a poisonous feeling. Gold jewelry is accepted as clownery. In terms of religious thought, people believe in only one God and they are rewarded if they work hard enough and have good deeds. However, everybody is free to believe in whatever religion or idea s/he chooses. Forcing somebody to believe in a particular religion is a kind of crime. The other issue worth mentioning is the attitude to war. It is a cruel thing if it is not obligatory for the purpose of defence. All things considered above, More's *Utopia* is quite different from Plato's *Republic*. Its one important similarity is the fact that the interests of the society are superior to that of the individual in both utopian works, which is another prevalent attribute of many literary utopias.

Thomas More's *Utopia,* in essence, reflects the ideals of Renaissance Europe. The fictitious character Raphael Hytloday, an intellectual traveler, visits an imaginary place outside the realms and narrates his experiences. As Hadfield asserts in *Literature, Travel and Colonial Writing*, by creating such a well-traveled character, More manages to juxtapose European political impasses with foreign cultures (7-8), and thus the work becomes one of the many Renaissance works that is inspired by the discovery of the New World and contact with overseas cultures. Similarly, in *The Renaissance Utopia*, Houston explains that the reason why utopia gained a lot of popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the increase in (travel) writing (8). According to Sargent, utopias had used imaginary countries in order to increase the effectiveness of satire ("Themes" 276). The traveler figure Raphael, for instance, expresses that it is quite ridiculous to conform one's behavior to the norms and shows his critical, questioning side and his perspective towards the current system. He is said to have accompanied Amerigo Vespucci in his expeditions. In brief, traveling culture and its politics play a major role in More's *Utopia*.

One of the most significant features of More's *Utopia* is that it is like a modern literary work and the book bears many characteristics of modern works: To illustrate, More uses satire which is the core element of Renaissance utopian literature. Satire is to be used especially for the purpose of emphasizing the difference between the real and the utopian society portrayed, in a smoothing way and criticizing the former by means of literary devices. More's *Utopia* was a valuable work in its author's lifetime. Yet, in the end what More thinks is still ambiguous. In this vein, J.C. Davis mentions that *Utopia* is an eclectic work combining both the old traditions of utopia and the Renaissance ideal (32). Moreover, Davis expresses that it is a common product/outcome of the sixteenth century intellectual work although it is written in Latin (29). Davis also emphasizes that today utopia heralds modernity and it is the hallmark of the sophistication of the Renaissance (30). In short, a comparative reading of Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia* shows a major shift in socio-political paradigm from antiquity to Renaissance Europe, particularly regarding contact with other cultures, emphasis on individuality, and the deliberately ambiguous tone of the work.

Utopian thought is found in antiquity, but utopia in the Renaissance Period is different from those of antiquity. The rise of utopia in the Renaissance Period is basically the outcome of geographical discoveries. Thomas More, as an inventor of the word "u/eu/topia" and the literary utopia as a genre, "made a connection between the classic and the Christian traditions" and this altered the individuals' roles in their lives (Fatima 5-6) and contributed to his utopian thought. One of the main characteristics of utopias is that they are criticism of the societies in which they prevail. However, the utopias prior to More, "lack the tension between the affirmation of a possibility and the negation of their fulfillment" (6). Namely, More offers a model by discussing both negative and positive traits of his utopia. Therefore, on one hand, More's utopia brings forward a perfect society; on the other hand, its critical and cautionary side is very powerful in contrast to Plato's *Republic*.

As Sargent underlines, literary utopias of the sixteenth century are both religious (that is, Christian) as well as hierarchical ("Themes" 276). What is noteworthy in this categorization is the underlying understanding of humans in the sixteenth century. Sargent notes that "people are weak and must be constantly supervised and must know

their place [. . .] women in general and wives in particular be obedient;" and people who violate the order must be punished (276). This perspective itself is surely hierarchical and literary utopias of the sixteenth century still reflect the values of a religious society that holds the views of both the original sin and the great chain of being. Such an example could be observed in More's *Utopia*, particularly in the practice of enslaving the criminals.

In the seventeenth century, literary utopias displayed a series of differences, most of which are related to a relatively more modern approach to humans. Although it is true that most of the seventeenth century literary utopias are categorized as "Christian, hierarchical, basically authoritarian," these utopias are different in the practice of inflicting less punishment on criminals (276). In almost thirty utopias written in this century, emphasis on education replaces the function of punishment; what is more, "the first positive statements about democracy" and "less authoritarian, centralized forms of government" appear in literary utopias for the first time in the seventeenth century (276). In other words, the seventeenth century is an age of transformation of utopias particularly in the understanding of humans: the emphasis is on the idea of progress through education. Similarly, introduction of the idea of democracy in utopias foreshadows a much larger transformation that would appear in the upcoming centuries.

As Sargent reports, similar to the seventeenth century, almost thirty utopias were published in the eighteenth century as well, and these works still pursued the "tradition" of religious perspective that was present in More's *Utopia* (277). However, probably the most important characteristic of the eighteenth century literary utopias was their emphasis on the idea of reason: the genre had works that highlight the significance of reason such as *A Voyage to the World in the Center of the Earth*, which was published in 1775, and those that mock how helpless humans could be when they attempt to follow pure reason, as in *Gulliver's Travels*, which appeared in 1726 (277). Spence observes that one last significant trait of the eighteenth century literary utopias was that utopias were in dialogue with "industrial revolution, […] local control of land, and industry" (277). In this respect, in the eighteenth century, another set of transformation appeared in literary utopias: Particularly, the relative decline in the significance of

religion, emphasis on reason, as well as the increase in the desire to find the most effective means of production in agriculture and industry can be mentioned as examples.

Nineteenth century literary utopias are different from those of the previous century in terms of their political perspectives and functions. To start with, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one of the greatest changes in the literary utopias was the sudden rise in numbers: in comparison to around thirty works in the eighteenth century, around one hundred and sixty utopias were published in the nineteenth century (Roemer xi; qtd in Suderman 91). Considering the increasing number of works and readers, one may see that utopias became much more functional in discussing current socio-political issues. In detail, for instance, both Sargent (“Themes" 278) and Roemer (“Paradise Transformed” 80) write that nineteenth century literary utopias stand out for their socio-economic emphasis. According to Sargent, the utopias of this era offer a perspective that promotes “some form of socialism or a cooperative system” (“Themes” 278). With respect to Roemer’s words, nineteenth century utopias had “didactic guide-visitor narratives that are heavy on long socio-economic dialogues, lightened by touches of romance and travel-adventure episodes and firmly grounded in cooperative or socialistic ideologies" stated in "Paradise Transformed: Varieties of Nineteenth-century Utopias." (80). Then, the increase in the number of the utopias in the 19th century is not a coincidence, but a result of the attempt to offer solutions to complex socio-economic problems of the century.

In the following quotation, Beaumont explains the main motives behind the socialist oriented literary utopias of the nineteenth century:

> A realignment of the middle classes occurred from the early 1870s, in reaction to the adaptations of British capitalism on the one hand, and the uneven development of the labor movement on the other. This ideological drama was played out, most markedly, in the political and intellectual impact of socialism on middle-class consciousness. Socialism appealed to intellectuals of the middle class to the extent that it opened up the possibility of ameliorating the capitalist system; but it tended to appal them to the extent that it threatened to overthrow it altogether. The generalized expression of this tension was the utopian structure of feeling typical of the late-Victorian epoch. In the dehiscent

> climate of the time, the future itself functioned as a new semantic figure in which this tension was articulated. (3)

In the above passage, Beaumont addresses the socio-economic instability of the late nineteenth century that motivated the production of literary utopias. It is noteworthy that literature in general and the genre of utopia in particular played an active role in responding to the precariousness of the times. In Roemer's words, this precariousness responded by and in the literary utopias of the nineteenth century is defined as "the deep fear of the perceived disorder and chaos of the late nineteenth century and a sincere desire to tame the chaos with humane orderliness" ("Paradise Transformed" 101). In other words, literary utopias were a useful means of searching, producing and sharing possible solutions to the problems of the middle class in particular. All in all, as Sargent, Roemer and Beaumont agree on, the literary utopias produced in the last three decades of the century popularized (that is, both supported and/or criticized) the idea of socialism against the turmoil of the capitalist system.

Literary utopias of the nineteenth century that focused on the economic issues of the society had three perspectives, Sargent writes: nineteenth century literary utopias emphasized "complete public control of publicly owned property;" or designed a society based on "private ownership with or without public regulation;" or a system of "cooperation that allow owners of private property to band together to provide a sizable corporation that can compete in a free market" ("Themes" 278). The economic perspectives listed show that there was variety in utopian approaches and literary utopias were efficacious and practical ways of creating solutions to the social issues. In this respect, nineteenth century literary utopias seem to have gained a considerable role in comparison to the utopian works of the previous centuries.

Another common theme in the nineteenth century literary utopias is the woman issue. Male dominance in literary production began to be cracked by the appearance of several female authors in the century and several of these women also tried their hand in utopian writing, challenging women's positions and traditional roles in society and imagining and demanding larger domains of activity and existence for them in their utopian works. Beaumont writes:

> Until the late-Victorian period, the utopian genre remained the almost exclusive preserve of male authors. Despite Mary Wollstonecraft's affirmation of 'Utopian dreams' in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), feminists made few forays into utopian territory over the course of the nineteenth century. It seems plausible to suggest that this was because the political discourse that had shaped utopian fiction since Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), defining the genre as a form of social dreaming, had necessarily rendered it inaccessible to those sealed off from the public sphere. (106-107)

In short, nineteenth century literary utopias establish a connection between the idea of social progress and women's privileges (Beaumont 92).

In addition to the socio-economic emphasis and the attention to the woman question, the last noteworthy change was in the number of the anti-utopias in the nineteenth century. Anti-utopia, defined by Lyman Tower Sargent as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as a criticism of utopianism or of some particular 'eutopia' " ("Three Faces revisited" 9), by definition, depicts the less-than-ideal conditions that are usually horrific. In this sense, nineteenth century literary utopias are important because they first make the distinction between utopias and anti-utopias clearer (Rüsen 25); and open a path to dystopias that would be immensely popular and politically influential in the following centuries. As the genre of utopia started to pay more attention to the notions of progress, science, technology and well-being of humanity, anti-utopias offered precise and realistic but negative versions of life, which would contribute to the visionariness of the genre.

1.3. Conceptual Categorizations of Utopian Literature: Static, Dynamic, Abstract and Concrete Utopias / Utopian Hope / Novum

After following the development of utopia through time, now, conceptual categorizations and different patterns in utopian literature will be touched on by using the works of H.G. Wells: *The Time Machine* and *A Modern Utopia*. It is necessary to understand these patterns to make a connection between utopia and utopian hope. Finally, due to the fact that the twentieth century is the turning point of the

transformation of utopias into dystopias; namely, the birth of dystopias, this period will take place in the second chapter so as to understand the development of the dystopian literature in a more comprehensive way. It is necessary since readers need to foresee the divergence in utopian literature, especially 'the critical dystopias' in light of which this thesis will examine the novels of two female writers, namely Doris Lessing and Margaret Atwood in the following chapters.

The focal point of the previous section was the historical development of utopian literature. Different from the previous part, this section provides an overview of the concept of utopian hope, as well as of the distinction among static/dynamic and abstract/concrete utopias. Understanding the ideas of static and dynamic utopia is significant, as they are totally different from each other and these concepts are both related to the idea of utopian hope, a concept that is significant in the evolution and agenda of both literary utopias and dystopias. In this context, the goal of this section is to provide an analysis of how static and dynamic utopias are strictly connected to the idea of utopian plasticity, — which is to be defined later on — hope and alteration. This section will prove how these three concepts are related as well.

To begin with, the terms static and dynamic utopias may sound to be completely contradictory, but the desire for change and a belief in the possibility of evolution is imminent in them. To be more specific, static utopias produce stable and unchanging ideals and it is not possible to question those ideas and systems that they manifest. Once a static utopia establishes a 'perfect' construction, one may find it quite odd and hard to be suspicious of the alleged perfection. These conceptions of perfection and stability almost always represent the flawless, perfect, 'blueprints' of its author's ideal. Dynamic utopias, in contrast, are open to change; they are adaptable, and its creators do not believe in perfection of any sort; thus, this perspective renders utopias more realistic, believable, and more likely to happen.

Historically speaking, literary utopias have evolved from static to more dynamic structure. For instance, in Sargent's article, H.G. Wells, the political theorists Judith Shklar and Elisabeth Hansot mentions that "until modern times, utopias were static, unchanging then some became 'kinetic', changing, dynamic" ("Five Hundred" 186).

Static utopia bears the following characteristics: First, there must be perfect blueprints of an ideal life or system, which are unquestionable and not open to change as in *The Republic of Plato* and Thomas More's *Utopia*. Static utopias generally lack alternatives. Their imagined societies have their own strict rules and stand as closed, isolated communities. They designate standards for various topics about different layers of society. These standards never change and citizens are deprived of alternative visions.

In "*The Time Machine* and *A Modern Utopia*: The Static and Kinetic Utopias of the Early H.G. Wells," Partington puts forth the comparison between Wells's two works. *The Time Machine*, on one hand, is shown as an example of a static structure. *A Modern Utopia*, on the other hand, is given as a dynamic (kinetic) utopian model. As Partington states, *The Time Machine* of Wells is not categorized as a dynamic utopia, because Eloi society is resistant to knowledge and learning. They just obey the perceived authority even if there are no written rules. The lack of options and people's indifference to each other create a chaotic but an unchanging atmosphere. The residents of the society lack the feeling of empathy. For example, when Weena (the female character in the novel) is in danger of drowning in the river, nobody cares but the time traveler. They just eat, drink and have fun in a drowsy manner and have animal-like behaviors. They are like puppets controlled by Morlocks who take control of the city. They do not want to learn anything from a new resource. The books, for instance, are abandoned to decay.

Partington also expresses that even though H.G. Wells defines his *Time Machine* as a futuristic work; it has been perceived as an example of static utopia due to the work's similarity to the Victorian period ("The Time Machine" 57); in terms of "fixed, unchanging ideals of the society". That is why H.G. Wells also thinks that *The Time Machine* is a kind of "failure" since it carries the features of static utopia (57): "*The Time Machine* [does] indeed have a considerable futuristic dimension, but the impression of the events and tendencies of [his] own time is unmistakable" (66). Therefore, utopias with inventive technologies like the time machine in the novel should not mislead readers into the illusion of great development and progress.

Wells wished to demonstrate the evils of a static society rather than the benefits of a kinetic one and thus his story inevitably ended in doom. However, in *A Modern Utopia*, Wells takes the Morlockian curiosity and initiative, and imagines a society founded upon it. In *A Modern Utopia*, curiosity and initiative are not weapons to be used by one class against another, but are tools used by the human race to direct its own evolution through educational, cultural and biological competition on its own terms (62).

Drawing upon Wells, Quamen states his claim that "*A Modern Utopia* must be not static but kinetic" ("Unnatural Interbreeding" 72) because in his mind Wells carries the idea of contrasting the utopias before and after Charles Darwin. He stated that an "ever-changing environment" is needed for "driving mechanisms of evolution" (72). According to Wells, it is the same for a society. So the environment must be open to change via nature and human beings to escape from a static community. Along with Quamen, Partington puts forth Wells's expression that "the State must be progressive" supplying "initiative" along with basic needs like "food and clothing" ("The Time Machine" 67). Hence, if there is initiative, there is also liberty, which serves to one of the other targets of dynamic utopia, which is to supply each human being and society with freedom to its largest and fullest extent (66).

At this point, Tom Moylan's definition of "critical utopia" gains importance: "A critical utopia rejects utopia as a static and perfect blueprint, focusing instead on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within the utopian society itself and thus render[ing] more recognizable and dynamic alternatives to existing societies that surround both writer and reader" (Mossner 165). This means that improvement is at hand and always possible. There is no one single truth and possibility, no need to be afraid of making mistakes; but lots of alternatives to develop, change and conform or not to. It is not surprising that Sargent warns the reader about "perfection" with his words: "Avoid it like a plague" ("Five Hundred" 189). The idea of perfection can be so dangerous that the society may suffer from it while trying to reach perfection, and well-intentioned ideals are likely to transform into a totalitarian system. Therefore, dynamic utopias seem to be a better option to choose and create a model society.

Another example which demonstrates the danger of static utopias that turns into a totalitarian system is given by Sargent again. He allows for different points of view such as Northrop Frye's definition claiming that utopia is a perfect —' Karl R.Popper puts the term as blueprint'—, defect-free place and a kind of final destination serving happiness, idealization and freedom, not open to a radical alteration and is a static society ("Authority and Utopia" 567). Conversely, Bertrand de Jouvenal defines it as "a dream much more than a blueprint" (568). He states that the utopia that you imagine and construct must be parallel with the reality, which is a bigger, genuine success than presenting merely the principles of a social construction. One needs to show utopia as a real, working system to the reader and it is not the blueprint concept since it does not create this sense of authenticity (568). The differences of static and dynamic utopias are also emphasized to highlight the danger of static utopias and their potentiality of becoming a dictatorship in the end in political arena. As Sargent quotes from Camus, "We must proclaim the necessity of 'relative utopia' to avoid the danger of 'absolute utopia' and the utopia become dystopia through the machinations of prophets and politicians" (Camus 1972: 37-38; qtd. in "The Necessity" 10-11). That being the case, one should abstain from following static, absolute utopias blindly; otherwise, one might be entrapped in a suffocating dystopia rather than a hopeful utopia.

Another terminology concerning utopias is introduced by German philosopher, Ernst Bloch. Bloch makes the distinction between abstract and concrete utopias: The term "abstract utopia" is generally understood to include "fantastic, compensatory, wishful thinking"; it is to some extent "constrained and immature", "expresses desire, lost in fantasy and memory, empty-possible", that is, unlikely to happen (Levitas 14-15). It does not necessarily have to preserve its social construct as Levitas reports; however, it "draws upon memory rather than imagination in the construction of its images" (19). Abstract utopias tend to appear in such a political atmosphere where freedom of expression is limited.

The term "concrete utopia", on the other hand, has come to be used to refer to "anticipatory, will-full thinking, consisting of a feeling like 'it must become so', carrying hope, affecting the future, and is real, possible" as a concept (15), and is "present historically and praxis-oriented" (18). Concrete utopias include life-likeness

and plausibility owing to the fact that they are more likely to happen. They stimulate the power of imagination and this imaginative potentiality arouses concrete utopias reciprocally. They are "future oriented" rather than "drawing upon memory" (19).

Bloch also brings out a term "Front, or Novum" and defines it as "part of reality which is coming into being on the horizon of the real. This location within but on the edge of the real means that utopia is transcendent …" (Bloch 1:146; qtd. in Levitas 17). So Levitas makes a connection between Bloch's concept of "Novum" and concrete utopias in particular. Since they are "within the real" (17), concrete utopias are considered to be closer to the reality on one hand; however, transgressing the reality by taking on a better and a hopeful form, provide its transcendent quality. "Novum" is important because it makes a connection among desiring, dreaming and reality in light of their (absolute) affiliation with utopian hope. To put it simply, abstract and concrete utopias, desire and dreaming all contain utopian hope in varying degrees, and they all wish to go beyond their temporal and spatial limits.

Sargent, throughout his comprehensive utopian literature research, wonders and tries to find an answer to one of the most prominent questions in his mind: Why do people give different reactions to the same utopian product and label and define it in various ways and why does "One person's tentative dream seem to be another's blueprint" ("Authority" 568). He comes to a conclusion that "there are national differences in utopias and different utopias within nations" ("The Necessity" 10). He asserts that we must give up the wrong idea that all utopias are the same. Everybody's expectation and 'utopian aspirations' are different from one another depending on their location, education, status, sexual orientation, socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural background and atmosphere. For that reason, the circumstances in which one lives in, leads to extremely different reactions and categorizations. He gives a striking example: One might consider that it is no good to imagine better conditions for fear of showing ingratitude to his/her belief or More's sixteenth century *Utopia* despite all of its restrictions and strict rules can be perceived like a paradise by somebody who lives in another geography in which conditions are worse ("The Necessity" 5-6). Besides, the tendencies of utopias take shape according to the perspectives of the

predecessors and successors of generations. For instance, while the nineteenth century utopia is mostly identified with 'free market', the grandchildren of that generation will chase after 'political self-determination' as a utopian ideal (6). To put it shortly, geography, era, the readers' resources, background, perspectives and social surroundings are crucial elements, especially with regards to interpreting and even categorizing a work of utopia. This understanding will affect the interpretation of the novels this dissertation will analyse; the works, which are classified generally as dystopia, and accordingly, my aim is to search for the presence of hope and to see if it exists or not in the final analysis.

Consequently, utopia is "a social dreaming" ("Authority" 186) for Sargent and putting this reasonable view aside, recent utopias are "more complex, multi-dimensional, less certain, and designed with the inhabitants of the late twentieth/ early twenty-first century in mind" ("The Necessity" 10). According to Sargent, utopias belonging to different epochs are all different, but always reflect better places and conditions compared to the period in which they were written ("Five Hundred" 187). Therefore, "Utopias must be self aware and self-critical" ("The Necessity" 10). At this point, it is a very revealing clue to follow and we should evaluate the works of utopian literature considering the geography, the century and the readers to whom they address and pave the way for 'u/eu/anti-u/dys/topias' to be self-critical.

1.4. Plasticity and Fluidity of Literary Utopias

Plastic and / or plasticity have been a key concept in the study of literary utopias because the idea of change and political transformation is an integral component of the genre. In this respect, this section of the dissertation discusses various definitions of plasticity in the context of literary utopias, and offers a theoretical perspective explaining the significance of plasticity in both ancient and modern contexts.

Plastic/ity inspired scholars of utopian theory such as Catherine Malabou, Miguel Abensour and Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor, and it has come to be one of the significant theoretical views on literary utopia as a genre. Catherine Malabou, a French scholar specializing in utopia and its political potentials, defines plastic/ity as a fundamental part of utopian possibility. She aims to unravel the complicated nature of

the concept by listing two basic characteristics of utopia: on the one hand is "positive plasticity (giving form), whereas on the other is negative plasticity (receiving form)" (Wagner-Lawlor, "The Persistence of Utopia" 67). She makes an analogy between the brain's neuroplastic capacity and utopia's resilience. By plasticity, Malabou means the power and capability of alteration and resilience. In order to reveal the "utopian anticipation" and its political motivations, possibilities and the opportunities it brings forth, Malabou "extends speculation on utopian possibility" (67) by using the term plasticity. Giving form means, "making meaning" and "resisting meaning" at the same time (77). For Malabou, "plasticity is life and extends the possibilities of utopia beyond the text" (77). She alludes to the transcendental nature of "literary utopia", and its self-reflective ability of critical approach towards itself. Namely, at first literary utopias open themselves up for discussion and they have such functions that they have a power to criticize omnitemporal politics and texts along with other socio-political agendas. This is what Malabou denotes by utopian plasticity. Furthermore, it indicates a process into which readers are invited to create a new meaning from the utopian text independently of the author and its time.

