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Received 2024-01-23

Accepted 2024/11/15

Printed ISSN: 2352-989X
Online ISSN: 2602-6856

Power Relations Infecting-Identity Crisis in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

Rania Chounaa*

Brahim Aribi²

¹ Ali Lounici Blida 2 University (Algeria), er.chounaa@univ-blida2.dz

² Amar Telidji University of Laghouat (Algeria), b.aribi@lagh-univ.dz

Research Laboratory: Linguistique et Sociodidactique du Plurilinguisme

ABSTRACT

For a long distinguished period of time, identity has been the concern of human beings. Following this fashion, the concept is shaped and constructed according to the individual, his or her environment and its prevailing ideology and jurisdiction. Precisely, female identity, has witnessed shaking moments due to numerous impetuses among the concerns the consideration of woman as inferior to man. Hence, it has been a tendency that females came to be defined from the males' perspective. Within this context, violence and sexual slavery, to mention but few, have constituted most of the aspects of oppression which was effectuated against woman resulting in the surfacing of a female identity crisis. In light of this contemplation, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, seems to provide a realistic demonstration of such identity crisis set in New England. Following the swirling core of information, the woman of Gilead is transformed into a pregnancy machine to rescue the growth of population due to the decline of fertility. As soon as a new regime dominates the sphere, the conversion of woman to a "thing" void of rights ranging from losing their proper names to the limitation of language use is put into motion and ushering, therefore, in the vanishing of the life of an independent woman. The totalitarian regime that advocates power to spread in a hierarchical structure leads not solely to men's dominance but also women's preeminence over other women. At this level, misogyny found its way to serve the master's power, the Commander, Fred Waterford. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to inspect identity crisis of the female protagonist, Offred, considering Michel Foucault's theory of power relation as an impulse that constructs an identity crisis personified in resistance. The use of a descriptive and an analytical approach can finalize the point with the fact that Offred around all the varied power was exposed to identity damage leading her to embark on a resistance of her own way.

Keywords: *The Handmaid's Tale*; Power Relations; Michel Foucault; Resistance; Identity Crisis.

*Rania Chounaa

1. INTRODUCTION

In the *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood positions the protagonist Offred within a male dominated sphere that has undertaken the despotic totalitarian and theocratic government for the purpose of embedding intended laws via utilizing the arguments of religion. In this milieu, the latter laws prove to be overbearing exhibiting power in varied forms by diverse persons. At first, the regime of Gilead's institution formed victims (Offred is one of them) by means of sovereignty and surveillance. In order to accomplish this, the system used the so-called "the Eyes" in which every movement is viewed, that is, each step entailing rebellion can lead to embark on chastisement and impalement of any individual crossing the boundaries and defeating the institution supremacy. Second, men status in this society is glorified and in any case, they are never to be referred to as infertile; it is women who are responsible for that. In this sense, patriarchy is manifested in the state of Gilead; that is to say, the main character is to assent the devaluating process imposed on her by being submissive due to the violence and oppression prevailing the entourage so that she can be blessed by her Commander, his Wife, the Aunts and the doctor she encountered in the regular visits she had as a Handmaid. All told in order to determine the power guises at every level of Gilead society.

The narrative of Atwood demonstrates the situation of females in an authoritative totalitarian government ruled by the will and wishes of men, the mission of women in this case is to provide the high ranking class husband and wife with a baby since a fertility crisis heat the country. Women are expected to obey whatever power they receive from both men and women as if it is their destiny; they have no other option yet only to embrace the fact. Therefore, their identity is shackled and influenced among them Offred as the scope of this study. Foucauldian power relation concept is employed to demonstrate how power works inside relations, particularly relations that are under the control of disciplinary power. Tremendous works have shed light on power relation in the chosen novel of this study yet this enquiry is distinguished by the analytical path that demonstrates disciplinary power in power relation of the protagonist, Offred, and how the latter with all its impulses could lead to her identity crisis.

The inquiry of this study is concerned with how Offred's identity is shaped under the umbrella of power. Also, this research seeks to give an image

to the reader through which Offred's identity is distinguished through the way she resisted to disciplinary power compulsions.

