

**THE HANDMAID'S TALE: A WISDOM OF CANADIAN SOCIETY BY
MARGARET ATWOOD**

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Abstract:

This paper proposes an analysis of the gender inequality and uses of technology in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, a novel written by famous versatile writer, nationalist and Booker Prize winner Margaret Atwood. It was published in 1985, and heavily influenced by second wave feminism, the story of the novel mainly the matter of gender inequality, and uses of technology, through once it creates a reality in which fertile women are compelled to reproduce through a servitude system. Atwood's writing explores history making in colonial, Post-colonial situation. It is also settled in a dystopian theocratic society, the story is followed the Handmaid's, Offered, in her from submission to full awareness and desire for freedom from the male dominated system. This paper expresses that this subjugation is not a literary work by Margaret Atwood but a reproduction of power relations put forward the history of Mankind.

Key Words: *The Handmaid's Tale*; Social Gender Inequality and use of Science

Introduction:

The Handmaid's Tale was published in 1985 written by The Booker Prize Winner Margaret Eleanor Atwood. The novel remains the outstanding success of Margaret Atwood's career and made her an International celebrity. The novel is classified as a dystopia. Dystopia means, according to German Beauchamp, "a genre that projects an imaginary society that differs from that of the other, primarily because it is significantly worse in important aspects, and secondly, worse for trying to materialize a utopia deal"

The novel was often labelled as science fiction, although the Canadian author always preferred to consider her novel as example of speculative fiction and novels describes near future of USA society, the Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian theocracy governed by white, male supremacists. Birth rates have been radically reduced by epidemics and nuclear and industrial accidents, and women with viable ovaries are now routinely removed from their families and compelled to act as Handmaid's or surrogate mothers for the childless wives of the ruling elite; These fertile women are referred to by a patronymic based on the name of the commander with whom they presently live as the narrator of the novel.

The futuristic society of *Handmaid's Tale* is based on the convention of various past, ranging from the ancient to the recent. The novel is science fiction, as Reber Scholer says about science fiction, "Fiction that offers us a world clearly and radically discontinuous from the one we know, yet returns to confronts that known world in some cognitive way" "The novel *Handmaid's Tale* its own present in various ways, as engaging in particular with concern about environmental pollution, the increasing surveillance and policing exercised through new technology, the rise of the religious rights amendment legislation which was vigorously campaigned for, in the early 1980s but has still not been constitutionally ratified. The ideology of state spheres remerged in America, promoted by the new right and by fundamentalist Christians. These groups are represented in the novel by the commanders' wife.

Christine Gomez rightly remarks: *The Handmaid's Tale* is set in the future, in the republic of Gilead, which occupies part of the territory of what was once the USA. This is a dystopia which carries existing patriarchal tyranny and the victimization of women to an extreme. According to Atwood, "everything in the book is true and has been already accomplished in some form in society."

Margaret Atwood presents in *The Handmaid Tale*, is a dystopic society where the woman is regarded as less than object which is meant to be controlled and dominated by males. In these novel Atwood shows is a representative of most horrible vision of male dominated society. Rigney points out that “represents the confrontation with power and its universal form :dictatorship , tyranny , torture ,and the reality of violence .” Women of the Gilead totally control under the male members of the society. Indeed, the Republic of Gilead is a totalitarian state of in which women are manipulated and oppressed by men. In the novel Atwood depicts various types of women exploitation by men.

The Handmaid 's tale is also known as science fiction, where the escape from the present in a futuristic view of society is replaced by an escape into the present, with the intent to reveal its essence through the exasperation of its major trends. Atwood also depicts the patriarchal society of Gilead which is full of male sexual violence against women “all the ways in which women are suppressed, subjected, restricted, intruded on, violated and objectified are recognized as what sex is for women and as the meaning and content of femininity “written by Mackinnon.

