



**ANALYSIS OF MARXIST-FEMINISM ON THE OPPRESSED
WOMEN AS BREEDING APPARATUS IN
THE HANDMAID'S TALE NOVEL**

**A THESIS
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Sarjana Degree Majoring Literature in English Department
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University**

Submitted by:

NATHANIEL DAVIN PRATAMA

13020113120026

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY
SEMARANG
2018**

PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer honestly confirms that this thesis is written by himself without taking any works from other researchers in S-1, S-2, S-3, and in diploma degree of any university. The writer also ascertains that he does not take any material from other works except from the references mentioned.

Semarang, January 2018

Nathaniel Davin Pratama

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

-Philippians 4:13-

“The main thing is to pay attention. Pay close attention to everything, notice what no one else notices. Then you’ll know what no one else knows, and that’s always useful.”

-Jeanne DuPrau-

*This thesis is dedicated to
myself, my beloved family and
everyone who helped me in finishing this thesis.*

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Written by:

Nathaniel Davin Pratama

NIM: 13020113120026

is approved by thesis advisor

on January 11th, 2018

Thesis Advisor,

Dr. I.M. Hendrarti, M.A.

NIP. 195307281980122001

The Head of English Department,

Dr. Agus Subiyanto, M.A.

NIP. 196408141990011001

VALIDATION

Approved by

Strata I Thesis Examination Committee

Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University

On January 29, 2018

Chair Person

First Member

Drs. Siswo Harsono, M.Hum.
NIP. 196404181990011001

M. Irfan Zamzami, S.S., M.Hum.
NIP. 198609230115091000

Second Member

Third Member

Dr. Ratna Asmarani, M.Ed, M.Hum.
NIP. 196102261987032001

Dwi Wulandari, S.S., MA.
NIP. 197610042001122001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Praised be Lord Jesus Christ, who has given his blessing, strength, and health so that this thesis entitled “Analysis of Marxist-Feminism on the Oppressed Women as Breeding Apparatus in *The Handmaid’s Tale* Novel” could be completed.

Moreover, the deepest gratitude and appreciation are extended to:

1. Dr. Redyanto Noor, M.Hum, as the Dean of Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University.
2. Dr. AgusSubiyanto, M.A, as the Head of English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, and as academic supervisor.
3. Dr. I.M. Hendrarti, M.A. as thesis advisor who has patiently given her time, guidance, assistance, suggestion, and motivation to the writer in completing this thesis.
4. Prihantoro, S.S,M.A who had given a chance for the writer to participate in international seminar in LAMAS 2016 as a presenter.
5. All lecturers of English Department, who have taught, motivated, supported, and inspired the writer in many ways.
6. Beloved mother, Feny Lindawati, and beloved father, Djuanidi, who have given affection, tears, endless pray that strengthened the writer anytime.
7. The writer’s closest college friends, Megalistha Pratiwi, Aswita Aqidatul Ersa, Noveka Erviana, Elfida Rofiq, Lovitasari Santosa, Octavia Rista,

Anindita Devi, and Irma Patriana, who had spent times and shared moments in Semarang.

8. The writer's favourite literature students and friends, Megalistha Pratiwi, Sheilla Jingga, and Elfida Rofiq, for their time in sharing and discussing subjects together.
9. The writer's partners at church, Hermon Deo, Ester Kristina, Naomi Dyah Ayu, and Adheska Chandra, for being good, helpful and encouraging.
10. All 2013 English Department friends for sharing experiences, laughter, inspirations and loves.

The writer realizes that this thesis is still far from perfect. Therefore, the writer would gratefully welcome any receive critiques and suggestions to make this thesis better.

Finally, the writer expects this thesis to be useful for the readers who want to do similar research on Marxist-feminism.

Semarang, January 2018

Nathaniel Davin Pratama

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ABSTRACT

The work of fiction, such as novel, mostly adapts its themes from human's life in reality. Novels might accept conflicts in human's life and apply it in the novel characters' life as a reflection of reality. The issue of social class and gender segregation, which causes dystopian life, are examples of social reality which happens among people, and this issue is available in Margaret Atwood's novel which is entitled "*The Handmaid's Tale*". In analyzing the novel, the writer of this study mainly applies Marxism-feminism theory in revealing the reason behind the oppression toward the women depicted in the novel. In conducting this study, library research method is applied in order to get information and theories which are supporting. The aim of this study is to show that the oppression toward women, especially The Handmaid, is actually caused by the interpellation which The Republic of Gilead uses. After thorough analysis, the result of the study shows that *The Handmaid's Tale* novel is, in intrinsic aspect, dystopian novel which has its formula, and there are groups of women categorized into several social classes. In extrinsic aspect, the writer finds out the women social classes overpower each other, and these social classes are caused and maintained by the Gileadean interpellation, including the use of religion in deceiving the Handmaids.