2. Power Implications in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

The Handmaid's Tale is an inspection of personas within particular situations. It is an investigation concerning power; also in what manner it is conducted. Moreover, what manner it is distorted or contoured the individuals who are residing under that sort of rule (Bloom, 2003). The plot centers its concern around a female persona residing in a totalitarian environment; an entourage of tyranny and unwavering supervision, utterly used by authority's governance and maneuver. The account demonstrates the society with unseemly subjects concurred with power. (Mirzayee, 2019)

2.1.Totalitarianism as One Form of Power

Totalitarianism is a unified one political system that incorporates the absence of human rights with a completely governmental control of subjects in societies undertaking that ideology. According to Shanmug (2022), governments holding dominance utilize apprenticeship and creed as a medium to command citizens. Following this fashion, that ruling system pushes its doctrine to forefront in order to be adhered to by the citizens. The latter subjects, devoid of any inquiry, pursue what is dictated out of distress from God. In a totalitarian society, the authority depends on theocracy to enact their principles which are steamed from a rudimentary Bible elucidation.

2.2. Offred a Victim of the New Regime

The Handmaid's Tale is an excellent account that depicts power practices, chiefly the application of the totalitarian regime reinforced via the application of theocracy's laws. In reference to the description of Deboranti and Wedati (2020) of Gilead and its protagonist, Offred pictures her secured life with her husband and daughter under the totalitarian regime. This recalls her life before the conversion to this new political system. In fact, Offred was free; yet when the system was imposed, she lost her family and was sent to the Red Center to be trained and transformed into a Handmaid (Deboranti & Wedati, 2020). Women are forced to bear children's Commanders in response to the theocratic regime that serves the fertility crisis, which lead Offred to lose her college degree, her job and even her bank account. Theocracy is only another form of power that can be read in the novel, specifically, when the Commander recites verses from the Bible to legitimize the act of sexual intercourse with the

Handmaids.

2.3. Sovereignty and Surveillance Equal Power in Gilead

In order to subdue identity and retain the system, the government recasts the past, enforces authoritarian dominance of TV broadcasting, prohibits written accounts, leaving only rumor, considering it as a reference of acquaintance. What is more, the system extends that to restricting the use of language among women who are banned from writing by withholding divine books far reached, unapproachable to the majority of individuals excluding in warily selected passages or transcribing (Stillman & Johnson, 1994). In this case, Gilead undertakes procedures particularly designed not in favour of women. More importantly, the subjugation of women takes various forms starting from altering the Handmaid's names to names referring to their commanders' like the Commander Fred and his handmaid Offred. Gilead could simply impose its laws smoothly, no Handmaid is able to use language completely yet instead a limited vocabulary is dictated by Aunts on them, solely sentences that stress the existence of biblical meanings. The regime structures hierarchical positions initiating from higher ranks including The Eyes and the commanders, to the lowest ranks, that encompasses Handmaids and Unwomen. Consequently, power over women, and men servitude are sustained with total obedience.

Ceremonial behaviours of supervision and one's shadowing are copious in the Gilead's society. The over-reaching of the story is a manifest of men and women's supervision as omnipresent day after day. The way that the Handmaids are educated and strained to perform self-discipline is utilized to evoke tame women's manners (Swatie, 2019). The Eyes in Gilead represent God's surveillance in reference to theocracy and totalitarianism. Accordingly, the Handmaids are proscribed from having any other relationship apart from their relationship with their Commanders. In addition, the latter women are restricted from involving themselves in any parties that rebel against the authority's safeness and stability to the extent that any movement the individual do would lead to severe punishment exemplified in hanging them on the wall to be a paradigm to everyone.

2.4. Patriarchy a Prevailing Supremacy in Gilead

The Gileadean society applies a system of stratification among its people, men and women. In other words, that patriarchal structure compels the utter

pre-eminence of men over women apropos of stratification and rank. This manifests itself in the fact that males are presented to be constantly finer comparing to females who are evermore lower and valueless (Ginç, 2022). Offred represents a good exemplification of living under the patriarchy system: she must comply with the system, otherwise she would be dead. In this sense, she is the mistress, as she sees herself, of Serena Joy's husband, Mr Fred Waterford. With this in mind, the rock-bottom of masculine echelon in the masculine structure seems to be enormously unrivalled to that of the females at the bottom of the feminine structure (Ginç, 2022). Men are never to be identified as infertile even when pregnancy would not occur with varied and multiple women; therefore, it is the Gileadean women who are blamed since men are considered as the leading figure of life. In this vein, women are not considered as human beings yet as instruments or, simply put, pregnancy machines.

2.5. Women's Submissiveness in the Republic of Gilead

The Gileadean women reside in an environment featured by power hegemony. This, undoubtedly, includes oppression, violence, sexual slavery and misogyny as other forms of power. Such dominance restrains women from having an ordinary life given that no female is able to exercise even her basic needs as a human being. In fact, they are treated as slaves and machines of sex. All this occur with the help of hierarchical figures among which the women who stress the exploitation of men's mandates.