The republic of Gilead is a strictly patriarchal kingdom. This novel reveals how women are subordinate of men and totally control by them. Offered the protagonist of the novel tells the story of these handmaids and herself. Aunt Lydia, Helena and Elizabeth are tyrannical aunts who use steel cables to have a hold on Handmaids,” it was the feet they ‘d, for a first offence. They Steel used cable frayed at the ends. They did not care what they did to your feet or your hands, even it was permanent. Remember, said aunt Lydia. for purposes, your feet and your hands are not essential”. Offered, the protagonist, regards herself no more than a breeding animal. Offered considers not only Offred as a “Trained Pig “but herself as “a queen ant with egg”. Offered “s only purpose in Gilead is to bear children. She is gifted to command and must take part in the monthly ceremony where they copulate with the commander. Offered no longer interested in her body which has been converted into an object of producing babies. She says in the novel “I used to think my body as an instrument, of pleasure or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will. I could use to run push buttons and make things happen.”

The patriarchal society of Gilead is full of sexual degradation and violence against women ,including pornography. As Bouson also feels that “relentlessly exposing the misogyny underlying present day culture, constructs a feminist reading position as it continues Bodily Harm’s critique of sexual degradation and violence to which women are subjected. “The protagonist, along with other handmaids, is forced to see movies. These porn movies present a fearful description of male brutality and lust, “women kneeling, sucking penises or guns, women tied up..... once, a woman being slowly cut into pieces, her fingers and breasts snipped off with garden shears, her stomach slit open and her intestines pulled out”. But the protagonist of the novel, Offred totally against this business of pornography, which makes a naked show of a woman’s body thus, destroys her individuality and identity. The sexual harassment is not only done by the commanders but the doctors who look after these handmaids during their pregnancy, also sexually harasses them. The Handmaids who have to visit the doctor every month for the check up to ensure that their bodies are functioning properly for maternity. Indeed, this whole process of monthly medical check-up looks like sexual harassment of these handmaids by the doctors. In the novel Offered is also harassed by the doctors, she notices that the Doctor is constantly sexually harassing her by calling her HONEY and touching the internal part of the body. During these medical check, up these handmaids not only harassed by body but also by the mind. Above all ,she also tries to have sexual intercourse with Offred. The situation of the women in society is not more than an sexual object, and on the other hand, the totalitarian republic of Gilead completely neglects women ‘s own pleasure.

The place of women in society of Gilead is not more than a sexual object. The rules strictly follow by the women of regime. If anyone who speaks or criticized the regime gets punishment. The problem for the opposition is the widespread system of reporting any one who speak negatively of the state. Although Gilead is a society built on male dominance there are plenty of women who help maintain that system, which is common and effective divide and conquer tactic. The representative of these women with limited power in the novel are the Aunts. They are women who convinced that this kind of rules is justified and they help to control the other women. The Aunts are in charge of the re-education of the women who are Handmaids. This type Family Terrorism, of tactics is Rhonda Hammer described in Antifeminism and Family Terrorism.

Offred is not happy with the situation. She is continuously, advocating such ideas was very well in the theory, but the ensuing realism was not what she had expected it to be. Her bitterness has made her lose persuasion and respect of the tough laws of Gilead. This is showed when Serena suggests that Offred should

The Aunts in the Gilead were to in victim position description of the position in Survival fit them perfectly. "The position is usually taken by those in the victim group who are a little better off than the others in the group. They are afraid to recognize they are victims for fear of losing the privileges they pass"(36). The aunts are rigid middle aged women who have internalized patriarchal values and are used by the state to impose these values on other women. The power wielders in Gilead have discovered that "The best and most cost-effective way to control women for reproductive and other purposes was through women themselves"(320). The Aunts fulfil their roles as disciplinarians and indoctrinators with great gusto. By oppressing other women, they deny their own victim position, unaware of their own use and exploitation by the system. Tyrannizing over the Hand maids with "electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts", (13) the Aunts convince themselves that they themselves are not victims.