Just as plastic can be transformed into new forms, literary utopias are open to different expositions. Plasticity of utopias also demonstrates that literary utopias have pluralist points of view. Wagner-Lawlor confirms that twentieth century French theorists "approach utopian speculation not simply as a form of political modeling but rather as a representation of imagining difference" (67). This imagining difference manifests different points of view, distinguishable interpretations rather than monist perspectives and static political models. Similarly, in light of the plasticity of literary utopias, they have a transformative power in that they bring the values of their time into question even though some of the literary utopias seem to be prescriptive. That is why; one should not perceive them as materials for implementation; on the contrary, they annunciate their defective sides, which is necessary for "disruption" if predicated by Miguel Abensour's term. What he represents by "disruption" is that utopias disrupt realities in a persistent way to create new meanings infinitely; thus, there will not be any perfect or permanent form but lots of alternatives. In this way, one will be in a continuous struggle for betterment and "alterity". Utopia's disruptive power is a

prominent characteristic of utopian plasticity. The success of utopia depends on its "non-accomplishment" in Abensour's sense. He put the term "persistent utopia" and what he means by the term is that "the persistence of utopia designates a stubborn impulse toward freedom and justice — the end of domination, of relations of servitude, and of relations of exploitation" (qtd. in Abensour 407). In other words, a continuous struggle and a gap between "intention and realization" is essential mostly due to the fact that this gap and endeavor to find the better and the different versions of something constitutes "persistence" (410). This persistence is a break from "perfection" and the "blueprint" of utopias toward a consistent pursuit of betterment.

Abensour has four theses demonstrating the essence and "sine qua non" of utopias. His first thesis is that "It follows that there is a complete break between the critique of utopia made from the point of view of the established order" (413). That is to say, utopias should have a capacity to object to the rules of the settled arrangements and power of criticizing the systems. By its own standard, utopia supports the reconstruction of the world like plastic.

His second thesis is that "Historically, in the nineteenth century there was a radical inversion of the concept of utopia" (413). Utopia can neither be defined as a conservative structure as in *the Republic* of Plato nor as a liberal one exemplified by More's *Utopia* especially from the nineteenth century on. Utopia revolves around "inversion" which is also related to Ernst Bloch's "not yet" concept. Here, in essence, "the not" is the starting point "around which every something is built [...] it is a driving towards what is missing" (Bloch 6-7; qtd. in Abensour 408-409). "The not" has a dual pattern involving a "lack" but at the same time "escape from this lack" (409). In contrast to Plato and More, utopias do not have a particular static purpose. While offering an order, they do not suggest one single reality, which is based on strict and unchangeable rules. On the contrary, they propose different realities and times, questioning their relationship with "socio-historical transformation" (414).

His third thesis is that "it follows that revolutionary theory can invent novel relations to utopia" (414). It is impossible to categorize and reduce utopia to one single concept; philosophers can define them in different ways. It is always open to be redefined in different times. His fourth thesis is that "for those who choose a narrow,

inventive, specific concept of utopia, examination of the great utopian traditions reveals a fecundity that provokes them to rethink utopia" (414). Both creation and analysis of utopias must not depend on old-fashioned, conservative and biased ways. One can be open to read any kind of utopia produced up until now so that s/he can develop new, different perspectives. Owing to the fact that there are many different types of utopian traditions, one should always "rethink" previous utopias and understand that it is not possible to degrade utopia into one political paradigm.

Utopian plasticity and fluidity mean that utopias are pluralist and persistent and have great transformative power. They must be free of any kind of "petrification and coagulation" and the existing reality should always be "displaced" by the plasticity and fluidity of utopia. "… Instead of rushing for the 'solution' apparently proposed and adopting or rejecting it, a utopia has to let itself go on a trip, to abandon itself to its tempo and in so doing discover that it is not the result that counts so much as the way of getting there"(418). Therefore, rather than the consequences and the achievement of utopia — whether to embrace them or not —, it is the process that generates the struggle of utopia against sovereignty, singularity and exploitation. The constant effort to reach for "the not yet" — which is always better than the existing reality — during the everlasting journey of humans constitutes the inquisitive and worthwhile side of utopian plasticity.

CHAPTER TWO

DYSTOPIA IN UTOPIAN LITERATURE, ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS AND MEMORY

2.1. Historical Development of Dystopias

The term ‘dystopia’ was first coined as ‘dustopia’ “as a clear negative contrast to utopia in 1747”, (Papastephanou 45) and spelled as ‘dys-topia’ by Noel Turner in 1782 (45) meaning as ‘bad place (topos)’. Similarly, ‘cacotopia’ was the term used by Jeremy Bentham for dystopia meaning ‘as the opposite of a good place’. Following Bentham, John Stuart Mill used this word as well in his Parliament speech in 1868. It was also “defined as ‘an unhappy country’ in 1748” (Claeys 273). Tom Moylan, on the other hand, puts the term as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the reader lived” (Moylan, *Scraps* 74). As for Papastephanou, she believes that “dystopia has been defined in its relation to modernity and postmodernity, since it is often used as ‘the imaginative portrayal of how modern societies can go badly wrong’” (qtd. in Geoghegan 45).

Putting the definitions of the term aside, in contrast to utopia; dystopia became dominant in the 1950s and has been popular since then. That is to say, in the second half of the twentieth century, dystopian perspective had a great impact on Western culture. The roots of literary dystopia come from satire and its “earliest modern form” is subsequent to ‘The French Revolution’ (Claeys 355). In Britain and the United States, it expanded to ‘a fully formed genre’ ‘in the last decades of the 19th century’ when triggered by “industrialization, growing social inequality and the increasing popularity of socialism and Social Darwinism” (355). In the later decades of the century, scientific and technological issues developed into the prominent themes of the genre. Mechanization and mass production brought about “enslaving the working classes” (355). Thereafter, the former was about to replace human beings due to the fact that it

was much more capable of producing goods without getting exhausted and was faster than humans. In addition, they did not need to be paid like laborers and numerous productions were done in a short time compared with an individual factory worker. As a consequence, the value of an individual as a whole decreased day by day, and the distribution of wealth became unequal. Prosperity was in the hands of few privileged groups; and unfortunately, it was the core of modern economies.

Succeeding the reasons above, industrial societies, which developed in parallel with the utopian thought, did not pay for their workforce, created a surplus value and became increasingly rich. Then, they waged wars in various parts of the world to obtain the fertile lands, mines, raw material and beautiful geographical regions in the world. The First World War (1914-1918) was the milestone of the industrialization and the dystopian genre. For, it brought along a more genuine dark emphasis within the scope of dystopia, increased the level of satire and showed the possibility of fictitious nightmares turning into a reality; in that sense, the genre became apparent with a strong warning function.

Regarding "[...] the central theme of the modern dystopia is despotism, the degree of oppressiveness of the regime described. Here the estrangement and isolation of individuals, and their fear of each other, are central, as well as the ways this is engineered by external, usually collectivist, authorities" (Claeys 290). Other common literary dystopian umbrella themes are "race, eugenics, empire, and feminism"(330) along with sub-topics as mind-control, memory erasing by destroying previous materials and changing history by the help of scientific totalitarianism, taming people via eugenics (manipulation of the genes and biology), hedonism, drugs, brainwashing, overpopulation, which might lead to dictatorship as a result of efforts of preventing it, or just the opposite side of it: Infertility problems and behavioral engineering. In dystopian societies, most people except special groups go through hardship by means of intentional human deed and the governmental system, which has a strong tendency to implement dictatorship, slavery, cruelty, injustice, and inequality. It was the purpose of literary dystopias to depict those societies by putting a mirror onto them and pave the way for a critical approach out of them.

2.1.1. Critical Dystopias and Hope

Tom Moylan critiques the utopian promises made in the 1980s and 1990s, rather than bringing about peace and prosperity, caused severe social and ecological devastation. During this era, there was a rise in wealth disparity, deterioration of the rights of employees, an increase in homeless status, and an outbreak of violence attacking disadvantaged populations. Moreover, the environment underwent major damage as an outcome of neo-conservative and neo-liberal policies, which prioritized financial gains above the betterment of humans and ecological systems (Moylan, *Scraps* 183-184).

Moylan denounces the upsurge of capitalism, disguised as sound decisions and free market goals. He clarifies the primary objevtive of the revived capitalist system, which seeks to entirely exploit and control both workers and consumers through the establishment of a global division of labor and market for goods and services. Financial institutions have enabled this mission. This system put an extreme value on rapid financial profits leading to the disregard and neglect of vast areas and communities that were regarded unworthy of support and investment by the streamlined economic structure (184).

Moylan maintains that the political transition to the center since the 1940s has not considerably relieved the conditions of the entire population regardless of the decline in blatant incidents of violence observed in the 1980s. Even though there was somewhat fewer signs of violence in the 1980s, the political center-left that emerged in the 1940s was unable to significantly enhance the quality of life for individuals. Instead of an eventual return to democratic values or egalitarian industrial development, the rise in employment rates in the 1990s was an indication of a more tactical strategy of leadership inside an exploitative, oppressive and competitive economic system. It keeps enriching those in wealth, maintains to extract wealth from labor and trade at the expense of the working class and tiny businesses. Secure jobs have been replaced by lower-paid, part-time positions without advantages. Economic and social development on the surface level has concealed social inequilities in society. The continuing practice

of abuse towards underpriviledged populations and the constant destruction of the planet have conflicted with asserted devotion to “green ethics” (185-186).

Anti-Utopia has grown as an outcome of liberal principles, third-way solutions, and social democrat partnerships’ inadequacy to hold onto their values as shown in Moylan’s text. It posits that three presidential administrations’ utopian expression discloses a paradigm transition, which eliminates hope for a promising future. “Millennial capitalism” pushed by global corporations positions profit and competitiveness first, neglecting social and ecological consequences. Leaders of industrialized nations regardless of neo-conservative, neo-liberal, or social democratic, all employ the pretense of competitiveness to advocate strategies, which prioritize the demands of those in wealth and position rather than the majority of the population (186).

Moylan addresses the revival of dystopian narratives in the 1980s, particularly with respect to financial reorganization, political opportunism, and cultural disintegration. Science fiction writers tuned in the evolving social climate by redrafting dystopian patterns to portray the current landscape of the time. Moylan refers to critics such as Bryan Alexander who recognized these developments in literary form and political involvement. Alexander traces the origins of this revival of curiosity in dystopia as a response towards late capitalism after The World War II, drawing upon the theories of Theodor Adorno and Fredric Jameson. He draws a connection between this dystopian response and Walter Benjamin’s use of infernal imagery to critique the frantic suffering and hegemony of capitalist modernity (186-187).

Moylan’s study also analyzes the process in which commercial images that display abundance establish idealized worlds of desire additionally, including dystopian depictions of horrific conditions as explored by Benjamin. Alexander links this to Adorno’s criticism of market-ruled society, describing it as nightmarish, thoroughly controlled dystopia by no means of escape. This examination broadens Jameson’s criticism of the cultural instruments of predominant late capitalism during the 1990s. Moylan refers to Alexander’s emphasis that both Adorno and Jameson admit

capitalism's capability to repress and steal away authentic utopian aspirations, leading to dominant position of dystopian patterns for criticis. Jameson portrays this dystopian narrative as an antidote to the hallow quality of the post modern "night-utopia" (187).

The text maintains that as has proven evident since the onset of capitalism in the twentieth century, the modern era needs a critical, more often, dystopian stance. The 1980s witnessed a transition toward dystopian themes as noted by Jenny Wolmark. This was particularly apparent in feminist science fiction, in which writers like Margaret Atwood and Sheri Tepper blended utopian and dystopian elements to address the concerns of the excluded social and sexual identities. Lyman Tower Sargent names this tendency as "critical dystopias" which question and challenge both social and literary conventions through the merging of principal themes that are both utopian and dystopian. Drawing upon Raffaella Baccolini, Moylan emphasizes that akin to the previous critical utopian wave, feminist writers are leading this new literary movement (188).

As Moylan put forth, Baccolini in her article "Gender and Genre in the Feminist Critical Dystopias of Katherina Burdekin, Margaret Atwood, and Octavia Butler," detects a dystopian style which can be classified as "open or critical" in the works of literature from the 1930s to the 1990s. Moylan agrees with Baccolini's evaluation of the stylistic properties of the new critical dystopia. On the other hand, he holds the view that it is best to apply it to literary works, which emerged around the socio-political setting of the late 1980s and 1990s. In this respect, Moylan perceives Atwood and Burdekin as pioneers. Whereas Sargent's "critical dystopia" is a relatively novel idea, its humble beginnings can be traced back to the political and aesthetic fundamentals of the dystopian genre. Moylan suggests that dystopian literature might be situated on an array that ranges from utopian to anti-utopian angles. Within this array, works might vary from being emancipatory and critical to compensatory and anti-critical. The rise of modern dystopias that are more introspective and critical does not imply the emergence of entirely new genre. Rather, it shows a noteworthy upsurge and reinterpretation of the most imaginative components of the dystopian storytelling. These new texts are not

only an extention of the long-standing dystopian convention but also an innovative new breakthrough (188).

Baccolini identifies critical dystopias as works of literature, which, while maintaining an essential utopian angle, attempt to question established norms along with offering cutting-edge possibilities. These works undermine static thinking, foster revolutionary acts and serve as a means for the communication and introspection of opposing viewpoints. Baccolini examines stylistic strategies used in these texts that effectively tackle the current circumstance and confront the prevalent despair usually connected with dystopian genre. These strategies provide an occasion for hopeful resistance and disruptive conflict. By studying novels by Atwood, Butler and Burdelquin, she asserts that critical dystopias differ from classical dystopian narratives through refusing a gloomy ending. In contrast, they contain "open endings" that transcend finality and keep a utopian orientation. By criticizing accepted beliefs that enslave individuals, these critical dystopias formulate a possibility for discussion and resistance particularly for women and nature that are underrepresented and dismissed by mainstream debates. Baccolini's concept of critical dystopias embraces works of literature, which, regardless of their dark and cold atmospheres, preserve a utopian spirit and challenge normative storylines (188-189).

Although classic and science fiction dystopias additionally include the premise of openness through resistance and confusion; more recent critical dystopias openly prioritize this strategy in their structure and political context. Their objective is to ensure the survival of the less fortunate groups while also encouraging their efforts in the direction of a society that is equal and environmentally friendly instead of focusing merely on competition and profit for a small number of individuals (189).

Critical dystopias make use of the technique of "genre blurring" to expand their imaginative alternatives via integrating patterns from other genres. This technique challenges dystopian boundaries and strengthens genre's adaptation for critical expression. Baccolini maintains that this structural modification transforms dystopian narratives into "impure" texts, thus regenerating their capacity for resistance and

making them far more complex in their opposing quality. She relates this structure to post-structuralist criticisms, which challenge uniform assumptions and strict categorizations, fostering the recognition of diversity, sophistication and blending (189).

Baccolini's "re-vision" of critical dystopias indicates a shifting position. These texts reflect on memories of past resistance in order to mold future political orientations. By the end of the century, they question both prevailing and opposing viewpoints, drawing a connection between "imagination and utopia" and "utopia and consciousness." The critical dystopias, distinguished by their adaptable boundaries and opposition to the "closure of master narratives", operate as vital positions of opposition. Yet, this opposition embraces not only feminist ideals but also 'anti-capitalist', 'democratically socialist' and 'radically ecological values'. These dystopias not merely build on the advancements achieved in identity politics, but additionally employ a more comprehensive and uniting approach to politics, establishing alliances and carrying out extensive studies so as to question and significantly transform the whole political-economic system (190-191).

As Moylan underlines, similar to Baccolini, Cavalcanti draws attention to an explicit female component in her study of dystopian writings. Her examination of dystopian works produced by women between 1960 and 1998 suggests that these texts provide invaluable ideas on "paradises" from modern women's lenses. By analyzing works written by Atwood, Piercy, McKee Charnas, Elgin, Tuttle, and Elphinstone, she observes the formation of a "feminist critical dystopia". These works in question, for Cavalcanti, are noteworthy for three significant reasons: They use dystopian components to criticize and resist patriarchy; they demonstrate self-awareness both in genre and their formation of utopian alternatives; and they operate as cultural expressions, which possess the capacity to mold and influence feminist readers (190-191).

Cavalcanti and Baccolini argue that critical dystopias primarily involve a feminist perspective in their political and formal breakthroughs although they are impacted by a broader antagonistic standpoint. Enhancing upon this point, Cavalcanti

explores how these works transcend traditional dystopian patterns. They construct a utopian vision, which avoids being confined to particular content, thereby safeguarding revolutionary possibility for a future that stays unlimited and "not-yet achieved" (191).

Cavalcanti maintains that the structural components of dystopian narratives offer a conceptual domain for utopia. As to her argument, the counter-narrative fosters a "blank space" that anticipates radical societal opportunities. This "utopian object" cannot be readily defined but instead functions as a sort of negation or neutralization, which is required for the beginning of "anticipatory illumination". Cavalcanti maintains that critical dystopian works are not isolated from utopia; in fact, they make use of 'dialectical negation' to tackle the tension between utopia and anti-utopia. This form of storytelling does not conceal historical problems but brings back the notion of utopia as a source of inspiration in feminist dystopian narratives. Likewise, these works offer a chance to create new types of political insight and agency, which are adaptable to the present-day circumstances (192).

Cavalcanti points out that critical dystopias possess a 'self-reflexive' character in which the act of writing itself functions as a sign of hope. The self-reflexivity of the narratives reveals its criticism and utopian hope together. Critical dystopias not only present textual manifestations that imply a suspended utopian ideal but also underline the 'imaginative and epistemological' dynamics at play. By accomplishing this, they take an active part in creating and promoting a feminist "counter-public sphere". Such an arena has the power to operate as a base for political mobilization (192).

Critical dystopias refrain from simply imitating earlier utopian works or surrendering to anti-utopian dismal. They comprehensively look into the tradition of dystopian literary genre in an effort to criticize the present and look for novel ways of resistance. These works often take on 'emancipatory' and 'militant utopian' standpoint distinguished by unresolved ends that signify continuous struggles and potential possibilities for change. They avoid propagating a 'perfect utopia' or conforming to a cynical anti-utopian perspective. They emphasize the cultural importance of the transforming effect of language, memory and history, and envision the constraints and

potentials of the dystopian genre. They reveal the influence of inventive involvement in political criticism and transformation, adopting tools such as historical analysis, memory, and storytelling to confront and redesign social matters. They reconfirm the transforming mission of 'language, textuality, memory and history.' They focus on a storyteller whose narrative becomes the heart of a political call in a group or potential group of people; and they propose profound reflections on imaginative and critical statements that disrupt their worlds (199).

2.2. The Relationship between Ecology, Gender and Literary Dystopias

> It is obvious that publications and reports containing data that scientifically reveal the extent of the damage to ecosystems do not deeply affect large masses. They are stories that directly reach human consciousness and leave an impact.
>
> - Serpil Oppermann, "Ekoeleştiri Yazıları – 1"[1]

The issue of endangered ecosystems by human activities has been prevalent for years. Readily and widely, the related impacts on the life of the planet along with social, cultural, and economic losses have been discussed based on empirical data for many years. Nonetheless, none of these have been as effective as stories. Stories have the power to get the readers to empathize with the suffering of the eco-systems, which scientific data falls short of. To this end, literature has become a great way to raise environmental awareness and ensure sustainability.

'Ecocriticism' and 'ecofeminism' have emerged as prominent literary analysis methodologies. Based on this, this chapter briefly explains ecocriticism, ecofeminism, the flourishing of dystopian, nightmarish societies within the concept of environmental problems and gender relations followed by the interplay among them. The interaction of gender and environment; the exploitation of both women and nature, and the need for

[1] Opperman, Serpil. "[Ekoeleştiri Yazıları-1] Ekoeleştirinin 6n1k'sı." *Yeşil Gazete*, trans. by Duygu Yavuz. 18 Nov. 2022. Web. 01 Dec. 2023.

eco-justice are significant issues of ecofeminism. This chapter specifically explores the reciprocal relationship between gender and environmental concerns that lie within these respective fields.

First and foremost, the word "ecocriticism" comes from the words “ecology” (the study of how living things interact with each other and their environment) and "criticism." The term “ecocriticism” was first defined by Cheryll Glotfelty, who put it as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (“Introduction” xviii). The American literary critic William Rueckert used it for the first time in 1978 in his book *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* (xx). On the other hand, Greg Garrard has expanded the definition in his study of *Ecocriticism*, and expressed the concept of ecocriticism as follows: In its broadest definition, it is the cultural history of humanity in the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. It's a look at the history of people and a critical look at what it means to be "human" (5).

Serpil Opperman, one of the most important figures working on ecocriticism asserts in her article titled “Ecocriticism: The Natural World in the Literary Viewfinder” that literature can be viewed as an “aesthetically and culturally” produced component of the environment. She discloses that it handles the themes associated with such human formations as “meaning, value, language, and imagination”, which can be connected to the matter of “ecological consciousness” that humans must accomplish. Literature teaches ideas that help people think about the environment, and the environmental disaster is a problem that literary studies cannot ignore (32).

Ecofeminist literary criticism, is a "hybrid" theory that combines "literary and philosophical" points of view to look at how nature is shown in literature and how it relates to "gender, race, class, and sexuality," and it emphasizes the social constructions of nature, such as “language, desire, knowledge, and power” (Legler and Warren 227). Legler claims that environmental issues are problems for both ecocriticism and feminism because of the patriarchal moral approach to women as "land" and the misguided mission of patriarchy towards the fact that the definition of nature and where it is located are related to social status, gender, and race. Legler also mentions ecofeminists' viewpoint on the importance of thinking of nature as feminine in order to

fight against the maintenance of a harmful environmental morality and the legitimization of the oppression of different "others" under patriarchal systems. Ecofeminists also wish nature and human-nonhuman relationships to be reinvented and reinterpreted. They claim this helps get rid of established dominance and is likely to help change harmful environmental applications.

There exist other concepts such as ‘environmentalism’ and ‘deep ecology’ in which ecocriticism and ecofeminism are concurrently intertwined. Environmentalism is “a theory that views the environment as rather than heredity as the important factor in the development and especially the cultural and intellectual development of an individual and group” and “advocacy of the preservation, restoration, or improvement of the natural environment (“Environmentalism” [Merriam-Webster]). In contrast to environmentalism, deep ecology does not just mean protecting nature for people's sake; it also means keeping nature for its own "immanent" value. Deep ecology is fundamentally opposed to the dualist approach of western philosophy, which is based on the human/nature dichotomy, and consequently requires a change from a "human-centered value system to a nature-centered value system," and is clearly opposed to the morality of western philosophy (Garrard 21). In that vein, it is similar to ecofeminism because anti-ecological ideas and actions are found guilty of the anthropocentric dualism between humans and nature; likewise, ecofeminism considers the androcentric dualism between men and women as the basic reason of differentiation of males and females also in terms of their brain size, denoting superiority to males. Garrard, referring to Warren and Davion, says that feminists and ecologists agree on the "logic of dominance" that governs the "master model." In this model, women are associated with "nature, the material, the emotional, and the particular," while men are associated with "culture, the immaterial, the rational, and the general" (23). At this point, Garrard suggests turning the hierarchy upside down by putting "nature, irrationality, emotion, and the human or non-human body" above civilization, rationality, and "the mind" (24).