2.6. Oppression: A Submissive Means

According to Miller Bruce (2017, as cited in Hershman, 2018)), there exists no exclusion of female's subjugation among the Gileadean women, including prime females and sterile spouses of high-ranking authority commissioners. In this sense, the latter individuals are outlawed from reciting, inscribing or talking gibberish. In fact, all females are treated in reference to their pregnancy abilities. Conversely, the Handmaids are deemed as slaves; they definitely have no privilege, no opinion and no self-government. In this context, these females are bodily injured and raped, also inwardly exploited.

The theme of oppression establishes its existence among Atwood's females where the Handmaids are treated as a property; precisely, Offred who have no control over her present or future. She only resides in a nostalgic sphere where she can retrieve back her life and her freedom since, at present,

she is repressed and subdued to have a basic life. The writer depicts women with vulnerable spirits enchained with the weapon of power. Therefore, individuals in power are the repressors who spread their ascendancy via laws that meet their final ends, producing children to the Commanders and their Wives.

2.7.Violence Against Female Residents

In Atwood's account, it is a refinement if they lose their lives early. They are under constant terror of being exiled. A lot of females are conceded to live with the condition of delivering babies. Margaret Atwood's female characters in her both novels *Bodily Harm* and *The Handmaid's Tale* are inseparable from violence. Moreover, in the same accounts women are unarmed under the jeopardy of aggression. In the two-fold novels, fleeing from the latter tyranny results in retribution (Mirenayat & Soofastaei, 2015). When one mentions oppression, it is compulsory to link it to violence; it is a munition to enforce the application of its laws. In the narrative in hand, Offred is living between a fear of such a deteriorated life forever and the fear of being sent to the colonies to clean areas under radioactive waste. This phobia of violence created a hideous status of the most powerful figures in Gilead among its female residents.

2.8.Sexual Slavery of Gilead's Females

The restrains of independence are, wittily, giving the pretext of God's volition. The latter reason is utilized to vindicate sexual servitude and the killing of the nonconformists. The uterus of Offred is vital to her community. In the protagonist perspective, this is communicated as sex slavery. She is coerced to give birth to babies who by the end are given to the Commander and his Wife. She has no autonomy over her corpse nor does she have any choice when it comes to having sexual intercourse or bearing children (Dinucci, 2011). That is to say, the forced systematic sex in Gilead is deemed as slavery since it is mandatory; men's desire is the focal concern regardless of women's pleasure and attraction. Offred exerts sexual intercourse with her Commander in the presence of his Wife which is a realistic exemplification of slavery. In brief, she takes on the role of preserving the offspring of the society.

2.9.Misogyny among Atwood's Characters

The end outcome of the hierarchy in Gilead is the progression of a fresh conformation of misogyny; it is not the way we perceive it; that is, it is not

men's abhorrence of women yet women's abhorrence of women (Callaway, 2008). Given this, the writer in her tale renders a feasible repercussion from the recent feminist impetus: feminocentric misogyny and classical misogyny are melded in a bellicose social and religious regularity. Also, the patriarchy of the account environment institutes a matriarchal system liable for governing females via exerting the distribution of household duties. As a consequence of the stratification that gives women superiority and governance over other women, hatred is created against women themselves. To illustrate, Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth are having a lighted room nevertheless the Handmaid stays in a semi-obscure room. Their rank gives them a powerful spirit to practise their own will. In this context, it is another form of oppression yet by the end all the women of Gilead are governed by men and only men as highly ranked creature.

3. Constructing an Acquaintance of *The Handmaid's Tale*

Gayret (2019) describes the identity of female characters as fractured and materialized. The scholar refers to the subservience of females as inhabiting an oppressive patriarchal society. Moreover, the scholar's article asks the question of how societal hierarchy suppresses female's privileges depending on religion, monitoring, constrained language usage, savagery and fright. Also, the indoctrination of the government's whim is imposed to sustain its governance. This research demonstrates how physiological and physical severity on females results in a misplaying of inner identity. She associates the idea of naming the Handmaids after their Commanders' names, which entails that the women of Gilead are possessions, with Beauvoir's thesis incorporating men's perception of women as an accompaniment to them not a self-independent entity and a sovereign spirit in the book entitled the Second Sex (2019). This study sheds light on the fact that the oppression of women whether via mental or physical impulses aims at maintaining the government dominance which leads to deconstructing females' identities. With advocating Beauvoir's thought, Gileadean men prove their perception of woman as an object that has no governance over themselves. All of these considerations push to the fore one idea: oppression, which is the reason behind females' identities collapse.

