

**Ministry of Higher Education  
and Scientific Research  
University of Al-Qadisiyah  
College of Education  
Department of English**

**Woman Character in Margaret  
Atwood's  
*The Handmaid's Tale***

**Submitted by:**

**Tiba Muhammad  
Ghadeer Abbas**

**Supervised by:**

**Assist Lecturer : Dijla Gattan**

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## **Dedication**

To our Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.

## Acknowledgement

We thank our supervisor Assist Lecturer : Dijla Gattan for her guidance and advice to complete this paper .

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## Abstract

As a dystopic satire, both Margret Atwood's novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, portrays the present evils in the hope of bringing about social and political change. The former's cautionary tale portrays the physical and psychological oppression of women for the sake of male genes in a state called Gilead. Gilead is a theocratic dictatorship based on Puritanical fundamentalism, rigidly orders every aspect of the daily life of all but those in the most privileged positions.

This paper is divided into two sections and conclusion. Section one sheds light on Margaret Atwood's biography and women identity in literature and society. Section two discusses woman character in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Finally ,the conclusion sums up the findings of this paper.

## Section One

### 1.1 Margaret Atwood Biography

Margaret Eleanor Atwood was born November 18, 1939. she was a Canadian poet, novelist, literary critic, essayist, inventor, and environmental activist. Because of her father's ongoing research in forest entomology; Atwood spent much of her childhood in the backwoods of northern Quebec and travelling back and forth between Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, and Toronto. She did not attend school full-time until she was eight years old. She became a voracious reader of literature, Dell pocketbook mysteries, Grimm's Fairy Tales, Canadian animal stories, and comic books. She attended Leaside High School in Leaside, Toronto, and graduated in 1957. Atwood began writing plays and poems at the age of six.<sup>1</sup>

Atwood realized she wanted to be a professional writer when she was 16. In 1957, she began studying at Victoria College in the University of Toronto, where she published poems and articles in *Acta Victoriana*, the college literary journal. She graduated in 1961 with a Bachelor of Arts in English (honours) and minors in philosophy and French.<sup>2</sup>

In late 1961, after winning the E. J. Pratt Medal for her privately printed book of poems "Double Persephone", she began graduate studies at Harvard's Radcliffe College with a Woodrow Wilson fellowship. She obtained a master's degree (MA) from Radcliffe in 1962 and pursued doctoral studies at Harvard University for two years, but did not finish her dissertation, "The English Metaphysical Romance".<sup>3</sup>

Atwood's first published work is the pamphlet of poetry "Double

Persephone” (1961), publishes via Hawkshead Press. More poetry follows during the decade as seen with the books *Talismans for Children* (1965) and *The Animals in That Country* (1968). Then she publishes her first novel, *The Edible Woman*, in 1969, a metaphoric, witty work about the social status of a woman about to wed.<sup>4</sup>

Later, Atwood would describe taking Greyhound buses to read at gymnasiums and sell books. She continues to publish poetry as well as the novels like *Surfacing* (1973), *Lady Oracle* (1976) and *Life Before Man* (1980). Several books follow, yet it is 1985’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* that garnered Atwood a massive wave of acclaim and popularity. A prescient warning over what could be, the book chronicles a puritanical, theocratic dystopia in which a select group of fertile women a condition which has become a rarity are made to bear children for corporate male overlords.<sup>5</sup>

Atwood is a prolific writer who has penned additional novels that include *Cat’s Eye* (1989) and *The Blind Assassin* (2000), which won the Booker Prize. Continuing her output of speculative fiction with real-world parallels consisting of *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). In addition to *The Penelopiad* (2005) and *The Tent* (2006), she also releases the book of essays *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (2011), looking at the nuances of sci-fi/fantasy genre writing.<sup>6</sup>

In 2016, Atwood publishes the graphic novel *Angel Catbird*, an undertaking done with fellow Canadian artist Johnnie Christmas which profiles the super-heroic adventures of a genetic engineer who becomes part feline, part owl. The work is slated to be followed up by the February 2017 release, *Angel Catbird: To Castle Catula*. Atwood lives in Toronto with her partner Graeme Gibson. The two have a daughter.<sup>7</sup>

Atwood in her novels, short stories and even poetry uses a similar style of writing. It is a style that is not only distinctive but also effective. Her sense of description is one of her best talents. It allows her to create pieces of work that constantly reinforce her themes of political chaos and the effect that a patriarchal society has on women.<sup>8</sup>