Sezgin Toska, is another academic who makes evaluations on ‘how nature is perceived’ differently in various occasions along with ‘ecological problems’ in his work. He has pointed out that there are big differences in how sensitive the nomadic natives and the settled people are to the environment and nature. The locals see

themselves as a part of nature, and since they identify nature with the concept of “mother” mentally and physically, they believe that birth and life depend upon nature and that there is “fraternity between humans and animals” (27-29). On the other hand, the changing world order, the bad effects of the industrial revolution on the environment, and the dominance of capitalism have turned nature into a product that can be bought and sold. This has led to environmental problems all over the world. At this point, among the aims of early ecocriticism are to help people “raise awareness through literature and try to get them to be more sensitive about environmental issues” (75); this means that there can be a way out for people in this chaotic environment, and ecocriticism instills hope for humanity.

Having provided the definitions of literary notions and relevant views, it is now worthwhile to address the historical foundations of Western dualism as an essential issue. Since, only by understanding how Western dualism emerged and how it operates, can effective strategies be developed for dealing with it and ultimately overcoming it. My aim is to review some of the most fundamental dichotomies in western thought, including: “culture/nature,” “mind/nature,” “man/woman," "mind/body," "master/slave," "rationality/animalism," "mind/emotion," "spirit/nature," "freedom/necessity," "universal/particular," "human/nature," "civilized/primitive," "public/private," and "subject/object" (Plumwood 43). These two “binary oppositions” stand for the most fundamental kinds of subjection and power. So as to understand how this dualism works, it is essential to go into the details about the other important elements that construct the dualistic structure.

The process of recognizing and comprehending the underlying principles of Western philosophy and dualism has the potential to pave the way for the emergence of effective resolutions. Val Plumwood is a significant scholar whose work provides invaluable insights into the conceptual framework recognized as "the logical structure of dualism". In her work *Feminism and Mastery of Nature*, Plumwood addresses numerous fundamental concepts that lie within this structure of thought involving "denial," "radical exclusion," "incorporation," "instrumentalism," and "homogenization or stereotyping." First and foremost, it is vital to elucidate upon the concept of "denial," which includes things like downplaying the importance of the other party, ignoring its

contributions, and refusing to acknowledge that it even exists. The other term is known as "radical exclusion," which means pointing out things that aren't the same and then consequently excluding them. Exposure to “radical exclusion,” could occur together with the existence of just one contrasting trait. In addition to the premise of “radical exclusion”, another crucial term imposed by dualist constructions is the idea of “incorporation (relational definition)”. This term encompasses the act of identifying and classifying ‘the other’ with respect to the perspective of “I”, “the master” defining “the other,” “the slave”; and “the man” defining “the woman” in compliance with his own comprehension of things. Furthermore, “instrumentalism (objectification)” is also included in this structure which means ‘the other’s being a tool for the interests of the selves and acting submissively. ‘The other’ is objectified, made to forget one’s own purposes, serves the purposes of the center and becomes a means. Lastly, “homogenization or stereotyping” consists of ignoring and trivializing the differences of others and rejecting pluralism and diversity at the same time (47-50). All in all, identifying and understanding the mechanisms of western philosophy may lead to a path that brings forth solutions.

In addition to the implementations and fundamental concepts of western dualism, it would be appropriate to include the time period it encompasses. The origins of human-nature dualism can be traced to the advent of reason in ancient Greek culture and Plato's theories. Long before the Age of Enlightenment, the retreat from femininity began in ancient Greek culture as Plumwood reminds. Plato’s ideas were quite influential during his time. His views on women and the environment were quite dualistic and as a supporter of the dualist viewpoint and its proponents, Plato asserts that the feminine element depicts disorder while the male aspect represents the world at large (72-74). Plato argues that there is no need to consider nature because it operates as an ‘instrument’ that has the capability of satisfying every one of humanity’s demands (69). In addition, it has no intrinsic value "before it becomes useful or before human work is contributed." There is also concern over the term "natural homogenization." The intended meaning of the phrase is that every notion which is included in the realm of nature, such as waves, sea, rocks, woods, etc., is defined by reducing it to a single word, such as "nature" or "brush-whistle." The capabilities of language generate

manifestations of emotions including dominance and humiliation (70). Furthermore, Plato places strict restrictions on "body and passions," classifying them as belonging to the lower category and rejecting them, homogenized, and defined in order to serve the supreme authority of "superior minds" (71).

In *The Death of Nature*, Carolyn Merchant discusses that there exists not a single consistent definition of nature, gender and sex. Because they are shaped by historical and social factors, they have evolved over the centuries and changed within different cultural settings. That is to say, the ways in which people comprehend nature and the connection between one another depends on cultural standards, upbringing and education. Likewise, gender is a societal construct with transforming rules and regulations whereas sex is often considered as a binary form, and is in fact more complex as a result of unique traits among individuals (xvi).

Throughout the period shifting from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, there took place a significant transformation in how people conceived the cosmos. The dominant idea of an ‘organic’ universe in which a dynamic, living feminine earth had an essential position ultimately submitted to a mechanical standpoint. This newly developed perspective depicted nature as devoid of life and inert, consequently requiring human interference and control over it (xvi).

These earlier improvements reflect the rise of a fresh viewpoint, which may have the potential to lead people into embracing a lifestyle, which is environmentally responsible in the twenty-first millennium. The effectiveness of the mechanical foundation utilized all throughout the ‘industrial revolution’ may eventually decline, thereby necessitating the implementation of a non-mechanical scientific approach and an environmental morality fostering the reuse of sustainable substances and the creation of ecologically viable habitats. This might have the potential to contribute to the recovery of the Gaia (xviii).

The meaning of nature in classical and early modern eras involved closely linked conceptions; as for humans, it included innate traits, basic capacities and natural impulses manifested by individuals, animals and objects. This suggested a natural tendency to take part in action and continue activity. Yet, operating against nature represented an aversion towards this fundamental inclination. With respect to the

physical domain, the word “nature” implies an ever-changing, innovative, and regulating force, which triggered events and their consequent transformation and advancement (xxiii).

The use of the living organism metaphor as an organizing principle for people, community and the universe as a whole during the sixteenth century was an anticipated outcome. “Organismic” philosophy laid a strong focus on the interlinked nature of numerous parts inside “the human body” in addition to the dependence of people on social purposes inside the household, society and nation. Additionally, life-giving forces permeate into the smallest entity in the cosmos (1). The analogy between nature and a living thing was born from an ancient viewpoint in philosophy that generated a major influence on the intellectual foundations of the sixteenth century. Still, this analogy presented diversity in different situations as explained below (1-2).

The impact of ‘nature’ compared to ‘nurture’ on ‘controlling imagery’ at the foundation of the ‘organic theory’ established the understanding of nature, the earth in particular as a maternal image that is a compassionate and loving feminine figure, providing the requirements of humanity underneath an orderly and purposeful existence. Even so, a contrasting portrayal of nature as feminine was greatly perceived, considered by its untainted and unforeseeable characteristics, prone to provoke “violence, storms, droughts” and disarray as a whole. Both beings have been identified as containing feminine biological attributes and were expressions of mankind's determinations imposed upon the natural world around them.

As ‘the scientific revolution’ advanced resulting in mechanization and rationalization of the current mindset, the metaphoric portrayal of nature as a caring mother slowly decreased in significance. The following representation of nature as ‘chaotic’ generated a significant principle associated with modern thinking, which is putting authority over the natural world. The Modern Era has adopted some basic tenets: Machinery and control and ‘mastery of nature’. The predominant perspective which favored ecological principles with a strong focus on feminine fundamentals, eventually deteriorated and overtaken by an industrial paradigm which either ignored or misused female values. Throughout the seventeenth century, the ongoing mechanization

of Western civilization resulted in the enslavement of the maternal planet and 'virgin earth' by the expanding industrial equipment (2).

All of these elements in the abovementioned paragraphs that have paved the way for dystopias can be addressed through ecological awareness. Literature is one of the most significant and powerful means to help raise insight along with contributing to the amplifying voices of the others. When the interaction between gender and environmental issues leads to dystopia and has become a part of a literary story, it provides an opportunity for humankind to reflect on through the experiences of fictional characters and stories in the novels, which will be examined in the following chapters.

2.3. Memory and "Theses on the Philosophy of History" by Walter Benjamin

Walter Benjamin's text "Theses on History" is essentially about readings of history, especially that of Hegel's and Marx's where he argues that capitalism brought forth the emergence of progress, replacing religious societies with capitalist ones. As a result, the non-linear understanding of time, that is, the belief that the event of Jesus ascending to heaven has an impact on the believers' present, shifted to sequential and constantly evolving 'linear time', or 'homogeneous empty time' that is a uniform understanding of time where each moment is similar. In the structure of the nation-states, we currently find ourselves in a state of linear or homogeneous empty time.

The reason why it is important and relevant is that Benjamin states that the readings of '-isms' are teleological [2] and theological [3] . In other words, Hegel's reading of the Germanic community, for instance, as the end of history is also teleological and religious. Similarly, even Marx's materialism, in which he claimed that the proletariat would prevail and bring about the end of history, was teleological and theological for the same reasons.

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[2] The word, along with its close relative *teleology*, comes to us by way of New Latin, from the Greek root *telos*, meaning "end or purpose." Both entered English in the 18th century, followed by *teleologist* in the 19th century. *Teleology* has the basic meaning of "the study of ends or purposes." A teleologist attempts to understand the purpose of something by looking at its results (merriem-webster).

[3] Of or relating to theology (merriem-webster).

So as not to misunderstand the concepts that Benjamin put forth, I aim to clarify the word "religious" in Benjamin's text. The original connotation of the word is avoided here; instead, it refers to highly rigid, orthodox ideas and beliefs such as fascism and capitalism. Benjamin denounces these strict "isms", criticises their roots in a biased interpretation of history, and adjudicates the particular reading of the past since they contain violence in an extremely destructive way.

Interestingly, in the formation of "Theses on History", Benjamin uses a mataphor to imply that the cultural environment he lives in has reached the current circumstance — wars, tyranny, hunger, ecological disasters, inequality — as a consequence of teleological and theological perspectives: Benjamin put the term "automation", referring to a dwarf which is hidden inside a chessboard metaphorically, manipulating the game and constantly deceiving and defeating people. The dwarf actually stands for teleological and theological interpretation of history and it appears in unexpected places; invades, deceives and prevails. The other literary image is the fact that Benjamin's text is written in forms of theses which reminds the reader the theses that Martin Luther hung on the door of a church in Germany which started the Reformation movement. Benjamin's choice of this format, which is very similar to Martin Luther's, implies that there exists a great decay in theology, or religion. Not solely that, but Luther leverages the theses form to critique the religious in general while deliberately taking advantage of the religious imagery in his very work. Similarly, Benjamin benefits from religious imageries, too; and what is required according to him, paradoxically, is having a theological stance, but by entirely rejecting and criticising the deterioration from inside and beside itself, in light of the corruption's disastrous impacts on society.

The religious analogies Benjamin employs are 'the Messianic time' and 'redemption'. What he means by Messianic time is that "the theological conception of the time of history as Jetztzeit (now-time)", contrasting with "homogeneous and empty mechanical time" which corresponds to the numerically quantifiable "time of natural sciences" (Tagliacozzo 181). In other words:

> Historical time is for Benjamin, 'homogenous, empty time' a haphazard, meaningless series of events that a weak historicism tries to arrange into a teleology it naively associates with 'progress'. Opposed to this 'homogenous, empty time' is the redemptive Messianic time in which distinctions among past, present and future are all absorbed into a single entity, what Benedict Anderson describes as 'a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present'. (Ivry 142)

Crucial to Walter Benjamin's "political, ethical and historical" agenda is the encompassing, intensive and redemptive comprehension of time. Time is not an ongoing sequence of events, but instead, a conceptual dimension which reveals the wholeness, completion and everlastingness. That is why Benjamin's standpoint encapsulates a "restorative" element in history (Tagliacozzo 182).

The word "Messianism", actually, has nothing to do with looking for a particular person, a saviour; rather, it focuses on the prospect of a Messianic rule which will restore the destroyed moments of the past. Such prospect is inert, which involves regenerating and damaging proclivities together. Namely, Benjamin's 'Theses' suggest an innovative move away from global history to one of redemption by means of recollecting and comprehending the past, that is, through memory. This stresses the imminent Messianic anticipation resembling "a tiger's sprint into the past" (182). By recalling the past, bringing it forward in the present moment, and reproving progress, historians maintain "a weak Messianic power" with the aim of revolutionary political endeavors in the direction of a fair society without social classes and inequaility in the establishment of a secular governing (182).

To put it differently, Benjamin's discovery is entirely materialist because it starts from the knowledge that time, in its linear, orderly, and determined direction, is an ideological structure that does not have any materialist essence. It is the way out of a political-economic-social system that seems to have no escape route; it does not require a Messiah to come and save it – that is, it does not need salvation from outside society in the classical sense (Gandler 162-163).

Paradoxically, it is theology that helps Benjamin eliminate the inhumane elements in such a conception of salvation. The Messiah element, which indeed exists in Benjamin's text, is fundamentally different from the salvation thought characterized by a

classical Messiah in the concept of revolution. For Benjamin, "a weak messianic power" has been given to each generation, and this power is sharpened precisely by understanding time differently from what is generally accepted, as "We have been expected upon this earth" — expected not only by past generations but also by future ones. While different generations wait for a savior or Messiah, and while there is an expectation of the "fulfillment of the laws of history" which is no different from expecting a movement from outside society or, ultimately, a Messiah, for Benjamin, the person toward whom past generations' hope is directed is none other than ourselves (Gandler 163).

There exists “a perfect world” within each “now of knowability” based on Benjamin’s idea of history. His famous “monadological dialectical image” stands for instances from the past which still need to be redeemed by way of awareness and political engagement. All of this draws attention to the overlap between the past and the present, “a Messianic interruption” which pauses the continuum of history (Tagliacozzo 181). In relation to the limitless and incomplete character of “historical time”, there is not just one actual incident which is associated with the time it takes place. For, it is unable to adjust to the typical aspect of time. As a consequence, time as a form is unfinished. Therefore, time should not be considered as merely the measurement of the length of a mechanical transformation. The connection to the past, the ability to summon back long-forgotten instances, and the potential of those who are oppressed to derive power from memories of their own servitude, help foster the likely outcome of political action as well (185).

In a nutshell, Walter Benjamin argues in the “Theses on History” that capitalism brought forth the emergence of progress, replacing religious societies with capitalist ones. As a result, the non-linear understanding of time; — namely, the belief that the event of Jesus ascending to heaven has an impact on the believers’ present — shifted to sequential and constantly evolving ‘linear time’, or ‘homogeneous empty time’ that is a uniform and secularized understanding of time where each moment is similar. In the structure of the nation-state, we currently find ourselves in a state of ‘linear’ or ‘homogeneous empty time’ in which events can be justified by a cause and effect connection. For instance, the outbreak of a war is likely to be rationalized through

raw material need; or manufacturing weapons is the result of technological advances and the requirement of the era; or victory is the result of nuclear bomb and such fallacies on.

2.4. Doris Lessing's and Margaret Atwood's Similar Narrative Styles in *The Memoirs of A Survivor and The Handmaid's Tale*

One of the most important factors, affecting our historical vision and our ability to shape it, is our way of perceiving and telling it because we can best preserve reality and our memory through narratives. The content of *The Memoirs of A Survivor* and *The Handmaid's Tale* draws our attention to the fact that our approach towards history, time, memory and narrating what happened in the past should all be examined together due to their inextricable nature. When the novels are analysed in terms of Benjamin's Messianic time concept, the perception of time as we know feels broken. Both narratives have an exceptional flow such as the lack of linear time, going back to the recollections through flashbacks, sudden re-emergence/disappearance of childhood memories, and the puzzlement they create. Even though it is difficult to distinguish what is real from what is imaginary where confusion takes over the narrations, all these elements are intentionally embedded in the stories and they serve a purpose.

Another significant element of the narratives is that they go on especially very slow because both Lessing's and Atwood's main concern is not to narrate the events one after another. On the contrary, they aim to demonsrate that the world can be a livable place even without progression, without a linear narrative or teleological chain of events. They accomplish this through a non-linear narrative style. The importance of this narrative style lies in its relevance to Benjamin. According to him, there is a serious problem in the narratives of linear time: the notion of progress inherent in the linear concept carries within itself a self-destructive element, and this is why we find ourselves in the situation we are in, as evidenced by examples of the demolishing effects of the idea of continuous progress in the novels we read.

> For linear time views the present as the watershed that divides the past and the future, thus disallowing the idea of a future in, of, or from the past. Linear time abandons the

> past as lost, as dead and gone. It must be interrupted in a "messianic cessation of happening" (Thesis XVII) and replaced by a concept of time in which the future of the past has a chance to be assumed – in a sense to be specified – by the present. (Fritsch 41)

The concept of time on which capitalist economy is based has to be linear and immutable. This concept is sacred and inviolable for the prevailing ideology because time is the only measure it holds to make incomparable things comparable: the different labors of different people (Gandler 162-163). Capitalism and fascism aim to erase memories by promoting a uniform and vacant concept of time. For that reason, only can Messianic time continue to exist, even in a weakened state through memory and story. As previously stated, story and memory need to be fractured and never be teleological, holistic or causal. Benjamin's conception of the future (messianic time) is "non-instrumental" (not teleologic) and "non-progressivistic" (Fritcsh 14). In order to construct a future, it is essential to remember and address the pain of the past. Having said that, giving up teleological interpretations and seeing history through such a lens is necessary for Messianic time to be accomplished. As Benjamin stated in his Thesis X below:

> Our consideration proceeds from the insight that the politicians' stubborn faith in progress, their confidence in their 'mass basis,' and, finally, their servile integration in an uncontrollable apparatus have been three aspects of the same thing. It seeks to convey an idea of the high price our accustomed thinking will have to pay for a conception of history that avoids any complicity with the thinking to which these politicians continue to adhere. (Benjamin Thesis X; qtd. in Fritsch 23)

If we aim to adopt a broader point of view on messianic time, redefine our connection to the past, and move away from Aristotelian unities of time, place and action in storytelling, then the predominant viewpoint and narrative structure ought to include analepsis and flashforwards as apparent in both Lessing's and Atwood's novels. The material world no longer adheres to a cause-and-effect paradigm in the pre-modern sense. On the contrary, an absence of consistency and unity dominates their narratives.

Both Lessing and Atwood depict scenarios where the natural balance is disrupted by human ends, driven by desires for development, profit, power and similar motives. In Atwood's work, environmental pollution, radiation, and declining birth rates contribute to this, while in Lessing's, there is a serious catastrophic incident referred as 'The Crisis'. So, the first common element in both narratives is the human-induced degradation of nature, highlighting a cultural dimension related to concepts such as progress, capitalism, and modernity.

Both narratives cleverly utilize time and storytelling. Time jumps, visits to the past, flash-forwards, the present, the future and the past all intertwine seamlessly. In Atwood's novel, this is achieved through recollections, and the use of recording, while Lessing's narrator keeps a memoir in which she writes down the experiences she went through and employs the metaphor of rooms to navigate through different temporal dimensions. For instance, the narrator in *The Memoirs* constantly delves into Emily's past, simultaneously exploring myriad alternative scenarios, encompassing the present and the future. Similarly, Offred in *The Handmaid's* tries to preserve her experiences like a treasure digging deep into the past, and bringing them to the present. Considering all these efforts and striving of both protagonists, what Lessing and Atwood do as their creators to "recuperate" long-forgetten moments and "make them explode and to fuel the destructive liberatory power of the oppressed class" (Tagliacozzo 185) and maintain their recollections instead of forgetting or repressing them.

Both narrative styles, through employing the novel form and non-linear narrative technique, aim to convey a message to the reader: As women writers critiquing the modern world, Atwood and Lessing deliberately and consciously avoid the use of a progressivist narrative. This is because just a narrative has, in itself, the very element that leads us into the predicament we find ourselves in — a predicament that eradicates nature or renders it uninhabitable. The use of form in conveying this message in both novels is a pleasant detail from the perspective of eco-feminist fiction. This approach in these novels against the literary tradition and cultural understanding, appears to emphasize the need to question and change male-dominated and progressive cultural codes. Moreover, it is suggested that within this tradition, themes of exploration,

progress, and conquest come at a cost, and the female authors in the novels offer an alternative perspective by questioning our relationship with nature and the environment.

From Homer's epic poetry to Rudyard Kipling's works, from Columbus's discoveries to James Cook's travel journals, many works contain the progressive, expansionist, and dominant cultural codes. Feminist critical dystopian fiction and ecological perspectives they offer challenge these cultural codes and provide alternative standpoints along with solutions. These often include the empowerment of female characters, challenging traditional gender roles, and efforts to establish a more sustainable relationship with nature. All these examples convey a message to us, the readers. Through clever narrative devices, Atwood and Lessing are essentially telling us that the era of that progressive, capitalist, linear, and male-dominated perspective has come to an end. However, as they imply, there is neither nature nor a viable path left for us to follow. Yet, hope is the very thing, operating as a catalyst of change, nowhere but within ourselves; we don’t need the resurrection of Messiah, but a messianic power which we already possess inside. All we need is profound moments of contemplation and awareness and the novels examined in this study provide their audience with these moments of reflection.

CHAPTER THREE

UNBOUNDING THE CONFINES OF THE MIND'S LABYRINTH, *THE MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR*

3.1. Doris Lessing

Doris (Tayler) Lessing was born in 1919 in Kermanshah, Persia, and spent her early childhood in Southern Rhodesia from the age of six, then moved to London in 1949, marking it as her constant place of dwelling. The novels produced by the author encompass an extensive variety of topics and different narrative forms. The political and social facets of colonialism and Communism are among the topics she covered in her novels. In addition, she pursued the complexities of the human psyche and tackled with mystical elements. The combined use of several different narrative forms embracing realistic, speculative and mythical styles has made her work draw attention and generated an array of critical views on her literary output (Fahim 1).

Fahim argues that the literary works of Doris Lessing embrace a multitude of different frames consisting of Marxism, though not confined to it, psychological stories and 'Sufi-influenced fiction'. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that these numerous themes are bound together via central concepts, which interact with each other and enhance her philosophical perspectives further. Particularly, the inspection of decent harmony within 'the individual' is figuratively represented; patterns of 'descent and ascent' are utilized whereas the formation of an equilibrium connection with society is depicted via "motifs of return" (1).

