

Simulated Spaces of Power: The Discourse of the Gendered Space in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and *The Testaments* (2019)

فضاءات محاكاة للقوة: خطاب الفضاء الجندي في رواية "حكاية الخادمة" (1985) و"الوصايا" (2019) لأتوود

Touhami Ibtissam ^{1*}

¹University Center Aflou , Algeria
a.chadli@cu-aflou.edu.dz

²Chadli amar, SeltDjihad Afaf
University Amar TelidjiLaghout, Algeria

Received 20-07-2025 Accepted 12-08-2025 Published. 16-09-2025

Abstract:

The characteristic of legibility of space is diligently tangled with Westphal's concept of Imagology. This research is theoretically framed by Baudrillard's views on the simulacrum in Atwood's Dystopian fiction. The Gileadean space is characterized by theocracy, and patriarchy, in which females are subdued and regarded as inferiors. The analysis of this simulacrum, requires a metonymic connection between the Gileadean space on one hand, and the Lefebvrian and Foucauldian views on space production and power on the other, in order to shed light on the male dominant ideology involved in the production of the space.

key words: Space; Discourse; Power ;Simulacra;Imagology ; Legibility.

ملخص:

تشابك سمة وضوح المكان بشكل وثيق مع مفهوم ويستفال لعلم الصور. يُؤطر هذا البحث نظرياً من خلال آراء بودريار حول المحاكاة في أدب أتوود الديستوبي. يتسم الفضاء الجليدي بالثيوقراطية والأبوية، حيث تُقهر النساء ويُنظر إليهن كأقل شأناً. يتطلب تحليل هذا المحاكاة ربطاً مجازياً بين الفضاء الجليدي من جهة، ووجهات نظر ليفبيري وفوكو حول إنتاج المكان والسلطة من جهة أخرى، وذلك لتسليط الضوء على أيديولوجية الهيمنة الذكورية المتورطة في إنتاجه. الكلمات المفتاحية: الفضاء؛ الخطاب؛ السلطة؛ المحاكاة؛ علم الصور؛ الوضوح.

1.Introduction:

Symbols are signs that share some resemblance with the objects, such as maps, photographs, or architecture relates to the object through shared causal connection

either actual, or imagined. That is to say that symbols are holders of a surplus of meaning that goes beyond the linguistic sign. Similarly, in discourse analysis the representation of space and is regularly produced 'aspects of the physical environment such as the urban design and the architectural design of buildings are also at issue' (Fairclough 151). Henceforth, space is an element of discourse and it is subject to interpretation. This is specifically applicable to the discourse of power, considering that space is the material environment that regulates power relations and could define the participants' roles. The literary text offers a plethora of fictional societies, which is exemplified with the concept of Simulacrum of Baudrillard. The dystopian novel contains fictional spaces where the referent is far from the actual referent. In the Gileadian fictional society of Atwood, space is both functionalized and hierarchized for the purpose of an institutional order.

The analysis of space in a literary text through Imagology puts space into the center of the debate and transforms it into a symbolic construction to be interpreted as a mediator of the discourse of power. It calls for the analysis of this simulacrum to examine how the metaphoric representation of space in the Gileadian society is a Gendered space that serves as a mediator of male dominance discourse. In the following paper we attempt first to present the theoretical frame related to space as a mediator of the discourse of power in the dystopian literary text. Next we apply this geocritical analysis on the corpus selected to illustrate the feature of legibility and establish the space in the Gileadian fictional society as a discourse of power.

1. THE LEGIBILITY OF THE DISCOURSE OF SPACE

Bertrand Westphal (2011) argues that the hierarchical vision of "space falls prey to time" has been revolutionized by Einstein's Spatio-Temporality, and Poincaré's bifurcation. In *The Post Modern Explained* Lyotard reflects the view of the grand narratives whether per the Hegelian dialectic, or the Darwinian evolution or the Nietzschean cyclical, is not applicable in the Post modern, and it is supplanted by plural and fragmented small narratives that are Spatio-temporal bound thus synchrony seems to take away the focus from diachrony" (Qtd in Westphal p14). Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* challenges the linear time bound progression with the concept of polyphony. Which highlights the shift from linear logic to a multi linear logic and each relegated to Space-Time, and he further illustrated this idea with his concept of Chronotope to illustrate the interconnection of time and space within a literary work. Michel Foucault went even further to claim the supremacy of Space over time as he stated "our epoch above all is the epoch of space".