As a feminist writer, much of Atwood's work deal with how men not only empower women but how they manage to hurt each other. Using parallelism and symbolism as springboards, Atwood writes to inform and perhaps warn her reader of the exploitation of women and sometimes even helpless men who exist within a society. In bodily harm, Atwood develops her thematic concerns in even more global dimensions, in both figurative and geographical senses.<sup>9</sup>

## **1.2 Women Identity in Literature and Society**

The traditional view of what a woman wants is thought to be a husband, followed by a family. In most cultures, women have been brought up with the sole goal of finding a man to marry. However, there are also women in the world who do not strive towards this presumed goal as well as literary works that highlight this.<sup>10</sup>

Womanhood is an ever changing conceptualization, a fluid idea defined by society and culture; a biological fact that has created various implications for women all over the world. There is a constantly evolving effort to reconcile the dissimilarities of identity reflected through standards of beauty, sexuality, and gender roles. American and immigrant women, the challenge of navigating through pivotal stages of their lives as a product of two cultures has been one of difficulty, fueled by the contradicting norms of beauty, identity and womanhood: defined by



American standards which often times more than not clashes with the way in which these standards are defined in their homes .<sup>11</sup>

Identity connects the individual to a broader social category, in which the individual associates himself or herself with. Traditionally, the concept of identity has not focused on the individual's personal definitions of social categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, sex and class identities; but rather identity has always been a strictly structured label that has left little room for individuality .<sup>12</sup>

The process of identity is a never-ending process that goes beyond the onset of adolescence. Identity development becomes more and more pronounced during youth; because this is the phase in which the individual becomes more concerned with a sense of self and formulating independent values and opinions that are distinct from that of their parents, background and ascribed (gender) roles; yet still remain mindful of them .<sup>13</sup>

Moreover ,immigrant women deal with common coming-of-age themes like body images, sexuality and self-identity. These experiences are more pronounced because they have to navigate this complex realm in not only one but two cultures-that of the United States and that of their cultural origin. Ethnic identities are strongly influenced by cultural backgrounds and visibly defined by environmental surroundings; women must alternate between the changing contexts of female identity inside the home and outside of the home. This adaptational trend is a reflection of how identity negotiation alternates between varying cultural dimensions; women have to continuously adapt to different standards of self-actualization, body image and beauty perceptions .<sup>14</sup>

Many writers who comment on women as a group or on female identity in general assume women take up a dual position in the definitions given by dominant forces; they are both part of culture in general and part of women's culture in particular .<sup>15</sup>

The broader discussion women's cultural contributions as a separate category has a long history, but the specific study of women's writing as a distinct category of scholarly interest is relatively recent. There are examples in the 18th century of catalogues of women writers, including George Ballard's *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain Who Have Been Celebrated for their Writing or Skill in the Learned Languages, Arts, and Sciences* (1752). There are catalogue of women writers; and the *Biographium faemineum*: the female worthies, or, *Memoirs of the most illustrious ladies, of all ages and nations, who have been eminently distinguished for their magnanimity, learning, genius, virtue, piety, and other excellent endowments*. Similarly, women have been treated as a distinct category by various misogynist writings, perhaps best exemplified by Richard Polwhele's *The Unsex'd Females*, a critique in verse of women writers at the end of the 18th century with a particular focus on English writer, philosopher, and advocate of women's rights Mary Wollstonecraft and her circle.<sup>16</sup>

Judith Sargent Murray (May 1, 1751 – June 9, 1820) was an early American essayist, whose religious and political writing, as well as personal letters, help us understand that period of history. She also wrote one of the earliest feminist essays in America. A creative genius and recluse, Emily Dickinson (December 10, 1830 – May 15, 1886) wrote over 800 poems, most of which were published posthumously. She is now considered a pioneer of inventive poetry in English literature. Harriet Beecher Stowe (June 14, 1811 – July 1, 1896) She is the famed author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Published in 1852 a book which helped build anti-slavery sentiment in America and abroad. This novel expresses her moral outrage at the institution of slavery and its destructive effects on both whites and blacks.<sup>17</sup>