On the other hand, Moosavinia and Yousefi (2018) in their article entitled "New Norms of Gender and Emergence of Identity Crisis in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaids Tale*", an application of Judith Butler's doctrine, gender performativity, on the novel leads to a conclusion that gender

performativity links power with the individual's mind. To explain further, this theory studies how power's remodeling of sex speech influences the idea of gender and terminates in identity crisis. In the perspective of Butler, individuals are formulated via power dealings; nonetheless, the power that constructs individuals concurrently conceives room for sedition of the conventions. Furthermore, she points to the speech as it outranks identity, which signifies that identity does not subsist away from language and that gender restrains the individual's corporeality. As a full understanding of the piece, the power of gender discourse, which is here men's authority, mould women based on their interests. In fact, these women are formulated as a result of power relation; the most dominant characters the Commanders extend their dominance to subduing female's identities and leading to their loss.

Both critics strive to examine the identity crisis of women in Gilead and the twofold denote the patriarchal power that is prevailing in the society with imposing rules. The first one, it links the loss of identity to male dominance proving that a woman is an instrument; precisely, an inferior being. For the second, identity crisis is a result of male's powerful status. In so doing, he points to the power relation governing Gilead and its Handmaids.

All the same, Maanini (2022) expresses his concern that is allied to females' identities. The latter are disciplined by the patriarchal totalitarian regime and the effect of the societal formation of gender order of womanliness and motherliness on the Gileadean women. Similarly, the Handmaids are increasingly incarcerated; at first, by the system of patriarchy that founds the hierarchy of Gilead; secondly, by the matriarchy structure (Dhanappriya & Samundeeswari, 2021). In the context of this binary coercion, the Handmaids are sternly confined. Although the protagonist, Offred, dreadfully seeks to revolt and renounce her action, the matriarchy insures that the Handmaids, including Offred, reside secluded and feeble with the societal stratification that displays threatening repercussion of women pointing their devotion to men before their devotion to women which means the demolition of women's camaraderie leading to females' dissension. Beyond doubt, the dual dominance of both males and females on the Handmaids resulted in a fracture in one's self which can be contemplated as identity crisis.

Margaret Atwood and Michel Foucault perception of power as being in a wobbly state since it is dispersed around entire societal connections instead of being prescribed from atop (Howells, 2006). This can be elucidated as relations

controlled by power not necessary a power derived from one rank yet a connection of powers regulated according to one's social status. The superior the individual is the more power he or she acquires. With the multiplicity of relations, Offred's self is puzzled due to the various power impulses. Admittedly, identity crisis is linked to power impulses ending with shaping Offred's identity.

The ubiquitous aspect among the whole perceptions concerned with identity is the verity that the self is not independent and does not persist in a sense of vacuity. Moderately, identity is constantly a vulnerable being exposed to oppression from the twofold external side, cultural political social aspects and many other criteria, and internal side, inside one's self (Pourjafari, 2021). Expressly, the individual is not connected to his or her own self and determined by its connection to the adjacent environment. In this study, the writer pinpoints to the crises of female identity in a male dominated sphere by dictatorship and serfdom yet they try to resist in their own escapist tactics. This can solely be interpreted as the unfolding of identity crisis of Atwood characters that obviously is the impulses of power relations as the reason behind its exigency.

Power commences from contact among individuals that it influences each person who is embroiled in it, plus it figures their character. Hence, power's standpoint by Foucault pertains to scrutinizing power connection in Ahmed Tohari's novel *The Dancer*, in view of the protagonist, Srintil. Here, the author works on the power practised by other individuals including the protagonist's identity (Savitri, 2016). After reading the latter paper, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* can be another terrain to apply Foucault's theory of power; specifically, his two tenets: the first one that power occurs in societal connection, the second one is that power is inbred with intransigence. Since Tohari's novel *The Dancer* is not far away from Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* concern in that both stories revolve around identity construction and power involvement in reshaping everything around protagonists of the twofold novels including themselves. This research seeks to scrutinize power dynamics and identity formation using Foucault's theory.

A study can be undertaken by applying Foucault's theory of power not typically as applied in *The Dancer* account since it targets identity crisis of the protagonist "Offred" using Foucault's theory of power, more precisely how power relation can lead to Offred's identity crisis. Also, this can be proven along the passages of the narrative uttered orally by the main character, and

physically resisting in her own ways.