In *Time and the Narrative* Ricoeur asserts that the literary discursivity creates a meta-discourse, the representation of space within a literary text involves mental images of things composing the world, that is to say that the literary discourse analysis is performed beyond the linguistic level and involves images and the fictional representations. Which is further highlighted by Westphal's concept of Imagology that transforms the author into the architect of the fictional city. These fictional representations of space of examine how the author apprehends an environment that is unfamiliar, imbued with cultural issues, class distinction and even hegemonic. (Touhami 2019)

Henry Lefebvre (1974) reflects on the ideological dimension of space, he argues that space is far from being neutral, and is considered as political entity. His concept of 'spatial code', emphasizes that space is in essence a social production therefore a reflection of the ideology of the group. the social practices attributed to these spaces highlights the paradigms surrounding these spaces. The space produced serves as a tool of thought and of actions; that in addition to being means of production, it is also a mean of control, and hence of domination of power' (Lefebvre 26). Therefore, the characteristic of legibility of space is diligently tangled with the literary texts.

Literature is a prolific source of spaces both real and fictional. The spaces produced are ranging between the acquainted and the surreal, such as the Dystopian spaces. The later are often unfamiliar futuristic settings, and sometimes even chaotic, reflecting what John Baudrillard termed as 'Simulacrum'. He argues that "the deconstruction of the traditional concept of urban space or place leads to a highly problematic relationship between what is termed reality and the discursive. It establishes space fundamental status as a simulacrum" thus reality is displaced by a 'derealizing hyperreality'. In Margaret Atwood's work the production of space is a 'derealizing hyperreality' that reflects a dominant ideology. The analysis the fictional representation, requires a metonymic connection between the imagined space of Gilead as an intermediary representation of the male dominant ideology. Atwood's fictional spaces is a projection of the Schemata of a whole fictional society and serves as mediators of power, which becomes the object of the following analysis.

2. THE READABILITY AND DECODING OF THE SPACE AS A DISCOURSE

In Geocriticism, Bertrand Westphal (2011) notes that the hierarchical vision of "space falls prey to time" has been revolutionized by Einstein Satio-Temporality , and Poincare bifurcation. In *The Post Modern Explained* Lyotard reflects the view of the grand narratives whether per the Hegelian dialectic, or the Darwinian evolution or the Nietzschean cyclical, is not applicable in the Post modern, and it is supplanted by plural and fragmented small narrative that are Spatio-temporal bound thus synchrony seems to take away the focus from diachrony" (Qtd in Westphal p14). Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* challenges the linear time bound progression with the concept of polyphony. Which highlights the shift from linear logic to a multi linear logic and each relegated to Space-Time, and he further illustrated this idea with his concept of Chrono-

tope to illustrate the interconnection of time and space within a literary work. Michel Foucault went even further to claim the supremacy of Space over time as he stated “our epoch above all is the epoch of space”.

In *Time and the Narrative* Ricoeur asserts that the literary discursivity creates a meta-discourse, the representation of space within a literary text involves mental ages of things composing the world, that is to say that the literary discourse analysis is performed beyond the linguistic level and involves images and the fictional representations. Which is further highlighted by Westphal's concept of Imagology that transforms the author into the architect of the fictional city. These fictional representations of space examine how the author apprehends an environment that is unfamiliar, imbued with cultural issues, class distinction and even hegemonic. (Touhami 2019)

Henry Lefebvre (1974) reflects on the ideological dimension of space, he argues that space is far from being neutral, and is considered as a political entity. His concept of 'spatial code', emphasizes that space is in essence a social production therefore a reflection of the ideology of groupness illustrated in the binary opposition of US versus THEM. The social practices attributed to a given space highlight its ruling paradigms. The designed spaces become also a means of control, and domination (Lefebvre 26).

