

# **Fertility and Motherhood in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*: A Comparison of the Novel and the Series Adaptation**

Nikol Andrllová

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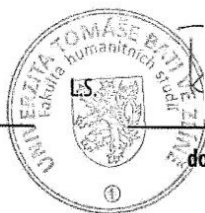
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Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

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**Mgr. Libor Marek, Ph.D.**  
děkan



**doc. Mgr. Roman Trušník, Ph.D.**  
ředitel ústavu

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem plodnosti a mateřství v románu Margaret Atwoodové *Příběh Služebnice*. Zároveň porovnává její knižní předlohu s americkou televizní adaptací vytvořenou streamovací společností Hulu. První část popisuje život Margaret Atwood, která zkoumá její dospívání a formování literární kariéry. Poukazuje na vlivy, vzdělání a zlomové momenty, které ji inspirovaly a ovlivňovaly. Zkoumáním jejího života se tato část snaží poukázat na souvislosti mezi těmito aspekty a jejím psaním. Druhá část je zaměřená již na dílo *Příběh Služebnice*, konkrétně popisuje jak kontext knižní předlohy, tak televizní adaptace. Třetí část je zaměřená na ženy v Gileadu podle plodnosti s ohledem na to, jak početí a mateřství ovlivňuje jejich vlastní identitu. Hlavním cílem práce je uvést autorku do kontextu s napsaným dílem, zároveň analyzovat *Příběh Služebnice* a téma mateřství a plodnosti. Téma plodnosti se stává zajetím, ale zároveň i zdrojem moci, jelikož je to hlavní nedostatek ve světě Gileadu a jejich jediná naděje na záchranu populace. V Gileadu je mateřství symbolem útlaku, ale i moci, jelikož plodná žena má určité postavení a ochranu ve společnosti, ale zároveň je toto téma spojené s hlubokou bolestí.

Klíčová slova: Margaret Atwood, feministická literatura, mateřství, plodnost, kanadská identita.

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor thesis explores the theme of fertility and motherhood in Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. It also draws comparisons between the original book and the American television adaptation made by the streaming service Hulu. The first part describes the life of Margaret Atwood, exploring her coming of age and the development of her literary career. It highlights the influences, education and pivotal moments that inspired and influenced her. By examining her life, this section seeks to show the connections between these aspects and her writing. The second part focuses on the work *The Handmaid's Tale*, specifically describing the context of both the book and the television adaptation. The third section focuses on women in Gilead by fertility with respect to how conception and motherhood affect their own identity. The main aim of the thesis is to put the author in context with the written work, while analysing *The Handmaid's Tale* and the themes of motherhood and fertility. The theme of fertility becomes a captivity, but also a source of power, as it is a major scarcity in the world of Gilead and their only hope of saving the

population. In Gilead, motherhood is a symbol of oppression but also of power, as a fertile woman has a certain status and protection in society, but at the same time this theme is associated with deep pain.

Keywords: Margaret Atwood, feminist literature, motherhood, fertility, Canadian identity.

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.



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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis will explore Margaret Atwood's life across various stages, exploring her formative years, educational background, family influences, and the major turning points that inspired and affected her. By delving into her family, education, and life experiences, I aim to establish connections between these aspects and her writing. Additionally, I'll introduce her other works and delve into the genres and themes that intertwine with the observations she made throughout her life. Margaret Atwood is an international Canadian novelist, poet, and literary critic seen by many as a “feminist” novelist due to her strong personality as a white English-speaking female with no fear to explore and use her voice to write and talk about thought-provoking themes.<sup>1</sup> She has been known for her ability to create strong female protagonists who are the main characters in her stories. This distinguishing feature of her work highlights her dedication to presenting women as diverse, resilient, and independent individuals who question conventional gender norms and provide varied viewpoints on femininity and societal power structures. Whether examining religious extremism, mythology and fairy tales, or contemporary gender norms, Atwood's writing consistently seeks to expose and examine inequalities, various forms of power abuse, and violence. Her father accepted a professorship at a university, and the family made Toronto their permanent home shortly after World War II. For eight-year-old Atwood, this transfer meant a major change.<sup>2</sup> In order to better understand Margaret Atwood's writing, I will examine the factors in her life that had an impact on her in this bachelor's thesis. I'll go into greater detail on *The Handmaid's Tale's* work and its themes of parenting and fertility. What does it mean in the world of Gilead, and what effect does it have on life in general? In Gilead society, being pregnant and a parent stand for both strength and hope, as well as suffering and uncertainty.

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<sup>1</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), introduction, Kindle.

## 1 MARGARET ATWOOD AND THE GENRE OF DYSTOPIA

Having begun her writing career in the 1960s, Margaret Atwood has been recognized as one of the most influential writers of her day and has been a noticeable and highly acclaimed writer for more than sixty years. She was raised in Quebec's northern forests for a portion of her early years, and much influenced her work, especially the way she portrayed the fauna of Canada. Atwood is internationally recognized for being a strong and vocal supporter of women's rights, liberty of expression, and ethical behaviour. Her feminism and the conversation it generated about social issues were mostly inspired by her mother's strong female role and the group of fascinating and like-minded women she had the chance to meet. After all, being a mother entails shaping your kid, offering advice, and teaching morals and values. Motherhood has never been an easy job, and although some people may view mothers as merely caregivers, mothers are much more than that. She additionally expresses her support for ecological consciousness and Canadian cultural independence.<sup>3</sup> Her father instilled in her family the values of environmental consciousness and friendliness., therefore she acquired these ecological worries and understanding from him. As an entomologist studying forests and a professor of Zoology at the University of Toronto, he frequently took his kids on nature walks and bush explorations.<sup>4</sup>

Margaret Atwood's poetry collection, *Double Persephone* (1961) was released the same year in which she finished her studies at the University of Toronto. It was her first exposure to the male-dominated literary industry at that time. However, Atwood has also written reviews, children's books, novels, and essays that focus on a range of local and global issues that have sparked a wave of criticism.<sup>5</sup> Debating about important issues led her to become a major part of the literary industry, attracting significant critical engagement as a woman with her own opinions, perspectives, and values.<sup>6</sup> Because she was well aware of the discrimination against women, Atwood focused on the challenges faced by women in many cultural contexts and feminist issues within her works, especially during the 1970s and 1980s. Atwood's speculative fiction, including novels like *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), and *Oryx and Crake* (2003), have earned her the highest recognition in the literary industry,

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<sup>3</sup> Reingard M. Nischik, *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 20.

<sup>4</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1.

due to her consciousness and skills fusing social commentary and personal experiences into her writing to produce stories that feel relevant and genuine to readers.<sup>7</sup>

Margaret Atwood is a passionate political and environmental activist in several fields. This indicates that she writes novels that address these topics and frequently speaks on gender equality, climate change, and the potential dangers of authoritarianism. We may see that, for instance, in her novels *Oryx and Crake*—which centers on environmental degradation and corporate control over technological developments—and *The Handmaid's Tale*, where she tackles the subject of reproductive rights and the effects of strong religious beliefs. Throughout the course of her many decades-long writing career, readers across the world are still drawn to her unique portfolio of work.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1 Margaret Atwood's Writing: Influences

One of the most important factors that influenced Atwood to start writing was her early exposure to literature emerging at Victoria College at the University of Toronto, where she contributed to the college magazine and drama society. Her desire for research and her writing abilities were probably influenced by her academic background, which gave her a solid understanding of literature and literary analysis. Following her graduation from undergraduate studies at Victoria College, she attended Radcliffe College, which subsequently was a part of Harvard University. She started a new chapter in her career in 1962 when she graduated with a master's degree in English.<sup>9</sup> After returning to Canada, Atwood worked for a while in several university English departments, filling temporary positions. Following her divorce from her first husband, she met a writer Graeme Gibson with whom she had a fulfilling relationship and a daughter, Eleanor Jess Gibson.<sup>10</sup>

The unique cultural and natural features of Canada, which Atwood grew up in, presumably influenced her perspective and provided material for her writing.<sup>11</sup> Resilience and toughness are a significant and recurring theme in many of her works, which reflect her Canadian identity.<sup>12</sup> Following the release of her *Survival* (1972), Atwood rose to

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<sup>7</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 3, Kindle.

<sup>8</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 3, Kindle.

<sup>9</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>10</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), introduction, Kindle.