Keywords: Marxist-feminism, social class, interpellation, handmaid, dystopia.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This first chapter introduces briefly about how this study would explain the analysis of the research, and there are five parts in this chapter regarding to the research sequences, which are the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, methods of the study, and organization of the study. Further explanations are available in the following paragraphs.

1.1. Background of the Study

The work of fiction, which could be constructed as novel, play, or poetry, could either adapt human's life in reality or invent illusionary events. A novel, particularly, is a literary work with various possible characters, and themes which according to what Clara Reeve says in Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* that a novel is a depiction of reality, including the culture, in which a novel is written (1956: 216). Based on this statement, it could be said that the story within a single novel might reflect a human lifetime which could happen at any time. Most novels depict social reality which happens in real life, and any social reality could be depicted, including a verse of an author's experience as the main idea.

Social reality might be various, including social class issue which classifies people according to their social status, traits, and their economic-standard life. Social reality could also include women right issue which has a story of women, fighting for their rights against social status injustice, including gender segregation. This gender segregation issue takes women below men, making them submissive, powerless, and taken for granted, while men are prevailing and ruling.

Social class and gender segregation, about how people are distinguished into classes or groups due to their traits and gender, has its root growing from the beginning of time as in old belief and religion. In Christianity, as an example of ancient-modern religion, women have been appointed in its covenant, for they will be submissive to the men. The covenant is clearly written in Genesis 3:16, "...and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee". As the covenant says the husbands (males) will dominate the wives (females), so shall it be because people regard religion and its sacred words beyond everything and tend to believe it without questioning any. This could be the reason behind the existence of social gap, started from males higher than females, and later, to the clashing social classes trying to dominate one to another.

Margaret Atwood is an author of a novel which depicts a scene of popular social issue concerning social class and gender issue, which tears apart thousands of people's social lives into several grades. One of her writings, *The Handmaid's Tale*, is a story of a dystopian country led by a totalitarian group of leaders which raises the rights of men beyond women and suppresses the rights of women. As a result of this segregation, women are classified into 3 major classes of work, making them powerless and turn against each other. It is an interesting study to analyze the interconnection of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, with the thoughts of Marxist-feminism, the theory of social class issue concerning women rights segregation, and its segregating process towards women.

1.2. Research Questions

There are several questions concerning this research which would be answered in the discussion, those are:

1. How does the condition of the place where the protagonist lives influence the protagonist and other women?
2. How does the Republic of Gilead reach its goal in raising fertility rate?
3. How does the protagonist live as breeding apparatus in the middle of gender segregation?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

In order to answer the followed questions, objectives are stated to narrow and to achieve the results, those are:

1. To show how the rules and restrictions of the place where the protagonist is living.
2. To show what kind of interpellation which the Gilead applies in raising fertility rate.
3. To reveal the struggle which the protagonist faces as breeding apparatus while they are being segregated in gender.

1.4. Methods of the Study

In analyzing this novel, it is necessary to use a research method, and for this study, library research is applied in order to get information and theories which support this study. This study, obviously, uses the "*The Handmaid's Tale*" novel

as object of research, and also as the primary data. For the secondary data, this study takes information and theories from other literatures, books, and electronic media which are related to the analysis of this study.

This study applies social theory to analyze particular social issue which is depicted in the story and affecting the characters. The social theory applied in this study is mainly the Marxism theory, which also includes Marxist-feminism theory, the social classes (bourgeoisie-proletariat), the false consciousness explanatory and hegemony.

Overall, what Marx and all Marxism philosophers believe is that it is not the consciousness of men which determine and define their lives, but it is their social being, how people interact to each other in daily life, which define and determine their consciousness. Hegel, one of many philosophers who studied Marxism, as well persuaded his followers and many others that it is thoughts of men which govern the world's perspective. Therefore, Marxist concepts, mostly, try to make people think and to be critical about what they believe in their cultural life, legal system, and religion in which they believe (Selden *et al*, 2005: 82). In relation to such statement, Marxist-Feminism influences people not only in what they believe unquestionably about their social life issues but also, in particular, in how they think about what people usually name as "the second sex" or the women. This Marxist-Feminism theory has tried to deconstruct people stereotypes about women as "the second sex" so that women could live without being oppressed and segregated.