Jane Austen (16 December 1775 – 18 July 1817) was an English novelist

known primarily for her six major novels, which interpret, critique and comment upon the British landed gentry at the end of the 18th century. Emily Jane Bronte (30 July 1818 – 19 December 1848) was an English novelist and poet who is best known for her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, now considered a classic of English literature. Adeline Virginia Woolf (Born Stephen; 25 January 1882 – 28 March 1941) was an English writer who is considered one of the foremost modernists of the twentieth century and a pioneer in the use of stream of consciousness as a narrative device.<sup>18</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Corel Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood. Modern Novelists*. Ed. Norman Page(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995),p,5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Hill Rigney, *Margaret Atwood. Women Writers*(Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1987),p,62.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Karen F. Stein, *Margaret Atwood Revisited. Twayne World Author Series*. Ed. Robert Lecker( New York: Twayne Publishers,1999),p,4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Eleonora Rao, *Strategies for Identity: The Fiction of Margaret Atwood. Writing About Women: Feminist Literary Studies* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1993)p,79.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid,p,83.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Judith Hole, and Ellen Levine. *The Rebirth of Feminism*( New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971),p,152.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid,p,153.

<sup>16</sup> Paula R. Backscheider, and John Richetti, eds. *Popular Fiction by Women, 1660-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996),p,78.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Judith Hole, and Ellen Levine, p,89.

## **Section Two**

### **Woman Character in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale***

*The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian novel by Canadian author Margaret Atwood. Dystopian fiction (sometimes combined with, but distinct from apocalyptic literature) is the opposite: creation of an utterly horrible or degraded society that is generally headed to an irreversible oblivion, or dystopia. *The Handmaid's Tale* was originally published in 1985. The novel deals with the journey of the handmaid Offred. Her name derives from the possessive form "of Fred"; handmaids are forbidden to use their birth names and must imitate the male, or master, for whom they serve.<sup>1</sup>

This novel can be explained as a double narrative, Offred's *Tale* and the *Handmaid's tales*. The night sections are solely about Offred, and the other sections :shopping, waiting room, household, etc. are the stories that describe the possible life of every Handmaid. In many of these sections, Offred jumps between past and present as she retells the events leading up to the fall of women's rights and the current details of her life which she lives.<sup>2</sup>

*The Handmaid's Tale* wins the 1985 Governor General's Award and the first Arthur C. Clarke Award in 1987; it is also nominated for the 1986 Nebula Award,

the 1986 Booker Prize, and the 1987 Prometheus Award. The book has been adapted into a 1990 film, a 2000 opera, a television series, and other media.<sup>3</sup>

*Handmaid's Tale* shows a society that is colonized by a Republic that ironically coalesces two extremist ideologies: the Puritanical right that denotes women proper place in the home like many extremist countries as the property of men, and the feminist groups that protest against the objectification of women and their bodies under patriarchy. And the fundamental extremists who want to control every aspect of people's life have constant power on society totalitarian governments.<sup>4</sup>

Offred the narrator of the story records her memories of the different forms of oppression that happens in the Gileadean Republic. The story is presented from the point of view of a woman called Offred. The Commander is the high ranking official in Gilead and Offred serves as his Handmaid °.

*The Handmaid's Tale* is a decent model of a sensible society with the complexities of self-perception. Atwood uses the female body as a treatment of the psyche/body idea and analyses the manner by which her character responds to, and resists its destructive effects. The bodies of ladies in Atwood's novel such as the handmaids are severely scrutinized to show how a body can be malleable. °<sup>6</sup>

Keller is especially interested in the impact of feminist scholarship has had on this relationship. While her article "Feminism, Science, and Postmodernism" is to a greater extent a general discussion of science and sexual orientation, Keller touches specifically on how multiplication is controlled in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Understanding this thought is vital to the impact of Science Fiction and speculative fiction on the formation of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Shirley Neuman's "'Just a Backlash': Margaret Atwood, Feminism, and *The Handmaid's Tale*" discusses a meeting she led with Atwood after the operatic adjustment of *The Handmaid's*

Tale. The fundamental focus of this article is Atwood's feminist sympathies and tendencies.<sup>7</sup>

Atwood is outstanding for her feminist views, however she is never biased, and in *The Handmaid's Tale* she raises questions rather than simply asserting her views. As Offred comments:

if Moira thought she could create Utopia by shutting herself up in a woman-only enclave she was sadly mistaken. Men were not just going to go away.<sup>8</sup>

The narrator compares herself and the other Handmaids to "people workmanship, obsolete," using the axiom "waste not, need not." (64). These ladies and craftsmanship are both brightening and pointless, leftovers that have been used up. Feeling both useless and used up, the storyteller plays on need, reminding herself why she isn't the same as a useless craftsmanship question.<sup>9</sup>