<sup>11</sup> Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 7.

prominence and was given the chance to influence the conversation surrounding Canadian national culture. The purpose of the book is to define and contrast national Canadian literature with national American literature. Since her early writing days, she steadily established herself as a significant figure in Canadian literature, and as a result, she attracted greater attention to her works that soon attracted critical notice.<sup>13</sup> In alignment with the analytical work *Survival*, which highlights the crucial connections between individuals and their surroundings, Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* (1972) is identified as an environmentally aware, feminist contribution from Canada that has garnered substantial global acclaim.<sup>14</sup> Both *Survival* and *Surfacing* were written by Atwood as products of English Canadian cultural nationalism in the 1970s, putting them in the broader picture of ongoing discussions about postcolonialism in Canada. Her depiction of wildness included the Arctic North and the woods of Canada, a home to many lakes. In colonial rhetoric, the wilderness was portrayed as a realm of strange and frightening otherness, apart from Christian morality and civilized social order. However, Atwood saw it as a place of comfort and escape from the pressures of society.<sup>15</sup>

As previously mentioned, Atwood's writing was greatly influenced by her national identity, she has frequently used her personal experiences with her family as a background that has shaped the themes, characters, and storylines found in her works. In response to their father's desire for them to experience the Canadian environment, she, her brother, and her sister had grown up in the suburbs and the woods, where she had the chance to explore the country's diverse environments and implement them into some of her works. Atwood's father attempted to pass on his love of nature to his children especially during his children's annual upbringing, exposing them to the realities of living in the bushes where he built up a study workstation and the family pitched a camp in a tent.<sup>16</sup> As someone who has had and carried out a few lifestyle experiences, he managed to construct the family cottage that serves as the backdrop for Atwood's book *Surfacing*. Following health issues that weakened her father's condition and ultimately led to his death in January 1993, she subsequently wrote a collection of poems dedicated to her father called *Morning in the Burned House* (1995), in which she

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<sup>13</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), introduction, Kindle.

<sup>14</sup> Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 37.

<sup>16</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 3.

expressed her thoughts about him and the beautiful childhood he provided for them.<sup>17</sup> Margaret Atwood's involvement in activism on modern-day political and social concerns may be linked back to her early life and the awareness of her father, Carl Edmund Atwood. Although Carl Atwood became primarily an entomologist, his love of the outdoors and technological know-how gave Margaret a deep sense of obligation to attempt conversation initiatives and a profound appreciation for the fragility of our planet. Through her books, articles, and public talks, she has elevated awareness of these issues and sparked a conversation about them by using her position as a creator. Ultimately, Margaret Atwood's involvement in activism may be seen as a continuation of her childhood and the morals her father established in her, encouraging her critical thinking and inquisitiveness.

As previously noted, Atwood's literary career often demonstrates her engagement with regional and global issues during key moments. This influenced her decision-making on the literary style and genre that she chose because she started shifting more toward prose, introducing *The Edible Woman* (1969) as her first published novel, presenting a critique, primarily through a feminist perspective, of 1960s North American consumption society. Consequently, it offers an introduction to the humour that distinguishes Atwood's writing and offers a concept that will be fundamental to all of her subsequent feminism-focused novels.<sup>18</sup> *The Edible Woman* made her debut at the start of the second wave of feminism, which rapidly attracted the attention of feminist critics.<sup>19</sup> Following her second published novel *Surfacing* emphasizing the growing unease of the young female character in relationships with males in a society where women are frequently ignored in both their personal and professional spheres.<sup>20</sup> Atwood investigates the effects of human exploitation of the natural world, the loss of connection to nature, and pollution. Atwood spoke out against the exploitation and devastation of the forests, urging people to pay attention to environmental values in a way that the advanced American technological society was not doing to ensure the preservation of the environment for future generations. Reflecting to *The Handmaid's Tale*, where a similar sense of anxiety is portrayed with escalating urgency.<sup>21</sup> She continued exploring and following the feminist themes and their thematic concerns, introducing books like *Lady Oracle* (1976) and *Life Before Man* (1979). Atwood discusses

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<sup>17</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>18</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 31.

<sup>19</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 1, Kindle.

<sup>20</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 53.

<sup>21</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 40.

the preservation of individual rights and the end of the wilderness in *Lady Oracle*. It centers on the female artist persona, a theme first explored in *Surfacing* and recurring in the majority of Atwood's later books. (Cooke 2004, 79) *Life Before a Man* portrays the mundane realities of a particular era in Toronto, showcasing unfulfilling relationships, instances of physical abuse, and societal decay. Through distinct acts of survival and defiance, the novel delves beneath the superficial layers of society.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.2 The Genre of Dystopia

Atwood uses this technique to illustrate several future events in *The Handmaid's Tale*, including the establishment of the theocratic dictatorship, environmental calamities, political instability, surveillance technologies, and manipulation of reproductive rights.<sup>23</sup> Throughout history, conceptions of determining the destiny of human reproduction have been intimately linked to the politics of birth control as female autonomy.<sup>24</sup> The twentieth century's experiences with oppressive totalitarian governments have influenced dystopian fiction, a subgenre of utopian literature. Like *The Handmaid's Tale*, modern dystopian stories emphasize a more intense blending of ecological complexities and societal fears, highlighting a thematic progression into the twenty-first century.<sup>25</sup> The purpose of dystopian fiction, which depicts the end of the world, is frequently to facilitate political change or, at the very least, to make change more plausible.<sup>26</sup> Atwood delves deeper into themes of violence and victimization in *The Handmaid's Tale*, making her first noteworthy venture outside of her own contemporary Canadian setting and laying the groundwork for what would eventually become a classic piece of feminist dystopian fiction.<sup>27</sup> Since dystopias are typically associated with masculinity, the dystopian novel she writes about features a female narrator named Offred who challenges conventional ideas of gender and genre. Her use of a feminine viewpoint drastically changes the focus of the dystopian/utopian genre.<sup>28</sup> Her tale alters the structural link between dystopian private and public realms by making the

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<sup>22</sup> Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 69.

<sup>23</sup> Alexis Lothian, *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 14.

<sup>24</sup> Alexis Lothian, *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 35.

<sup>25</sup> Jadwiga Wegrodzka, *Popular Genres and Their Uses in Fiction* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2018), 47.

<sup>26</sup> Alexis Lothian, *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 61.

<sup>27</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 2, Kindle.

<sup>28</sup> Reingard M. Nischik, *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 141.

disadvantaged groups—rather than the officially silent—the key actors.<sup>29</sup> Offred's vocabulary alternates between reality, poetry, and fantasy, and the novel's plot blends in so many conventional clichés. For readers in the late 20th century, the book serves as a moral critique and cautionary tale.<sup>30</sup> Because the book is multi-genre, the reader's interpretation of it will largely depend on their point of view.<sup>31</sup> Because Atwood's dystopian work is more of a speculative fiction, she purposefully resists attempts to place it under the related genre of science fiction.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Reingard M. Nischik, *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 142.

<sup>30</sup> Reingard M. Nischik, *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 143.

<sup>31</sup> Reingard M. Nischik, *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 142.

<sup>32</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 3, Kindle.



## 2 CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE NOVEL AND THE TV ADAPTATION

This chapter will focus on the contextualisation of the book and its subsequent television adaptation.

### 2.1 The Novel

This chapter will focus on an analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale* not only within the context of its genre but also within the broader framework of feminist literature, considering its themes, character portrayals, and the narrative's engagement with issues related to women's rights and societal power structures. Atwood employs the double voice in *The Handmaid's Tale* to show individuals who are at odds with both their surroundings and themselves. By use of intertextual references and shifts in the narrative's point of view, she illustrates how the self is built from conflicting desires.<sup>33</sup> The story builds a theocracy in which every citizen is absorbed into their assigned responsibilities, referring to Puritan New England stories from the past.<sup>34</sup> Atwood dedicated the book to Perry Miller and her ancestor, Mary Webster, who was a female person wrongly accused of being a witch, yet she managed to survive being hung from a tree, hanging from the rope till dawn. She believed that having an intriguing story would give her novel a solid framework.<sup>35</sup> Atwood's dedication to the book indicates her interest in Puritan New England from the very beginning. Atwood's Harvard professor of American studies, Perry Miller, had a passion for Puritan history in the seventeenth century and inspired her to write the novel. She then drew from Miller's histories which contain a great deal of Gilead's language and cultural practices.<sup>36</sup> Thanks to him, Atwood came to realize the power of words and the importance of understanding how they are spoken and to whom they are addressed.<sup>37</sup> The work has been translated into more than thirty languages, adapted for television, and has become the most popular novel all owing to Margaret and her extraordinary creativity.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Reingard M. Nischik, *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 73.