1.5. Organization of the Study

Considering the methods, and the objectives concerning the research questions, this thesis would be written in chapters and sub-chapters in order to cope it as simple as it could be. The organization would be arranged as follows:

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter has five sub-chapters. Those sub-chapters are background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, methods of the study, and the organization of the study.

CHAPTER 2

MARGARET ATWOOD AND HER NOVEL

This chapter contains important information (biography) regarding Margaret Atwood as the author of the novel, "*The Handmaid's Tale*", and also short summary of her work.

CHAPTER 3

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the writer thoroughly explains the theories which would be applied in discussing the study. The writer would describe the setting of the story (Dystopia) in such Totalitarianism government system, the main and typical character(s) in such novel, and also the Marxism-Feminism study which happens within such system along with its

complements (base-superstructure definition, social classes, and hegemony/interpellation).

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the novel, dissects it into several aspects using related theories. These aspects would be the explanatory about the characters, how these people could live under the Totalitarianism which conducts dystopian atmosphere. Later, how those people could live within such condition would be discussed with Marxism-Feminism theory.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter would conclude the discussion and all previous chapters, making it simple to answer the research questions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 2

MARGARET ATWOOD AND HER NOVEL

This chapter would describe the biography of the author of the novel, and also the summary of *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is a dystopian novel telling about a woman living as a Handmaid, whose life purpose is bearing a baby, and they are living in limited freedom. This chapter would explain about the author and the summary furthermore.

2.1. Biography of Margaret Atwood

The writer of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood, was born in Ottawa, but she was raised in the northern side of Ontario, Quebec, and also in Toronto. She was graduated from Victoria College, and then she continued her study in Radcliffe College to get her master's degree.

Concerning her degrees she had taken, Margaret Atwood has written plenty critical essays, fiction literatures, and poetry, and "*Stone Mattress: Nine Tales*" is her latest short story book in 2014. Her previous work before 2014 is "*MaddAddam*", which came in trilogy. In 2007, she had her latest volume of poetry, which is *The Door. "Payback Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth"*, which is published in 2008, and "*In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*", which published in 2011 are her recent work for her non-fiction book collections. Moreover, some of her works are exquisite to win an award, such as her novel "*The Blind Assassin*", which won the Booker Prize; "*Alias*

Grace”, which won the Giller Prize and the Premio Mondello; and “*The Handmaid’s Tale*”, which is now an ongoing TV series.

Margaret Atwood lately lives in Toronto with Graeme Gibson, a writer, and together, they are living back and forth several times. For her living, she worked many times as English lecturer, instructor, and Writer-in-Residence from 1964 in many places. Her latest job, in 1989, was as a Writer-in-Residence in Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, and she was also a President of the Writers’ Union of Canada from 1981 to 1982. As an addition, she was a President of International P.E.N., Canadian Centre (English Speaking) which was started from 1984 to 1986. Atwood and Gibson are the Joint Honourary Presidents of the Rare Bird Society which stands within Bird Life International. Currently, Ms. Atwood is also a Vice-President of PEN International.

2.2. Summary of *The Handmaid’s Tale*

The Handmaid’s Tale novel is a story about a woman, whose name is Offred, who lives in suffering in The Republic of Gilead, the totalitarian and theocratic state which was once the United States of America. It was once the low reproduction rates which caused a revolution from the religious group to take over the country. The Gilead raised their power against over limited pollution and chemical drugs usage which led to decreasing fertility rates, and by using military force, they massacred the leading president and parliament. It is Offred, one of the Handmaids, who tells the tale in the novel, and Handmaids are one of the women who are forced to bear babies for the upper-class couples who have problem with

having children. Offred serves under the authority of the Commander and his wife, whose name is Serena Joy, and the name “Offred” is not the woman’s actual name, yet it is the name of the Commander with “Of” affix which follows the name.

The story begins as Offred tells her flashbacks before The Republic of Gilead takes over the old world which she lived. She was once had an affair with Luke, and they had a child together, and by the arrival of The Republic of Gilead, Offred was caught and got separated from Luke. After being captured, she and the other women were indoctrinated with The Gilead’s beliefs to be proper Handmaids. Aunt Lydia was the supervisor who controlled and prepared these women to be Handmaids, and she told them that the new social order brought respect and safety more than it was in the old world. Later, Offred describes that there are 3 social classes for women to put into: the Handmaids itself; Marthas, whose job is doing households; and Wives, life companion of the elites. On the other hand, men would be Commanders, guards (the Eyes, the Angels) as jobs.