4. An Analytical Path Toward Exploring Power Relations in *The Handmaid's Tale*

Power kindred is tremendously pervasive in individuals' connections which entails that political power is not all over the space yet there is in individuals' connections as an integral breadth of power connections; existing among persons, inside families, in educational connections, political sphere (Foucault, 1997). This means that power is not exclusive to political stance yet it extends its existence to every type of relation.

Michel Foucault barely employs the concept of power, and if he employs it antecedently it is basically referred to the term connections of power yet there are stereotypical perceptions reckoning political configuration, a regime, overriding social rank, the boss and the toiler, in fact he does not mean the latter, he refers to individuals' connections including oral contact in various fields of life (1997). From the lens of Foucault, power is constantly at hand; he means a connection governed by an individual running the demeanor of another individual particularly pointing to connections that occur at diverse degrees, in various figures; the latter connections are adjustable, they can be perverted, they are not firm. This is the case of Atwood narrative which demonstrates a chain of power relations governed by hierarchy. Following this initiative, this study aims at considering Foucault's above mentioned discernment to prove that power relations administrate Gilead individuals accurately Offred, which lead to her identity crisis that can be anticipated via reading the symptom of resistance, another time it is Foucault consideration that proves that Offred's resistance has intrinsic power.

4.1. Foucauldian Disciplinary Power in Offred's Life

Discipline forms persons; it is the definite method of a control that considers persons both as substances and as tools of its use. It is not a dominant rule, which for of its own spare can conceit itself on its supremacy; it is a meek, wary supremacy, which works as a premeditated, yet perpetual bargain (Foucault, 1977). These are unpretentious modes, negligible processes, looking at the grandiose ceremonials of dominion or the inordinate contraptions of the government. And it is precisely that they were increasingly to occupy the chief procedures, fluctuating their apparatuses and striking their techniques. The permissible kit was not to drip this narrowly furtive annexation (Foucault,

1977). This can be considered in the relations appearing in the account under the totalitarian system of hierarchy.

The attainment of disciplinary supremacy springs indisputably from the usage of humble utensils stratified surveillance, standardizing decrees and their mishmash in a formula that is explicit to it, the assessment (Foucault, 1977). The aforementioned power is exercised precisely on Offred who perceives constant sovereignty, surveillance and control from different parts of her community including the Commander, the Aunts, the Commander's Wife and the doctor, each one of them separately strives to prove that sexual acts, hierarchical valor with training and observation, also knowledge can sustain control over one's body and mind.

4.2. The Commander and Offred Power Relation

Foucault shares one characteristic of power represented in its relationality. In his opinion power is not owned or distributed readily human beings are permanently in various modulation of relations or chains of power. The philosopher focuses on "non-egalitarian" connections even nobody has the power, few individuals are unswervingly positioned in advantaged status compared to others in such systems of power for the consideration of the organization of society or establishments (Taylor, 2017). This is the case for the relationship that bonds Fred Waterford and Offred. By this fashion, the latter connection is managed under the tool of power, the Commander as a high ranking character plays the role of the controller of Offred's body not only that yet her life as a whole. Foucault sees power relations as permanently poignant and intricate, and nobody is downright feeble in them; in circumstances of ascendancy in which a person is inferior to another, he contends that this is violence instead of power (Taylor, 2017). This is the case of Offred, she is an instrument of her Commander, who can be mobilized by him whenever and wherever he wishes to, as it is demonstrated in one of the scenes where she is accompanied with the Commander secretly in a night club. The controller extended his manipulation and secret meetings to transform this relation to more humanistic and romantic directions: "I'd like you to play a game of scrabble with me" (Atwood, 1985) in this unanticipated and illegal meeting Offred finds herself in a maze of bewilderment; she keeps mum when he declares his desire of playing scrabble, she is only nodding her head. She actually won the first game and let him win the second.

In this case, Foucault's perception is to be mentioned considering that power gives some individuals more or less domination over others yet not under any circumstance comprehensively or vigorously (Taylor, 2017). By the end, he sends her to her room. A prototype identity is ready made for the Handmaids to inherit. In this case, these women have no option except another escape which is to comply with the sanctioned rules. The following quotation gives a clearer reflection of the latter consideration:

We are for breeding purposes: we aren't concubines, geisha girls, courtesans. On the contrary: everything possible has been done to remove us from that category. There is supposed to be nothing entertaining about us, no room is to be permitted for the flowering of secret lusts; no special favors are to be wheedled, by them or us, there are to be no footholds for love. We are a two-legged womb, that's all: sacred vessels, ambulatory (Atwood, 1985).