<sup>34</sup> Reingard M. Nischik, *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 81.

<sup>35</sup> Reingard M. Nischik, *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 29.

<sup>36</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 97.

<sup>37</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Biography* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1998), 94.

<sup>38</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 94.

### 2.1.1. Themes Explored in the Narrative

The novel develops into a feminist dystopia by breaking out from the conventions of science fiction. The work explores gender-based oppression and social control, rather than focusing exclusively on futuristic technologies or alternate worlds, despite certain aspects of speculative fiction.<sup>39</sup> The story of the novel depicts a future where the past and present are combined, representing Gilead as a ghost of Puritan America where language is censored and sex for pleasure is banned.<sup>40</sup> *The Handmaid's Tale* explores dystopian themes by providing a terrifying portrayal of the Republic of Gilead, a theocratic society characterized by strict rules and regulations. Protagonists in dystopian fiction frequently oppose the repressive government and work to effect change. In order to preserve its power, the government may censor or regulate data flow. In Gilead, a theocratic government has taken control and replaced the government of the United States. Women in Gilead undergo a significant loss of autonomy, which is especially evident in the case of the Handmaids. The Handmaids' value is only based on their capacity to have children, hence their bodies become government-regulated reproductive tools. This has a significant impact on a maid's mental health because of the extremely demanding circumstances they face, such as being raped once a month and giving birth to a child they have to abandon since it legally belongs to the Commander's and his wife. After giving birth, they are sent to a different Commander, where the Handmaid experiences repeated acts of sexual assault, humiliation, and cruelty until she becomes pregnant again. The psychological stress of the entire experience forced Janine, the maid who had to give up her infant, to come up with a plan to run away with her daughter. Janine attempted to leap off a bridge to end her own life as well as the life of her infant daughter. For this, she was punished and exiled to the Colonies. Unfortunately, as seen in both the novel and the TV adaptation, Janine suffers with the loss of her child and considers taking desperate measures to regain her daughter. Even though Janine herself survived the attempt, her actions were viewed as jeopardizing a child, which is not acceptable in Gilead society.

Independence and control are one of the dystopian themes explored in the book, where the limitation of reproductive rights is a major issue. Within the social hierarchy, women are allocated to defined positions that come with certain privileges and obligations that express a sense of injustice and oppression fostered by this rigid structure. Besides

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<sup>39</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 94.

<sup>40</sup> Reingard M. Nischik, *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 159.

becoming a Handmaid, women were divided into other categories according to their perceived worth, social standing, or ideological alignment with the regime. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, women that the Gilead government has labelled as disobedient or rebellious are known as “Unwomen.” They are rejected by society and viewed as a danger to the status quo.<sup>41</sup> Econowives perform a combination of roles that include Wives, Marthas, and Handmaids, who occupy a lower social class. Aunts mission is to adapt future Handmaids to the ideology of the dictatorship by educating them and adjusting them to the roles that are expected of them. They play a crucial role in upholding Gilead's repressive social structure.<sup>42</sup> The primary goal of Marthas, women no longer capable of reproduction, is to support Wives, by helping with domestic duties and contributing to the functioning of households. In Gilead's social order, Wives have a dominant and privileged role. At the top levels of the female hierarchy, they are married to those in the governing class, the Commanders. They are idealized as standing for the regime's moral authority and its view of conventional family values. Because of their position in society, they may attend social gatherings and pursue further education. Gilead limits women's access to learning and knowledge by suppressing the past in favor of its version of history. The government was obligated to cleanse the environment and convey again traditional and conservative principles, specifically concerning gender roles, heteronormativity, traditional family values, and religious fundamentalism. The cultural, social, and political surroundings needed to be erased and reshaped earlier than the appearance of Gilead to hold manage over the populace and suppress any shape of dissent or independent thought. This includes creative output that even slightly flouts the law, including visual art, rebellious music, films, TV series, plays, books, and textual materials. All things related to originality, independence, contradiction, and challenging authority were forbidden. Gilead limited information access and repressed free media. Most likely, to control the narrative and manipulate public opinion, newspapers, magazines, and other independent journalistic sources were censored or destroyed. To make history fit its story, Gilead attempted to eliminate or manipulate it. The history was twisted to support the regime's journey to power and to censor any information that went against its beliefs. Atwood constructed a civilization in which information control is a tool of oppression and monitoring is accepted as normal. The perception that Gilead is a dystopian state with no privacy and continual surveillance of its inhabitants is strengthened by the

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<sup>41</sup> Fiona Tolan, *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), chapter 6, Kindle.

<sup>42</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 3, Kindle.

secret police called “the Eye.” The Eye is responsible for monitoring the behavior of individuals, identifying rebels, and making sure Gilead's laws are followed. In a culture where the flow of information is tightly regulated, it is about who has the power to influence whom and what role they play.<sup>43</sup> With God's grace and the dedication of the girls who underwent training to become Handmaids, the government and people involved determined the world's most important crisis, and they are proud of what they have left behind for future generations. Children who were taken away from their mothers and fathers were referred to as “children of Gilead,” which meant that they were frequently placed with households that shared Gilead's beliefs and ideals. It is important to point out that the story emphasizes authoritarian dictatorship in Gilead using language manipulation and control as a strategy to preserve power and enforce obedience. The aim is to reshape language to support social control and adhere to ideology. Women are also idolized as the only source of humanity's future. Due to positions such as mistress, housewife, wife, and child-bearer, women are biased against one another. It highlights how damaging fundamentalist governments are and how they control language.<sup>44</sup> It is forbidden for women in Gilead to go by the name they acquired at birth. The Handmaids are dehumanized by the "Of" prefix, which turns them into the Commanders products or property. This illustrates the regime's attempt to take away women's uniqueness and personhood to control them more effectively. The Handmaids' identity is determined by their affiliation with male authority figures rather than by their individuality or liberty. For instance, the name “Offred” combines the words “of” and “Fred,” denoting her association with Commander Fred. In addition, the Handmaids' ears are marked with a symbol that represents humiliation and compliance to Gilead's government's hierarchy. The mark, which is clearly visible on each Handmaid's right ear, is referred to as a winged eye. The Handmaids are under the watchful eye and guidance of the Aunts, who enforce this mark as a means of visible identification and control. It is also strictly prohibited to use words or expressions that might be seen as undermining Gilead's authority or ideology. This includes independence and the freedom of speech that is seen as going against the regime's principles.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, language around sexuality is regulated and restricted, mirroring the harsh aspects of Gilead's government, in which explicit expressions are

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<sup>43</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 130.

<sup>44</sup> Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 87.

frequently replaced with euphemisms throughout sexual ceremonies. The protagonists in the narrative suffer from constant worry as a result of constant uncertainty, invasions of privacy, and threats of punishment if the law is not obeyed. The Republic of Gilead, as depicted in *The Handmaid's Tale*, can be seen as an important warning emphasizing the risks of extreme ideologies, the loss of personal liberties, and the abuse of authority in dictatorial regimes. Because Atwood was influenced by the feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s when she wrote the novel, which explored topics connected to women's rights, gender oppression, the struggle for identity, and reproductive rights, I will assess *The Handmaid's Tale* in the context of feminist literature and consider how it interacts and contributes to the broader discussion around women's rights, gender roles, and social power structures. Margaret Atwood's career reached a significant milestone in the 1980s pushed by the feminist movement. Atwood's divergence from the values and policies resulting from these changes fueled her forward momentum, sparking discussions and debates surrounding social issues. The book expresses warnings about the possible negative effects of religious fanaticism. The political and theological undertones of the Handmaids story were shaped by her studies of Puritanism throughout her degree program. The idea of employing Handmaids to deal with infertility in Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid Tale* is taken directly from the bible, which is one of the novel's primary sources of inspiration. It especially draws from the narrative gathered from the Book of Genesis about Rachel and her Handmaid Bilhah.<sup>45</sup> At the beginning of the narrative, Rachel and Leah are both Jacob's wives. But when Leah became pregnant and gave Jacob several children, Rachel was the one unable to give birth. Rachel becomes jealous of her sister as a result of feeling unable to create a human being. In accordance with a widely accepted cultural tradition, Rachel chooses to present her Handmaid, Bilhah, to Jacob in the hopes of conceiving through her. With Jacob's approval, Bilhah becomes a surrogate mother for Rachel's unborn child.<sup>46</sup> The dictatorship in Gilead is founded on a corrupted understanding of the religious values. The work is extremely political in nature, revealing the legal, cultural, and psychological frameworks and limitations that oppress individuals and impose frequently ridiculous, unfair laws, norms, and roles.<sup>47</sup> According to government restrictions, a Handmaid is solely responsible for her

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<sup>45</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 129.