Later, Offred knows that her companion, who is also a Handmaid, is a part of a revolution which tries to overthrow The Gilead, and the novel ends with an epilogue in a lecture given by a Professor in 2195, the time after the fall of the Gileadean regime.

CHAPTER 3

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

This chapter would explain thoroughly about theories applied to analyze the novel, and the theories would be categorized into two platforms. The first platform is known as intrinsic elements which include the description of dystopian environment, and also the formula of revolutionary action. The second platform is known as extrinsic elements which include the explanation of Marxism and Marxist-Feminism theories.

3.1. Intrinsic Aspects

Intrinsic aspects deal with elements of novel as literary work, including setting, characters, and sequence of events. In discussing the intrinsic aspects, the idea of characterization, Dystopia and the Formula of Dystopian Fiction are applied. The idea of Dystopia discusses the restraining circumstances while the formula describes about the characters and sequence of events.

3.1.1. Dystopia

Before explaining about dystopia, how it could appear within society, it is better to understand the difference between dystopian fiction and science fiction, as this study tries to apprehend dystopia from a novel considered as fiction. According to Booker in his book, *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature – Fiction as Social Criticism*, dystopian fiction could be distinguished from science fiction even though some texts could have and overlap both genres. However, dystopian

fiction has its attention on social and political critique which depicts social and political issues in reality (1994: 19). It means that dystopian fiction more likely to concern about social and political issues as criticism compared to science fiction which could cover many aspects. Dystopian fiction has many examples; one of them is *1984* by Orwell, which concern about Soviet's politics and Anti-Soviet.

If one is discussing about dystopia, the discussion has to correlate with utopia as well because utopia and dystopia are two inseparable aspects, and the spectators should understand the lexical meaning of the terms. According to Compact Oxford English Dictionary (2008: 1147), the word "utopia" means "an imaginary place, society, or situation where everything is perfect", which the word "perfect" means "having all the required elements or qualities". On the other hand, the word "dystopia" has "an imaginary place or society in which everything is bad" meaning, which the word "bad" means "of poor quality or a low standard... unwelcome or unpleasant... wicked or evil" (*ibid*, 2008: 311), or it is simply the anti-utopia condition. However, in fact, utopia is not merely the opposite of dystopia. To explain this, Booker (1994: 3) uses Disneyland as an example of utopian-dystopian fantasy. Disneyland is a symbol of "escapism" as it tries to pursue its visitors to believe that Disneyland and its park is the reality. However, in the midst of such utopian atmosphere, one might find "a sinister hint of dystopia". The dreadful feeling comes from the workers inside the loving cartoon characters as the overseers watching intentionally upon the visitors as if the visitors are being stalked. In addition, the regulations in Disneyland, which indirectly make its visitors to be herded like cattle or inmates, to be spending

hours queuing for rides, are considered frightening if it is observed from different point of view aside from the utopian platform. People might think, based on the good advertisement and the cherish comments about dystopian Disneyland, that Disneyland is perfect, but, on the other hand, Disneyland also has its “dark side” which treat people like prisoners.

Judging from the fact that Disneyland has double-faced traits, people start to reconsider that Disneyland is not as perfect as it seems. Booker, in his book, says

“Among other things, the doubleness of Disneyworld indicates the simple fact that what one person considers an ideal dream might to another person seem a nightmare. It also indicates why so many modern thinkers have become suspicious of utopian thought, fearing that such vision can ultimately work only to the advantage of the status quo” (1994: 3).

From what Booker has stated, it could be said that utopia and dystopia are more like two sides of a coin, which are correlated and similar, yet grow continually with different traits, and in this case, those two sides are not completely contradict each other. Booker (1994: 15) says that as Disneyland shows as an example, the thoughts utopia and dystopia are not truly “diametrical opposites”. In fact, the vision of utopia merely criticizes current order as imperfect or non-ideal for its people, and the warning of dystopia would clearly distinguish the probability of utopian growth into “bad” utopia or “good” utopia, directing it to the “good” one. Hence, it could be assumed that utopian and dystopian ideas are strictly correlated, indirectly supporting each other in order to make a new better environment. The thoughts of utopia and dystopia are also rooting from one

source, which is the thought of making a better place, and the utopian idea would be the fuel to encourage people while the dystopian caution would limit the utopian growth from going to the wrong side. Andrew Ross in Booker (1994: 19) states that it is the “deficiencies of the present” which constructs the utopian critique, while the “deficiencies in the future” builds the dystopian warning, and this statement supports the idea of utopian and dystopian correlation.