Literature is a prolific source of spaces both real and fictional. Subsequently, the characteristic of legibility of space is diligently tangled with the literary texts. The spaces produced are ranging between the acquainted and the surreal, such as the Dystopian spaces. The latter are often unfamiliar futuristic settings, and sometimes even chaotic, reflecting what John Baudrillard termed as 'Simulacrum'. He argues that “the deconstruction of the traditional concept of urban space or place leads to a highly problematic relationship between what is termed reality and the discursive. It establishes space's fundamental status as a simulacrum” thus reality is displaced by a 'derealizing hyperreality'. In Margaret Atwood's work the production of space is a 'derealizing hyperreality' that reflects a dominant ideology. The analysis of the fictional representation, requires a metonymic connection between the imagined space of Gilead as an intermediary representation of the male dominant ideology. Atwood's fictional spaces are a projection of the Schemata of a whole fictional society and serve as mediators of power, which becomes the object of the following analysis.

3. MARGARET ATWOOD DYSTOPIAN SOCIETY

Margaret Atwood is one of the highly acclaimed novelists of the contemporary era. She is famous of her strong feminist leaning against the unjust patriarchal views that place males in a superior position than females. Margaret Atwood's works are regarded as fiction of protest. Standing in the same line with many feminist writers, Atwood is basically concerned with bringing to the fore women's sufferings with inferiority and oppression in the Western society. She wrote more than one novel dealing with this theme among which we mention: *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Lady Oracle* (1976) and *Bodily Harm* (1981).

Nevertheless her novels *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and its sequel *The Testaments* (2019) are the ones that explicitly and boldly stand against the modern and postmodern capitalist western societies wherein women are still struggling to achieve an equal status with men. Her Novels are regarded as speculative fiction that holds prospective predictions about the post-apocalyptic world that is ecologically endangered by uncontrollable side effects of scientific progress that result in sterility. Both of the novels fall into the dystopian genre since they do not only discuss feminist issues but they also frame Atwood's feminist stances with politics and religious fundamentalism. The works share Gilead as a common spatial setting for the plotline of the story.

In fact, the state of Gilead represents a simulated space of oppression and subjugation for women as it diminishes their values and confines their roles to merely concubines that are used as child-bearers. The theocratic regime of Gilead imposes its rules by force on its people. It consists a patriarchal space which is founded on monolithic religious system that distorts people's liberties. Through a geocritical approach, we aim to investigate the space of Gilead as a gendered one relying on Lefebvrian as well as Foucauldian views to examine the process through which it is produced. We also aspire to arrive at a synthesis that suggests the Gileadean space as a hyper-real one depending on Baudrillard's Simulation and simulacra.

4. CONCEPTUALIZING THE SPACE OF GILEAD AS A GENDERDOMINATED :

The fictional Republic of Gilead serves as the setting for both Novels selected. The author designed a totalitarian and theocratic state that has replaced the United States of America. Similarly to the Orwellian London In 1984, this space is under constant surveillance by the Eyes, Gilead's secret police force.

In this fictional society patriarchy and misogyny are taken to the extreme. The architects of the new world began their rise to power in an age of extreme objectification of women through the sex industry. The chemical pollution caused the declining fertility rates. In this fictional space freedom society Women's freedom is restricted; they have no privacy allowed. Their basic rights to hold property or jobs are abolished. And due to low reproduction rates, even their right to control their bodies is denied since women are assigned the status of Handmaids, whose task is to bear children for elite couples, thus restricting women to the status of surrogate womb only.