<sup>46</sup> Genesis 30: 1-4

<sup>47</sup> Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 92.

infertility. Thus, if a Handmaid is unable to conceive, it is her own fault and not the fault of any Commander.

### 2.1.2. Brief Historical Overview

*The Handmaid's Tale* highlights Atwood's choice to choose liberty over orthodoxy and to urge caution.<sup>48</sup> The strong Christian fundamentalism prevalent in North America in the early 1980s is the subject of criticism and satire in her work that unites these subjects.<sup>49</sup> The novel, which started as a satirical critique has moved out of its historical setting and turned into a cautionary tale for our times. It seems as though Atwood is confirming her predictions about pollution of the environment, extremism in religion, conception methods, and civil rights violations as the present rushes.<sup>50</sup> In addition to using humor to attack the New Right and its Puritan foundations, Atwood provides a critical analysis of American feminism since the 1960s.<sup>51</sup> The feminist movement helped Congress approve abortion and equal rights early in the 1970s, giving American women a far wider range of options in life. The Equal Rights Amendment, however, was not ratified in 1982 due to resistance from pro-life advocates and conservative Christians, which stopped it from becoming law. These opposing viewpoints are represented in the novel by the Aunts and the Commander's Wives.<sup>52</sup> The pursuit of gender equality under the framework of human rights continues in many parts of the world in the face of oppressive political regimes, intolerant societal structures, terrorism, and the negative effects of globalization. The state frequently appropriates women's reproductive rights and health in order to further its own political, philosophical, professional, and individual goals.<sup>53</sup> Women and other people who are marginalized, including the LGBTQI+, around the world stand for rights within specific political systems that align with their own particular worldviews, which are not always anchored in the general idea of human rights, because of distinct hardships under colonization and economic globalization. Persecution, migration, and relocation frequently persist when their demands for equality and just

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<sup>48</sup> Fiona Tolan, *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), chapter 6, Kindle.

<sup>49</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 134.

<sup>50</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 94.

<sup>51</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 97.

<sup>52</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 98.

<sup>53</sup> Shannon Stettner, Katrin Ackerman, Kirstin Burnett and Travis Hay, *Transcending Borders: Abortion in the Past and Present* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 2,

<https://doi.org/9783319483993>.

treatment are not met. However, navigating boundaries and discovering points of agreement inside and across various groups of women gives promise for a brighter future.<sup>54</sup>

### 2.1.3. The Testaments

*The Testaments* (2019), Atwood's much-awaited follow-up to *The Handmaid's Tale*, is set 15 years after the original novel ends and earned praise for the growth of the world she built. *The Handmaid's Tale* was published in 1985, as previously mentioned, and her follow-up book, *The Testaments*, was written and released in 2019. It broadens the story, includes brand-new characters and perspectives, offers fresh insights on Gilead, the characters of one of the prominent Aunts, Lydia, and Offred's lost daughter, now a grown-up. Agnes, and keeps examining subjects that appeal to readers in contemporary times. *The Testaments* leans on contemporary socio-political issues and addresses themes of authority, resistance, women's rights, and abuse of power. Both *The Testaments* and *The Handmaid's Tale* examine the authoritarian Gilead policy and the suffering of women inside it, sharing storylines and thematic motifs. It looks at how people work within and against repressive systems and highlights the value of female unity and sisterhood which was an essential part of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Nevertheless, *The Testaments* offers fresh viewpoints by using the voices of different characters, serving as a more comprehensive understanding of Margaret Atwood's dystopian society. While *The Handmaid's Tale* is mostly told from Offred's perspective, *The Testaments* employs a multi-narrator approach, providing a more detailed look at Gilead's internal struggles. Both literary works provide a greater knowledge of the complexity of Gilead and the difficulties experienced by individuals trying to stand against its oppressive government, despite the contrasts in their narrative structures. Once the original draft of *The Handmaid's Tale* became a series adaptation, it created speculation about the possibility of adapting *The Testaments*, and according to Bruce Miller, the chief creator of *The Handmaid's Tale*, a series adaptation of this sub-sequel has been confirmed.<sup>55</sup>

## 2.2. The Television Adaptation

The subchapter will examine and provide context for the television version of *The Handmaid's Tale*, focusing on its themes, narrative decisions, and visual interpretation

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<sup>54</sup> G.T. Bonifacio, *Global Currents in Gender and Feminisms: Canadian and International Perspectives* (Leeds: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2017), chapter 1, Kindle.

<sup>55</sup> Sian Cain, "Margaret Atwood announces *The Handmaid's Tale* sequel, *The Testaments*," *The Guardian*, November 28, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/nov/28/margaret-atwood-announces-the-handmaids-tale-sequel-the-testaments>.

of the original work. This is going to involve looking at how the adaptation effectively conveys the spirit of the dystopian novel, touching on social and political criticism, and delving into the lives of the characters in the Republic of Gilead. The plot changes from being an open narrative to having a more elaborate and defined framework, and the characters grow from being mere words on paper to completely formed people. The television adaptation of the novel maintains the core ideas and characters from the original work while adding new characters and story lines. *The Handmaid's Tale* became a hit and was adapted for television thanks to its insightful examination of contemporary issues including women's rights, tyranny, and consequences arising from extreme ideologies. The novel's connection to relevant social and political themes and Margaret Atwood's skillful writing pulled in readers and eventually television viewers, turning it into a sensation that struck a chord with a wide audience. Since her books are still being explored and recreated for a variety of media, Atwood's influence goes beyond the literary dimension. The book was made into a 1990 movie and an opera in 2000, but one noticeable television version of *The Handmaid's Tale* has gotten positive reviews for its depiction of Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel. A new readership and audience for Atwood's writing has been introduced by the series, which has won praise from critics.<sup>56</sup>

*The Handmaid's Tale* was adapted for television in 2017 thanks to a *Hulu original series* that gave readers of the book a fresh viewpoint providing a detailed depiction that improved the audience's understanding of the novel's themes and all of the complex social concerns it tackles. It has finally made Margaret Atwood's narrative of near-future dictatorship accessible on the screen and brought up several seasons, with new seasons arriving periodically. There are currently five series in the adaptation, the first is based directly on the plot of Margaret Atwood's book, and the other series are already reimagined by Elisabeth Moss and Joseph Fiennes in their own unique ways. The story expands the world of Gilead beyond the book's conclusion and takes Offred's life in new directions.<sup>57</sup> As said, the overall plot and concepts of Margaret Atwood's book are closely followed in *The Handmaid's Tale* television adaptation, particularly in the first season. On the other hand, as the series goes on, it adds new characters and plotlines and develops parts of the tale that were not covered in as much detail in the original novel. There are modifications and deviations in the TV series that provide a more thorough examination of the world of Gilead

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<sup>56</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 3, Kindle.

<sup>57</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 3, Kindle.



and its characters, even if the adaptation keeps the dystopian mood and essential features of the book. As opposed to the novel, which solely tells the story from Offred's point of view, the TV version offers a variety of different viewpoints and a more in-depth look at characters like Serena Joy and Aunt Lydia. To give the entire story more complexity, the TV adaptation introduces additional details such as June's (Offred's) search for her daughter and the resistance network, which carry over several plots from the novel. The TV show explores certain characters in greater detail, giving them longer backstories. Both the novel and the TV version make use of flashbacks to Offred's past before Gilead, which gives her character some background and sheds light on the social change that resulted in the establishment of the strict government. The most striking scenes in the television version of *The Handmaid's Tale* are those that portray the Ceremony, the Resistance's endeavours, and Offred's inner conflicts. These moments convey the horrific reality of life in Gilead's dystopian society. The purpose of the ceremony is to use Handmaids as reproductive tools to take care of the fertility issue. There's a scene where the Commander has sex with the Handmaid while she's lying between the wife's legs. The goal of this act is to bear fruit, which the Wife will subsequently care for. The Handmaid experiences extreme mental suffering and dehumanization throughout the ceremony, which highlights Gilead's repressive control over women's bodies and reproductive rights. It is forbidden for Handmaids to look directly at the Commanders to preserve the feeling of disconnection and depersonalization during the Ceremony. The rule of law strengthens the power hierarchies inside Gilead's dystopian society by protecting the Commanders from any potential emotional attachment or recognition of the Handmaids' humanity.