Doris Lessing, beginning with her earliest works of fiction, deliberately focused on recognizing the complex connections between personal ethical awareness and societal morals instead of political resolutions to societal issues. She remains committed to the conviction that "hope" for humanity depends on preserving equilibrium between personal and communal identities (Fahim 2). Lessing also believes that one should not surrender to collective decisions without questioning through their own discernment (Lessing and Schlueter 12).

Doris Lessing had initially been admitted ‘as a novelist’ who adopted the guidelines of ‘Classical Realism’. According to Doris Lessing, the highest level of literary accomplishment is to be credited to the works released in the nineteenth century by giant authors such as ‘Tolstoy, Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Turgenev and Chekhov’. These giants of literature are recognized worldwide for their role in contributing to the realist movement during the nineteenth century (12). She interprets realism as an artistic expression which originates from vigor and authenticity which does not have to be ‘intellectually defined’, a perspective immersing ‘symbolism’ and furthermore she is of the opinion that realist work of literature is the most sublime ‘form of prose writing’ compared with ‘any other ism’ such as ‘expressionism, impressionism, symbolism and naturalism’ (13). What significant people in the nineteenth century had as the very common point was a moral stance irrespective of their beliefs, political leanings and ‘aesthetic’ values. For her, what makes the nineteenth century novel distinguishable is this very moral attitude and humanism (13). She expresses her rereading of ‘Tolstoy, Stendhal, Balzac’ along with the very different people she knew, regardless of their religion, their political affiliation; they do the same because they want to broaden their comprehension of existence. Lessing exemplifies that the explicit ethical decisions put forward by Balzac provides relief; Dostoevsky gives readers an opportunity to discover moral disorder. However, eventually their works arrive at reconciliation, salvation and regaining ‘order’. Lessing questions and puts forth the reasons why she felt as if she would not reread approximately ‘all the contemporary novels’ she finished reading once (14). Lessing looks for ‘the warmth, the compassion, the humanity, and the love of people’ in the 19th-century literature, similar to faith in mankind, rather than repeating old ethical values or familiarity. She thinks all of these traits are missing in contemporary literature (15). If the writer has a sense of duty for the readers who have been influenced by him, he must embrace a humanistic attitude contributing as an agent of alteration either for beneficial or adverse. She underlines the obligation of the writer’s perceiving himself ‘as an architect of the soul’ who is supposed to possess a visionary outlook, which must have its roots in what surrounds us (15-16).

She is not sure whether humankind will be able to survive and take part in literary occupations like producing and consuming books because they presently find themselves in a world, which is full of danger, brutality, instability and unpredictability. The reason for worries stems not only from the possibility of the annihilation of the population by human beings with unscrupulous and corrupt intentions but also from the probability of childbirth with mental and physical deformities. In today's world, the atom has been splitted, changing the core component of the universe. This advancement has led to a major effect on the ways humans think as the materialization of abstract ideas took place impacting people's daily lives which was different for ages (16). However, she believes that 'artists' by their nature, decode 'dreams and nightmares' and that is why she is aware of the duty of the artist to be there with profound concerns, intimidations and 'hopes' of humanity. She is of the opinion that their responsibility is not only to fight against malevolence but also enforcing an optimistic worldview overcoming ill will (17).

Given that she was a supporter of 'classical realism', critics were surprised by her following engagement in 'misticism' and aspects of science fiction that rested on 'myth and Oriental fables' (Fahim viii). Recognising the underlying concept of collapse in Lessing's works is possible through an awareness for Jungian theories of the unconscious and the stereotypical image of the confined occidental men and the conviction offering the Western world has advanced in a way that shows he has abandoned his subconscious for the sake of his position in society. Lessing was interested in Jung's ideas on psychology and ended up finding the framework of Jungian approach better matched compared with Freud's. The idea that humankind can become an all-encompassing whole once again is Jung's hopeful view, which is different from Freud's perspective. He disapproves Freud's view that what is known as the 'unconscious' is the place of suppressed aspirations and contains little; on the other hand, for Jung, it is the crucial aspect of each person as much as 'conscious' (6). In connection with Lessing's concernment into mysticism and subconscious, *The Memoirs of A Survivor* can be considered as an outstanding representation of the endeavor of harmonizing and establishing bridges between two obviously dissimilar realms: the world of realism, and the domain of fantasy (ix) and unconscious.

However, my reading of *The Memoirs of A Survivor* is not going to be Jungian precisely though it will include the basic 'unconscious' element. Instead, this chapter aims at analyzing the novel by combining Doris Lessing's concept of memory with Walter Benjamin's historical reading. The main reason of this choice is that the significant connection lies in Benjamin's treatment of historical narration and memory concepts akin to Lessing's narrative technique. Storytelling is very similar to history writing; the narrator perceives and conveys the reality similar to a historian. Both of them serve the objective of persuading the reader, and they both rely on memory both at the individual and societal levels. My assertion is that in *The Memoirs of A Survivor*, Lessing resists the operating mechanisms of traditional historical storytelling and literary narrative styles that are monopolized by progressivist perspective and exploitative way of thinking and she uses a narrative technique very close to what Walter Benjamin describes in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History".

Lessing's narrative technique provides an opportunity for people, who have been silenced, suppressed, disadvantaged and neglected, to speak up about themselves. In order fully to understand this, I will begin by primarily focusing on the atmosphere depicted in *The Memoirs of A Survivor* consisting of the surrounding environment, women, nature and animals; and the all-around interpersonal relationship dynamics among individuals. In simple terms, the chapter is precisely about how the prevailing ideologies criticised by Benjamin, degrade nature and human existence into a hellish state, a dystopia. At this point, the reader will encounter the hopeful alternative that Lessing offers in the end within the novel's nightmarish atmosphere.

3.2. *The Memoirs of A Survivor*

The narrative starts with a middle-aged female narrator whose name the readers will never learn and a young girl named Emily Mary Cartright who is suddenly dropped off by a man in the nurturing hands of the narrator. Herein, the narrator, being one of the tiny number of residents in a gloomy apartment building, is now weighed down with the burden of looking after the child. Early on, she hesitates to decide on the right course of action, though eventually there is no other practical choice except complying. She accepts the situation and shares her house with Emily and her animal Hugo, a cat-like dog.

Meanwhile, the disturbingly miserable atmosphere is marked by the decay and the breakdown of a civilization in which families have scattered and children have been left abandoned. It is such a setting which is depleted with plants and trees gone, distinguished by a toxic climate with an unbreathable air, and the absence of trust among people. There is just a restricted amount of food that can be obtained through personal and communal efforts, and additionally, the source of electricity has been cut off for an extended period of time. The unsettling atmosphere, the sense of insecurity felt, the ecological collapse are the very proving elements of the dystopian hellish atmosphere. It is comprehended that it was a chronicle which we have managed to get our hands on, describing all these post-apocalyptic events. The narrator avoids defining the catastrophe with a specific word — so do the other characters in the novel — and she uses the word "it" because she knows that such cases are not specific to individuals or a single community. In contrast, literature and history have covered such themes since the beginning:

> Perhaps I would have done better to have begun this chronicle with an attempt at a full description of 'it'. But is it possible to write an account of anything at all without 'it' — in some shape or another — being the main theme? Perhaps, indeed, 'it' is the secret theme of all literature and history, like writing in invisible ink between the lines, which springs up sharply black, dimming the old print we knew so well, as life, personal or public, unfolds unexpectedly and we see something where we never thought we could — we see 'it' as the ground-swell of events, experience... Very well then, but what was 'it'? (*The Memoirs* 103)

In the preceding quote, the narrator delves into the idea of "it" which is more than chaos, a recurring theme in literature and history, a profound factor molding occasions and life itself. The quotation highlights the value of eagerness for reading the other layers between the lines and understand the puzzling nature of human existence. She invites the readers to inquire the worth in unfathomable, calling for them to look deeper into the entire realization of "it" and to question how we got to this point and. "[...] Inside it was all chaos... the feeling one is taken over by, at the times in one's life when everything is in change, movement, destruction — or reconstruction, but that is not always evident at the time — a feeling of helplessness, as if one were being whirled about in a dust-devil or a centrifuge" (56). The centrifuge metaphor and the concept of "it" also points out the psychological chaos the narrator is confronting due to the ambiguous nature of exogenous factors and the intricate relationship between internal and external experiences.

With regard to external factors, some children find themselves caught in a situation where they are compelled to develop maturity at such a young age beyond their years like Emily. Majority of them lack the capacity to foresee the years to come, maintaining an everyday existence devoted merely to survival, embracing an attitude of bowing to fate and relying on a higher power what lies ahead. Besides, families have been torn apart and the concept of family has been destroyed: "Some parents were dead, because of violence, or epidemics, others had gone away out of the city and left their children behind" (*The Memoirs* 65). The most agonizing aspect is the complete absence of maternal and paternal morality; individuals have a singular focus on survival instinct and self-preservation. For instance, some parents having children were "[...] simply losing interest and throwing them out to fend for themselves as people had once done with dogs and dogs that gave no longer pleasure" (65).

While all these are happening regarding families, the governing body, "The Talkers" (36) presents its pretense of concern for all problems which serves as an outstanding manifestation of its hypocrisy. "[...] waifs tended to be ignored by the authorities unless attention was specifically drawn to them [...]" (65). The entire process is a display of power and a facade: "Officially of course children still had parents and

homes and that kind of thing, and if not, they had to be in care or custody; officially children even went to school regularly. But nothing like this was the practice" (65). Actually, the top priority of authority and those in positions of power including police officers is to safeguard their own structure of rule. Their biggest worry is the gatherings and uprising of the populace. When everybody in the neighborhood cooperates to fix a life-threatening circumstance, officials spread terror in apprehension of losing control over them. As a consequence, it could possibly make things much more dangerous for the citizens. The narrator openly mentions the likely outcome of their extermination as a result of such a gathering and describes it as a "'mass meeting' of the ordinary world" (*The Memoirs* 121).

The narrator sets forth the changing foundations of the city that the apartment building she lives in were previously populated by aristocratic and highly-skilled professionals, yet presently by impoverished households or clans. For, abandoned properties have been taken over by different folks or group of families. She portrays how the corridors and halls of the building enabled encounters among people with diverse cultural backgrounds, "every sort of person" (9) which is comparable to a lively street or market place. The end result, it turned out to be hard to tell apart the working class neighborhood and the homogeneity of the dwellings.

In the current situation, although it might seem to be the collapsing of a class-based society, it remains discretely. A notable example of this type of thing may be noticed in The White and The Ryan Families who are positioned at precisely opposite cultural backgrounds. The former resides in the same, average apartment building as the narrator does. Janet, the daughter of the White Family and Emily's peer, seems to lead an ordinary existence, for instance. On the other hand, she genuinely maintains a different life opposed to the rest. She has access to food, products, outfit and transportation whereas majority of people have challenges finding them. There were not only The Whites but also other members of the official families disguising their privilege in bureaucratic circles (40-41).

3.2.1. Emily's Company, Hugo and Her Passionate Lover, Gerald

At the center of Emily's story are two major characters. One is her animal Hugo, while the other is her intimate partner Gerald. They both undergo a positive transformation throughout the novel. In the following paragraphs, Hugo and Gerald are going to be analyzed subsequently.

The novel provides an insight into the treatment of animals by exploring the viewpoint of the folk towards Emily's beloved cat-like dog Hugo. He endures societal and personal biases that result in his mistreatment as a freak. The gang of kids longs to murder him, rendering him with such dread that he shelters behind the flat's window and refuses to leave. With all of that, Emily's most devoted companion is Hugo. He exhibits deeper compassion, empathy and sentiment. Although Emily has an exclusive romantic passion towards Gerald, Hugo is more committed to her than Gerald on the grounds that the former is the most selfless character in the novel. Hugo's presence within the world of Emily has proven so significant that he holds a keen sense of all possible dangers and fills her with affection. Hugo embodies traits worth mentioning like common sense, sensitivity, tenderness, patience, anticipation and maybe the purest love for people, Emily in particular, around him. Waiting for Emily, Hugo:

> [...] lay there hour after hour, contemplating his thoughts. Why not? He thought, he judged, as animals can be seen to do, if observed without prejudice. [...] Our emotional life is shared with the animals; we flatter ourselves that human emotions are so much more complicated than theirs. Perhaps the only emotion not known to a cat or a dog is — romantic love. And even then, we have to wonder. What is the emotional devotion of a dog for his master or mistress but something like that sort of love, all pining and yearning 'give me, give me'. What was Hugo's love for Emily but that? As for our thoughts, our intellectual apparatus, our rationalisms and our logics and our deductions and so on, it can be said with absolute certainty that dogs and cats and monkeys cannot make a rocket to fly to the moon or weave artificial dress materials out of the by-products of petroleum, but as we sit in the ruins of this variety of intelligence, it is hard to give it much value: I suppose we are under-valuing it now as we over-valued it then. It will have to find its place: I believe a pretty low place, at that. (*The Memoirs* 56-57)

In the aforementioned quote, Lessing reveals that humanbeings have no inherent superiority over animals, since animals additionally have deep thought and elevated emotional mental state. Moreover, she unveils the reality that the improvements brought into our lives by discoveries, inventions and industrialization have more negative consequences than positive, and are inevitably invasive with human ambition and lack of conscience. Lessing challenges our ideals and underlines that what we had prioritized up to now is a great devastation. She illustrates the consequences of the increasing gap between humanity and nature. She implies that if we fall short of changing our beliefs and actions towards animals and environment and unless we embrace an ecological perspective, we will confront further catastrophic scenarios. She draws attention to the significance of emotional gains and values that inherently exist in animals and this rubble of intellect and rationalism is a manifestation of the fact that a deep change in total perspective is no longer a suggestion or a question of choice but a matter of urgency.

The following point I intend to discuss is Emily's love, Gerald in the novel. Gerald — Emily's first and only love — embodies the futile pursuit of ineffective solutions, which are very similar to that of organizations within the nation-state foundations through modernity. He reminds us of naive but ultimately insufficient efforts both by means of his private life and his position in community. He is typically furnished with rationality which is commonly a manly requirement. Without a doubt, Gerald cannot be regarded innocent thoroughly from certain viewpoints. First and foremost, he bears a striking resemblance to the main characters in patriarchal historical narratives who utilize control and authority in terms of his relationships and general way of living. These are progressive, exploitative but influential figures who fail to recognize any misconduct in going after their own desires and do not settle for a single thing. To illustrate, in terms of his love-life, Gerald has created his own "harem", in a manner of speaking, by engaging in sleeping with all the girls that adore him. The girls orbit around him, helping him with a number of physical and cognitive duties. He possesses the attributes of a warlord and keeps considerable power as a leader of a gang. He is capable of taking any step and reflects the glorified portrayal of a man as envisioned by the expansionist ideology. He protects the vulnerable (women, nature,

children), and "his need to protect the weak" (*The Memoirs* 65) reminds the physical strength of Hercules, and the cunning intelligence of Odysseus. He possesses a power so immense that renders him extremely appealing to all women, Emily in particular. So to speak, Emily displays the same level of commitment like Penelope — if we were to compare — and this faithful young girl is head over heels in love with him but she gets disappointed from the very beginning. The narrator quotes:

> Soon I saw that Emily was not the only girl Gerald favoured, she was by no means the only one helping him with that household. I saw she was not sure of her position with him. [...] From the rumour markets I heard that the young man Gerald was 'seducing all those young girls, it is shocking.' Funny, to hear all those old words, seduce, immoral, shocking and so on; and that they had no force in them was proved by the fact that nothing else was done. When citizens are moved one way or another they show it, but one really cared much that young women of thirteen, fourteen, had sexual relations. We had returned to an earlier time of man's condition. (67)

In parallel, Gerald is seeking to demonstrate his position of power to his male peers by his eager quest for leadership, while outwardly displaying the presence of a woman at his side. Traditional patterns and gender roles in relation to masculinity and femininity can clearly be seen. Meanwhile Emily continues to perform her maternal duties by taking care of children in the domestic realm. Gerald is currently involved in a public sphere excursion, though. The narrator explicitly underlines the drastic deterioration of living conditions, while proving that societal norms and responsibilities have remained unchanged:

> Back in my home, I saw, through the window, Gerald arriving on the pavement with a girl, presumably Mauureen, and he stood surrounded as usual with the younger children, some from his household, some not. He probably saw his loitering there for hours at a time as a function. I suppose it was. Collecting information, as we all had to; attracting new recruits for his household — but he had more applicants than he could take in; simply showing himself, displaying his qualities among the four or five other young men who were the natural leaders — was this the equivalent of a male going out to hunt while

> the women kept themselves busy at home? I entertained these thoughts as I stood with Hugo beside me, watching the young man in his brigand's outfit prominent among the people there, with so many young girls hanging about, catching his eye, waiting to talk to him... old thoughts, about stale social patterns. Yet one had them, they did not die. Just as the old patterns kept repeating themselves, re-forming themselves even when events seemed to license any experiment or deviation or mutation, so did the old thoughts, which matched the patterns. I kept hearing Emily's shrill, over-pressured voice: 'Where's Gerald, where is he?' as she stood in her woman's place, combining nits and lice out of the younger children's heads, while Gerald was probably planning some expedition to capture supplies from somewhere, for no one could say of him that he was unresourceful or lazy. (*The Memoirs* 115-116)

After all, a woman should devote herself to her man and abstain from pursuing attention from others. If necessary, women had better put themselves in competition with one another (Emily-June) to win the hearts and minds of their shared partner. Meanwhile, their man has a freedom to move from one to another, and employ the right to choose any desired woman at any given time. He wants all at the same time. But supposedly, he has been tempted and ensnared by women, and regarded as a victim! This once again brings back the traits attributed to canonical female figures Circe, Calypso and the Sirens from ancient times. Whatever the reason for their actions, men conduct them with benign intentions, attempting to rescue the world! This has been the case from the time immemorial.

3.2.2. The Narrator's Dream World Beyond The Wall

When and how did the narrator's penetration into the wall start? In essence, the narrator recognizes the presence of another world beyond the wall not as an outcome of an isolated event, but through an ongoing course of comprehension. This insight became apparent throughout an unresolved period of time distinguished by an unfolding grasp reminiscent of the meaning of realizing. The narrator does not have an exact date or time, yet she acknowledges that she has been conscious of this latent presence for some time prior to fully recognizing it:

> I knew that behind the wall a certain quality of life was being lived. Not even: 'It was in the spring of that year that...' No, the consciousness of that other life, developing there so close to me, hidden from me, was a slow thing, coming precisely into the category of understanding we describe in the word realize, with its connotation of a gradual opening into comprehension. Such an opening, a growing, may be an affair of weeks, months, years. And of course one can 'know' something and not 'know' it. (One can also know something and then forget it!) Looking back I can say definitely that the growth of that other life or form of being behind that wall had been at the back of my mind for a long time before I realized what it was I had been listening to, listening for. But I can't set down a date or a time. (*The Memoirs* 9)

The narrator also mentions a corridor and the rooms behind the wall, which become significant elements along with the wall. The wall functions as a barrier between two realms the narrator experiences, whereas the corridor serves as a form of connection between these two worlds. The rooms embody multiple layers of the narrator's subconscious mind. The wall that splits worlds and the corridor that connects them together with the rooms beyond the wall and the narrator's recognition of them, imply an expansion and a freeing of perception in terms of space rather than time. By integrating the wall, the corridor, the rooms and the concept of "realization"; the narrator strengthens her own spatial comprehension and makes it more concrete. From then on, the conventional view of linear perception of time as an uninterrupted flow has been totally shattered and Walter Benjamin's 'Messianic time' has started to prevail.

> Not realizing, or allowing myself to take in, the full implications of the fact that something was going on behind the wall of my living-room was because beyond it was a corridor. To be precise about it, what I was hearing was impossible. The sounds that come from a corridor, even a much-used one, are limited […] Yet there did come that moment when I had to admit that there was a room behind that wall, perhaps more than one, even a set of rooms, occupying the same space as, or rather overlapping with, the corridor. (*The Memoirs* 10)

After a while, the wall turns into an obsession, allowing the narrator to profess that her "ordinary daytime life was irrelevant. Unimportant"(12), space became greater in importance in contrast to time for her. She "was feeling as if the center of gravity of life had moved, balances had shifted somewhere […]" (12). The image of the wall with its contradictory ramifications has grown into the primary focus of her life, considering that it has formed a link to the adjacent room.

The wall comes with two sides, having the power to fall apart, creating its own temporal dimension, constructing external life. "[…] the ambiguous wall, which could so easily dissolve, dissolving, too, all this extraneous life, and the anxieties and pressures of the time-creating, of course, its own" (54). The preceding quote most clearly depicts the two realms: the first one includes the tribes, gangs passing through the route Emily frequently visits and then she leaves. The second one is, referred by the narrator as the "other indefinite region" marked by constant change and dissolution "where walls and doors and rooms and gardens and people continually recreated themselves, like clouds" (54). The narrator perceives the world beyond the wall as an alternative to her own world that is marked by modernity. She portrays the former as a realm of possibilities. When confronted with hardships, she turns back into the rooms and finds solace there. On the one hand, the modern world, which creates a sense of looming disaster, is worsening and consuming her life energy. On the other hand, the rooms are flourishing, as she feels vibrantly alive and full of life in most of them.

Upon opening another door, the narrator witnesses everything is perfectly arranged and set up for its residents, similar to a well-prepared hotel bedroom. Still, there is an unsettling feeling of someone who just lately left the room. Only a fragmentary look through a slightly open door is sufficient to sense another persona or existence. Conversely, just following a brief amount of time, the narrator may observe that the room is in a state of disarray like a doll's house that has been suddenly damaged by a child's impulsive, aggressive behavior (46). As she stated, rooms undergo transformations with each visit and view, possibly depending upon the narrator's thoughts and feelings. Most importantly, it is related with the narrator's past and manifestation of the unconscious mind. She recalls memories beyond her control and

effort, but when she confronts images and incidents along with the sensory stimuli in the rooms, she attempts to comprehend and organize them. She "decided […] to repaint the rooms…" (46). Repainting the rooms is a metaphor for the narrator's longing for the reconstruction of her memories. The narrator declares "I talk as if they were a permanent, recognizable, stable set of rooms, as in a house or a flat, instead of a place which changed each time I saw it" (46). It is as if she is striving to solidify an enjoyable moment, a memory in her mind. It seems like submerging herself in a captivating memory. In a picturesque moment, she is freezing time by being present in an exquisite moment and stabilizing where she is. Her imagination offers her a shelter, a place to escape from reality.