This is the kind of touch they like: folk art, archaic, made by women, in their spare time, from things that have no further use. A return to traditional values. Waste not want not. I am not being wasted. Why do I want? (4)

Nevertheless, ladies are the primary victims in the society which Atwood conceives - The Republic of Gilead (The Republic of Gilead, sometimes colloquially referred to simply as Gilead, is the authoritarian, theocratic regime that takes over the United States of America in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The regime can be seen as the overall main antagonist of the novel and the television adaptation (- and her vision of this society sometimes seem to misrepresent, by uniting several diverse examples huge numbers of the inequalities and abuses looked by ladies

worldwide in the past and at present. In Gilead, female subjection is finished, and as far as the Handmaids are concerned even their personality is subsumed by the male who controls them. They are taboo to use their genuine names, however are instead made the property of their masters: Ofglen, Ofwarren, Offred.<sup>10</sup>

Moira, with her masculine-style dress, forbidden dialect and lesbian proclivities, is the opposite of everything that Gilead wishes to see in ladies, and as such, through a great part of the novel, offers what to Offred that there might be a shot of successful defiance. In any case, at long last the men shut Moira up in a ladies just enclave which men keep running for their own pleasure.<sup>11</sup>

Atwood's skillful use of postmodern story devices, amusing names, wit, and wonderful dialect got visit praise and is the focus of numerous scholarly studies of the novel. Remarking on the novel's universal significance, the satire in *The Handmaid's Tale* directs its criticism towards every one of us feminists and non-feminists, ladies and men. It warns us of the indistinct innovation of energy, of the subtle mastery of ladies by men, and of our unconscious imprisoning of each other and ourselves by ourselves.<sup>12</sup>

A quest for ladies' personality has been a key thought of contemporary feminist idea. Feminist artistic criticism exposed a serious clash between the conventional perspective of the ladies' part in the society and the way ladies saw themselves. It is this clash is quite compelling to Margaret Atwood in her novel. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood again examines the significance of names, especially the names of female characters.<sup>13</sup>

*The Handmaid's Tale* continues Atwood's explorations of sexual orientation and way of life as well as domestic politics. Since its production in 1985, *The Handmaid's Tale* has been the subject of intense basic exchange. A dystopian survival content set toward the finish of the twentieth century on the cusp of accomplishing uniformity between the sexes.<sup>14</sup>



These handmaids who are corrupted to the level of negligible conceptive beings are not by any means supposed to think or feel and need to proportion their thoughts. They who are the entire property of state have no name, character or feeling other than fear and are known after the Commanders with whom they need to play out the impregnation function "We are two legged wombs, that is all: sacred vessels mobile chalices" (146) 2 explains the entire situation. They are denied the privilege to possess or to have control over her body and are broadcasted as unwomen in the event that they neglect to create a youngster within the settled time assigned to them. The female protagonist Offred is one among the numerous handmaids in Gilead.<sup>15</sup>

Gotten up to speed in a universe of rules, strict direction, oppression and extraordinary punishment, the novel's protagonist, Offred attempts to get past every single suffering, every single day by clutching the conviction that she will someday be brought together with her husband and little girl. Like other ladies she too is considered as a unimportant normal resource, as a negligible conceptive being and is used to the greatest. Her life in Gilead is no superior to a repression in a correctional facility. She refers to herself in plural, showing that her individual personality has been subsumed by an aggregate identity.<sup>16</sup>

In *The Handmaid's Tale* Atwood depicts the adverse impact of natural debasement on the life of ladies. Females are constrained into a submissive position and are used for multiplication and to hold up under kids for the childless commanders and to go about as handmaids.<sup>17</sup>

The first-person, female, story perspective in *The Handmaid's Tale* is essential to the feminist message of the novel and Offred's record of her life in Gilead and "previously" is fascinating in its own privilege<sup>18</sup>.

As Karen F. Stein explains in her essay "Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* :Scheherazade in Dystopia :(\ ^ ^)"

Feminists are particularly interested in stories, because as a marginal group of society, women have often been the objects rather than the creators of narrative: their stories have often been untold. People on the margins of societies often find they are denied access to the discourses that confer power and status<sup>19</sup>.