Even though it is clear that the utopian critique should build a better place and the dystopian warning would limit its growth, utopian idea could still aim falsely and end into dystopian situation, or utopia exists only for certain society, forming sanctuary with nasty surrounding outside it. Booker (1994: 20) gives example to such issue, like the nightmarish Nazi Germany as the Bourgeoisie run amok, or the Stalinist Russia as the Communism run amok. Both Capitalism and Communism have aim to reach success for society, and by considering dystopian limitation, it is possible to create a supportive place to live. However, Booker (1994: 9) quotes Freud’s statement which says that reforming social institutions and conventions cannot give happiness because civilization is against some human impulses, creating unhappy atmosphere instead. In some cases, the leader of a society makes change to civilization, reforming and reconstructing society, in order to create utopian environment according to their perspectives. These kinds of leaders, the totalitarian leaders, insert their ideology forcefully to overthrow prevailing, incompatible culture so that the leaders achieve their utopian atmosphere for themselves. As the result, utopian environment exists, but at the

same time, it gives nightmarish dystopia for those unsuitable or against the leaders' utopian perspective, creating unhappy atmosphere.

3.1.2. Formula of Dystopian Fiction

A story which includes dystopian environment, such as dystopian fiction, usually tells about a life in which the main character suffers and struggles against prevailing culture or custom which suffocates them. The dystopian fiction is considered as popular literature, and it is affected by the popular culture, mostly about social and political issues circulated in the society.

Nachbar and Lause (1992: 2) assume that popular culture is something common among people and is easy to get because it revolves around us whereas Nachbar and Lause illustrate the mundaneness of popular culture as “the waywater surrounds a fish”. As examples, the recent fashion people wear, or the recent literatures people read are considered the result of popular culture. From the previous statements, it could be said that popular literature is a work which could be achieved regardless of position and social class. Therefore, in order to capture mass' attention, popular literature should contain issues, beliefs and values which available broadly among the society. Nachbar and Lause (1992: 6) also agree that the authors of popular literature need to reflect the beliefs and values of the audiences so that the mass could accept their products. In order to be accepted by the society, Nachbar and Lause (1992: 6) believe that popular literature has to be “imitative, repetitive, and conservatively resistant to change” because once authors have discovered a formula, the ingredients of what the

society desires, they have tendency to repeat it as it stays successful. As the result, there are similarities among popular literatures as a formula.

The formula of popular culture, according to Nachbar and Lause (1992: 6), is important component as it helps people not only in sorting out cultural elements to be studied but also in guiding people how the sorted elements would be analyzed. From this statement, the formula could be considered as a manual book for popular culture researchers to distinguish a popular culture, which later would be studied accordingly, by its function and meaning from other existing cultures. Later, this formula also helps researchers to examine similarity and tendency among resembling popular cultures, resulting in a form of patterns which would be useful in examining popular literature.

For an example of the formula of popular culture, According to John G. Cawelti (1976: 5), every stereotype given to characters in a literary works by the author, such as red-headed, Irishmen with hot temper, virginal blondes, and sexy brunettes, is considered as a formula, a repeating pattern of traits, in a literary work. However, the formula of popular culture could cover almost any elements, not just character or personal traits. The formula could describe the pattern of a story plot, which means it shows sequence of events depicted in a story. Concerning this plot pattern formula, John G. Cawelti (1976: 6) claims that the plot pattern is another common formula which inspire writers to put into their literary works; such as boy meets girl, boy and girl misunderstand each other, boy be with girl, and this is an example of what the experts call as archetypes or pattern favored in many cultures.