The crudeness of what she deems family or personal space is much more severe worse than the untidy rooms she encounters from time to time. If compared to the places and times during which families spend their lives, the atmosphere in these rooms is simply fresher. "[...] The disorder and anarchy of the rooms were nothing like as well as the shut-in stuffiness of the family, the 'personal'" (46); because they operate as a haven where she can pursue personal development and recuperation, "a liberation to step away from […] 'real' life into this other place, so full of possibilities, of alternatives" (46) through engaging in introspection and deep contemplation. It is impossible for her to make a comparison between "the constrictions and confinements of the place, or the time, where that family lived out its little puppet play" (46) referring to one of the families of the time. This expression further points out that the horrific century in which they find themselves is far more disastrous than the atrocities she struggled earlier. The narrator seeks to set up a narrative juxtaposition between the collapsing modern world and the abundance of opportunities beyond the wall. In spite of facades, the apparently chaotic space beyond the wall, in essence, serves as a sanctuary of limitless possibilities, liberation, sensations and promises; a place of revitalization and resurrection. To put it differently, the narrator detects that the crumbling present world outside reveals its contrast in this particular realm beyond the wall. This very contrast can only be found in this very individual domain that possesses

the potential to rescue us. Yet, this domain belongs to history of ourselves, comprising things that we have supposedly forgotten yet still bearing a sense of familiarity.

Over the course of the story, it becomes quite apparent that the fluctuating quality of the narrator's memories are embodied by changes in colors and/or the places of furniture and the arrangement of rooms she senses, and is largely due to her traumatic experiences she suffered during her childhood. Once, she remembers four year-old Emily terribly. Each day of her childhood appears insurmountable. She faces daunting obligations beyond her capabilities. Every day is the same, defined by the constant tick tocks of a white, nursery clock "which told everyone what to do, was obeyed by everyone, consulted, constantly watched", which is a reminder of Benjamin's 'homogenous empty time' where each moment is similar and ordinary (*The Memoirs* 32).

> Claustrophobia, airlessness, a suffocation of the mind, of aspiration. And all endless, for this was child-time, where one day's end could hardly be glimpsed from its beginning, ordered by the hard white clock. Each day was like something to be climbed, like the great obdurate chairs, a bed higher than one's head, obstacles and challenges overcome by the aid of large hands that gripped and pulled and pushed — hands which, seen at work on that baby, seemed to be tender and considerate. (32)

Emily's younger brother beyond the walls is a newborn boy that is why she indulges in self-comparisons with him. Obviously, he is taken care of better than Emily. She is unable to attract the tenderness she craves from her mother. By contrast, her mother constantly communicates displeasure and points out how hard she tries to do any of her duties. She asserts that she had not foreseen the degree to which being married and having children would be such extremely demanding and tedious work. She frequently speaks of frustration and discomfort due to her lack of individual time. However, as Emily keeps on growing, her continuous and natural need of affection and warmth maintains going up:

> But already her mother had set down the glass and was turning away to another duty. 'Stay with me,' pleaded the girl. 'I can't, I have to see the Baby.' 'Why do you always

> call him Baby?' I don't know, really, of course it is time ... he's quite old enough to... but I keep forgetting.' 'Please, please.'[…] Mummy, cuddle me, cuddle me… (63)

Meanwhile Emily, who belongs to the time of present, is going through the growth-process simultaneously. On the flip side, the fact that the past seemingly floods over from the opposite side of the wall and begins influencing the present, is what shapes Emily. The narrator recalls a time, a memory belonging to her father when:

> In a large chair set against the curtains the soldier-like man sat with his knees apart, gripping between them the small girl who stood shrieking. On his face, under the moustache, was a small tight smile. He was 'tickling' the child. This was a 'game', the bedtime 'game', a ritual. The elder child was being played with, was being made tired, was being given her allowance of attention, before being put to bed, and it was a service by the father to the mother, who could not cope with the demands of her day, the demands of Emily. The child wore a long nightie, with frills at wrists and at the neck. Her hair had been brushed and was held by ribbon. A few minutes ago she had been a clean, neat, pretty little girl in a white nightdress, with a white ribbon in her hair, but now she was hot and sweating, and her body was contorting and twisting to escape the man's great hands that squeezed and dug into her ribs, to escape the great cruel face that bent so close over her with its look of private satisfaction. The room seemed filled with a hot anguish, the fear of being held tight there, the need for being held and tortured, since this was how she pleased her captors. She shrieked: 'No, no, no, no'... helpless, being explored and laid bare by this man. The mother was indifferent. (*The Memoirs* 60-61)

Beyond the wall, the physical world's sense of time fails to operate and the conventional norms are irrelevant, that is how the dream world is constituted. The narrator puts a critical statement forward. "When in my ordinary life, I forgot…" (99). When she happens to lose recollections, the wall would unexpectedly open and bring them back to her. What this implies is the ability to remember and forget; that is, memory is the essential component of Lessing's construction. It is very similar to Platon's cave imagery. The philosopher sees the shadows reflected on the wall of the cave, these shadows are reflections of truth and he turns his back and tells people in the cave about the reflections he remembered. This is the same in Lessing's fiction as modern world has distanced us from the truth, deprived us and, after the destruction, the

truth reveals itself, whatever that may be. However, according to Lessing's implication, it is needed all along.

As much as the purpose of the wall is to build a barrier between things, it could also function as a container to keep something valuable. This may be concluded from the narrator's employing the two-fold analogy of a chick inside an eggshell and her comparison of herself to a chick on the brink of hatching. The metaphor of the room behind the wall overlaps with the imagery of the chick's egg and the womb reaffirming one another. Likewise, the narrator longs for going through rebirth and beginning anew along with molding her identity through redefining her past confrontations.

> Yet, standing there and looking at it, or thinking about it while I did other things about the flat, the sense and feel of it always in my mind, was like holding an egg to one's ear that is due to hatch. The warm, smooth shape on one's palm is throbbing. Behind the fragile lime, which, although it can be crushed between two fingers, is inviolable because of the necessities of the chick's time, the precise and accurate time it needs to get itself out of the dark prison, it is as if a weight redistributes itself, as when a child shifts position in the womb. (*The Memoirs* 12)

In the past, the narrator lacked the ability to claim power over her life: "And so with all the many rooms of this place, which was giving a feeling of things slipping away from me through clumsy and stiff fingers" (20). But now she aspires totally to reinvent her own narrative. "The whole place should be cleared out […] what was in it now should be burned or thrown away. […] Now I kept looking for the empty room that had in it a painter's ladder and a half-glimpsed figure in overalls: if I could see this, it would mean a start had been made" (20-21). The narrator wants her inner world to be like tabula rasa, similar to an unfilled page, and to wipe out the bad memories like cleaning out old rooms and putting them on fire. However, to be able to manage this, it is essential to bring light to painful memories and confront them, learn from them and then rewrite each encounter in her memoir with constructive alternatives and solutions just like the cleaning and painting process of the empty room she is looking for in her inner world.

3.2.3. Who is Emily? Two Personas in a Lifetime

At the outset, the narrator proclaims that the young child she describes in her flashbacks is the infant entrusted to her, named Emily. How does the narrator have such intimate knowledge of Emily's past and put herself into an omniscient storyteller? In addition, the narrator avoids revealing her name at any point throughout the novel. Why? Abstaining from exposing her identity poses some inquiries in our mental faculties and holds profound significance. Then, who is Emily? Is she the narrator herself? Are the rooms, through which the narrator's traumatic recollections flow from her subconscious to her conscious mind, the replicas of her own traumatic memories she experienced in her childhood? Is Emily who is left to be taken care for in the present-day dystopian atmosphere, an extension of her own imagination? Is Emily an imaginary persona of the narrator she constructed herself to help relieve the agony of her own existence and start over?

My assertion is that the narrator is none other than Emily herself. Apparently, the rationale for this can be that the narrator invented Emily within the constraints of her own mind as a persona, mirroring the aspirations she harbored as a young girl, but also could not manage to fulfil. She created her because she had yet to find what was missing in herself. The narrator could not grow the way she wanted in addition to her uncompleted childhood story. The narrator's confrontation with the past had remained unresolved either. Supposedly, the narrator made effort to suppress her past memories throughout her life and was keen to eradicate the unwanted particular details. Yet her buried thoughts and recollections kept coming back to haunt her unrelentingly like each and every repressed memory that one desires to forget or put away. Consequently, she had no choice but to confront her memories springing forth from the deeper, and finalize her account of past occurrences. In the following paragraphs, I shall reveal other reasons, which support my argument.

The experiences of Emily who was entrusted to the narrator's care disclose similarities with her memories of Emily she envisions in the rooms. For instance, the narrator notices little Emily in the room and perceives her as a burden for her mother.

The mother repeatedly speaks as if she regrets giving birth to Emily, grasping every chance to express this sentiment. She is unable to offer emotional attachment and affection, always falling short of satisfying Emily's emotional needs. Emily is continually treated as a neglected kid, which triggers the narrator's fear of abandonment. This emotional abandonment is represented through Emily's real abandonment by her parents. This dreadful feeling manifests itself in the narrator's subconscious as a fresh portrayal of Emily who is left behind and handed over into the narrator's care. Similarly, the fact that at present, Emily has been given to the narrator by a mysterious man to be looked after is an instance of abandonment. Even so, it also serves as a means of salvation, liberation since Emily gets rid of her father's disturbing behavior that resembles harassment. As a consequence, despite the fact that themes overflowing from the narrator's subconscious are mostly negative associations such as abandonment and abuse, the narrator has to recreate and rebuild her childhood identity and overcome her trauma by fully embracing Emily, or her own self. On this occasion, it is crucial that the narrator provides dedicated attention and compassion towards Emily. The more devotedly Emily (the narrator) watches the ideal image of herself, the more efficiently she will take care of her own well-being and accomplish what she was incapable of achieving before. Therefore, the wall embodying the layers of her subconscious forms a new version of Emily on the opposite side of it which subsequently restores the absent, frustrated and agonizing facets of the narrator's identity.

The narrator elucidates both familial and societal expectations imposed upon her by her portrayal of recent Emily. The person whom she empathizes with is her own self-image in essence. She strives to fully gain insight into her own existence and bestows upon herself the feeling of compassion that was not present in the past. "Her bedroom had been tidied already, but not her bed, which was always a nest or womb of coiled blankets and pillows. I never reproved her for this; on the contrary, I was delighted that there was one place she felt was her own, that she could make her refuge, where she could hide away from this really awful need always to be so bright and good" (*The Memoirs* 21-22). The image of the unmade bed alludes to a significant detail.

Obviously, if her mother were here, she would absolutely reprove Emily for it. Her mother's demanding nature and high standards for her to possess qualities such as goodness, competence, achievement, and patience on a regular basis are strongly encoded in her psyche and remain unbroken. Expectations haunt her wherever she goes. Besides, this image is further supported in the quote by establishing an analogy between the bed and a womb particularly in relation to modern-day portrayal of Emily. The corresponding analogy brings forth tranquil atmosphere of the womb wherein the unborn baby enjoys serenity and contentment as her needs are provided by the umbilical cord connecting her to the mother. Therefore, the bed in the room she stays in can be as messy as she wishes. It is an area of safety that offers relief and protection from familial and societal expectations. She is resilient to being held responsible or driven into resentment in that untidy bed. Similarly, a baby in the womb, who has not faced the hardships of the world, is in protection by her mother's presence.

The image of eating is another detail supporting the narrator is nobody but Emily herself. Emily in the rooms is seen eating her own excrement since she has been neglected and never full since she was a small kid. Emily, at present, consumes a great deal of food while growing up. "And now it wasn't only that she was older and her body showing it: she was putting on weight. She would lie all day on the sofa with her yellow dog-like cat, or cat-like dog, […]" (35). Furthermore, the narrator develops a connection between Emily and herself by declaring: "It drove me quite wild with irritation: yet I could remember doing it myself" (35). In simple terms, even though the memoir's apparent presence of two separate personas, it eventually discloses that each of these personas is the narrator and overeating image reveals her psychological desire of compassion.

Soon after encountering Hugo, the narrative protagonist finds it hard to identify if Hugo is a cat or a dog and she never asks Emily whether it is a cat or a dog. Why not? My argument behind the case is that Hugo is also an extension of her dream world that she struggles to resolve. That is why, she never asks Emily about Hugo. Actually, in simple terms, the cat is notorious for its lack of gratitude whereas the dog is marked by its loyalty, which gives them two contrasting traits. Can it be possibly claimed that

Hugo encompasses both the positive and negative sides of human nature? Alternatively, can it be that we define the other being as a reflection of our own consciousness? Does our view of something as nice render it innately good? If we identify something negatively as a manifestation of our own thoughts, does it make it inherently bad? The image of Hugo in the memoir is vague since the narrator's state of mind is variable. The genuine importance of Hugo who is a hybrid of a cat and a dog keeps on being ambiguous until the narrator thoroughly confronts and comes to terms with her past. At the very end of the novel, the narrator's portrayal of Hugo turns into completely transparent and they all pass the threshold.

Further supporting idea about my assertion is that Emily reveals maternal qualities, bearing responsibility for her younger brother both while her image is behind the wall as well as when she is in front of it. Likewise, the narrator possesses corresponding traits. They all merge, inheriting each other's attributes. The narrator takes on responsibility for Emily's good health, offering her a livelihood, a place to live and responds to her emotional needs. Emily, at present, nurtures romantic affections for Gerald, the leader of the street gang while simultaneously adopting a caring position among the other participants of the group.

All things considered, during this entire re-creation process, Emily undergoes growth and maturation, a kind of metamorphosis before the narrator's eyes (in her image). She turns into a mature, devoted woman. The narrator reveals her transformation by spotlighting her physical appearance, her sexual identity and her style of clothing. Thus, she raises Emily in the present moment, which she left in her memories at the age of four and thereafter repressed in her mind. In the image of eleven-year old Emily, the narrator experiences what she failed literally to go through in her real life.

On some occasions, the narrator creates a sense of envy against Emily's attractive appearance and sexual appeal. Her alter ego might be the reason for this jealousy and her shame about the past confinement and all the failed chances she had no way to engage in. But ultimately, the narrator portrays an incredibly resilient woman

who takes control of her own difficulties. On another occasion, she confronts plenty of obstacles, but this time she tackles them through stubborn commitment and perseverance and builds up capability to handle and prevail over them.

Throughout the narrative, the narrator is incessantly searching for a face she craves to encounter along with a vacant room to decorate by her own desire. Eventually, she recognizes a persona who has an immediate resemblance to her mother's image. It follows that she is able to empathize with her mother and justify the reasons for her unpleasant behaviors. At some point, she contemplates that her mother was also another suffering victim of her own parents and upbringing.

Once the narrator has completed confronting the problems in her mind, especially her traumas concerning her mother, the wall dissolves and they cross the threshold. By the final scene of the memoir, Emily and Hugo proceed across the threshold, with Gerald tracking after. Gerald follows along the path led and enlightened by these two individuals (the narrator- Emily) who is essentially the same person. The latest gang and its terrifying youngsters, who have been portrayed extremely hazardous until the end of the novel, also trail after Gerald by undergoing a great transformation. Upon crossing the threshold, the novel concludes.

3.2.4. Final Words on *The Memoirs of A Survivor*

To sum up, memory is one of the central concepts in the memoir. Individuals who utilize violence exemplify an absence of memory like the members of the recent horrific gang considering that they are in charge of setting the places on fire where they eat their fill. To crown it all, they hold an impulse to commit crimes against who have offered benevolence. The things people forget are related to the prevailing world order that regulates an ongoing state of devastation. Thereby, the missing memories are retrieved from the rooms, namely, the layers of the narrator's subconscious and revealed in the physical reality. This particular occurrence is when the person telling the story suffers from gaps in memory involving many different facets of their daily existence.

The wall symbol used by the author to create a memory narrative proves that walls do not only set barriers, but also are meant to be destroyed. Added to that, the author hints the solution can be found within an imaginative power with the capacity for dissolving these walls. The narrator has also established an intimate connection between the women's power of imagination and the understanding of nature and existence. This very imagination embraces ecological issues and concerns about the environment. The author enables us to pose such questions: How much of the nature is left after the crisis? The setting is already as bad, devastated, dark and cold as it can be. Relying on all of these, the narrator intentionally keeps a distance from whatever remains of nature. In other words, the narrator deliberately avoids what we refer to as 'nature.' Through significant changes, the present condition of nature is hardly recognizable. The entire terrain has been drastically changed, with the inner spaces now imitating surroundings from nature. Horses have been supplied with food inside the apartment flats, whilst crops for agriculture are grown on the roofs of the buildings. For that reason, Lessing's narrator rarely ventures out into the streets, and the narrative consistently unfolds within the confines of the home. She refrains from taking to the pavement and does not join the passing groups. Although various groups come and go in front of the door, and there are even reports of certain areas being livable and saved, the narrator never sets out to explore other cities. Instead, she prefers the rooms which are the only places that contrast with the depiction of outside, representing narrator's imagination and which not only serve as an alternative escape but also as a sanctuary of profound contemplation.

As a consequence, in the concluding part of the novel, even when their lives are at their most perilous (i.e., the harsh and inhospitable weather outside, children coming from outside with the intention to kill and eat Hugo, children from upstairs descending to attack them, etc.), Emily, the narrator and Gerald retreat further into the interiors. They see a threshold and when they pass the threshold, the memoir ends, having a striking impact on the reader. This decision appears to be deliberate, not coincidental, showing that modern world is not capable of offering a solution on its own, nor does it contain even a framework that could supply one. Besides, the quest of

redemption is unlikely to be facilitated by someone as Gerald who holds both authority and competence as depicted in the final part of the novel.

In addition to its modern world critique, there is also a bold eco-feminist perspective in the novel. Despite the ineffectiveness and even the potential for destruction of modern concepts such as science, reason, measure, engineering, will and progress; the narrator's imaginary spatial travel, her inner journey, delves into the deepest parts of her psyche, suggesting that an experience could emerge from there, leading to a form of liberation. Initially appearing fantastical, this viewpoint challenges the norm and prompts one to consider that there might be other subjective viewpoints as well.

The other reason why the ecofeminist stance is so strong in the novel is that despite occasionally placing women and Hugo in challenging circumstances, the narrator or Lessing refuses to abandon them in that extremely tough world. At the beginning, Emily and Hugo reveal meek and subserviant attributes, yet, this dynamic is subject to a shift while the narrative progresses. In this regard, Emily cherishes a profound devotion to Gerald and takes pains to satisfy his needs and desires. Yet, Lessing finally presents Emily as an individual who has gained her common sense. She portrays Emily in a more competent and influencial position than Gerald, neutralizing any need for her to depend on him and supplying her with an extensive array of knowledge and skills. She also appears as a more resilient figure in comparison to Gerald mainly because she holds the courage and stamina to cope with harsh life conditions in nature without Gerald's company. His awakening, quitting promiscuity, and subsequently reunification with Emily, which were brought about by his appreciation of her outstanding talent, wisdom and insight, clearly highlights the power that Emily possesses. Emily wholeheartedly supports Gerald and is madly in love with him. Nevertheless, she keeps being resolute in her resistance to conform to his selfish advances, by evolving into a woman who never sacrifices her powerful identity and accepting leadership in her own distinctive way.

In addition, the fact that Lessing adopts an ecological perspective and a critical approach is clear by the depiction of animals, nature and women as passive entities at first. Nonetheless, the novel diverges from this portrayal in the end. Hugo portrayed as a cat-like dog consistently exhibits passivity until the end of the novel. The attempt to do away with Hugo functions as a manifestation of his passive condition. However, in the final section of the story, the narrator alludes to a transformation in Hugo, too, declaring that he undergoes a significant metamorphosis, who becomes human-like, which also creates a great contrast to the most recent gang's transformation into a brutish state, whose eldest member is barely at the age of four and can take someone's life without hesitation.

To conclude, all the transformations in the end lead us to the path of resolution and all conflicts come to an end, providing relief for the readers. These include the narrator's emerging aptitude to comprehend and share the feelings of her mother; Gerald's decision to stop sleeping with other women and give in to Emily's leadership and go along with her; the unraveling of Hugo's murky description, where he is given the appreciation he precisely deserves. The fact that the author overcomes the issues proves the anticipation that hope could possibly exist. Besides, while the transformation in Gerald corresponds with feminist ideals, giving Hugo his due gives countenance to the ecological values. Besides, the narrator's potential to make sense of her association with her mother suggests that a mature and a harmonious individual may embrace an unbiased and humane attitude towards whatever she went through. Furthermore, the novel's conclusion taking place after the threshold scene, the wide range of metaphors and symbols used throughout the story, and Lessing's offerings of infinite possibilities both within and outside the novel for the reader to anticipate beyond the threshold, all serve as reminders of the ideas of "not-yet" and "hope" that characterize Ernst Bloch's arguments about utopias and dystopias and the message he signifies. There always exist a room for betterment as everything is constantly changing. It is not useful to strictly adhere to a rigid "blueprint" or have a predetermined result. Instead, one ought to anticipate and search for possibilities beyond established principles.

Lessing breaks from the progressive and controlling perspective of the well-known canonical literary figures, instead suggesting that we should develop a different socio-cultural relationship with nature. She implies that trying to escape from this impasse with reason, science, or development, — as we see with the example of Gerald — is naive. This perspective is actually relevant to Val Plumwood's argument to set aside the dualistic perspective and look through a deep ecological perspective exemplified best by Hugo, in the novel, who is a human-animal hybrid, whose portrayal was quite passive and whose human characteristics become pronounced at the end; or set aside the self-other distinction, i.e. us-them division, so the children who attack Emily and Gerald are also taken along with them at the end of the novel.

Lessing tells us to look inward rather than outward, to question our values, to see the problems in our hierarchical perspective, to seek alternatives to the culturally encoded violence within us, to recognize that all these issues can be noticed in our relationship with nature, and that we can change them. And on the narrative level of the novel, by not going out, by not joining those caravans, and instead turning in the opposite direction, returning inside the house and saving all the characters there, she rejects a major male-dominated socio-cultural-economic tradition, thereby, also a literary tradition; instead, she offers a non-hierarchical or deep-ecological proposition, as Plumwood also mentioned, by going in the opposite direction (the house), or by not going where everyone else is going (groups/caravans). Through the narrative, Lessing critiques the emptiness and naivety inherent in all communities formed under Gerald's leadership or in structures created for societal services. In essence, Lessing challenges the prevailing male-dominated and nature-dominating perspective that has persisted throughout history and suggests that a reevaluation is necessary for our relationship with the environment and our understanding of progress.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY THROUGH *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* BY MARGARET ATWOOD

There are several influential elements, which had a great impact upon Margaret Atwood's pursuits in literature and politics such as the author's birth of place; upbringing; the education she received; the environment she lived in and prominent figures she emulated. That is why the following part aims to highlight important biographical information about the author.