The main character, a handmaid named Offred narrates the story in flashbacks, from which the reader reconstruct the events in the old world prior to the Gilead. The story begins with the first sequel *The Handmaid's Tale* recounting the story of the works' protagonists Offred and the radical changes that her life went through after she is captured by the newly established oppressive government to become a handmaid , and forced to become a child-bearer. Meanwhile, the second sequel entitled *The Testaments* narrates the journey of the three separately fated characters: Aunt Lydia, Agnes and Nicole. The story is told from their perspectives through which the reader comes to terms with knowing how the Gileadean state is eventually overthrown. By considering both novels as dystopian literature, it becomes legitimate to claim that they together fall into the genre because of their inclusion of important dystopian traits including the setting. This fictional society, with its practices, and social stratifications becomes what Baudrillard termed as a simulacrum of the dominant ideology (2001)

Within this fictional space there are insitutions designed to maintain and spread the dominant ideology. Such as the special institution of The Red Center, designed as a Re-education Center serving to indoctrinated women into the Gilead's ideology in preparation for becoming Handmaids, which is a perfect illustration of the architecture of dominance and the abusive power practices related to spatial settings. In the Red center the 'the Aunts' supervised the women, and worked on the mind programing arguing that The Handmaid's submissive positions in this new social order ultimately offers a safer environment than the old, pre-Gilead society.

Dystopian Fictional societies are characterized by being a locus for dictatorship, tyranny and religious theocracy, where people's freedoms and liberties are distorted and delimited through surveillance. This applicable to the Republic of Gilead, except that woman, in this state, are the only ones who are strictly deprived from their

simplest rights including the right to express their opinions, to earn money, achieve economic independence or even the right to walk alone. The name that Atwood has given to the state is not chosen haphazardly. She aimed to choose a religious name that stands for hill of testimony, (Genesis 31:21), a mountainous region that is located east of Jordan. From its mountainous character it is called "the mount of Gilead" (Genesis 31:25) (Easton's Bible Dictionary). In the novels, the appellation was suggested after series of ecological problems such as the accidents caused by atomic power plants and the spread of syphilis that killed large numbers of people and caused the rest to be infertile. This has pushed a group of Christian fanatics to exterminate the government and declare the end of USA in favor of what they have named Gilead. The founders of Gilead were male commanders who tried to seek a solution for their inability to have children via capturing the only remaining fertile females and using them as sex slaves to bare children.

In fact, the space of Gilead can be seen as a gendered space wherein females are subjugated and relegated to the fringes. The legislations of the Gileadean government delimit women's freedoms and coerce them to total obedience. The social stratification of Gilead places men as superiors and women as inferiors. Generally, women are categorized as Marthas, Wives and finally Handmaids who are the least valued. In fact, the handmaids are strictly bounded by certain protocols; they are not allowed to read, ask questions or even wear makeup and take care of their physical appearance. In a passage page 17 in the Handmaid tale the main character Offred creates a disassociation between her outer and the inner experience, in the passage she describes the moisturizing of her skin with butter in the prohibition of body lotion and shift to explain the banality of the action since she is only a container and highlights that it is an imposed rules by the wives: "This was a decree of the Wives, this absence of hand lotion. They don't want us to look attractive. For them, things are bad enough as it is." (Atwood, P.17)

They are defined as mere sex objects and "containers" for babies, denied from the right to perform their femininity. They are even mistreated by other women from higher ranks. The space of Gilead is gendered in favor of men by the commanders with the help of Aunts who set the rules for the newly established theocratic state. They force the handmaids to conform to the Gileadean doctrines via displaying movies that explains their reality. Substantially,

the space of Gilead is being gendered because of the misogynist regime that regulates spaces ensuring a masculine supremacy. In this esteem, Martina Low suggests that the genderization of spaces is effected by the cult of the physical beauty standards

This finds expression both in the predominance of the visual and the implicit masculinization that denotes a hierarchically genderizing gaze as Low notes in *The Social Construction of Space and Gender* (2016) "The genderization of perception (including the culture of the gaze) leads, in the sense of a somatization of social order, to a choice of place and a placing practice that reproduces structural principles of society (including gender). In other words, gender may be seen as inscribed, via body practices, in the production of spaces. (Low, p129).