The Hunger Games Trilogy, which is published into *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay*(2010), is the example of literary work which has similar, patterned plot with *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), and it is also categorized as popular literature. *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, which the main character is Katniss Everdeen, is a story about a girl living in a confining district led by the prevailing government, the Capitol. In dystopian literature, the main character is usually living through restraining circumstances, and this formula exists through the entire story. Katniss lives in the 12th district, where men are forced to work in coal mine to suffice the Capitol needs, and in districts, including the twelfth district, there are Peacekeepers as guards to maintain peace and anticipate riot. Each district is also enclosed inside electrified wires, making districts as prisons. In order to maintain power, the Capitol holds the Hunger Games culture, an annual game in which 24 people taken randomly from 12 districts would fight until only one stands as victor. The characters that live in such terror would likely to rebel for freedom, and in the story, Katniss also doing several minor acts of rebellion, until at one game, called Quarter Quell, she manages to get released from the annual Hunger Games and joins the mutineers in 13th district, which was once rebelled against the Capitol but failed. Later, Katniss inspires districts to rebel, causing severe damages and casualties in fierce battle against the Capitol until the rebels prevail.

The Formula of Dystopian Fiction is composed in order to ease readers in understanding and examining dystopian novels. The formula contains characters, traits, settings and plot, which would be described in a structured list of five

points, which are (1) Under the Rules and Restrictions; (2) Desire for Freedom; (3) Invitation to Revolt; (4) Uprising of the Oppressed; (5) Resolving Event. These five points start describing the story from the beginning, including characters and setting introduction, conflict, climax, and end in resolution of a dystopian story.

3.1.3. Character and Characterization

In fictional literatures such as novel, or any other literary works which contain sequence of events and conflicts, there should be characters as initiators of the events which are depicted in the novel. Character, according to Holman, is frequently considered as a figure or a person in a fictional story (1980: 74), and there could be more than a person or a figure in a story. The existence of character is important in building a story because through character, a sequence of events happens, and eventually, the events grow more complicated as the character is actively living and struggling.

Character in a story could be numerous, and these characters could oppose or support each other, but basically, there are two types of character which appear in a fictional story, those are the protagonist and the antagonist. The protagonist, according to Holman, is “the leading character” in a story, and the existence of protagonist steals the audience’s attention, interest and sympathy, whether their act is heroic or evil. (1980: 356). On the other hand, the antagonist, according to Holman, is the opposing figure who opposes the protagonist, which basically is considered as the opponent, or a rival of the protagonist.

These protagonist and antagonist character could be distinguished by their manners and traits, and these manners and traits are considered the characterization. According to Holman, characterization is the aspects of the characters in a story which are revealed, explicitly or implicitly, by the author of the story so that the characters may exist for the readers in the realm of fiction.

3.2. Extrinsic Aspects

Extrinsic aspects, in this study, deal with social theories and approaches in order to understand the correlation of the story and reality, from which an idea for a story is taken. In analyzing the story, the writer applies the theory of gender proposed by Simone de Beauvoir (1956), Marxist-Feminism proposed by Eisenstein (1978), Social Classes proposed by Karl Marx, Althusser's concept of interpellation and hegemony.

3.2.1. Women as Second Sex

It is obvious, from the beginning of time, that there are two types of human according to their sexual appearance, which is female and male. People tend to use the terms "male" and "female" only on animals, and it is rude to mention those for humans, so our society uses the terms "men" and "women". However, the image of the terms, men and women, is constructed by culture, and has been manipulated by the humans themselves. In the ancient-modern religion, such as Christianity, there is a story of Adam, the first man living, who was created by the God Himself. The other, Eve, the first woman living, was created by plucking

Adam's rib, considering women as dependent to men. This testament given to the believers told them that women are supposed to be submissive to men, and in accordance to this believe, the idea of patriarchy was born, and it has become a culture, the identity of humanity. The idea of women as the oppressed gender has been evolving through time, and some philosophers worsen the idea of women as they also call women as "The Other", "The Lack of Qualities", or "The Defective". According to Aristotle, as quoted by de Beauvoir (1956: 15), he states that women are born under the "virtue of lack of qualities". To Aristotle, society should accept the fate that women are inflicted with "natural defectiveness".

The idea of women as oppressed gender could be older than any issues concerning other oppressed minorities who are considered as strangers in their own land. However, de Beauvoir (1956: 17) mentions that women are not supposed to be called as "minority" to men because women are living as plenty as men. The fact that women are living likely to be equal with men is reasonable, and there is no mean of restrictions concerning to this idea. According to Beauvoir (1956: 18), the reason why women could not claim themselves is that "they do not authentically assume a subjective attitude... They have gained only what men have been willing to grant; they have taken nothing, they have only received". In order to change this situation, women, as the oppressed group, must stand together to make a revolution.