4.1. A Brief Account of Margaret Eleanor Atwood's Life

Margaret Eleanor Atwood was born in 1939 in Ottowa, Canada and grew up in Canadian countryside. As a small child, she was fond of being in nature, and "enjoyed the freedom of roaming outdoors [...], largely undisturbed by either formal education or the conservative social niceties of 1940s provincial Canada" (*The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* 2). Her father was an entomologist academician, which would affect her intrests and writing topics throughout her career. Her mother, on the other hand, was a housewife who was different from the traditional woman stereotype in that "she hated hats, tea parties and housework"(2). Her birthplace and date has also had a great impact on shaping her pursuits in literature, politics and environment. She witnessed the Second World War as a child; she and her family lived in "the bush like nomads on the far edges of the war" during those years (qtd. in Tolan 2). She studied English at the University of Toronto and in the USA; she then went on to study Victorian and American Literature at Redcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts and completed her MA degree there. She started writing a PhD Thesis on "The English Metaphysical Romance"(2) but did not complete it. However, she kept on writing from then on and eventually became the most prominent figure in Canadian Literature and a recognized and well-respected writer throughout the world.

There were of course, a number of reasons motivating her success. Moving from Canada to the USA, she got the impression that Americans were not aware of the

"colonial experience" and they also did not worry about the sense and significance of "one's own home place" (2), which significantly affected her writing. She early on became aware that attachment to one's own place was a major determining force on one's identity. She became the shaping figure of "the debates on Canadian national culture" and contributed greatly to "Canadian Cultural Renaissance" (4). She was immensely influenced by Northrop Frye who was teaching at the university of Toronto at that time. Atwood describes "the Canadian national psyche" that emerges in literary works, as being busy with "themes of survival and victimhood"(4), which is "more pragmatic and less optimistic"(4) and surely different from American literature.

She attracted many critics' attention immediately, especially after having published her book *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) about Canadian nationalism and literature and it became a milestone in her gaining international reputation. She won countless awards throughout her successful career owing to her outstanding works including poetry, short stories, fiction and non-fiction. Her range of topics and genres are remarkably large: She is interested in political issues, environmental concerns, and gender questions; she has been into history and mythology; fairy tales, science fiction, speculative fiction, historiographic metafiction and utopian literature are diverse genres that have always engaged her attention and imagination and she tried her hand at almost each one of them throughout her long and productive writing career.

Margaret Atwood's 'sixth novel' *The Handmaid's Tale* is published in 1985; it corresponds with the time of The Second Wave Feminism and contains vital feminist issues. The genre of the novel led to controversy about whether it belongs to science fiction or speculative fiction or dystopian genre. However, Margaret Atwood puts an end to this discussion by explaining the genre she employed in her book *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*. She makes a distinction between science fiction and speculative fiction while emphasizing science fiction's fluidity:

> Some use speculative fiction as an umbrella covering science fiction and all its hyphenated forms — science-fiction fantasy and so forth — and others choose the

> reverse. SF[4] novels of course can set themselves in parallel imagined realities, or long ago, and/or on planets far away. But all these locations have something in common: they don't exist, and their non-existence is of a different order than the non-existence of the realistic novels' Bobs and Carols and Teds and Alices. (113)

In fact, she uses the word science fiction for the things that are not likely to happen; at least, soon in a very short time. Accordingly, science fiction includes unrealistic, fantastic elements. In contrast, for her, speculative fiction is a kind of warning about what may happen in the future if societies are not cautious and thoughtful about current problems happening around them. She confirms that *The Handmaid's Tale* is both a dystopian speculative fiction and 'ustopia', the word which she coined herself. She explains the reasons why and how she made up the word 'Ustopia': By "combining utopia and dystopia — the imagined perfect society and its opposite —" because she thinks that "each contains the latent version of the other" (116).

Raffaella Baccolini, on the other hand, considers Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* as a critical dystopia along with its other contributions regarding which genre it belongs to. To prove her argument, she quotes from Honoré de Balzac that " Hope is memory that desires" and explains her understanding of critical dystopias. First and foremost, in order to be able to recognize what Balzac means by this quotation and what Baccolini claims, it would be convenient to bethink the fundamentals of critical dystopias. Drawing upon Jane Donawerth, Baccolini adds "the presence of memory and history" to the salient traits of the genre (Dark Horizons 130), and specifies that women writers of dystopia create woman protagonists (like Offred) who stake a claim to their individual memory firstly, thus paving the way for protecting an authentic collective memory which means that they resist by means of literature and history. In her article "The Telling as a Critical Dystopia", Baccolini refers to Donawerth's identification of the basic components of contemporary "women's SF writing": Hellish atmosphere of the city life, oppressive governance, defective family life, sexuality which is full of problems, machines proved dominant, emancipated gender roles which are not only the signs of women's struggle for probable liberation but also its menaces and "a non-

[4] Atwood refers to 'Science Fiction' by the abbreviation.

linear, fragmented, postmodern form" (129). In these works carrying these features, Donawerth recognises a convenient space for the flourishing of hope and political resurrection. Telling is a way of obtaining freedom because "history, memory and storytelling are subversive elements in that they promote hope and the potential for change" (126). While 'classical dystopias' tell the stories of regression, violence, oppression, totalitarian regimes, fundamentalism, wars, injustices, inequality, deterioration, decay, ecological devastation, famine, diseases, infertility, cons of technology and its highly negative results on Earth without any crumb of hope, critical dystopias handle the very same prominent issues by subverting them with the help of various narrative techniques, providing the reader with some signs of hope.

One of the most significant methods of subversion is writing open endings and rejecting one clear, precise closure, which is dynamic and anticipating. Thus, utopian hope arises out of the exclusion of closure. Nonetheless, Baccolini also emphasizes the fact that in critical dystopias, in spite of the existence of hope, the protagonist and the other characters are not generally happy. This unhappiness, uneasiness and discomfort, however, have some important missions: "awareness and knowledge" (130) and taking the responsibility of decisions, which brings about social consciousness as well. This is about the "text's utopian horizon," which is crucial for critical dystopias. The "text's utopian horizon" falls within the approval of individual's liability, memory, restoration of the past and rendering it alive in the present, — like Walter Benjamin's 'dialectical moment'— considering and appreciating its warning function and making way for a real, positive, utopian development out of a dystopian structure.

Coral Ann Howells asserts that *The Handmaid's Tale* is "an imaginative writer's response to contemporary situations of cultural crisis as they suppose what may happen at what Atwood has called 'definitive moments' after which 'things were never the same again" ("Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Visions" 161). In addition to Howell's emphasis on the warning function and transformative power of critical dystopias, Coomi S. Vevaina also points out that Atwood's fictional reconstructions are intended to make us become more aware of our current situation and demonstrate to us how things will unfold into the future. They inspire us to act responsibly to make the world

— which is getting smaller and more dangerous — a more prosperous place for the generations to come ("Margaret Atwood and History" 97).

Atwood's creation and use of a female protagonist is an important contribution to the genre. Howells also adds that when Atwood opts for a female narrator in *The Handmaid's Tale*, her decision changes the typically male dystopian genre thoroughly. Different from Orwell's examination of the public policies and bodies of state oppression, Atwood provides us with the story of a handmaid who has been pushed to the edges of political power. This mode of telling the story converses the structure of the dystopia's public and private spheres. This enables Atwood to recapture a feminine realm of internal feelings and "individual identity", which is brought out by her first-person narration technique ("Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Visions" 164-165).

In addition to Atwood's choice of a female narrator protagonist, Howells also stresses Atwood's portrayal of "not one but two futuristic scenarios, [...] with its shift from Gilead to the historical conference at Nunavit two hundred years later that is relatively optimistic" (164-165). This stress is prominent because the novel was published in 1985 and was written even before; both scenarios take place in the future, one is in the time of the Gilead Regime in 2005 and thereafter, the other scenario occurs in the 2200s. The latter is only comparably promising in essence, since at the end of the novel, we understand that the patriarchal mindset has not changed a great deal and there is a long way to go. Nonetheless, offering two future scenarios — the earlier scenario represents the worst and the latter is much more hopeful although there is room for improvement — demonstrates how critical dystopias help the reader see both sides of the coin simultaneously.

4.2. A Modern Day Parable: *The Handmaid's Tale*

The Handmaid's Tale opens with the depictions of the first person female narrator Offred, and throughout the novel, we see through her lenses. Offred's story takes place in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the USA, which is known to have been settled by the Puritans in the beginning of the seventeenth century (Tolan 54), which also contributes to the major issues of the novel. The story is set around the early twenty-first century which is notorious for its ecological destruction, deterioration of the

balance of nature, nuclear problems, chemical pollution; decreasing birth rates, defective or stillborn babies which leads to intentional refusal of birth giving; contagious diseases as AIDS, syphilis; "a rampant unregulated market for sex and pornography — and consequently a more militant feminist block in America of the 1990s" (54) — mass production, overpowering of capitalism, unfair distribution of wealth; brutality against women; mechanization; advanced level of technology and its side effects and so on. The atmosphere is solemn and foretells the upcoming events, which will be worse unless humankind reflects on itself and takes precautions. Under these circumstances, "the Christian New Right" overthrows the President, together with the parliament and takes over by implementing Old Testament tenets including 1600s assets of "American Puritanism" (55).

The Handmaid's Tale carries the features of classical dystopia at first glance; besides, critics found plenty of similarities between Atwood's work and George Orwell's novel titled *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which is the most significant representative of the canonical classical dystopias. This similarity is partly true; however, protagonists' attitude towards the conditions and their resistance strategies are highly distinguishable from each other, which separate the genre of the novels, especially when comparing the endings of the stories. Also, Winston (the protagonist) in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* totally fails to remember his past and is fully unaware and uninformed of the preceding state of the society. In contrast, Offred is quite aware of what is happening around her and she clings stubbornly to her past so that she can manage not to forget. That is why *The Handmaid's Tale* is a critical dystopian speculative fiction, or 'Ustopia' as Atwood calls it, while Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a classical dystopia.

After having clarified the relevant differences between classical and critical dystopias — that is particulary important for the argument of the existence of hope in the thesis — it would be appropriate to inquire into the story. The events in the story takes place in such an atmosphere that because of the nuclear waste and poisonous chemicals, most women either cannot get pregnant or they have miscarriages. The theocratic regime's solution is to take fertile women and imprison them for the use of breeding. These fertile women are chosen according to their marital status. If it is their

second marriage with children, there is no chance to escape. Moreover, their children are taken away from them. The order at play is the one in which class and gender hierarchies are deeply ingrained with women facing the most challenging predicament. Additionally, it reinforces the ongoing value of societal identification and a rank system within the same gender. The highest statute of men in the society falls to the Commanders. Guardians and Eyes are among other inferior groups. Regarding women, Wives, Marthas, Aunts and Econowives are among the classifications, which remind us of Platon's so-called utopia, *The Republic*. This classification is done by taking socio-economic and cultural diversities into account, and gender is the key element in this societal formation.

Wives, for instance, have the highest status among women and they have a relatively luxurious life, they have access to some black market products, for instance, such as cigarettes as a privilege. Yet, they cannot walk on the pavements; since this deed may seem humiliating, they have to travel in cars all the time. That seems like a signifier of a high statute on the surface, but actually it is another kind of isolation and restriction. They feel all alone although their husbands (commanders) appear to be with them both physically and emotionally. However, the case is just the contrary due to the fact that wives have to join the ceremony of sexual intercourse between their husbands and the handmaids. They hold the hands of the handmaids' tightly and pretend that they are the ones in the intercourse, which makes them feel so contemptuous and "unable," and reminds them of their barrenness and discard. When that happens, they naturally hate the handmaids and this is particularly exemplified by Serena Joy's behaviors — Fred's wife — most of the time in the novel. Besides, we later learn that commanders cheat on their wives with the women who used to be 'handmaids', but who are currently working as prostitutes at Jezebel's, the secret brothel of the regime.

Regarding aunts' status, it is ironic that aunts, who are the symbols of honor in the regime, control the "prostitutes" (previous handmaids) there. As for econowives, they have one of the lowest status. "These women are not divided into functions. They have to do everything; if they can" (*The Handmaid's* 32). They have multiple tasks to perform; the fact that they even do not have one single function, but many is accepted as

disgraceful. In this case, being a handmaid, for example, might be accepted as much more honorable, especially that is what aunts think and articulate frequently.

In regard to the guardians, they have a chance to be promoted to the position of 'Angels', which again calls to mind *The Republic of Plato* and its promotion system. If they work harder, they will be rewarded, which is also 'Platonic' and indicative of the Puritanic value system, criticized by Atwood, which I will discuss in the section concerning religion. However, this positional promotion does not work for women in the regime. If they cannot fulfil the roles and responsibilities they are supposed to carry out, their situation becomes worse; handmaids, for instance, have to get pregnant in three attempts; if they cannot, they are sent to camps which means death actually, and unfortunately, the death is known to happen in the short term because of the hard cleaning work done there and intense exposure to the chemicals.

Concerning other implementations of the regime, color-coding is another attribute to the status of women and labeling them. For instance, wives wear blue; on the other hand, 'marthas' wear green. "Dull green of Marthas" (31) is how Offred describes their clothes. While handmaids walk around in red, "women all in black" is a widow (32), and econowives are "in the striped dresses, red and blue and green and cheap and skimpy that mark the women of poorer men" (32). Hence, even from a distance, they can easily be seen and controlled. In essence, who all these women really are as individuals is of no importance; or what they feel or need does not matter; they are just 'functions' and colors show how women are categorized and labeled just like invaluable objects one more time in history.

On the subject of the circumstances of the Giledian period and its dystopian regulations, it can be said that life continues in such a way that it is very difficult to obtain even the most elementary needs such as food; to illustrate, meat is very expensive as well as fruit. Even the commanders cannot afford to buy oranges for example, because of the fact that the resources are consumed away; and the war is going on in a nightmarish Orwellian atmosphere. There are no doctors available — except the ones who examine the handmaids — or lawyers; no universities anymore, which were the essential components of the society once.

The most important determinant of the conditions of the fundamentalist Gilead regime is the victory of religion over secularism, triumph of dogma over research, and achievement of order over freewill. For that reason, the name of the regime demands attention; it is necessary to clarify where the name Gilead comes from. Atwood chooses this name deliberately, since it has various biblical references. As Kuźnicki notes, "it appears in the Holy Book in reference to both persons and geographical names. For the first time, it is mentioned in the book of Genesis as a mountainous region, east of the Jordan River, directly connected with the story of Jacob" ("The Handmaid's Tale" 22-23). It is an integral part of numerous significant events in patriarchal history with reference to the 'Old Testament' and facilitates the novel's criticism of patriarchy as Kuźnicki put forth. He also draws attention to the presence of the name in a conventional Negro chant, "There is a Balm in Gilead," coming from the "balm of Gilead" in the Bible. This balm is known to be a kind of "spiritual medicine," having power to cure "all the sinners". This interpretation relates Gilead in the Old Testament to the notion of redemption in the New Testament, much like "a promised land" in which it is also possible to observe misogyny by male authority (23). Gilead, in the novel, on the other hand, is located in Massachusetts, Cambridge, which is the Eastern part of America belonging to fundamentalists — in contrast to the west that belongs to liberalists. Religious image is very important in the novel because it is the very foundation the system is built on. Religious fundamentalism and conduct is the idea that shaped the Gilead regime thoroughly.

Gilead is a place "where nothing moves" (*The Handmaid's* 32) which can be interpreted as a time metaphor here. This metaphor is significant because one of the main features of dystopias is slowing of time even to the point that it freezes, and thus the augmentation of control and pressure on time and life can be felt better; and one has to internalize and digest the system, which Aunt Lydia expresses in such a way: "Gilead is within you" (32). It is a set of mind, the state of being, it is in one's mind from then on, from head to toe; it is timeless. It is not an individual occupying a place in Gilead; but Gilead itself in everybody's perception and one is stuck there. As a consequence, time in Gilead appears to decelerate almost imperceptible pace ensnaring one and all inside its confines.

The concept of 'time' is an important matter while analyzing the text, because control over the body — one of the most prominent issues of the regime — is emphasized with the comparison of 'now and then' theme in the novel. No one has any decision or control over their bodies now, neither women nor men, except the rulers. If anyone dares to make a decision related to the body, they are severely punished by the system's mechanism. Interestingly, punishments are retrospective. For instance, hanged doctors are the ones who performed abortion when it was legal in the past (41-42). The fact that it is a thing of the past does not stop the regime from punishing them. "[...] Their crimes are retroactive [...]. These bodies hanging on the Wall are time travelers, anachronisms. They've come here from the past" (42). It is through a consistent comparison of the past and the present that the rigidity of the system is brought to light.

The quotation in the preceding paragraph also implies that this point has been reached as a result of religion taking control and undermining the secular structure "[...] when the sect wars began [...]" (50). It is highlighted again that the citizens are under these harsh circumstances because of religious extremism. Obviously, Atwood strongly criticizes the wrong practices based on Christianity and Puritanism and emphasizes humanity over religion. The novel and the language, which is the mediator of it, is the element that questions that structure and therefore, demands secularization. The conflict between religious versus secular; men versus women; culture versus nature; society versus individual; order versus passion is ongoing and these dichotomies are all hidden in the above mentioned statements and continuously emphasized throughout the novel.

The other concept concerning religion and reflecting Puritan values in the novel is 'Salvation'. Accordingly, Puritans believe that if one works diligently, obediently, and be content with and grateful for limited resources throughout one's life, the soul of the person is going to be saved; s/he will be forgiven and purified from all her/his sins and thus, s/he will reach salvation. However, here comes the ironic, Swiftian satire of Atwood: "It's the choice that terrifies me. A way out, a salvation" (68). The reason is that in the world of the novel, salvation for a woman is possible only through sexual intercourse. It is not a violent rape, but it's not voluntary either. In the end, if Offred is unable to bear a child, she will become "Unwoman" and she will lose her life eventually. Thus, the word "Salvation" was paradoxical here and most probably

chosen deliberately by Atwood. It's a Christian word from the Bible, and its meaning was changed profoundly in the text. The only means of salvation is not to follow the God or the Christ here, but to have involuntary sexual intercourse with men so that women can bear children to the commanding class of Gilead. The word's ambiguity implies that the ultimate source of the catastrophe is 'religious'.

The use of words is another area of restriction because they are perceived as hazardous or threateningly unsafe in this very unsecular regime and they are exclusionary, not libertarian: "I don't know if the words are right. I can't remember. Such songs are not sung any more in public, especially the ones that use words like free. They are considered too dangerous. They belong to outlawed sects" (61). By the use of the word 'faith' written on the cushion in Offred's room, Atwood also demonstrates that the right of choice is by no means given to the handmaids and it is forcefully replaced with the word 'faith'. The quote by Offred, "I didn't put the cushion here myself" (64) has two meanings: Primarily, it is connected to the previous quotes: "I didn't choose…" and an expression repeatedly used in the novel, indicating an extreme lack of choice or preference. Similarly, "This specific faith that is imposed on me which does not really belong to me" shows that she does not have any right of choice. In this sense, faith and religion function as oppressive forces in the world of the novel. "I can spend minutes, tens of minutes, running my eyes over the print: FAITH. It's the only thing they've given me to read. If I were caught doing it, would it count?" (64). As one can observe, the sarcasm of Atwood, — also referring to the prohibition of intellectual faculties — merges with the feeling of unease that the narrator experiences as a result of the oppressive conditions she is forced to live in.

In addition, in light of the 'now and then' theme, the discrepancy between change and stability, and the idea of gradual transition and transformation are given with "a gradually heating bathtub" imagery along with that of secular and religious: "Is that how we lived then? But we lived as usual. [...] Even this is as usual, now [...] We lived, as usual, by ignoring. Ignoring isn't the same as ignorance, you have to work at it [...] Nothing changes instantaneously; in a gradually heating bathtub, you'd be boiled to death before you knew it" (63). The bathtub imagery here is kind of reminiscent of the

clash between the religious and the secular, and the core argument is that if you let religion prosper in an extreme and distorted way, it will slowly cook you up.

All in all, the conflict between religious and secular appears in the novel and the outcomes of the victory of theocracy are demonstrated via the time element which is a pathway for the comparison of the past and the present; the former is symbolizing the 'secular', the latter is representing the 'religious'. This juxtaposition of the concepts merging with 'now and then' theme is of great importance because there is a strong connection in the novel between misogyny and its implementations based on religion, which is similar to the relationship between the rise of misogyny — the 'hatred of women' — and the operations of fundamentalism in history.

Totalitarianism and oppression — as its natural extension — in daily life prevail in such a way that physical restrictions like barriers and projections are everywhere. The handmaids are continuously observed by the 'Eyes'. It is forbidden even to commit suicide and thus, to prevent this from happening, the authorities take measures as it can be detected in the following words "the door has no lock, and there are no razors, of course. [...] In a bathtub, you're vulnerable, said Aunt Lydia. She didn't say to what" (69). Therefore, privacy in the bathroom is something 'to be avoided'; the solution is taking away all the equipment so that one cannot be "vulnerable".

It is a treacherous classical totalitarian regime and thus anybody can be killed at any time for nothing. For instance, one can witness one of the Marthas having been shot because she looked for a passing document, which was supposed to be in her dress, and it was mistaken for an explosive bomb (30). This also indicates that the approach of the regime is so cowardly that the governors do not trust their Marthas or other people in their service, as it is the case in all despotic systems. Individuals are not valued, just the principles of the system; the regime's Machiavellian values, namely, 'in attaining the goal, every means is acceptable' by all means proves to be completely destructive in the society.

In addition to the dangerous practices above, babies have to be healthy-born without any defects. When they are genetically handicapped, they are called "Unbaby" and consequently, convicted to a cruel discard immediately. They are seen like ordinary 'products' in an assembly line. Suffering of the body, as another cruel mechanism, is

not taken into consideration at all, either. That is to say, the fact that all kinds of technological advances and equipment are abandoned in childbearing, from anesthesia to medical equipment, which were used in the past, might lead to unnecessary suffering and perhaps health risks for women while giving birth. The most important thing is just to have the healthy babies as profitable outcomes, serving the system.

One of the most outstanding features of the Gilead regime, as in all totalitarian reigns, is how the rulers work on the word and concept of 'free' and 'freedom'. It is such a powerful ideological system that even women who are the victims of the regime, become part it. Most of the time, for example, the aunts cooperate with the system voluntarily. Furthermore, normal liberations of the past are called and perceived as 'anarchy'. "There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you're being given freedom from. Don't underrate it [...] We were a society dying, said Aunt Lydia, of too much choice" (33), believing wholeheartedly that too many options have brought degeneration. She also harshly criticizes the behavior and the lifestyle of women in the past: "The spectacles women used to make themselves. Oiling themselves like roast meat on a spit, and bare backs and shoulders, on the street, in public, and legs, not even stockings on them, no wonder those things used to happen" (62). Here, we see a comparison of the dressing code of 'now and then'. Aunt Lydia as always does, accuses women of what happened in the end, which is a kind of 'scapegoating'. She implies that the nudity of women led to decay in society and the women's body itself (along with women's wrong choices) is responsible for what had happened. Scapegoating and group shaming is done systematically to all women for the purpose of intimidation as seen in the example of Janine, who is a handmaid as well. Women were shamed because they had sex with men without the control of the religious state and outside the bonds of the marriage (77), which is a powerful social construction. All things considered, lack of freedom is set forth sneeringly as an exclusive right and protection, and the merciless implementers of the rules are grievously women such as the aunts.