In the corpus selected the concept of power is tightly linked to gender. The Gilead mimics patriarchal societies manipulation to ensure a superior position for men. As a feminist and political theorist, Carole Pateman indicates that differences between masculinity and femininity constructed with the patriarchal scope equals the differences between freedom and subjugation (Pateman, P.207). The political structure of Gileadean government is based on subduing women and enslaving them. The limitations imposed on females in the Gileadean space go beyond restricting their bodies. They fetter their thinking and constrain their minds via preventing them from reading or cultivating themselves; they are not even allowed to read the Bible. In a passage page 37, Baby Nicole asks her adoptive mother Melanie: about the atrocities of the Gilead society where cows had more rights than the handmaids, and she goes on questioning the silence on such atrocities signaling a change in the future "Why don't you tell them they're evil?" "There's no point arguing with them," said Melanie. "They're fanatics." (p.37)

In the Gileadean space, Women are degraded and denied their identities. Handmaids were given names that suggest that they belong to their commanders. The name Offred for example indicates "of Fred" whereas the name Ofglen refers to "of Glen". This method in naming the Handmaids represents only one side of plenty that serve to exert masculine dominance on females. Henceforth, the Gileadean space is gendered space that transmits a male domination ideology infused through the spatial arrangements.

Men are endowed with power that they derive from manipulated religious, political as well as social traditions and doctrines. The dress code enforced, the limitations imposed because of their biological traits and roles, and the strict protocols they are compelled to follow relegate them to marginal space. This emphasizes the Gilead as a

space of antipodes where the dichotomies of superior/inferior personified in Male/female can exist at once within the same spatial locus.

5. A FOUCAULDIAN READING OF GENDER POWER IN THE STATE OF GILEAD

The interconnectedness of space and power is highlighted by the urban planner and cultural geographer Henry Lefebvre. In *On the discourse of Space* (1974) he reflects on the ideological dimension involved in the production of space, and signals the paradigms bordering the spaces of control, and power (Lefebvre 26). Likewise, Michel Foucault avers that space is produced with regard to the power relations that this latter entails. In *The birth of a prison* He refers to the panoptic architecture as a 'cruel, ingenious cage' (Foucault, 1977). This particular use of space could have several purposes, as it could serve to reform convicts, to restrain the insane; treat patients, to oversee workers and even to educate school children. It perfectly illustrates the production of a space of dominance.

Foucault (1977) further argues that the power relations are also personified in the design of the of buildings, memorials, as well as the sidelined spaces or the secretive space of resistance. This is very apparent in the fictional spaces of the dystopian societies in literature. The individuality and uniqueness are contained in a hegemonic system designed as a space of segregation, isolation, and rehabilitation.

What Lefebvre termed as the conscious production of space indicates the planification of the social interaction desired through the creation of a specific space. Henceforth any built space will be attributed a specific set of not only social practices but also defines the power relations within a society. Which attributes to the production of space the status of a spatial code that is tangled with discursive modalities of the discourse of power.

The space of surveillance mimicking the panoptical architecture (Foucault, 1977), the social and gendered polarization established through geographical boundaries. The practices of behavioral conditioning and the indoctrination of the maids to endorse their roles unquestionably in the Red Center, are all perfect illustration of intermediary representation of the male dominant ideology of power abuse. (Touhami, 2023)

The hierarchal order of society imposed by the commanders is clearly manifested through the buildings and places in Gilead. The commanders stay at the top

followed by the stratum of the guards or the Eyes who watch everything, then comes the aunts who are the trainers of the captured fertile women to become Handmaids. Afterwards, there are the Handmaids and the remaining categories are classified on the basis of color, race and religion. Alluding to the panopticon, the guards who are assigned with watching the state's population, especially the Handmaids are called the Eyes, Ironically the term panopticon is originated from a Greek word meaning "all-seeing eye".

In fact, the architecture of Gilead is designed in a way that keeps people surveilled, making Gilead a big prison. Surveillance is of an intrinsic significance as far as the dystopian setting is concerned. The concept was linked to the notion of "the panopticon" a term pioneered by the political philosopher Jeremy Bentham to describe the status of being watched. Bentham inspired the idea from his brother's workshop who was designed in a circular shape with his brother's office at the center; a spot that allows him to watch all of his workers who were situated around him. (Bentham, 1787, p.20). Analogously, In Gilead the way buildings are built and towers are located sustains Bentham's panopticon. All the state is surrounded by walls with armed guards around. To keep everything well surveilled, the Gileadean government ensures the separation and isolations of the society's members through establishing barriers. (Touhami,2023)

The architectural structure of Gilead serves power exertion over people. The idea of designing prison-like rooms for the Handmaids aims at delimiting their freedom in order to force them to fully submit to the commanders' orders and ideologies. In this esteem, Foucault describes the panopticon style of prison as the appropriate way of punishment by keeping inmates in their prison cells and letting them know that that are being watched.