### 2.2.1. The Age of Donald Trump

*The Handmaid's Tale* went through a rapid rise in popularity following the 2017 premiere of the television adaption. The television show was essential in propelling *The Handmaid's Tale* to a new level in mainstream culture. An authoritarian state based on patriarchal principles drawn from the Old Testament and seventeenth-century American Puritanism, along with a heavy dose of the 1980s American religious right ideology, a dystopian world haunted by the past is set in the revolutionary United States at the start of the 21st century following the overthrow of the President and Congress through a military takeover.<sup>58</sup> Similar to how the book was written in response to possible negative effects of global issues during

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<sup>58</sup> Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 94.

Ronald Reagan's presidency, the television series adaptation debuted at a time when sociopolitical debates regarding the influence of religion on politics and reproductive rights were at their height, which occurred with Trump's presidency. After Donald Trump was elected president of the United States in January 2017, there was a rise in interest in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Some commentators have made links between her up to 23-year-old novel and the present political atmosphere. Atwood believes that whenever human rights are in jeopardy, the novel's demand to bear witness is still relevant. His administration generated interest in her writing as well as in books like Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Despite the fact that these authors were men, Margaret Atwood's book resonated more with the people and particular issues associated with Donald Trump, who gained power.<sup>59</sup> In an article for *The New York Times* called 'What *The Handmaid's Tale* Means in the Age of Trump', she stated: "In the wake of the recent American election, fears and anxieties proliferate. Basic civil liberties are seen as endangered, along with many of the rights for women won over the past decades, and indeed the past centuries."<sup>60</sup>

### 2.2.2. Feminist Movement and LGBTQ+ Rights

The female characters in *The Handmaid's Tale* are placed in an unfamiliar setting that puts their bodily and mental well-being at risk. The histories of the feminist movement and metahistory are examined via the experiences of these characters, especially Offred.<sup>61</sup> For feminism and Margaret Atwood, the mid-1980s became a time of assessment and reconstruction. By analyzing the shifting issues and the vocabulary of an increasingly theorized feminism, *The Handmaid's Tale* takes a retrospective look at this shift.<sup>62</sup> *The Handmaid's Tale* becomes an important cultural reference for discussion, giving feminists a voice because it touches on current sociopolitical themes and discusses gender equality, autonomy, women's rights, and power dynamics. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the mistreatment of the Handmaids is used as a means of illustrating how women's rights are being

<sup>59</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 3, Kindle.

<sup>60</sup> Margaret Atwood, "Margaret Atwood On What 'The Handmaid's Tale' Means in The Age of Trump," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2017, <https://www.spps.org/cms/lib/MN01910242/Centricity/Domain/842/Margaret%20Atwood%20The%20New%20York%20Times.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1XzZI7Ti46TWcKAZps6eQGkUJII6B77YNHZSCIAyywixFPQzkDbkplFV4>.

<sup>61</sup> Fiona Tolan, *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), chapter 6, Kindle.

<sup>62</sup> Fiona Tolan, *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), chapter 6, Kindle.

undermined. It also highlights the negative effects of severe patriarchal control and the oppression of female autonomy in Gilead's dystopian society. Handmaids in Gilead are forbidden from making eye contact with men, particularly the Commanders. The regime's purpose in restricting eye contact is to undermine the Handmaids' feeling of uniqueness and personal connection. It represents the power relationships in Gilead, where women—especially Handmaids—are supposed to be submissive and loyal to men in particular, highlighting the society's humiliating tendencies. It is crucial to keep in mind that victims do not choose to become victims. Women do not marry men to be abused, mothers and fathers do not bring their children into the world to be murdered, and survivors of sexual harassment do not choose to be raped.<sup>63</sup> Around the time of the show's launch, arguments associated with women's rights, particularly those about access to contraception, reproductive rights, and abortion led to the emergence of the #MeToo movement.<sup>64</sup> The movement brought awareness to issues of sexual harassment and violence, providing a space for those whose lives were permanently disrupted by sexual violence in order to find recovery, criminal justice, action, as well as leadership. Bringing back *The Handmaid's Tale* as a TV adaptation meant the rise of feminism and sparked discussions about the freedom, independence, and rights of women. Moreover, across the globe, women were participating in large-scale protests and marches around the time the show debuted, raising concerns related to social justice and LGBTQ+ rights, which falls in line with the themes that are explored in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

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<sup>63</sup> Canadian Resource Centre for Victims and Crime, "The Impact of Victimization," <https://www.crcvc.ca/docs/victimization.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> D'Ancona, Matthew, "The Handmaid's Tale held a mirror up to a year of Trump," *The Guardian*, December 26, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/26/the-handmaids-tale-year-trump-misogyny-metoo>.

### 3 WOMEN IN GILEAD: FERTILITY AS A CLASSIFIER

As previously said, women are classified into distinct groups, and naturally, different positions force women to be divided against one another. Based on home functions, the female population is separated into classes, and each class's clothing is easily identifiable by its distinct color. The Handmaids wear red, the Wives wear blue, the Marthas wear dull green, the Aunts wear brown and the Econowives wear dresses consisting of three horizontal stripes.<sup>65</sup> Fertile women known as Handmaids are responsible for carrying children for Commanders, who are powerful authorities. The Handmaids' classification highlights the regime's desire with reproduction and the seriousness it will go to preserve humankind's survival, even at the price of women's rights and respect. Wives are Commander's Wives who are either considered infertile or who had kids from past marriages. In Gilead society, they hold a privileged position, enjoying comparatively higher standards of safety and convenience than other women. But because their position depends on their husband's fertility, they are under pressure to have Handmaids bear children. Despite the fact that Wives are not Handmaids, their identity and value are nevertheless based on their capacity to carry out traditional gender roles as mothers and caregivers. In Gileadean civilization, Econowives were of lower socioeconomic status than Handmaids and Wives. They are portrayed as multitasking women who work as moms, lovers, and occasionally even as unskilled workers. Compared to Handmaids and Wives, Econowives are different in terms of fertility and parenthood. It is expected of them to carry out conventional gender roles by having children and fostering them inside their marriages. They are under pressure to procreate even if they aren't utilized for reproduction in the same manner as Handmaids.

Older and infertile women Marthas are tasked with taking care of household chores like cleaning and cooking to make their Wives' lives easier. Despite not being actively involved in the process of reproduction, their work maintains gender norms and keeps Gilead's households running smoothly. Marthas are a constant reminder of the societal impacts of infertility in Gilead and the shame attached to not being able to carry out a child and become a mother. Another category of older and infertile women is the Aunts. Those are powerful women who uphold the ideology of the dictatorship in their positions of

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<sup>65</sup> Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 90.

influence. Their primary aim is to maintain the patriarchal system that the dictatorship put in place, by running Red Centres which train and brainwash future Handmaids. Aunts are guilty of being part of the system, may have been such because they agreed with the system's traditional beliefs or, more likely, because they wanted to maintain their own survival while still having some influence and advantages.<sup>66</sup> They employ physical and psychological techniques to keep everything under control while enforcing severe rules and penalties for disobedience. Aunts victimize other women, they have a vital role in preserving control over women's bodies and minds through training, oversight, and implementation of reproductive norms.<sup>67</sup> Even though Aunts do not have their own children, they are essential part of reproductive hierarchy in the Gilead. All of these women's outcomes, both passive and active, highlight the paradoxes present in the Republic of Gilead.<sup>68</sup>

The Handmaids are generally presented in the novel as victims of the dictatorship, raped ritualistically in the Ceremony in order to fulfil their reproductive function. The Handmaids' experiences are explored in greater detail in the TV adaptation, which also shows their resistance and unity against the oppressive society. Their portrayal gains complexity as viewers see the psychological and emotional effects of their enslavement and may resonate to the experiences of the Handmaids. The TV version of the book gives a more emotional and vivid representation of the abuse and dominance of women's bodies, while the book explains the Ceremony and the experiences of the Handmaids. The visual media highlights the regime's fixation with control and reproduction by allowing for a more graphic depiction of the cruelty and dehumanization experienced by the Handmaids. As a result of certain individuals receiving less attention in the novel, the TV show explores the emotional lives of characters like Aunt Lydia, Serena Joy, Moira, Janine, Ofglen, and Offred in greater detail and provides complex depictions of their attitudes to parenting and fertility. The viewer's knowledge of the effects of Gilead's rules on women's lives is enhanced with the addition of background and character development. The novel's and the TV adaptation's fertility theme emphasizes how reproduction is connected to the oppression of the new society while also highlighting women's tenacity and will to battle for their feminine bodies and their right to procreate.