However, there is an important issue that needs to be taken into account, that is, regardless of the position the aunts have in this very hierarchy, they are also used as tools of this system as well. They are not different from the other women in the regime

at all; women are altogether victimized and instrumentalized. To exemplify, Serena Joy is another important figure as a wife, who is in a higher position than Aunt Lydia; yet her life also provides the use of women as a tool in this regime, irrespective of her rank. She used to be a famous figure on TV screens before Gilead theocracy was established and was a soprano, singing hymns from the Bible in a choir, — crying while singing— along with making public speeches, which "were about the sanctity of the home, about how women should stay home. Serena Joy didn't do this herself, she made speeches instead, but she presented this 'failure of hers' as a sacrifice she was making for the good of all" (52). What Serena Joy did was a total pretension and what she radically defended returned like a boomerang to her. She must have been very sad; for she also simply lost her freedom and chance to work in the public sphere forever paradoxically. She loved showiness and being on the screen actually; yet she did not recognize that she was also utilized for the purposes of the regime and fell into her own trap eventually.

Even though each and every woman is utilized as a tool in one way or another in this system, this does not bring women together or motivate them to act together in search of solidarity and understanding. Just the opposite, within the above mentioned hierarchy among women, there are also conflicts even violence among them. The overall stereotype has not been drawn as 'women are only the victims and together they constitute an oppressed class based on their gender.' Unfortunately, there are women who use their position to suppress other women. For instance, Offred mentions that she wanted to see Serena Joy as an older sister, or a mother figure at the time but she was disappointed (24-25). In addition, the wives have the right to hit the handmaids by using only their hands. Offred talks about Serena Joy and expresses the fact that "possibly she will put a hand on my shoulder, to steady herself, as if I'm a piece of furniture. She's done it before" (83). In conjunction with the relationship between Offred and Serena Joy, Aunt Lydia also announces "It's not the husbands you have to watch out for […] it's the Wives. You should always try to imagine what they must be feeling. Of course, they will resent you. It is only natural. [...] You must realize that they are defeated women. They have been 'unable'…" (53). These words by Aunt Lydia indicate that when the wives lost their reproductive power, it can be recognized as a loss of identity as well. Hence, cutting off the hand cream from the handmaids is a good

example of the jealousy the wives feel towards them. Since, the former, once and for all, do not need to be pretty, it is not a problem if their skin wrinkles; it is their wombs, which serve a purpose for the continuation of the system that matter (73). All in all, no one is actually happy in this segregated society; neither the ones at the bottom nor the ones at the top of the hierarchy although a few may enjoy a modest amount of power occasionally.

4.2.1. Instrumentalization of the Body

Instrumentalization of "the body" is one of the most critical issues in the novel. Just as the female body has been reduced to its reproductive function and was used accordingly, within the existing system, the male body has likewise been used to serve a function (or functions) determined according to the ideological needs of the very regime. Offred constantly emphasizes how body is an instrumental entity for the order of the Gilead. She talks about the bodies hanging on the wall during 'Men's Salvaging' ritual for everyone to see which "are meant to scare"; their function is to intimidate (*The Handmaid's* 41). In another example, Offred goes back to the past, thinking about the body, wearing bikini, weight and shape and similar matters, and she states that it is just her body — her function in the society of Gilead — that defines her: "I avoid looking down at my body [...] I don't want to look at something that determines me so completely" (69). Accordingly, she is very much aware that in her case the body is the most determining instrument used by the new regime and in the way the regime dictated.

Instrumentalization of the body also connects with the experience of fragmentation as it is embodied in Offred's periodical visits to the gynecologist. She reports: "It intersects me so that the doctor will never see my face. He deals with a torso only" (67) to see the womb. No face-to-face interaction is allowed as the woman is reduced to her body in terms of her reproductive organs, just the body, just the function is highlighted. The women have no other use or identity other than their function as the protagonist expresses: "We are containers, it's only the insides of our bodies that are important. The outside can become hard and wrinkled, for all they care, like the shell of a nut" (100). By the same token, the doctor also sees her not as a person, or as a woman,

not even female body but only as reproductive body and suggests to make a sexual intercourse with him secretly to impregnate her: " 'I could help you', he says. Whispers" (67). All things considered, the doctor tries to abuse Offred and the fact that the body is transformed to a function creates such a ground that is highly susceptible to exploitation.

The juxtaposition of the experiences of her body in the past and in the present sets the protagonist thinking about how her relationship with her body has changed: "I used to think of my body as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for accomplishment of my will. I could use it to run, push buttons, of one sort or another, make things happen. There were limits but my body was nevertheless lithe, single, solid, one with me" (79-80). From the remembrance of the past, she moves to her experiences in the present and the comparison is inevitable. She recollects what she thought her body was 'then', and what it is 'now' and all the changing expectations of herself and of the others from her body: "Now the flesh arranges itself differently" (80). Perplexing thoughts about procreation are more complicated than biological impulses. She thinks all about these while sitting naked in the tub. She now thinks that her body has been transformed into a womb to give birth. "I'm a cloud, congealed around a central object, which is hard and more real than I am," she observes (80).

4.2.2. Erasing Memory by Rendering Ignorant

Ignorance is the other major objective Gilead totalitarianism consistently strives for; accordingly, literacy is strictly forbidden. Newspapers, magazines, books, and any other kinds of publications are all swept away. Similarly, long and meaningful dialogues and exchanges among the handmaids are firmly prohibited. "I'm like a child here, there are some things I must not be told. What you don't know won't hurt you, was all she would say," (60) Offred explains referring to Aunt Lydia. 'Ignorance is the bliss' is the gist of the philosophy which dominates the lives of the handmaids; yet Offred's thirst for knowledge is intense as she herself puts into words: "I'm ravenous for news, any kind of news; even if it's false news, it must mean something" (28). She has been deprived of information and starved for communication for so long and so

completely that she is willing to have even misinformation or distorted forms of truth and is ready to attempt to make sense of it.

The function of writing in the novel, on the other hand, is to fight against the darkness of ignorance that the new regime promotes. A piece of writing serves as an alert for the narrator who in turn forewarns the reader via the medium of recording. The novel is indeed the embodiment of the narrator's story. When *The Handmaid's Tale* ends up in the reader's hands, then as a cautionary tale, its function is to remind the reader to be alert at all times against the dangers of oppressive and discriminatory regimes like the one in Gilead. With reference to the newspapers, the novel implies that 'writing' functions the same way as the newspapers does, which is informing and awakening, yet unfortunately there are times the readers do not take the warning seriously or cannot decode the message contained in them. The implied meaning is that if a reader cannot analyze a form of text and understand the forewarning, offered to her/him, and then s/he is in danger of ending up in a system such as the Gilead theocracy. The prospective reader, hints the narrator, should not make the same mistakes that she herself had made in the past:

> There were stories in the newspapers […] of corpses in ditches or the woods […] but they were about other women, and the men who did such things were other men. None of them were the man we know. The newspaper stories were like dreams to us, bad dreams dreamt by others […] they were awful without being believable. They were too melodramatic, they had a dimension that was not the dimension of our lives [...] We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of the print. It gave us more freedom. We lived in the gaps between the stories. (*The Handmaid's* 63-64)

By the quotation above, Atwood indicates that if you are ignorant of or indifferent to the politics, the agenda, the news, the incidents happening around you; and remain silent when you should raise your voice, or unable to read between the lines of a text to get the message, then you may very likely end up in such oppressive regimes. However, if there is warning, there is also hope. Critical dystopias earnestly warn us about the very dangers of ignorance, obedience and submission to authority rather than questioning, challenging, and resistance to authority. Taking the warning of critical dystopias

seriously allows for the possibility of a reconstruction of another hopeful alternative by showing the opposite, nightmarish world and its do's and don'ts by means of storytelling and language. Change is always possible if you are wide-awake, hold on to your memory and make yourself heard whenever necessary.

With respect to hope and solution, it is not difficult to understand why writing is strictly forbidden in the regime. Since, it is a manifestation of identity, a sign of both resistance and resilience, and is taken as a threat by the rulers. The only way to remember, to preserve all authentic reminiscences is to keep inscribing, if not on paper, then in your mind; and you should constantly repeat them in order not to forget gradually what you have from your past. That is why literature and storytelling take on special significance and function. Together they allow our memory to retain the traces of the past, to treasure recollections of the long gone days; and this is the way to preserve our identity as well since, as Atwood enables us to see, memory and identity are inextricably interconnected. Similarly, storytelling and writing alert us to what might happen; they have significance both for the past and the future. That is why writing is the first thing to be prohibited, as it is a unique and sophisticated way of rebellion and resistance. It provides counteraction against ignorance and it is a means of strength to endure sufferings. More importantly, it leads one to believe that there will be a receiver at any rate on the other end to get the message and to decode it. It is also empowering since the storyteller or the writer has power over the ending of the story. Offred emphasizes below the importance of both the ending of the story and that of the receiver:

> I must believe it. Those who can believe that such stories are only stories have a better chance. If it's a story I'm telling, then I have control over the ending. Then there will be an ending to the story, and real life will come after it. I can pick up where I left off. It isn't a story I'm telling. It's also a story I'm telling, in my head, as I go along. Tell, rather than write, because I have nothing to write with and writing is in any case forbidden. But if it's a story, even in my head, I must be telling it to someone. You don't tell a story only to yourself. There's always someone else. (47)

Combining two different time periods subsequently, the past and the present following each other immediately is a narrative technique of speculative fiction that enables the readers to see the transformation and conflicts. The narrative is based on the transformation of the characters over time. So in time, who can change into what and how? That is what speculative fiction attempts to find out. "Then…I used to…." is a prominent expression because narration uses 'time' here to describe how religion has changed women's perceptions of themselves over time. When Japanese tourists visit Gilead, Offred criticizes their dressing style, contemplating with a little surprise: "We are fascinated, but also repelled. They seem undressed. It has taken so little time to change our minds about things like this. Then I think: I used to dress like that. That was freedom. Westernized, they used to call it" (37) with astonishment. In a way, they adopted in what the regime force upon them a short time and they now find the old western styles strange. It is implied that these radical changes in time have grown as an obvious jealousy and emulation in Offred's mind subconsciously, as she defines the reminiscences of the past as freedom and this is what speculative fiction reveals.

Another interesting point showing the change in time is that handmaids become very skeptical and cynical towards their surroundings. To illustrate, they do not want the tourists to see their faces for the purpose of becoming invisible. Since they are suspicious of the interpreters' being an 'Eye' in essence. Offred refuses to allow the tourists to take photos of the handmaids. She does not talk; she just shakes her head for 'No' (37). In accordance with their hesitations and imposed restrictions, there is no verbal communication and eye contact, either with strangers at all.

The comparison of the past and the present, the theme of time and change continues: *Memento Mori*; "remember that you must die" (40). This Latin proverb describes the impermanence of life, but here are two reasons why it is used. Firstly, as a time metaphor, it emphasizes the difference between the old and the new; the old passed away and the religion became victorious in the religious versus secular conflict. Secondly, it has been emphasized that the body is something we have temporarily and we will eventually become 'skulls and crossbones'. Time, the body, the past and the future are brought together very nicely in the proverb. The conflicts of the characters about the body are actually quite deep and related to these concepts.

If we consider the issue of change in the context of gender, transformation brings huge gender and sexual inequality. What has changed? What is still the same? Changes and/or stabilities are built on gender inequality and this can be observed in the changing and not much changed experiences of women and men. Firstly, whereas Serena Joy leaves her active career behind and becomes simply a wife, her husband maintains or even increases his power. The narrative displays the parallel change of these two characters, a woman and a man over time. It presents an interesting time-trick, it is noticeable because it shows one of the characters in the rear view mirror of the narrator; through the narrator's recollections, the readers can compare Serena Joy's active years and occupation prior to Gilead and her present situation in a limited role. She was actually a strong and successful woman and we know that the narrator envied young Selena once, but not anymore. Secondly, it is obvious that for the male members of the society, the changes in their lives have not reduced the power they had. Besides, manly tastes and enjoyment proceed without change or loss. They still "caress good cars" (26). Furthermore, "The football stadium is down there too, where they hold the Men's Salvagings. As well as the football games. They still have those" (39). So, the activities of the past from which men took pleasure then, still go on, unlike those of the women, which is not fair. Finally, there is another vital change related to sexuality and reproductive functions: "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" (67). All things considered, all the changes that have taken place in time since the initiation of the new regime have all been to women's disadvantage and caused them to lose ground immensely.

Actually, the fact that the oppression of women was also present in the old world is underlined in the novel, even though it was not so visible and radical at the time; especially for indifferent people it was hardly noticeable. The narrator implies that the plight of women in Gilead is not a coincidence; it had its predecessors: "I remember walking in art galleries through the nineteenth century: the obsession they had then with harems [...] They were paintings about suspended animation; about waiting, about objects not in use. They were paintings about boredom [...] But maybe boredom is erotic, when women do it, for men " (75). Because Offred is an object that is not in use

at the moment, she feels a connection to the paintings and likens herself to a "Prize pig" (75). "Therefore I lie still and picture the unseen canopy over my head. I remember Queen Victoria's advice to her daughter. Close your eyes and think of England" (98). Why does Offred refer to Queen's words as the commander carries out his duty? Probably, it is to remind us that the situation of women was not so bright in the past, either. Obviously, Atwood also criticizes the period's arranged marriages, which lacked love and passion.

4.2.3. Survival Strategies in *The Handmaid's Tale*: Sexuality, Naming, Memory, Imagination and Storytelling

The Handmaid's Tale is also a survival novel; and in terms of identity issues, we come across some survival strategies in the novel, some of which are sexuality, naming, memory, imagination and storytelling. First of all, in the Gilead regime, sexuality is a vital way to gain identity and status for the handmaids; for that reason, Offred uses sexuality as power. She seeks to attract men to reconnect with her femininity and to affirm that she is desirable. Despite its far-reaching and illusory nature, she longs for a subtle manifestation of control within all the constraints detailed in the story. This is not a single instance; rather, it occurs often: "[...] the vague outlines of men, which would disappear when you looked at them straight" (*The Handmaid's* 129). "They will suffer later at night in their regimented beds" (31). "Did the sight of my ankle make him lighthearted, faint, at the checkpoint yesterday, when I dropped my pass and let him pick it up for me?" (155). These quotations show that the narrator regains her sexual identity and power as she takes control over men and this happens through envisioning her sexuality in general. Since the system limits her sexuality to her reproductive body (the womb), she attempts to undermine the existing system, violating the limitations imposed upon her sexuality — at least in her imagination — and takes pleasure in the power she feels albeit temporarily.

In Gilead regime, securing credit and power is solely contingent upon a woman's fertility and capacity to give birth. The regime's ideology is in alignment with the convinction that childbearing is not only a source of power but also a means of salvation (35). The narrator's conflict with her identity grows more complex by her

attempts to reclaim it through her sexuality. This is made explicit by Aunt Lydia's teachings, most notably her advice she gave to the handmaids on how to influence commanders: "Men are sex machines," she stated, "not much more." Their only desire is one particular thing. It is imperative that you gain the ability to "manipulate them for your own good" (143). In essence, Aunt Lydia pushes the handmaids to employ their sexuality as a means of exterting control over males, which discloses the regime's misuse of gender dynamics for the purpose of controlling.

Offred's struggle to assert her identity and repressed sexuality is evident in her constant urge to violate the rules within the oppressive system. Her craving to touch something "other than cloth or wood" discloses her inner conflict as she details helping Rita make bread, comparing the sensation to flesh: "I would help Rita to make the bread, sinking my hands into that soft resistant warmth which is so much like flesh. I hunger to commit the act of touch" (20). Furthermore, Offred's dangerous flirtatious behavior with the Guardian during the approval of her certificate reveals the impossibility of entirely suppressing underlying human inclinations, displaying the classical clash between nature and culture (30). The interconnectedness of the body, display, sexuality, and fantasy further proves that despite cultural limitations, natural impulses continue to exist. Offred's longing to prove her existence and become discernable through her body, desires, and sexuality is a testimonial to the enduring power of human nature. Ultimately, Offred's actions serve as an indication of the ongoing struggle between the cultural repression and inherent desire for self-expression and identity. Offred puts it into words:

> But also I'm hungry. This is monstrous, but nevertheless it's true. Death makes me hungry. Maybe, it's because I have been emptied; or maybe it's the body's way of seeing to it that I remain alive, continuing to repeat its bedrock prayer: I am, I am. I am, still. I want to go to bed, make love, right now. I think of the word relish. I could eat a horse. (*The Handmaid's* 274)

Expanding upon the theme of sexuality, the novel stresses the crucial role of naming as a vital means for survival strongly connected to the maintenance of power and identity.

Within the realm of the regime, the very act of naming operates as a mechanism through which the wives establish control and maintain their own identity. The narrator juxtaposes the past and present, emphasizing the crucial significance of naming through Janine's childbirth scene — an incident that brings about her memories of motherhood. Offred says:

> Our happiness is part memory. What I remember is Luke with me in the hospital, standing beside my head, holding my hand in the green gown and white mask they gave him. Oh, he said, Oh Jesus, breath coming out in wonder. That night he couldn't go to sleep at all, he said, he was so high. [...] It's the Wives who do the naming, around here. (*The Handmaid's* 127)

The power of naming lies in its power to connect the past, the present and the future; functioning as a bridge between the old and the new. It incorporates an idea of perspective, a set of values that have been transmitted from one generation to another. The narrator is aware of remembering her own name, which is prohibited now: "My name isn't Offred, I have another name which nobody uses now because it is forbidden [...] This name has an aura around it, like an amulet, some charm that has survived from an unimaginably distant past" (*The Handmaid's* 88). Thereby, throughout the narrative, she persistently refuses to be diminished to the inauthentic identity of (Of-Fred) in which she is reduced to a mere object and defined solely by her reproductive capacity; and she clings to the memory of her true name. She recognizes that the absence of a name and memories results in a total demise of one's identity. She is also cognizant of the profound irony that even though the wives hold the power of naming, they are also rendered 'absent' shown in the following quote: "An obscure band name: 'the Wives'" (88). In a nutshell, naming is very much defining and categorizing; and is of great importance in literature due to the fact that it is equivalent to power and identity.

There is, yet, something else that disappears with identity: Memory. Offred expresses that "All this is pure speculation. I don't really know what men used to say. I had only their words for it" (45). She now remembers the past vaguely. The meaning is also blurred as if she cannot interpret the words. In her memory, the meaning will

become clear to the extent that she can go back in time: “I lie, then, inside the room, under the plaster eye in the ceiling, behind the white curtains, between the sheets, neatly as they, and step sideways out of my time. Out of time. Though this is time, nor am I out of it. / But the night is my time out. Where should I go?” (45). There is no escaping from the conflict between the past and the present; the lack of identity and the unmet needs they create, because the state of constant questioning never ends, both her desires and expectations can never be met, and now it is almost impossible to regain the lost identity. However, it becomes possible only through imagination; she should go “somewhere good”, wandering through the corridors of memory (45).

All the characters and objects gain meaning only when compared to the past; but the notion that unites them all is trauma. In relation to the misconducts of the state, the narrator sometimes suffers from a kind of delusion. From time to time, she loses her balance completely. She fantasizes about Luke, yet engages in actions that her previous self would never approve of. Offred finds herself trapped in an emotional state of uncertainty, caught between her previous personality traits and the new persona imposed upon her by the regime. She grapples with the clashing aspirations from her past and present. Though she is reluctant to disrespect the past and is hoping to return to her previous state, she engages in physical intimacy with Nick (105). The reason for this is related to the deep trauma she has suffered.

Offred’s choice of the future tense in her mention of Luke, exemplified by her use of the word “will”, signifies that she keeps living in the past while relishing in fantasies about the future: “When we get to the border we’ll pretend we’re just going over on a day trip” (89). The quote reveals that she is still living in the past at the present moment and feels as if she had never been caught and become enslaved in the new order by the new regime. She has delved far into her imagination to the point that she now strives to integrate her former identity with her current one as an instinctual survival strategy, a coping mechanism, escaping the harsh realities of the present. Offred clings to venturing into the past as her only means of bypassing her present reality. This psychological state could possibly be a sort of fragmentation in the personality in which the intensity of the current circumstance is so overwhelming that the only way to cope with it is forming alternate versions of the self, imagined within

various temporal and spatial dimensions. Offred oscillates between the past and the present; the old and the new self; imagination and reality; her feelings of love for Luke and her sexual interaction with Nick. Still, she no longer feels entirely grounded any of these facets.

The fact that Offred pendulates between the past and the present throughout the novel is proved by her contradictory remarks following one another. After claiming that "[...] nobody dies from lack of sex, it's lack of love we die from" (105), she soon states, "without [sex] I too am disembodied" (105). There is no comma in the sentence, no pause; there is an immediacy, which reminds us of the basic needs of an individual. There is no Luke here. There is no past, there is no more longing for love, marriage, or the old love. It's here and now, it is the body and the needs that matter (106). At this point, she is coming to terms with reality, starting to get her bearings… However, this momentary embrace of reality is short-lived. Shortly thereafter, she once again surrendered to Luke's memories: "I can see his clothes in my mind, bright as a lithograph or a full-color advertisement, from an ancient magazine, though not his face, not so well" (106). Her growing difficulty in recalling the specifics of the past makes apparent the regime's systematic eradication of memory. Even so, Offred's effort to remember serves as a vital act of resistance, as it is through her memories that she retains a connection to her genuine self, in spite of the system's operations.

In relation to the preceding paragraph, the power of remembering is another excellent survival strategy in the novel especially for Offred's trauma and fragmented identity. As Howel explains, "Offred survives in the present by continually slipping back into the past and for her this is not difficult as the heartland of Gilead where she now lives is her own home town, formerly Cambridge, Massachusetts" ("Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Visions" 166). Thus, the narrative's time metaphor continues; numerous conflicts, the old and the new, are made more apparent by the portrayal of their 'befores and afters' in the following quotation: "The sitting room would once have been called a drawing room perhaps; then a living room" (*The Handmaid's* 83). There is always a comparison between the past and the present. Offred can only make sense of the world in such a comparison. The past is her only reference point and she knows that if she loses her memory or cannot remember the past, she will completely lose her

identity. Offred establishes an inevitable connection between her memory and identity, the more she remembers, and the more complete she can feel.

Albeit Offred's consciousness about the indispensable nature of memory and identity, it is essential that where Offred's memory does not help, she necessarily employ her imagination: "I wanted to feel Luke, lying beside me. I have them, these attacks of the past, like faintness, a wave sweeping over my head. Sometimes it can hardly be borne. What is to be done, what is to be done, I thought. There is nothing to be done" (59). She tries to connect with the past through her imagination so that the past comes to the present and takes over it.