In this regard Foucault asseverates that "The entire penal institution [...] culminates in the cell, on the walls of which are written in black letters: 'God sees you'" (p.294). This is actually reflected in The Handmaid's Tale when Offred speaks of her isolation in her room without anything to read except the word printed on her pillow: "I can spend minutes, tens of minutes, running my eyes on the print: faith. It's the only thing they've given me to read" (Atwood, p.67).

6. A FOUCAULDIAN READING OF POWER KNOWLEDGE IN THE STATE OF GILEAD

The social practices in Red Center enable to sustain males dominance over females through the concurrent instruction of systems of thoughts. Designed as a space of surveillance where the maid are under constat scrutiny. This use of space is labeled as a 'cruel, ingenious cage' (Foucault, 1977, 199). The constant scrutiny results in a behavioral control that prevents any kind of deviance, or transgression to the imposed norms thus amplifying power through broth mind and body control. This design exemplifies the discourse of power through the conscious production of Space. And the recontextualization of the practices within these fictional spaces positions this built space as the discursive mode of discourse of control.(Touhami 2019)

Power is also imposed through knowledge. Foucault believes that knowledge and power are inseparable notions. Power can also be exerted through the absence of knowledge. A good example of this in the novels is hiding the Bible and preventing people from reading it and owning one even though it is the source of Gilead's legislations. In *The Handmaid's Tale* Offred describes the lunch time Beatitudes played from a tape with a man's dictating what to be blessed and grateful offred states "I knew they made that up, I knew it was wrong, and they left things out, too, but there was no way of checking. Blessed be those that mourn, for they shall be comforted." (Atwood, p.45)

The quote above indicates that the novel's protagonist is aware that what they are forcing them to hear every day is not true. Albeit she has no chance to check whether it is true or false, she knows that the whole institution of the Gileadean regime is fake and the texts they extract from the Bible are falsified. Henceforth, it can be summed up that The Gileadean state that is founded on a religious fundamentalism and fanaticism is the embodiment of extremist patriarchal authority whose main concern is to subdue women and dehumanize them.

7. THE GENDERED SPACE IN THE GILEAD AS A SIMULACRA:

Amid the post-modern times' blurring lines between reality and fantasy, original versions and copies, truths and falsehoods stands Jean Baudrillard's notion of simulation and simulacra. The word simulacrum is originally coined by Plato, stemming from the Greek word "simulare" which means to make like. According to Baudrillard, the simulacrum refers to the copies that portray things that either do not have originals or their originals do not exist anymore. It looks into the shift of the value that exists between objects and signs into the signs that lack referential value. The simulacrum stands for the things that replace reality by its representation. In this regard Baudrillard notes:

Simulacra are no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper-real. It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real. (P, 1-2)

Baudrillard states that the current world lacks full access to reality leaving space for simulations to take over. This results in the creation of a simulated copy that ceases to have an original. This latter is labeled as hyper-reality which marks the split between the real and the representation. In this disjoint state it is no longer possible to distinguish the image as a reflection of the thing; instead it becomes a symbolic reflection of the cultural construct, as opposed to the real world. Henceforth, simulation is not created out of the real, but rather it becomes the real that does not copy or stalk from any other source or origin.

The simulation eradicates the actual real in favor of its representation resulting in the creation of the hyper-reality that erases the blurring stripes between real, false and imaginary. (Baudrillard, p.81). He describes the post-modern era as being characterized by a media-laden condition wherein people lost the sense of "reality". People become connected more and more with simulated versions of reality and detached from their real lives. They relate more to things such as TV shows, virtual video games, and social media. Similarly, in the *Handmaid Tale* and later *The Testaments* the State of Gilead reality is lost in favor of its copy. As earlier mentioned, the appellation of Gilead holds a biblical reference, a simulated space whose original copy was lost in time and does not exist anymore.