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<sup>66</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 127.

<sup>67</sup> Fiona Tolan, *The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), chapter 3, Kindle.

<sup>68</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 127.

### 3.1 Individual Women Characters

The following subchapters will analyse the experiences of individual characters, progressively revealing their backstories and the development of their behaviours in both the novel and the TV version. The topics of conception and parenthood will be examined, along with how they significantly affect the identities, interactions, and experiences of the individuals in Gilead's dystopian society.

#### 3.1.1. June/Offred

The book is told from the perspective of June Osborne, who is also referred to as Offred living in the United States. Her character has a compelling narrative and transformation that effectively depicts Gilead's dystopian society, enabling the audience to identify with the protagonist and understand how the newly enacted legislation operates as well as the trials the character faces. Before the emergence of Gilead, June was a self-reliant, well-educated woman who worked in the publishing industry as a book editor and had an ordinary, contemporary life like everyone else. June married Luke before the establishment of the totalitarian dictatorship, and the two had a little daughter named Hannah. They loved each other, had a great life together, and had no idea how their worlds might suddenly flip upside down. The government denied women their rights, sacked them from their jobs, froze their bank accounts, and maintained that they were nothing more than things that could procreate. After Gilead takes advantage of control of the United States, June and her family decide to escape to Canada, where the authoritarian regime has not affected them. On the way, though, they were found and June—a fertile woman—was taken from her husband and daughter, imprisoned, and forced to work as a Handmaid for the state in order to support the reproductive system. Despite being married, June was forced to serve as a servant due to her crimes, her attempt to flee Gilead, and the fact that her husband, Luke, had previously been married and divorced. June's position had changed as a consequence, and she could not become an Econowife. After losing both her husband and her cherished kid, June was traumatized and refused to trust or submit to the system that had reduced her to the status of a Handmaid. She was put in facilities among other fertile women, where they received individual guidance from Aunts regarding their new duties in Gilead's dark society.

After completion of training, her main responsibility from now on is to procreate for the ruling elite because birth rates have drastically decreased as a result of changes in society and the environment. June is paired with Fred Waterford, an authoritative Commander, and his wife, Serena Joy, and her primary responsibility is to procreate for them. June acquires a

uniform made up of plain brown shoes, a long red robe, and winged bonnets that cover the wearer's head. This emphasizes their isolation and restricts their ability to see and engage with everything around them. Being a Handmaid, she has to undergo monthly ovulation rites with Commander Waterford in order to procreate. Broken, and humiliated, she begins to experience physical and mental changes. Of the normal day-to-day problems before Gilead's appointment, the only problem now is whether she gets her period or not. Offred becomes anxious, suffering because of the unconscious, physical, and psychological pressure she is subjected to be able to conceive at all and bring a child into the world that they take away from her, like her daughter Hannah. June's daughter and she have suddenly become separated, leaving June unsure of what's going on with her and living in fear for her health. June feels a wide range of feelings as a mother, from deep love and protectiveness to profound loss. She grieves the separation of their relationship and the life they previously had together through flashbacks:

“I dream that I get out of bed and walk across the room, not this room, and go out the door, not this door. I'm at home, one of my homes, and she's running to meet me, in her small green nightgown with the sunflower on the front, her feet bare, and I pick her up and feel her arms and legs go around me and I begin to cry, because I know then that I'm not awake.”<sup>69</sup>

June acts and makes decisions based on her desire to be with Hannah again throughout the narrative. Her goal is to make it through this experience alive and hope to reunite with her kid. Her relationship as a mother to Hannah is a potent representation of love, grief, and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of obstacles.

The relationship between Offred and Serena Joy is complex and characterized by tension, manipulation, and moments of unexpected connection. Initially, their relationship is rather rigorous and controlled by Serena, because, for the most part, Offred is only Serena's vehicle for achieving her goal of motherhood. She has a key role in planning the Ceremony, which forces Offred to have sex with Fred in the hopes of becoming pregnant. Because Serena is unable to conceive on her own and go through the entire process of becoming a mother, she holds anger towards June. This tension and desperation for the desired child is

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<sup>69</sup> Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (London: Vintage, 2016), 167.

what drives Serena's behavior both in the book and TV series. Offred is viewed as a danger to her own status and control, and she is envious of her fertility and resentful of her presence in the home. Serena Joy uses her physical and mental dominance over June to enforce severe rules and restrictions and punish opposition or non-compliance. There is a scenario in Season 1, Episode 8, where Serena acts and speaks disrespectfully toward June due to her inability to conceive. Infertility and June's inability to conceive have left Serena desperate and frustrated, leading her to doubt June's value as a woman.<sup>70</sup> She sees June as little more than a tool, a way to fulfill her want to have a kid. Notwithstanding the tension and power struggles, there are moments of surprising comprehension and bonding between June and Serena Joy. They share the trait of having endured oppression in Gilead's patriarchal society, and on occasion, motherhood may allow them to bond to or empathize with one another. When Serena and June visit a doctor in Season 1, Episode 9, trying to find out why she can't conceive, the doctor informs her that June is perfectly healthy, and that the Commander might not be able to conceive. When Serena confronts the Commander later, things get awkward, and June can sense how vulnerable and hurt Serena is. Even though their relationship is complicated, June comforts her and they have a rare moment of intimacy.<sup>71</sup>

Like most of the characters I'll be writing about, Offred received a lot of screen time in the series adaptation, which allowed her story to develop fully. However, in the TV adaptation, Offred takes on a more radical and activist role as she fights to reclaim the things that have been taken from her—her femininity, the things she holds dear, and her pleasures. As a result of their common hardships, she connects with other Handmaids and finds comfort and companionship in Ofglen and eventually Ofwarren/Janine. She joins the Mayday rebel group and puts her safety in danger in order to acquire knowledge and come up with a strategy to destroy the government. Many marched against the government's new policy because they disagreed with it, yet doing so may put their lives in danger because defying the authoritarian government would result in severe consequences. Offred battles to preserve her sense of self and agency in the face of Gilead's dehumanizing circumstances, which leads to both internal and outward revolt. Offred exhibits her disobedience even in her interactions

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<sup>70</sup> *The Handmaid's Tale*, series 1, episode 8, “Jezebels”, Directed by Bruce Miller, aired May 28, 2019, on Hulu. (HBO, 2017),

<https://play.hbomax.com/page/urn:hbo:page:GYT4Euwsme8NtwgEAAABI:type:series>.

<sup>71</sup> *The Handmaid's Tale*, series 1, episode 9, “The Bridge”, Directed by Bruce Miller, aired June 4, 2019, on Hulu. (HBO, 2017),

<https://play.hbomax.com/page/urn:hbo:page:GYT4Euwsme8NtwgEAAABI:type:series>.



with Mr. and Mrs. Waterford's driver, who is progressively showing signs of sympathy for her.

One of the main plot devices in Atwood's book *The Handmaid's Tale* and the television adaptation is the relationship between Nick, Commander's driver, and Offred. In the repressive society of Gilead, their bond is a source of relief, mutual respect, and resistance. In a culture that is dehumanizing, he gives her a sense of humanity by listening to her, supporting her, and confirming her emotions. Although there are a few variations in how this connection is portrayed, their relationship is portrayed in the book mostly via June's introspection and internal monologue, and it is kept rather low key. The television adaptation deepens their bond and demonstrates their shared interest. Because Commander is infertile, Serena sets up an undercover plot in which Nick sleeps with June in hopes of conceiving a child. June eventually becomes pregnant after some time, although not with Commander but with Nick. June is terrified of her pregnancy because it is against the rules for her to sleep with any guy other than the Commander. She worries that somebody could find out about their little secret, however in spite of everything, June feels hopeful about her pregnancy with Nick and is relieved that it is not with the Commander. In the end, June's thoughts on her pregnancy reflect the significant influence it has on her relationships, identity, and continuous fight for freedom and survival in the dystopian society. June lives in the dystopian society of Gilead, where her relationships with Nick and her husband Luke are intricately entwined and serve as opposing but complementing facets of her existence. Luke serves as a reminder of the world that was lost and is June's old existence that preceded Gilead's ascent. Although June and Luke have a strong bond, their marriage is marked by sadness and uncertainty as they strive to re-establish the closeness and trust they previously had. Although the novel leaves a lot of June's fate up for interpretation, the TV show develops June's tale by going further into her relationships, intentions, and the bigger picture of Gilead.