The females in Gilead know their role as only laborer. In point of fact, a woman like Offred conceives that they are not considered as prostitutes since they have indoctrinated that as a plain duty or job to accomplish in every female's life in this society with different ways, for the sake of blurring their vision of themselves and they are never to be considered under the latter grouping. "The processes of normalisation associated with disciplinary power do not necessarily produce conformity or the monotonous regularity of identities often claimed in radical critiques. On the contrary, one of the prime effects of disciplinary power was to produce, precisely, individuality" (McHoul & Grace, 1993). The latter is one of the pioneering traits of Foucault's proposal on power, it should be contemplated that the methods of power have not crumpled innate energies that distinguish kinds of human beings with innumerable personality features. Alternately, variances, particularities, nonconformities and oddities are the most emphasized in a scheme of regulators envisioned to pursue. The concept of personality descends from this progression, according to him individuals under this kind of power appeared to be sturdily individualized (1993). The protagonist comprehends that she is not allowed to feel any sexual desire or affection towards her Commander bearing

in mind that she and all other females are babies' production machines. Oppression and sexual slavery are among the traits that characterize the master and slave's relation.

In reference to disciplinary power as an apparent type found in the relation between Offred and her commander, Foucault gives the example of teacher-student relation at university "the dominant literature on professor-student relations today does not see the university as a disciplinary institution but, rather, as what Foucault would describe as an institution of sovereign power, in which professors, like kings, have a monopoly on power and exercise it over students in a unilateral, top-down manner" (Taylor, 2017). This cartel of corrective power is in the grip of the commander under which Offred is living, she is disciplined to the standards of her society to reach her commander's satisfaction as well as her society as a whole yet as mentioned above this power does not crush the individuality of Offred since that is created within her along her sexual life as a Handmaid.

4.3. Disciplinary Power and Panopticon in Offred's Life

4.4. The Aunts and Offered: A Misogynic Leading Power

Panopticon is the prototypical procedure via which disciplinary power is capable to operate. Since it banks on surveillance and the core indoctrination this yields to provoke federations of obedience; it does not apply any ferocity since violence purely exhibit exasperated or abortive formulas of discipline (McHoul & Grace, 1993). This mechanism can be viewed in Gilead society's structure: its organization points the Aunts as supervisors and indoctrinators over the Handmaids. With this in mind, they seek to command them with the aim of brainwashing and imposing the new ideals of the government so that the implementation of their roles as productive machines of children can be exploited in tranquility.

The Aunts strive to glorify the life in Gilead whenever they fall in situational incidents with the Handmaids, the following quote can demonstrate the previous declaration: "There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it"(Atwood, 1985). By referring to the old life of Gilead under the existence of men's verbal and physical abuse in the streets, Aunt Lydia could transfer the well-being of present Gilead as a space of freedom that they should cherish.

This panoptical power puts corpses in space, of dissemination of persons in connection to one another, of categorized institute, of outlook of centers and networks of power, of description of the apparatuses and means of interpolation of power, which can be instigated in hospitals, workspaces, schools, jails (Foucault, 1977). In fact, Offred in this power relation could only find herself again under the grasp of power, yet what kind of power? A power in the hands of a woman like her. In this situation, the privileges granted to the Aunts could solely foster their dominance since the government could perceive the strict implication of giving a foremost power to a woman to control another woman, it is the fact that the controlling women are permitted to read and write as the solely female who can do that. For Offred, these women are another factor to shape her identity. In one of the scenes, offered listens secretly to the Marthas conversations (the household women) and she describes her act as unusual; still it is an action out of curiosity concerning the happenings in the colonies and the news about the fate of the Unwomen. "Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used" (Foucault, 1977). In this case, the regime of Gilead constructs a power control upon a panoptical plan that guarantees the effectiveness of control.