The space of Gilead is a simulated one that Margaret Atwood uses for her "speculative fiction" in order to represent the harsh reality of the current world. Accordingly, the space of Gilead, that has realistic dimensions in the Christian belief, breaks its ties with reality by the recreation of a space that contradicts its actual meaning. Through both of the novels, Atwood depicts a fake simulated space as representative of the biblical Gilead. This latter contradicts the one that Atwood depicts. Atwoodian Gilead is neither a place of refuge nor a safe haven, unlike its biblical counterpart.

The Gilead of the Bible was famous for the balm from its trees but in the republic of Gilead, contrary to the hymn, "There is a Balm in it" sung at group weddings called in the thanksgiving day; there is no remedy, instead, "There is a Bomb in Gilead" (Atwood, P.115) says Moira. Offred is also aware that the version of the Bible that the Gileadean government uses is a fake one, just a copy of the real that is falsified in order to serve its authoritative purposes, Offred says: "The Bible is kept locked up, the way people once kept tea locked up, so the servants wouldn't steal

it. It is an incendiary device: who knows what we'd make of it, if we ever got our hands on it? We can be read to from it, by him, but we cannot read" (Atwood 43). Throughout the novel, Offred is aware of the different kinds of Gileadean state's manipulations even though they were well concealed. The government utilizes media as medium to create a simulated reality, a fake one through reporting news and allowing the Handmaids to attend them. Offred states that she is allowed to watch the news who knows if any of it is true? It could be old clips, it could be faked. But I watch it anyway, hoping to be able to read beneath it. Any news, now, is better than none. (Atwood, p.41)

She is able to recognize that the footage displayed to them is fake. She does not believe what is shown to them; she rather looks for signs or clues that would confirm her doubts about the hypocrisy of the government. Media, in this case, is used as a means of control along with other tools including: knowledge, language as well as surveillance. For Baudrillard media is not a means of communication but rather a means of representation. A tool that tends to cut the thin line between what is real/original and what is fake/copy. Indeed, In *The Handmaid tale* and *The Testaments*, media plays an intrinsic role in detaching the characters from reality. It functions as a distorter of reality because it misinforms the truth.

According to Baudrillard, media destroys the distinction between what is real and what is not causing people to be stuck in hyper-reality. A good example of this is the Disney Land which represents an illusion of reality is created in order to delight people's imagination through the creation of a manmade copy. In this respect, Baudrillard claims that the imaginery of Disneyland is neither true nor false it is rather a mechanism that rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. It is constructed as a childhood world, to make believe that the adulthood is somewhere else, in the "real" world, (P.175)

Similarly this illusion is created through different landmarks in Gilead. Perhaps the most important one is Cambridge that is located between Massachusetts and Boston. It is shown as the center of Gilead's regime's power. It alludes also to the early years in *The New World* where religion was strictly practiced and imposed by the Puritans, the Pilgrim Fathers of America. Furthermore, the Gileadean government has used the building of Harvard University as a detention center and a watchtower wherein the Eyes (Gilead's secret police) are the controllers. These simulations are obviously copies of reality that is faked and distorted making the whole space of Gilead as fake one that stands upon misogynist practices held against women in favor of males. Through ensuring a gradual withdrawal from reality, through simulations

and simulacra, the Gileadean government could abduct women through demeaning their value by turning them into mere sex objects and child bearers.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper investigated the interrelationship between space, gender and power in the novels of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments*. We explored the connectedness between First the Foucauldian Space of Power and second the Baudrillardian notion of simulation. The Corpuses selected are considered as speculative works of protest against women's subjugation and objectification. The author creates a fictional built on the patriarchal oppression of women as an attempt to utter the female's unspoken sufferings under the control of monolithic governments.