### 3.1.2. Serena Joy

As was previously noted, Serena Joy is a significant figure in June's life as well as Gilead's. Since the novel didn't give her character as much development, I'll talk more about how she appeared in the TV version. She is a complicated character, and it is important to fully understand her role in the narrative. Although she may come across as a negative character in the TV adaptation, there is a chance that some people will be able to relate to her and recognize her tender side—the side that yearns for a happy family and is searching for

purpose in life. Regarding Serena, her role in the television version has been given a lot more depth than it was in the novel. Her character has changed quite a bit, providing a deeper examination of her connections, conflicts, and motives within the harsh Gilead environment, in which she initially played a significant role. As a former religious figure and traditional activist, Serena Joy is portrayed in the book as having been instrumental in the establishment of Gilead. She supported women's enslavement and conventional gender norms before the establishment of the dictatorship. However, the TV version dives deeper into Serena's past and explores her life before to Gilead's ascent, her persona provides scenes illustrating how she and Fred contributed to the formation of Gilead as well as flashbacks to their life together. She is shown as a prominent author and wealthy businesswoman who holds traditional ideas on gender norms and family values. Despite her personal interest in the change, she was aware of her future and what lay ahead for her under the new government. Nevertheless, she persisted in her actions, believing that, with God's help, she would purify the environment and build a morally upright way of life.

Ultimately, she is reduced to the status of a domestic wife and loses her independence as a woman. She undergoes an emotional transformation during the course of her life, which is mostly reflected in the TV adaptation. She feels guilty and doubtful at times, and she battles with her position in the system. At first, she is shown as a bitter and angry woman who does not like the restrictions imposed on her by the government, she assisted in setting up. She is not at all comfortable in her new role as the Commander's submissive and obedient wife, and she finds herself yearning for the authority and influence she formerly possessed. Her behaviour was bitter and insulting, and she harboured a certain amount of anger against Offred in particular. In the TV version, Serena Joy is shown as being more actively involved in June's control and punishment, even going so far as to physically abuse her at times. In season 1, Episode 3, Serena becomes irritated by June's disobedience and rebellion in her duty as a Handmaid. In an attempt to demonstrate control over June, Serena physically drags her to the restroom and holds her down while the doctor examines June's fertility.<sup>72</sup> This emphasizes Serena Joy's harshness and gives their interaction another level. Serena's feelings of doubt and frustration with her infertility resulted in increased tension and worry, which was reflected in her attitude to Offred and the entire household. In an effort to get June pregnant, she plans the Ceremony and takes an active role in the ritualized sex between

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<sup>72</sup> *The Handmaid's Tale*, series 1, episode 3, "Late", Directed by Bruce Miller, aired April 26, 2017, on Hulu. (HBO, 2017), <https://play.hbomax.com/page/urn:hbo:page:GYT4Euwsme8NtwgEAAABI:type:series>.

June and Fred. Seeing her handmaid, who is compelled to have sex with her husband in order to have a child, made Serena feel even more powerless in a world where she had already lost some of her own rights. She craves children the Handmaids bring into the world, but on the other hand, she despises their presence, because she feels threatened by them, and serves as a constant reminder of her infertility and limitations. The way she behaved only transformed gradually as she came to know Offred, she had to learn how to work with her to avoid the toxic environment she established in the house. Although Serena disliked Offred, she also eventually came to feel compassion for her, viewing her as a miracle who might give birth to the child she desired. A certain amount of rage and despair beats inside her since she has never known what it's like to have a small miracle formed in her, without having gone through all the good and terrible of pregnancy and childbirth. Offred may appear unimportant to Serena, but despite this, she is able to develop a unique relationship with her and cares for her in a certain way—even if Serena simply views Offred as a conduit in her and Fred's life. Because Offred has already experienced motherhood, Serena is attempting to learn as much as she can from her in the hopes of at least having some understanding and empathy for what it's like to become a mother and raise her own child.

As Serena didn't get that space in the book, her relationship with children wasn't adequately described, as she doesn't have as much interest in children in the book as she did in the show. Serena appears to be a strong yet fragile woman trying to find solace in her husband, but she doesn't receive much of it when it comes to most aspects of parenthood and feels alone most of the time. She is trying to tame Offred's rebellion somehow, because Fred is influenced enough by her, Offred takes advantage of that and tries to manipulate him because Serena is more complex and knows where Offred's place is. Through Fred's feelings about Offred, Serena feels even more vulnerable and treats Offred as competition, not only because she can produce a child for them, but because of the attention she gets from her husband. Fred and Serena's relationship is complicated, inconsistent, and dependent on one another as they work through the harsh regulations of Gilead and the challenges of marriage. Their marriage serves as an example of a couple who, due to the paths they have each chosen, are under strain and dealing with issues associated with deception, authority, and control.

### **3.1.3. Moira**

Before Gilead rose to power, Moira was a close friend of June's. Her character represents friendship, courage, and resilience in the face of injustice. The relationship and support that Moira and June have for one another grows even more as they go through the harsh regime

together. In a society where people are estranged from their loved ones, they manage to survive the traps of politics by uniting and sharing a common humour. The television version gives Moira more history and character development, touching on her past before Gilead and her friendship with June. Moira is a significant character representing uprising and opposition against Gilead's rule. She actively looks for methods to oppose and overthrow the government rather than accepting the responsibilities and limitations that society has placed upon her. She will do all she can to survive, but not by submitting to the system, through all the obstacles and threats she faces, she has incredible strength and tenacity to fight for the rights of all women. Moira's persistent escapes from the Red Center demonstrate her dominance and drive. Following her capture which is depicted in the TV adaptation, Moira is compelled to serve as a prostitute for the males of the upper class. She's a woman who'd rather be a prostitute so she can distance herself from the role of a Handmaid. As a lesbian character, Moira's sexuality is explored under the harsh Gilead regime, where LGBTQ+ identities are suppressed and punished harshly.<sup>73</sup> Over time, Moira sees her utopia come to pass—first at the Red Center and then at Jezebel's, where she is made to labor.<sup>74</sup>

The novel doesn't focus much on Moira's interactions with children or motherhood in general. We can examine parenting from a different perspective since she doesn't have children and doesn't want any. Therefore, Moira offers a special perspective on which Atwood examines the subject of conception and parenthood. Moira is at odds with the entire basis of Gilead in this sense. Despite being fertile, she consciously refuses both her given job as a mother and her fertility. But underneath all of her activities and intentions is a desire to free future generations from Gilead's oppression and build a better future for them. The TV version delves deeper into Moira's connection with kids and parenthood overall. She establishes relationships with young girls in Gilead, acting as a guide and defender to encourage and uplift them. In comparison to the TV adaptation, in the book she succeeds to flee to Canada in spite of all the hardships, her example encourages other women to resist the tyranny and defend their individuality and rights. She inspires June and other Handmaids to maintain their independence and optimism, so they don't fall into the darkness of the Gilead. Although she is shattered in the novel and not so much of an activist, we can view

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<sup>73</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 126.

<sup>74</sup> Fiona Tolan, *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), chapter 6, Kindle.

the topic from a different angle in the series, where she is an activist attempting to avoid motherhood.

#### 3.1.4. Janine/Ofwarren

Despite her complicated and sensitive character, and the fact that her torture and trauma made her seem too weak for Gilead, Janine, also known as the Handmaid Ofwarren, has a strength that defies the dystopian society. Her character experiences tremendous growth in the series and becomes a representation of the difficulties associated with parenthood, fertility, and bravery in Gilead. Before Gilead, Janine had experienced a stressful period in her past as a victim of drug misuse, rape and abortion. Janine's character experiences more difficult moments, primarily associated with concerns about motherhood and fertility. Like all the mothers of Gilead, Janine lost her little daughter to the dictatorship from an earlier relationship. She thinks about her kid a lot and desires to be with her again. The TV adaption provides further insight into Janine's past and character growth. The core of Janine's character journey in the TV version is her battles with parenthood and pregnancy because many of her actions and decisions are motivated by her experiences as a mother and her desire to protect and reunite with her child. In the fourth episode of season 1, Janine experiences memories that show her pre-Gilead life and her challenges as a single mother. She remembers her life with her daughter in the past. Nevertheless, because of financial struggles, Janine is unable to give her daughter a stable and safe environment, and as a result, they are split apart.<sup>75</sup> Despite her challenges as a mother, Janine never gives up on the dream of meeting her child again. Viewers will be able to relate to and comprehend her better by learning more about her life before the regime.