As Stein points out, this is Offred's story. In any case, it is not free from male obstruction. What is imperative for this essay is the manner by which Offred tells her story. Despite the way that she tells it in retrospect it is not one that takes on a solely basic standpoint, a long way from it. The dialect she uses is, all things considered, the one rehearsed and acknowledged in Gilead. It is a dialect that is male overwhelmed and Offred can be seen to exist inside a male discourse, which limits her position in the society of Gilead. Henceforth, Offred's account is, albeit composed in a place outside Gilead's discursive achieve, not free from the frames of what Gilead discourse allows her to think.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of the fact that Offred obviously produces her story, perusing and composing are prohibited for most individuals as a result of the administration's endeavor to control and repress opposition, yet that the capacity to use dialect is vital to Offred, can be seen the first occasion when she is welcome to the Commander's private chambers.<sup>21</sup>

The Commander is a high-rank individual from the administration and furthermore the boss of the household Offred has been assigned to. He wants her, for example, to play board games with him:

We play two games .*Larynx* 'I spell .*Valance* .*Quince*. *Zygote* .  
I hold the glossy counters with their smooth edges, finger the  
letters. The feeling is voluptuous. This is freedom, an eyeblink

of it (149 .(

This is one of several of Offred's flashbacks where she rethinks her previous unmindful and perhaps guileless picture of the society previously as something great. It shows that she has understood that the way she carried on with her life added to the production of Gilead, since she permitted herself not to question the way ladies were displayed, adjusting to that picture keeping in mind the end goal to increase personal success, something that would most likely not have been possible on the off chance that she had questioned the official "truth" of ladies<sup>23</sup>.

Shirley Neuman also discusses this in her article “ ‘Just a Backlash’: Margaret Atwood, Feminism, and *The Handmaid's Tale*:(٢٠٠٦)”

Her commentary is often ironic, often analytic, often critical of herself and her peers in ‘the time before’. It also shows her as having gained political awareness and as reassessing her earlier more individualist positions<sup>24</sup>.

In spite of the fact that Offred has achieved some type of "awareness" of the state of things, which Neuman obviously sees as an imperative process for Offred, she is not sufficiently strong to follow up on that in any type of resistance. Nevertheless, Offred has understood that Foucault's "truth", which in this case would be "reality" about ladies, is controlled and dictated by men.<sup>24</sup>

Offred is, in some respect, a rather feeble person. There are several examples of other ladies in the novel who have not been so influenced by "reality" of Gilead as Offred. They are dynamic and decided not to live by the rules of the Gilead discourse. Offred's mother was engaged with the feminist development in the society "previously", copying explicit material and walking in support of ladies' entitlement to fetus removal<sup>25</sup>.

Gilead was frustrated about Offred's lack of interest in the women's movement and her habit of taking her rights for granted: "You young people don't appreciate things, she'd say. You don't know what we had to go through, just to get you where you are" (131). (Offred's mom fears the outcomes of slacking around there, a dread that would turn out to be advocated, and after the production of Gilead she is sent to the Colonies. Furthermore, Offred's kindred Handmaid, Ofglen is another lady who is apparently significantly more daring than Offred. Ofglen is engaged with the protection and she is the person who pushes their relationship past what is by and large acknowledged among Handmaids. She gives Offred data about the protection and needs Offred to pass on data got from her Commander, which is something Offred does not set out.<sup>26</sup>

At the point when Ofglen hangs herself as opposed to being captured by the mystery police in Gilead. Offred is diminished since Ofglen at that point can't uncover anything about her. "She did it before they came. I feel incredible alleviation. I feel appreciative to her. She has kicked the bucket that I may live. I will grieve later" (298). Offred does not express any bitterness, but instead alleviation that she, for the occasion, is protected. While other ladies, as Ofglen, forfeit their lives as opposed to uncover anything that may hurt the protection, Offred is fulfilled simply being alive<sup>27</sup>.

The successful Gilead discourse has influenced Offred "to sell out" her confidant Ofglen, by feeling help rather than sadness. She becomes mindful that the administration's energy has extremely influenced her mind. Yet another case of this is Offred's companion from the time previously, Moira. In the society "previously", Moira was, similar to Offred's mother, a dynamic feminist. The novel reveals instances of this in Offred's flashbacks. "Now, said Moira. You don't have to paint your face, it's just me. What's your paper on? I just completed one on date assault" (47). These interjections like the one above on the subject of date assault

give the investigate against the society "previously" since it displays the conditions for ladies then.<sup>28</sup>

Moiria also becomes a Handmaid, however she manages to escape from the Red Center. In any case, she is in the end caught and set to work in a brothel. The normal attribute for all these three ladies is their disappointment.<sup>29</sup>

Dismissing such limitations all alone life, Atwood shows in *The Handmaid's Tale* how an oppressive man centric régime denies ladies the privilege to have a vocation. It is therefore no mischance that the Handmaids are dressed in red and that Offred comments several times on her red shoes, specifically links them with the film, as Offred comments that her red shoes are 'level obeyed to save the spine and not for moving.'<sup>30</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Maryam Kouhestani 'Sexual Oppression and Religious Extremism in Margaret Atwood's *the Handmaid's Tale* ) Malaya, Malaysia University Press (۲۰۱۲,p,130.