The women who abide by the strict laws of Gilead are allowed some recreations from time to time. The women are allowed to see dead bodies of men hung up on the wall, and are supposed to feel hatred and scorn for them. They also attend public execution called salvaging and meeting called 'Paticution' where they act as frenzied Bacchanalian women tear up the bodies of rapists. At birthing all the Handmaids roll around and shriek orgiastic ally in sympathy with are one who is giving birth. In these novel Atwood shows woman condition in misery way. They wanted to live in their own style but they cannot live because of their commanders. In the Novel there is another handmaid Billah whose commander is Jacob. Jacob went into the handmaid Billah because his wife Rachel was infertile and she wanted child that's why she brought a handmaid Billah but Billah cannot bear the child for Rachel. When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said into Jacob, "give children, or else I die and she said to Jacob behold my maid Billah, go in unto my knees, that I may also have children by her"(HT.56). Atwood present the same situation and experience of these handmaid care, offered and Billah. They all facing same situations in the Gilead.

Offred, who finally emerges as "..... brave, touching, any wry, "starts off as Atwood calls, a solitary weeper" Essentially a survivor, she lies midway between the snivelling and self-effacing Janine on the one hand and her rebellious friend Moiré and her mother, on the other offered fares better than any other of them. She was well educated, complacent and an apolitical person with a male partner, a daughter, a job, a house, a cat, a lesbian friend Moira and a rebellious mother. In Gilead she suddenly finds herself as nothing more than ambulatory chalice a womb on two legs assigned to freed. all handmaid has no name same with offered has also no name of her own and though she tries to believe that a name, like a telephone numbers is useful only to other, she knows that it does matter. In "her

reduced circumstances"(H.78). She does not have control over any aspect of her life, including herself. She is completely directed and is forced to live for the good of society. She knows that the regime regards women as 'things' and that she as a Handmaid, with her tattooed ankles and identity pass, is merely a valuable commodity. Offered also knows that only the insides of the Handmaids bodies, which are important for reproduction, are essential, are ruthlessly flayed or even chopped off for minor offences like reading when offered appearance is unimportant, she is not given face cream or hand lotion and, like the other handmaid's resorts to the use of butter stolen from her food tray, as substitute. The commander who does his 'duty' by attempting to impregnate her once a month while she lies between the spread legs of his wife, is not supposed to be concerned with her appearance. Offered tells: "..... we are not concubines, geisha girls, courtesans. On the contrary everything possible has been done to remove us from that category. There is supposed to be nothing entertaining about us..."(HT136).

Under such drastically changed circumstance, offered experiences her body as separate from herself and as not within her control. However, she is more conscious of it than she was in pre gilled times when her body was lithe, Solid and one with her, her bath, like everything else, is regulated by others and despite her daily exercises, she finds her body not as flexible as it used to be. Like other Handmaids, she is forced into pregnancy tests every month and cannot choose to remain childless. Having already failed at two previous postings, she is obsessed with the need to conceive at her third and last posting.

The food eats by her similarly not chased by her. She can't eat food of her own choose she has to take the food according to her householder Martha, Martha brought to her room food of her won chose which is eaten by pregnant women. Being worthy vessel, she is fed only with what the authorities as healthy food. Offered forces the bland afford to fall ill without running the risk of being declared unfit to bear a child and shipped off the dreaded colonies to clean toxic wastes.

So Aunt Lydia always tell them Janine who were raped in the past, actually led the men on in her opinion. Atwood presents character of offered so victim. Offered is too much suffering crochets of the novel she has lost her husband and daughter and after these incident she has to do a job of Handmaid. In the novel Handmaid's have no identity of themselves they've no name but they exchanged names from bed to bed: Alma, Janine, Dolores, Moira, June. Atwood present Handmaids life so victim. In Gilead woman those who are infertile they have to do work as a slave labour. Handmaid's has no right to do writing and reading so they can't read and write so they can't understand what is the meaning "Nollie tebastardes carborundroum" on the internal surface of the wardrobe, inside the room allocated to her, inside her commander's house.

Conclusion:

So, Atwood presents the clear picture of society, she describes the situation of women. In Giled, women have been framed. Framed by their red robes and wide wimples, the handmaids are clearly visible marked and surrounded by their social status. For the wearer with in the frame, He wimples serve as blinders; to look through them is to see only straight ahead, a narrowed view of the world. To look at the wimples is the authoritarian practice of Gilead which attempts to central women, and to permit only one view of reality. Atwood shows the real picture of manmadesociety.

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