The fictional space of Gilead that is designed according to a Panopticon architecture held upon surveillance in order to restrict people's freedoms especially women's which Foucault delineates as a big prison. The Gileadean government imposes its power over its citizens using simulated images and texts spread through media. Substantially, this latter holds complex ideologies and presents them to people through covers of magazines, commercials and entertainment such as movies and TV shows in order to brainwash people. The aim of the present research was to clarify the ways in which the dystopian space of Gilead is a gendered one, created as a simulation of a real space that exists only in the text of the Bible. By unveiling the differences between Gilead that is mentioned in the Bible and the one that Atwood borrows as wetting for the plot of both novels, we conclude that the Gileadean space is a simulated one that Atwood constructs in order to divulge the hypocrisy of theocratic governments and misogynist cultures that victimize women and degrade them to mere sex objects meant for procreation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "Literature and discourse analysis", . (Volume 42, Supplement 1, 2010,). *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia, International Journal of Linguistics*, pp.147-157.
- Atwood, M. (2019). *The Testament* . NewYork: Doubleday.
- Atwood, M. (1998). *The Handmaid's Tale*. New York: Anchor Books .
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination*. The University Press of Texas.
- Bakhtin, M. (2004). Discourse In The Novel. In J. Rivkin, & M. Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (pp. 205-216). Blackwell Publishing.
- Baudrillard, J. (2001). *Jean Baudrillard selected Writings*. USA: StanfordUniversity Press.

- Bentham, J. (1791). *Panopticon otthe inspection House*. Dublin : Thomas Byrne Print .
- Bernstein, G. (1985). The Architecture of Repression: The Built Environment of George Orwell's 1984. *Journal of Architectural Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10464883.1985.10758358>
- Booker, K. M. (1994). *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Eaghton, T. (n.d.). *Marxism and Literary Criticism*.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Textual Analysis for social research*. London and Newyork: Routledge.
- Ferris, H. (2008). Are We There Yet? A Study in Dystopian Fiction. *Journal of Research across the Disciplines*, 1, 2-31. Retrieved from http://www.ju.edu/jrad/documents/ferris-dystopia_fiction_final.pdf
- Flyvbjerg, B. & Richardson, T. (2002). Planning and Foucault: In Search of the Dark Side of Planning Theory. In *Planning futures: New Directions for Planning Theory Publisher* (pp. 44-62). Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1986). Of Other Spaces. *Cultural Landscape Bibliography*, 22-27.
- Foucault, M. (2014). Panopticism. In *The People Place and Space Reader* (pp. 327-329). New York: Routledge.
- Garlick, S. (2016). *The Nature of Masculinity: Critical Theory, New Materialisms, and Technologies of Embodiement*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (2001). *The Production of Space*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Low, M. (2016). The Social Construction of Space and Gender. *European Journal of Women Studies*, Sage Publications.
- Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. Cambridge.
- Massey, D. (2009). Concepts of Space and Power in Theory and Political Practice. *The Open University. Faculty of Social Sciences*, 15-26. Retrieved from <https://ddd.uab.cat/pub/dag/02121573n55/02121573n55p15.pdf>
- Pateman, C. (1988). *The Sexual Contract* . Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Plattel, M. G. (1972). *Utopian and Critical Thinking. (Duquesne Studies.Philosophical Series)*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Stuart, E. (2004). *Understanding Henri Lefevre*. London: Continuum.
- Touhami, I. (2019, septembre). Texturing the Literary Text to Enhance the Learners' Critical Analysis of Space as a Discursive Mode of Discourse: The Case of 3 rd Year LMD Students at the University of Laghouat. Ouargla, Algeria: University of Kasedi Merbah.
- Touhami, I. (2023, January 1). The Discourse of the Dystopic Architecture: A Theoretical Framework for the Analysis of Space As discourse in The Dystopian Fiction. *Rufuf Journal*, p. 6521/6511.
- Tuan, Y.-F. (1977). *Space and Place*. Minneapolis: University of Minesota Press.
- Vandjik, T. V. (2008). *Discourse and Power*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Walsh, C. (1962). *From Utopia to Nightmare*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Westphal, B. (2011). *Geocriticism:Real and Fictional Spaces*. New York: Palgrave & Macmillan.