<sup>v</sup>Ibid.

<sup>v</sup>Ibid,p,131.

<sup>ξ</sup>S.Banurekaa and S.Abinaya “Emerging Women in Margaret Atwood’s Select Novels,” *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*,p,30.

<sup>°</sup>Ibid.

<sup>v</sup>Ibid,p,32.

<sup>v</sup>Ibid.

<sup>^</sup>Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid’s Tale*) Great Britain: O.W Toad, 1986,(p,61).This quotation is taken from addition, any subsequent reference, will document parenthetically henceforth).

<sup>^</sup>Amin Malak, “Margaret Atwood The Handmaid’s Tale and the Dystopian Tradition.” *Canadian Literature* (1997),p .٢٥ ,

<sup>`</sup>Ibid.

<sup>``</sup>Ibid,p:28.

<sup>^</sup>Lois Feuer, “The Calculus of Love and Nightmare :*The Handmaid’s Tale* and the Dystopian Tradition .”*Critique*,(١٩٩٧), p,.٨٣

<sup>^</sup>Ibid.

<sup>ξ</sup>Ibid,p,88.

<sup>١٥</sup>Hilde Staels ‘*Margaret Atwood's Novels: A Study of Narrative Discourse* .  
Tubingen (Ger: FranckeNerlig, 1995‘(p,55.

<sup>١٦</sup>Ibid,p,56.

<sup>١٧</sup>Ibid.

<sup>١٨</sup>Ibid.

<sup>١٩</sup>Karen F. Stein, “Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* :Scheherazade  
in Dystopia.”*University of Toronto Press*‘(١٩٩١)‘ p.٢٦٩ ،

<sup>٢٠</sup>Ibid.

<sup>٢١</sup>Patricia Goldblatt, "Reconstructing Margaret Atwood's Protagonists ".*World  
Literature Today*‘(١٩٩٩)‘p,.٢٧٥

<sup>٢٢</sup>Ibid.

<sup>٢٣</sup>Shirley Neuman, “ ‘Just a Backlash’: Margaret Atwood, Feminism and *The  
Handmaid’s Tale* .*University of Toronto Quarterly*‘(٢٠٠٦)‘ p.٨٦١ ،

<sup>٢٤</sup>Howells Anne, Caral ‘*Modern Novelist: Margaret Atwood*) New York: St  
Martin’s Press, 1996‘(p,79 .

<sup>٢٥</sup>Ibid,p,81.

<sup>٢٦</sup>Ibid.

<sup>٢٧</sup>Neeru Tandon ‘*Feminine Psyche A Post Modern Critique*) New Delhi:  
Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2008‘(p,42 .

<sup>٢٨</sup>Ibid.

<sup>٢٩</sup>Ibid.

Sharon R. Wilson (*Margaret Atwood's Fairy Tale Sexual Politics*) Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993, (p,11 .

### Conclusion

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is a thought provoking novel about the domination and governing of women by men. It presents a dystopia where freedom for women is restricted because of the new Christian government's extreme policies. This new society, The Republic of Gilead, is described by a woman called Offred. She is a so-called Handmaid, a kind of breeding tool for the republic. The ideology and ideas of this Christian government are presented to us through Offred's first-person narrative. Flashbacks also provide a picture of the society "before" Gilead.

To sum up, *The Handmaid's Tale* is, in fact, a rather tragic story where no woman is successful. Offred's mother ends up in the colonies, Moira in a brothel, Serena Joy as a miserable housewife, and Ofglen ends up killing herself. Ironically, Offred, the character who tried the least to affect her situation, is the most successful as she manages to escape and tell her story. Offred finds herself hiding in a safe house somewhere, and the only two societies she has ever lived in are both societies where women were in one way or another oppressed, be it by means



of sexual violence, language, knowledge or power.

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