4.5. Serena Joy's Authoritarianism on Offred

The way Serena was dealing with Offred can be translated as hatred, from the moment she stepped into her house, she is treated as anything yet not a human being. In this sense, she declares that she does not want to see her around or call her to the extent of clarifying that only death can discrete her from her husband. Obviously noticed, their relation is ruled via another form of commands that serve the pregnancy process and shield Serena's husband from the stigma of sterility. In one of the moments of their meeting, Serena avows "Maybe you should try it another way" (Atwood, 1985), by that she means having an affair with another man. At this point, she solely recalls the trustworthy man "Nick" (the car driver of the commander). With Offered agreement, a probability of showing her daughter's picture is uttered. As well as, a direct reward with a cigarette that could efficaciously end the deal between them. After all, the Handmaid may feel that this action is a fortification against the exile to the waste land where death is the ultimate fate; yet, it is the Wife's purpose to ensure that her arms will embrace a baby sooner or later.

At the core of the discipline's techniques, an exhibition of individuals as objects is recognized; these objects are oppressed (Foucault, 1977). Correspondingly, Joy and the Aunts are the oppressors who embody Gilead system of hierarchy. It is noticed that the grip of power in women's hands can create a solid path towards the exploitation of the Handmaids particularly Offered as the concerned character of this study.

4.6. Disciplinary Power and Knowledge

4.7. Offered Frightened Spirit and the Doctor

Surveillance is directed in one way: towards the individual upon whom the system is applied. That individual does not have communal power to detect any move of the detector. Correspondingly, in the situation of those regularising decrees which govern a person's degree of discrepancy, one individual has the aptitude to evaluate another one counting on knowledge that solely the prior one retains. Likewise, in the circumstance of inspections, it is merely the individual in power who undertakes this probationary; it is fashioned by a person beforehand holding the abilities or knowledge the other is looking for (McHoul and Grace, 1993). All Handmaids are required to have their frequent visits to the doctor, in this context; Offered is concerned with that. The latter person describes her experience in details, her description entails the contemplation of noticing another form of power exemplified in another man who is the doctor.

In the appliances of discipline, the investigation is exceedingly esteemed. A combination of power's ritual and experimentation are residing in it. The disposition of potency and the founding of veracity is established as well (Foucault, 1977). The whole process is under the eyes of the Guardians; whose mission is to drive the Handmaids to the doctor's building. It is compulsory to have general medical check-up for their bodies. In the waiting room, women glance at one another: their eyes seek to spot the fortunate female with a huge abdomen indicating pregnancy. When Offered enters the doctor's room, she learns that her trunk is to be examined living her body uncovered but with the white cover that veils her face. At the moment of examination, the doctor calls her "honey" proposing to help her; which bewilders her whether he knows Luke or he knows where he is. His manners of approaching her arise the signs of another ravishment; with a convincing voice he declares that her Commander is sterile. The doctor employs his might by

doubting Offred's ability to bear a child so that his help can be seen as compassion; that behaviour influences her to the extent of being terrified. The following quotation exhibits the protagonist's instance: "He could fake the tests, report me for cancer, for infertility, have me shipped off to the Colonies, with the Unwomen. None of this has been said, but the knowledge of his power hangs nevertheless in the air as he pats my thigh, withdrew himself behind the hanging sheet" (Atwood, 1985). The victim of this dominance refuses the deal due to her fear of execution; still, the unuttered control of the doctor sets her in another maze of constant terror stemming from her decision.

5. Power Impulses and Offred's Identity Crisis

5.1. Offred's Individuality in Sexual Life

Sex was a key to open the door to the twofold the corpse's state and the life of societies. It was engaged as a scale for the castigations and as a foundation for guidelines (McHoul & Grace, 1993). In Gilead the Handmaid Offred's body is accessed by her Commander as a means to flourish human race in her society. The act of sex becomes the hallmark of individuality as well as the concern of political maneuvers, economic arbitrations (via stimulations to or pavements on breeding), and ideological promotions for hovering ideals of ethics and duty: it was submitted as community's asset, illuminating its political dynamism and its genetic potency (1993). Infertility spreads in Gilead thus the government invests its power on imposing a systematic breeding on the Handmaids as a vigour to preserve their race. Offred finds in this act a humiliation to her as an individual who resided in liberty in the pre-Gilead era yet she finds an escape to forget her duty as breeder in her secret sexual relation with Nick. She is able to claim her identity in a resistance that can be sooner or later discovered. By this manner, she reaches sexual pleasure that leads her to shape an individuality; this individualism is the missing part in her relation with the Commander.

Offred miscarries to sustain her identity to construct an entity, to associate with others, and to perform acts since in Gilead outward practises of opposition or endeavours to generate, retain, or grip an identity commonly transform to complicity with the system. Persons become unrecognised plotters in their own persecution. Gilead's command extends broadly to each saying and deed on the part of Offred, after all she strives to advocate the society's structure (Stillman & Johnson, 1994). That patriarchal structure leads to

subjugate the protagonist spirit resulting in her identity crisis. After the ceremony of sexual intercourse Offred enters her room though she cannot refer to it as hers, to butter herself with a pat of butter she hides in the toes of her shoes, since no self-care products are allowed to be used.