3.2.2. Marxist-Feminism

Marxism is a social theory introduced by German social critic and a philosopher Karl Heinrich Marx. Marxism exists as a reaction to the history which holds the working classes of society, and Marxism gives a chance for people to change their world. According to Bressler (1994: 211), Marxism tried to make the society to understand social, political, economic, and cultural understanding of the nature of reality, society and the individual. In Marx's "*The German Ideology*", he claims that it is not consciousness which shapes life, yet it is life which determines consciousness. In other words, according to Marx, people's ideas and concepts are composed in daily discourse of real life language, and are not derived from some spiritual reality (Bressler, 1994: 212).

Besides, Marx also argues that all ideological systems are products of social and economic process. According to Marx, as quoted by Selden *et al* (2005: 83), "The 'superstructure' (ideology, politics) rests upon the 'base' (socio-economic relation)". It means that the domination which governs the social-economic order will determine the whole cultural life of the society, including legal institution, political and educational systems.

Following Marxist criticism, there is Marxist-Feminism, which Selden *et al* (2005: 125) say that it once raised during the late 1960s and 1970s, and it ought to improve Marxism's social class analysis by extending it into feminism theory. Marxist-feminism, according to Selden *et al* (2005: 125), exists because Marxism only concerned about men, ignoring women's activity and experience; therefore, Marxist-feminism focuses on the oppression of women through the capitalist economic practice, and women are exploited because their work is

uncompensated. According to Eisenstein (1978: 6), Marxist-feminism critiques both the power rooted in the distinction between male and female, which focuses mostly on patriarchy, and the power rooted in the distinction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, which focuses on capitalism. Women are implied on both sides of understandings, and these two theories of power are interrelated through the sexual division of labor. What Eisenstein tries to explain is that there is a relation between capitalism and patriarchy ideas which induces the oppression of women in economic and social issue, and in this case, Eisenstein believes that it is capitalism which makes women suffer from great oppression. It is the capitalist, or the bourgeoisie, the dominant class, who is responsible for the spreading of false consciousness saying that superiority belongs to men, while the women are the subordinates of men.

3.2.3. Social Classes

Concerning the theory of Marxism, Marx asserts, as quoted in Bressler (1994: 212), that "...as a society progresses from a feudal system as its economic mode of production to a more market-based economy, the actual of process for producing, distributing, and consuming goods becomes more complex". The process, which becomes more complex, means that the function of people in the economic system would be distinguished into several different social classes. As the result, eventually, the desires and the expectations from these varieties of different social classes shall induce conflicts which lead to a radical change in economic base of society.

According to Marx and Engels in "*The Communist Manifesto*", as quoted by Bressler (1994: 212), they declare that the working class, or the proletariat, had been successfully enslaved by the capitalists, or the bourgeoisie, through the economic regulations and production of goods. The social-economic conditions determine history, actions, and even beliefs of people, and as the result, the bourgeoisie who controls the base, which is the social-economic conditions, will develop and control the superstructure. In other words, the rich and powerful would become richer and more powerful, and the poor would be weaker and poorer.

3.2.4. Hegemony and Interpellation

Hegemony is the deceitful ideas which are applied and ruled by the superior classes, or the bourgeoisie, to maintain their authority upon the subordinated classes and to prevent any revolution from the lesser classes. Louis Althusser, as quoted by Bressler (1994: 213), believes that "the dominant hegemony, or prevailing ideology, forms the attitudes of people in society through a process he calls interpellation, or 'hailing the subject'". In previous statement, hegemony is considered an ideology, an idea which people believe as truth, and people are supposed to believe the concerning idea without questioning. The ideology of women as second sex could be an example of hegemony, as people mostly believe women should be submissive to men and not to be overpowering men. This ideology has been taken for granted though any law concerning women should be submissive is unavailable. The ideology, this hegemony, is a part of cultural behavior which tends to be conserved in order to maintain power upon men, and

culture attaches itself as a part of humanity, so considering change of gender role means changing the whole role of humanity.

In order to reach situation under Hegemony, there is a process called “Interpellation”. Interpellation is the process of how the false consciousness could be trusted unconsciously by the controlled people, and it changes people’s worldview by messages sent to people through the elements of superstructure, including literature and arts. The dominant classes might use military force to repress the lesser classes to maintain its authority and to successfully achieve interpellation, yet they choose the ‘Ideological State Apparatus’, or false consciousness. As the result, the lower classes hail the dominant classes’ absolute truth, and it could prevent insurrection of the lesser classes. Concerning the ideology of women as second sex, the way people told their girls to stay at home most of the time while boys could do mostly whatever they want, is considered an interpellation of gender role. Adults tend to teach their young girls to behave, to be feminine and to be submissive to whatever the adults say as a part of cultural behavior which makes women, mostly, have traits as a submissive and obedient personality. On the other hand, adults more likely to tolerate boys to do anything they desire, and to ask for help on heavier task to boys than to girls. It is also the boys who have rights to get higher education first than the girls. These kinds of cultural behavior are parts of interpellation which make women live under the ideology of women as second sex, the hegemony.