The TV version features Janine as a single mother raising her son Caleb, in contrast to the book, which has Janine having a daughter. When Gilead took power, Janine was transported, along with other Handmaids, to the Red Center. She rebelled against the Aunts almost right away refusing to become a puppet, not staying quiet, and using inappropriate language and sarcasm led to the removal of her right eye which served as a punishment for remembering to obey the law. Because of her experiences in Gilead, Janine is rather sensitive and broken. Despite giving the impression of being a vulnerable woman, Janine displays her disobedience and hate for the government to the audience. She tries to make her voice heard

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<sup>75</sup> *The Handmaid's Tale*, series 1, episode 4, "Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum", Directed by Bruce Miller, aired May 3, 2017, on Hulu. (HBO, 2017), <https://play.hbomax.com/page/urn:hbo:page:GYT4Euwsme8NtwgEAAABI:type:series>.

and demonstrate her gender rights, because she doesn't agree with the expectations put on her for being a woman. Despite her mental state, Janine is pressured into attending the ceremony by Commander Warren Putnam and Naomi Putnam, to whom she is assigned. After giving birth, she names her daughter Charlotte, but the Putnams refer to her as Angela. She experiences a mental breakdown and runs away with the baby, fearful that she will lose her like she lost her child before, all because of her affair with the Commander, whom she thinks loves her. Because of her trauma, she is forced to take her own life along with her beloved Charlotte. Thanks to her friendship with June, little Charlotte is saved and Janine attempts to kill herself but is not successful. In the end, Janine is sent to the colonies to serve her sentence and perish for putting something as lovely as a new born in Gilead in jeopardy.

The bond between Janine and June is extremely valuable since June can relate to Janine and is a positive influence on her life. The audience watches a friendship that causes issues brought on by Gilead as June attempts to assist Janine get her feet back on the ground and get through her tough times. June isn't the only person she's bonded with, despite her disobedience and anger toward Gilead and Aunt Lydia, who oversaw the Handmaidens' training and Janine's punishments, they have forged a strange bond that involves both understanding and manipulation. Janine and the other Handmaids are subject to the power and direction of Aunt Lydia, who forces them to accept their positions in the repressive Gilead society. She manipulates them into obedience and devotion by employing psychological tricks and propaganda to make them believe that their enslavement is essential and justifiable for the greater good. Even though it puts her in danger, Janine doubts Aunt Lydia's authority and the validity of the regulations that are placed upon her. There are times when Janine and Aunt Lydia's relationship is emotionally complex despite their authority imbalance.

### 3.1.5. Aunt Lydia

The survival of Gilead depends on the collaboration of female authorities, specifically the Aunts.<sup>76</sup> Aunt Lydia's position denotes authority to maintain social order by enforcing strict methods that make the handmaids the most effective means of preventing infertility in the country. Like the other Aunts whose names were inspired by famous figures, Aunt Lydia's name is derived from the well-known North American consumerist Lydia Pinkerton.<sup>77</sup> The

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<sup>76</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 134.

<sup>77</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 114.

television version gives Aunt Lydia more backstory and character development, revealing more about her past and life experiences. Aunt Lydia expresses support for the ruthless regime's doctrine, which dehumanizes women and suppresses the true worth of every human being. Despite the psychological manipulation and punishment, she employs, she really feels that she is working for the betterment of the Handmaids and society at large. In the TV series, Aunt Lydia's persona is ambiguous and vulnerable despite her apparent displays of control and power—she has periods of regret and self-observation, which challenge the audience's conception of her as an entirely evil person. Her character largely explores her relationship to parenthood and fertility through the guidance she gives to handmaids. In Gilead society, she stresses the significance of childbearing and reproduction, viewing motherhood as a holy responsibility. The TV adaption delves deeper into Aunt Lydia's bond with motherhood—she has expertise working with children and was a social worker in the past. In contrast to the novel, where Lydia is portrayed as a severe follower of the dystopian society's regulations, the TV version highlights Lydia's compassion for the Handmaids and delves further into her bond with them. Despite her mistreatment and degrading behavior toward them, she saw it as a means of preparing her handmaidens for strength and empowerment in the future and of hoping for a better life for them.

### 3.1.6. Ofglen

In addition to Moira and Offred, Atwood portrays Ofglen, another powerful figure representing an active woman. The true identity and origins of Ofglen are kept a secret throughout the book and she is only ever referred to by her assigned name. Ofglen's character and personal growth were not given as much space in the novel as they were in the TV version. She is shown as woman without children and any additional character development in the novel. On the other hand, she plays a mother who acts as an activist, defending her rights, in the TV adaption. The TV adaptation includes an extra narrative of Ofglen's previous life as a mother and teacher. Because Ofglen is only appreciated for her ability to procreate, her experiences in Gilead's culture have an impact on her attitude about parenting. Ofglen's connection to motherhood is examined in more detail in the television series—she struggles with the emotional and psychological effects of her experiences in Gilead's harsh society and displays grief for the child whom she was made to give up. Ofglen is a strong and tenacious woman, but her resistance has a heavy cost in terms of risk and sacrifice. Ofglen frequently use the password “Mayday,” which refers to an underground resistance movement against Gilead's repressive government. It reveals her activist side and her

desperate desire for rescue.<sup>78</sup> Overall, despite a few differences between the television version and the novel, her persona is still an influential representation of resistance and bravery in the face of oppression.

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<sup>78</sup> Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 121.



## CONCLUSION

This thesis examined Margaret Atwood's life, focusing on her coming-of-age and literary career development, as well as the themes of motherhood and fertility found in her best-known book, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Margaret Atwood is a fierce woman who doesn't hesitate to stand out for her rights and the rights of others. She is an advocate for moral behavior, freedom of speech, and equal rights. She also loves the outdoors, as seen by a number of times she has written about it in her books. As a woman, she seeks to help other women. Her thoughts and support provide some understanding and comfort to women who are reluctant to seek help and speak up for themselves. This is the reason Atwood sets herself apart from other authors in her field of writing. She is attempting to raise awareness to the problems facing women especially in her book *The Handmaid's Tale*. Women are independent, strong, and unique, and they should be respected. In an article for The New York Times called 'What The Handmaid's Tale Means in the Age of Trump', she stated: "Because women are interesting and important in real life. They are not an afterthought of nature, they are not secondary players in human destiny, and every society has always known that."<sup>79</sup>

The *Handmaid's Tale* novel awakens us to the harsh reality that anything can happen in this world. It is a recognition of this fact. Who knows? Maybe there will be a dystopian Gilead after all, and women will be treated like second-class citizens with no rights at all, valued solely for their ability to procreate and reproduce. As previously noted, Atwood makes a concerted effort to study history extensively and uses it as a source for the concepts and insights she presents in the book. History is something that never goes away; it helps us become better people, learn from our mistakes, and be thankful for what we have.

Fertility and parenting are sensitive topics particularly for women. While it can be beautiful it can come with challenging obstacles and challenges. Since every woman is unique, Atwood also attempted to convey this to the female characters in Gilead. The main motifs that support the narrative of *The Handmaid's Tale* are motherhood and fertility. Since a woman's fertility is the only characteristic that distinguishes her in Gilead's world,

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<sup>79</sup> Margaret Atwood, "Margaret Atwood On What 'The Handmaid's Tale' Means in The Age of Trump," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2017, <https://www.spps.org/cms/lib/MN01910242/Centricity/Domain/842/Margaret%20Atwood%20The%20New%20York%20Times.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1XzZI7Ti46TWcKAZps6eQGkUJII6B77YNHZSCIAyywixFPQzkDbkplFV4>

this bachelor thesis tries to focus on the female characters. In Gilead, the state is empowered to take any action necessary to maintain population growth, including abusing people physically or psychologically and leaving dead bodies behind. The pressure placed on fertile women to keep having children for other people keeps them from ever becoming moms. They cannot raise their own children and never become moms because parenthood is not for immoral women like the Handmaids. The themes of conception and motherhood combined with separation highlight the regime's harshness and the dehumanization of women. Atwood aimed to draw attention to powerful women and the ways in which their feminine forms are misrepresented. These women exhibit their toughness and fight by refusing to be reduced to simple reproductive organs. The concepts of strength and the genuine worth of women in society are demonstrated by these attributes in women.

Ultimately, the book employs techniques to raise doubts about assumptions concerning male dominance and to reflect both history and current events in an effort to get readers to think more deeply on contemporary patriarchal ideology.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 91.

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