Another powerful moment of remembering is the time in which she was with her daughter: "I close my eyes, she is there with me". The flashback image of her baby in the bathroom… "She fades, I can't keep her here with me, she's gone now. Maybe I do think of her as a ghost, the ghost of a dead girl, a little girl who died when she was five." (70). She is terribly traumatized because of this loss. In addition, she hopes to be remembered as well, trying to preserve her identity, wishing it still exists in her daughter's imagination, too. That's all left from her previous life. "I lie, lapped by the water, beside an open drawer that does not exist, and think about a girl who didn't die when she was five, who still does exist I hope, though not for me. Do I exist for her? Am I a picture somewhere, in the dark at the back of her mind?" (71). Now, memory and imagination are the only means of maintaining her dreams with her one and only daughter and also the extension of her identity as a mother.

Regarding the other reminiscent moments, three things remind Offred her motherhood again in the nativity scene of Janine: The first thing is the smell of the moment (the room smells, too); secondly, the smell of the body which must be coming from Janine, "the smell of matrix" (124), implying her womb; and thirdly, a scene from the past immediately comes up into Offred's mind as an olfactory image, which is the smell of the "plaid blanket when the cat once gave birth" (124). So, Offred cannot get rid of the burden of the past, which is both curse and blessing. It is curse because life becomes unbearable; blessing because remembering and telling are the only ways to resist. The text has combined them all in such a stimulating way that each minute is explained by traveling through the present, the past and the bodily reminders ("the smell

of matrix"). Therein, each incident occurring at present brings up a memory from the past over and over again.

Throughout the novel, Offred is incessantly in conflict, and as her circumstance develops more and more intricate, she meditates on multiple outcomes of the past concurrently. For instance, she asserts: "I also believe that they didn't catch him…" (107), referring to Luke. This statement functions as an illustration of the diverse ways in which the past permeates the present. She considers all possibilities at once, bringing all that may have happened in the past to the present.

All of these hardships Offred suffered bring out a central question: Is it possible to completely govern individuals, their emotions, thoughts and their imagination even if the country is entirely under state control? Atwood's novel implies that it is not fully achievable. We understand Offred's awareness regarding the importance of memory from this quote: "It is through a field of such valid objects that I must pick my way every day and in every way. I put a lot of effort into making such distinctions. [...] I need to be very clear in my own mind" (42). She is steadfast in her willingness to resist despite the challenges she has gone through.

To conclude, the novel's dynamic is shaped by a non-linear time storytelling, full of flashbacks and forwards within the 'now and then' frame, where the themes of survival, sexuality, identity conflict, trauma, imagination and remembering versus forgetting are constantly at play, as well as the acceptance versus resistance. As an outcome, the narrator's profound awareness, which she strives to preserve in spite of the conflicts and mental blurring she experiences, is a way of resistance. This very resistance not only delineates her struggle, but also signals the possibility of accomplishment, a little spark of hope, at least, for the succeeding generations.

4.2.3.1. The Connection between Storytelling and Memory

Eleonora Rao states that "the act of storytelling, as in *The Handmaid's Tale,* has multiple resonances. It is a means of survival that allows Snowman to avoid sinking into a world where words lose their consistency, use, and meaning" (111). By drawing upon Manning's *Ephemeral Territories* that uses a Snowman metaphor, Rao quotes:

> He would like to resume his old habits as a ‘word man’, telling and listening, reading books and studying them, immersing himself in the shifting patterns of language. Instead, he is in danger of being overwhelmed by the loss of his most valuable skill: ‘I used to be erudite,’ he says out loud. Erudite. A hopeless word… What are all those things he once thought he knew, and where have they gone? (*H.T.* 148; qtd. in Rao 57)

It is reported that Snowman finds comfort in stories since they are his wandering home and where his ‘strangeness, separation, alienation, and foreignness’ live (Rao 57). What Rao underlines is that Snowman's story is told from the point of view of "you," like *The Handmaid's Tale*, where the story is likened to a letter. “Dear You, I’ll say. Just you, without a name” (*H.T.* 279; qtd. in Rao 58). Rao takes Offred’s explanation: “By telling you anything at all I’m at least believing in you, I believe you’re there, I believe you into being. Because I’m telling you this story I will your existence. I tell, therefore you are” (*H.T.* 279; qtd. in Rao 58). What Offred ensures here is both her and the listeners’ existence.

Storytelling is strongly connected with history and memory, in essence; it is the indispensable process of serving them. Somacarrera explores that “History was once a substantial edifice, with pillars of wisdom and an altar to the goddess Memory, the mother of all nine muses. Now the acid rain and the terrorist bombs and the termites have been at it, and it’s looking less and less like a temple and more and more like a pile of rubble, but it once had a meaningful structure.” (86). She makes use of strong metaphors and underlines how history and cultural treasures once were like a strong structure that holds knowledge, a memorial for recalling the past along with innovative, original thoughts, now have been eradicated by destructive elements such as damages to the environment, war and indifference to them and have been transformed into a chaos that looks like rubble. So, she draws attention to how important it is to maintain and secure cultural legacy.

Preserving cultural heritage is possible through transference of all cultural, social, economical, philosophical, anthropological, sociological repertoire from generation to generation. Yet, how can one society or nation or an individual, be sure of the authenticity of the oral narratives, anecdotes or written historical records? Vevaina

suggests that the historical data are assembled from sections, which currently operate and were profoundly molded by the historian's perspective. The underlying accounts of history have provided micro-history with an emphasis on views, which were discarded from governmental archives. Posing questions about the claims of powerful groups to disclose the real story is crucial. "Telling history is always a question of interpretation" (86). She refers to Michel Foucault's argument that systems of language indicate how the mechanisms of authority operate. Namely, the ones in control and power determine the direction of discourse. Confronting conventional 'authority' has resulted in a shift from single empowering "History" narratives to more various and pluralistic realizations like the "histories" or even "her stories" which can be observed in Margaret Atwood's literary works, where female characters' standpoints are given voice and signified (86).

Vevaina reminds that "Historical notes" at the end of the novel gives a meta-narrative in which the incidents in the book are debated in an academic context two hundred years after the Gilead regime. In this part of the novel, Professor Pieixoto's lecture at the meeting demonstrates that he has little concern about what Offred recorded on the tapes. He considers them as "mere artifacts" and is skeptical of what he listens to. Hence, he undervalues the harm and agony people experienced, specifically that of women in the Gilead regime. By doing this, he also keeps himself emotionally away from the "terrorism and dehumanization" (87). Atwood's narrative technique shows that history is apt to change and she makes this reality visible to the reader. The part addresses how Professor Pieixoto's processing of Offred's story rendered it less prominent as a narrative. Her cautionary message against the rules of morality is overlooked by the academic, "who is interested in reconstructing his grand impersonal narrative," proved by his very self the way how history is manipulated (87).

Vevaina also refers to Offred's acception of the fact that "her entire narration is a reconstruction of memory and that any retelling is always selective, and so possibly a reduction and a distortion of what really happened" and she also notes that the truth is subjective and Offred is aware that she has to make choices about what to forget, what to remember and tell, that is why she names her story "a tale", so it appears that what she remembers is her account of what happens, and does not mean it is the very truth.

Moreover, Vevaina emphasizes that the story Offred told is mostly true though, but Offred's confession is what Atwood does deliberately to show her understanding of righteousness and Vevaina puts Atwood's expression of truth in terms of stories as being "vicious", "multiple" and "untrue after all" (88). The fact that it is not a "report" or a "diary" is quite a postmodern way of narration in which stories are confabulated and centered around the narrator's viewpoints along with the things gone through and recollections, indicating that there is no one truth.

CONCLUSION

This study seeks to uncover the concept of 'utopian hope'— as defined by Ernst Bloch — in Doris Lessing's *The Memoirs of A Survivor* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, two highly acclaimed dystopian novels. The analysis focuses on the narrative styles employed by these female writers of the twentieth century in light of the fundamental elements of critical dystopias. In order to accomplish this objective and comprehend why Lessing's and Atwood's dystopian works offer 'utopian hope' in the end, the study puts emphasis on the clarification of the development of utopian literature over centuries from *The Republic of Plato* — the archetypal example of utopias — to the dystopias written in the twentieth century. The primary focus of the analysis is on the authors' treatment of the disadvantaged groups and the 'plastic' nature of utopian literature as well as its malleable characteristic. The thesis reveals that Atwood's and Lessing's critical dystopias hold more hope for the future when contrasted to Plato's utopia, *The Republic* in particular. This is because *The Republic* is a 'blueprint' and has the purpose of forming a perfect society. Therefore, it remains static and impervious to change. Despite being categorized as a utopia, Plato's work include extremely dystopian elements, especially in its treatment of the excluded groups such as women, children, the uneducated folks and the environment. Albeit its intention to foster progress and desirable social improvements in society during its time, the utopian aspirations (hope and novum) are barely discernable. It displays a high level of opposition to 'alterity' and claims perfection. In contrast, even though the dystopian novels of Atwood and Lessing portray an extremely bleak setting and series of events, the conclusion of the narratives has a more utopian outcome. This is mainly because of the dynamic nature of these narratives, which brings about the struggle and notable transformation of the characters. The social landscape is well-suited for change as it has arrived at a critical, urgent turning point given that there is nothing left to be sacrificed and the situation has grown disturbingly alarming. As a consequence, the alteration is bound to take place in the near future. Much like a pendulum, the mechanism will ultimately swing in the opposite direction, aspiring a better society.

Catherine Malabou's notion of 'plasticity' entails the power of going through transformation and adjustment. Malabou employs this notion to disclose "the utopian

anticipation" in conjunction with its political potentials and aspirations. By using the idea of 'plasticity', she strengthens her assumptions concerning possibilities within a utopian frame. She asserts that 'positive plasticity (giving form)' requires 'creating meaning', and 'resisting meaning' at the same time. She holds the view that 'plasticity' promotes utopian possibilities beyond the limits of the text. For Malabou, literary utopias are open to discussion and retain the ability to challenge politics, texts and other socio-political agendas. They are transcendental and self-reflective. Likewise, the notion comprises a process in which readers are given the opportunity to draw novel interpretations from the utopian text regardless of its author and the era in which it is written.

Literary utopias, similar to plastic, has the ability to be molded into various arrangements, exhibiting their openness to a wide variety of assessments and pluralistic perspectives. Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor identified 'utopian speculation' not solely as an instance of political modeling, but additionally, as an instrument to imagine and explore differences. This visionary dynamic produces numerous perspectives and interpretations as opposed to unbending concepts, rigid political models and monolithic ideas. 'Plasticity' offers literary utopias flexibility, allowing them to critically examine the existing ideals of their time although some of them could be prescriptive. They should not be considered as laid out plans, a 'blueprint' to be implemented. Rather, they place emphasis on their own imperfections, which must be present to bring about "disruption" as defined by Miguel Abensour. His concept of "disruption" suggests that utopias persistently challenge present circumstances with the goal of novel interpretations, leading to multiple alternatives instead of one ideal form. This continuous pursuit of improvement and distinctness is an essential trait of 'utopian plasticity'. As indicated by Abensour, the key to the effectiveness of utopia is in its failure to be fully accomplished. This corresponds to the ongoing functioning of utopia which evokes an intense desire for freedom and equity and the prevention of control, servitude and exploitation. The persisting mismatch between purpose and fulfillment plays an important role for ongoing development, turning away from the premise of a 'perfect blueprint' towards a relentless search for betterment.

At this point, both *The Memoirs* and *The Handmaid's* line up with Malabou's concept of 'plasticity' and they resist the 'blueprints' of their time. Both texts, primarily due to their open endings, enable the readers to imagine innumerable alternatives beyond the text, challenge the socio-economic-political agenda of the time, which pave the way for "disruption" by Abensour's sense. There exist disparities between goals and realizations; that is, a continuous pursuit for betterment, which means a persistent alertness, awakening an overwhelming yearning for justice and liberty while concomitantly condemning supremacy, enslavement and exploitation.

Both *The Memoirs* and *The Handmaid's* explore post-apocalptic, dystopian themes. The novels share a remarkably comparable setting. Atwood's novel depicts a civilization that has become sterile resulting from the widespread utilization of chemicals and technological advancements. Consequently, the authoritarian regime captures women who are capable of bearing children so as to ensure the ongoing existence of the ruling elite. A despotic and oppressive totalitarianism is in control. This has been the decisive component for shaping life. Lessing's novel, on the other hand, portrays a severe ecological catastrophe. Individuals have found themselves unable to move away from their residences as a consequence of the damaging impacts of air pollution and the dangerous living conditions of the streets, compelling them to seek out more livable areas to guarantee their survival. Animals like horses are domesticated and vegetation is grown on roofs. Street gangs have sprung up, youngsters have grown wild and have turned to cannibalism.

Both novels feature a female narrator. The authors draw attention to the narratives of oppression and enslavement endured by those (women and nature) that are ignored and regarded as lacking legitimacy, and that are considered to need the protection of patriarchy. In addition, both works have crafted stories that serve as the critique of Western philosophy and its dualistic paradigm. In Lessing's work, there is a prevalence critique of dichotomies such as 'culture/nature,' 'man/woman,' 'mind/body,' 'master/slave,' 'rationality/animalism' (Plumwood 43). In a similar vein, in Atwood's work, there exist frequency of dichotomies such as 'culture/nature,' 'man/woman,' 'mind/body,' 'master/slave,' 'freedom/necessity,' 'public/private,' and 'subject/object' (43). These 'binary oppositions' embody the primary manifestations of domination and

control observed in the novels. Moreover, in both novels, the other concepts of Western dualistic structure can be observed. 'Denial', for instance, encompasses the act of underestimating the value of the other party, denying their contributions, and not acknowledging their existence. Accordingly, in *The Handmaid*'s, women who are not commanders' wives are totally ignored and they are regarded merely as instruments to reproduce. Their needs and emotions are rejected, their individual value is denied to the extent that after three failed attempts of getting pregnant, they are discarded and sent to chemical cleaning camps not to live long. In *The Memoirs*, the authority disregard and belittle the citizens' demands, obscuring them by employing variety of justifications. The administration leaves out the most fundamental needs of the general population. Everyone has to fend for themselves; that is, each individual needs to be in charge of their own needs independently without the support of the government. Similarly, the idea of 'radical exclusion' is proven by the Wives' lack of acceptance and intolerance to the Handmaids, considering them as socially undesirable. Likewise, in Lessing's literary piece, Hugo faces up severe exclusion and threat, left at the mercy of the impulses of the members of the gangs.

The notion of 'incorporation' is visible in Atwood's text, as Handmaids are confined to servitude and subjugation by commanders, wives and aunts; and their identity is reshaped by how their masters wish to perceive them. Lessing's narrative exposes the misconception of humankind as the dominant force over nature, culminating in a disastrous ecological apocalypse. People also view themselves as dominators over Hugo regarding him as theirs to rule. Likewise, Gerald's initial impression of young women as subservient to be at his service confirms this mindset. 'Objectification' becomes apparent in *The Handmaid's* as Atwood exposes the dehumanization of women's bodies while *The Memoirs* portrays the instrumentalization of Hugo and nature. Hugo, for instance, is devalued to the extent that he is regarded just as an object of consumption. Along with that, the young girls with whom Gerald gets involved in sexual interactions are treated as mere objects of desire, exploited for their bodily features and labor.

The concept of 'homogenization' is perfectly illustrated by the Handmaids, particularly because they display uniformity in their outward looks; homogenization in

feelings, ideas and identity in the eyes of others. Their individuality is irrelevant; but actually their function matters. In the same vein, their names consist of the prefix '-of,' followed by the commanders' names, i.e. (Of-Fred), indicating ownership. They are dressed identically, their visage remain hidden and they fall into positions in accordance with their assigned duties. In Lessing's work, the gangs unite for the purpose of survival and form a homogeneous commune. They share a lack of approval for diversity, notably towards Hugo who is regarded as an anomaly, 'a freak' on account of his non-human nature. Stereotypical views such as the belief that animals should be taken advantage, develop and have widespread support, resulting in a collective consensus.

Both novels have a primary goal of critically examining the premise of progress in modernity and capitalism and vividly exposing the damaging consequences it entails through their narratives. This means both works correspond to Walter Benjamin's criticism of progress. In "Theses on the Philosphy of History", Benjamin relates Paul Klee's painting Angelus Novus, whereby, an angel looks back at history, observing it as an uninterrupted catastrophe that accumulates wreckage (in Thesis VIII). A forceful wind, from 'Paradise', which embodies progress, accelerates the angel forward propelling him into the future in spite of his desire to stop, turn back and fix the damage. The angel desires to "awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed." Yet, the storm "has got caught his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them" (Bronner and Kellner 258). Thereby, the force of progress pushes history incessantly forward, into the future towards which "his back is turned" whereas "the pile of debris" ahead of him increases "skyward", the highest point (258).

Benjamin, in thesis XVI, provides a juxtaposition between historicism and materialistic historiography. The former arrives at its culmination in the notion of universal history which is marked by the absence of a theoretical framework and the gathering of data to occupy a homogenous and empty (unfilled) period of time. The latter, in contrast, adopts a constructive strategy that incorporates both an ongoing process of thinking and unplanned pauses, leading to a "crystallized" moment of meaning, or a "monad." A historical materialist investigates particular instances which indicate a "Messianic cessation of happening", which refers to revolutionary possibilities for the oppressed and downtrodden. Their goal is to capture and safeguard

the core essence of a certain era, life or work, distinguishing it from the wider, uniform flow of history. Thereby, this approach preserves the fundamental characteristics of historical eras (261-262).

In thesis V, Benjamin discusses the principle of how historical materialism chronicles the past. It signals that the authentic representation of the past is short-lived and only becomes apparent during moments of recognition, before it disappears permanently. Historical materialism points out the vital importance of realizing the past's relevance to the present, in opposition to historicism, which claims that the truth will always be accessible. It maintains the necessity of "the seize hold of a memory", which most notably, "flashes up" (256) in moments of jeopardy, and the need to prevent 'memory' from being taken over by the ruling classes. The historian's mission is to liberate memories from conformism and preserve "the spark of hope" they contain. The passage concludes with an urgent reminder that even people who passed away are not safe from the victors in historical instances, and it is therefore essential for the historian to be vigilant in securing the historical data from being manipulated and erased (256-257).

In thesis VI, Benjamin continues to explore the gaps between historicism and and historical materialism in their approaches to analyzing history. Benjamin touches upon Fustel de Coulanges suggestion that historians disregard the outcomes of historical events to fully interact with a specific time period, utilizing a method common to historicism. This method often results in the growth of empathy with the victors, consequently glorifying rulers and their victories. In contrast, historical materialists refuse this approach and acknowledge that the "cultural treasures", despite being praised, is also the consequences of exploitation and suffering. They are aware that cultural artifacts do not only commemorate the successes of the influencial people but also the tireless efforts of the oppressed. Since, "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another" (257). Hence, historical materialists critically examine cultural assets to discover the underlying injustices and struggling behind historical narratives. He considers it as their responsibility to "brush history against the grain" (257). That is,

to question the dominant perspectives and spotlight the frequently ignored, darker aspects of history.

Within this particular framework, the task of a storyteller and the mission of a historian display striking resemblance. Thereby, both novels employ the tools of a memoir and voice recordings to convey the account of the past. At this juncture, Atwood's portrayal of the historian-academic, evaluating the recordings at the end of the novel, dramatically contradicts the qualities of a fair and a competent historical materialist as noted by Benjamin. The historian in the novel, embodies the attributes advocated by patriarchy. Besides that, Atwood reveals that respected fields of academia continues to be dominated by the traditional male perspective. On the flip side, Atwood's protagonist, Offred strives to accomplish the crucial act of storytelling to the best of her ability. Despite the regime's prohibition on communication, writing, record-keeping, along with its attempts to distort perceptions through new regulations and by the help of Aunts, Offred, similar to Benjamin's exemplary historian, successfully hold onto her memories by recollecting the past on a regular basis. She painstakingly captures the current situation while persistently clashing it with the past.

The narrative style employed by Lessing's narrator has parallels to that of Offred. Similarly, she accomplishes to bring moments of the past to the present, executing a vital jump into the past at crucial moments, 'flashing up memories in moments of danger,' leading to an 'unplanned', "crystallized moment of meaning" in Benjamin's sense. These are 'Messianic interruptions' Benjamin conceptualized, which enable the 'redemption' of the moments and memories of the past. Atwood and Lessing accomplish this by disrupting the linearity of time in their narratives, resulting in a deliberate slowdown of the temporal flow. Time is not divided evenly, and the sequences possess differing durations. The oscillations of the narrators between the past and the present along with the sequences of remembering and forgetting serve as 'Messianic interruptions'.

Both Lessing and Atwood make use of highly potent symbolic language and metaphors. The wall is a prevailing symbol in both novels, functioning as an embodiment of memory, a kind of reminder. In Lessing, the wall exists to be destroyed and reconstructed. The narrator's journey through the labyrinths of her psyche, which

takes place behind the wall is both liberating and renewing. However, the wall in Atwood's narrative is an emblem of boundaries and serves as a place for public display and punishment; and it signifies areas/rules/restrictions that cannot be violated in both real and symbolic terms. It also showcases the negative consequences of transgressing it. In a nutshell — whether emancipating or restricting — in both novels, the wall is a permanent reminder in different ways.

In Atwood's work, what is explicitly forbidden gets pointless in Lessing's; it has lost so much weight that it is not required to prohibit it. Products, for instance, which are no longer in use like useful appliences, unable to function, owing to deficit in electricity, are not banned *in The Memoirs*, unlike the things in *The Handmaid's*. Regarding intellectual activities, in *The Handmaid's*, they are strictly forbidden; while in *The Memoirs*, they are not restricted by the rulers, as they have taken on a meaningless status. Education is fruitless and has lost its value. This is clearly demonstrated by the narrator's belief that Emily would not favor attending to school, as she has already gained expertise and skills in the process of survival. The main reason of this occurrence was the advancements brought by progress, which inevitably turned into regression.

The last point is that both novels make effective use of the attributes of critical dystopia. They function as cautionary narratives. They feature powerful elements of transformation and dynamic alteration. The fact that they both have ambiguous endings does not mean that they have no resolution. On the contrary, it opens up various paths, relieving and reassuring the readers that nothing can be worse than what they have already experienced. The individuals or society undergoes profound change or there occur hints of such transformation. Likewise, the novels place emphasis on the severeness of the circumstances if the necessary transformation fails to happen. Within the scope of the aspects of 'critical dystopia', Malabou's 'plasticity', Bloch's concepts of 'novum' and 'utopian hope', both novels resist and recreate meaning, nurturing utopian opprtunities that supersede the text, confronting the traditions and socio-economic-political-cultural-ecological ambitions of the time. That is why these novels operate as an inspiration of hope as well as gifting readers with an infinite number of possibilities.

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