5.2. The Panopticon's Mechanism Effect

Offred is also swinging between herself and the Aunts due to their lucrative aims. She finds herself beholden to the structured training that guarantees keeping her alive. That structure is established in order to disengage her and the other Handmaids in the Red Centre from the old women they were being, the Aunts employs the technique of confession of past deeds, the protagonist expels the truth of being raped by a gang at the age of fourteen. It is a ceremony that permanently discloses within a supremacy connection. Foucault contends that an individual admits to a factual or unreal person who signifies not only the other side of a discourse, yet the command who entails the concession, counsels and grows it, and interferes so as to magistrate, reprimand, exonerate, relieve, and reunite (Foucault,1993, as cited in McHoul & Grace,1993). Given this, the Aunts blame Offred of that act as if it is her liability. Simultaneously, they stress the Commander act as an obligation that should be tolerated.

5.3. Memory: A Path Towards Offred's Fractured Identity

Offred along the novel lives on the traces of the past; her nostalgic memory keeps her alive due to the lack of agency she was struggling with. She is an escapist and a conformist character to the sense her past lays in her night thoughts in order to cope with her life as a Handmaid. "I want Luke here so badly. I want to be held and told my name. I want to be valued, in ways that I am not; I want to be more than valuable. I repeat my former name, remind myself of what I once could do, how others saw me" (Atwood, 1985). Luke is her husband who shares with her memorable joys, with whom her name is alive. She dreams of being respected as a human being since she even lost her name.

Furthermore, the protagonist wants her old life back considering that she was able to do what she wants in order to retrieve back people's perception over her. In this sense, her speech incorporates the fulfilment of her lost identity; an identity she seeks to embrace once again. In her surreptitious assemblies with the Commander, in her planning with Serena Joy to meet with

Nick, and in her permanent meetings with him lies those disobediences that unswervingly involve her into the arrangement of sex, authority, and venality that typifies the concrete machineries of Gilead and robustly create her as a being who delineates herself by her torso (Stillman & Johnson, 1994). That female knows that her body is the instrument via which her sense of self is retrieved, and that each sexual relationship is more of a might of her fractured identity than a mere a reminder of her past.

5.4. Offred's Docile Body

A corpse is docile that can be jeopardize, utilized, reshaped and modified (Foucault, 1977). Offred identity is influenced by the societal impulses guided by disciplinary power that resulted in having a docile body. In fact, approaches like the scale of control and modality, which made conceivable the scrupulous ruling of the moves of the corpse, which ensured the relentless domination of its powers and enacted upon them a connection of docility-expediency, can be termed as disciplines, the thing designed was a dogma of intimidations that perform against the corpse, an intended influence of its rudiments, its motions, its conduct. The human corpse was arriving at a mechanism of supremacy that reconnoiters it, dissects it and reshuffles it, a political anatomy, which was correspondingly a mechanics of power, was being recognized; it clarified how one may have a control over others' corpses, which means one can be controlled as the other, hence; discipline yields endangered and trained corpses, in other words: docile bodies (Foucault, 1977). Offred performs as a puppet in a manageable society that treats her as an instrument. Although, her body tries to resist via clandestine sexual relation yet this resistance could only contribute to her internal struggle for the sake of finding wellbeing.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigates Offred's journey in a society commanded by a totalitarian theocracy precisely governed by disciplinary power that finds its way in each pioneering, controlling and influential character. The latter entourage could inaugurate a space of manipulation, regulation and transformation in the protagonist's identity. Accordingly, symptoms of identity crisis prove its position: the first one lies in the memory flashbacks that accompanies her along the extensive vacant hours of agony, misery and vacancy. The sole escape is the night talk to herself that keeps her alive along with the vain hope of meeting her beloved ones and retaining her old life. The

second is her exploitation of her body whereby she talks and rebels in her own ways, as she expresses herself through sex which is the mere elucidation left to find an identity within; even though that sex is a structured end supervised under the eyes of Joy who will benefit out of that yet, unluckily her identity gets fractured even more due to the immense might the oppressor have over her. The system could form a solid power relation that even with resistance, its vigorous presence could lead to Offred's identity crisis.

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Rania CHOUNAA

Brahim ARIBI

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