However, even though the interpellation might have been achieved, the hegemony is never complete. It is said that there are other alternative hegemonies

competing with the prevailing, dominant hegemony reaching for supremacy. If the interpellation fails to take over, then another part of hegemony could dominate, and a revolution might spark (Bressler, 1994: 217). Louis Althusser rejects that superstructure reflects the base. He believes that not all elements in superstructure are based on the base, yet some of them could influence the base, such as literature and art. Literature and art could lead people into revolution and overthrowing the prevailing authority of the base (Bressler, 1994: 217). In other words, if there any superstructure composed not by the holder of the base, yet by one of the oppressed, the proletariat, this superstructure might affect people who are under the prevailing hegemony, convincing them that people are under false consciousness made by the bourgeoisie. In this moment, the prevailing hegemony might fail, and another rising interpellation shall overthrow the throne, and prevail as a new hegemony.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This chapter contains discussion of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects which are present in the novel, and this chapter would be divided into two major parts. The first part discusses the intrinsic aspect, which includes the analysis of formula, characters and dystopian setting. The second part deals with the extrinsic aspect, which includes the discussion of Marxist-feminism, and the process of interpellation and its influence.

4.1. Intrinsic Aspect

This chapter would discuss the intrinsic aspect of the novel, and the discussion would be divided into two parts. The first discussion is the analysis of the formula, the structure composing the story, and the second discussion is the analysis of the characters and traits.

4.1.1. The Formula of Dystopian Fiction

NO.	FORMULA	DESCRIPTION
1.	Under the Rules and Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amputated rights and freedom.• Death penalty for the violators.• Alienation for the crooked.
2.	Desire for Freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offred's suicidal thoughts.• Offred's thoughts of spouses and friend.• Offred's random, hopeful thoughts.
3.	Invitation to Revolt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Commander's illegal night invitation.• Ofglen's revealed identity.
4.	Uprising of the Oppressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moira's escape attempt.• Salvaged women.
5.	Resolving Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ofglen's replacement.• Offred is captured.

Table 1: Formula of Dystopian Fiction

4.1.1.1. Under the Rules and Restrictions

The story of dystopian literature usually correlates to the existence of rules and restrictions applied in the main character's life which circumscribe freedom. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, people are living under strict laws, and they suffer from the restraint.

There are plenty rules, such as amputated freedom of speech, of literacy, and of act, applied in this dystopian story. Offred, one of the Handmaids, tells the reader several of the rules she knows, about how she and the other Handmaids in the Red Centre, the place for the Handmaids to be indoctrinated, are talking in whispers. Whispering behavior shows that the Handmaids are not allowed to talk freely and unnecessarily, as quoted, "We learned to whisper almost without sound... We learned to lip-read, our heads flat on the beds, turned sideways, watching each other's mouths." (Atwood, 1998: 4).

Beside the amputated freedom of speech, there is also the circumscribed freedom of act, as quoted, "Last week they shot a woman, right about here. She was a Martha. She was fumbling her robe, for her pass, and they thought she was hunting for a bomb. They thought she was a man in disguise." (Atwood, 1998: 20). This quotation shows that every motion which has to make should be in purpose and visible to the authority. Therefore, everyone should not behave suspiciously because any suspicious behavior might result in death penalty.

Another rule to follow is a prohibition of literacy among women, which means the women are not allowed to read, as quoted, "This hasn't been blacked out, even though we aren't supposed to be reading". (Atwood, 1998: 119).

Moreover, the women are not allowed to write either, as quoted, “Pen Is Envy, Aunt Lydia would say,... warning us from such objects.” (Atwood, 1998: 186).

Failure in following rules causes penalty, including death penalty. There are several penalties in *The Handmaid's Tale*, and these penalties vary based on gender, which is death penalty by being hanged to death for the men, as quoted,

“Beside the main gateway there are six more bodies hanging, by the necks, their hands tied in front of them, their heads in white bags... There must have been a Men's Salvaging early this morning... Each has a placard hung around his neck to show why he has been executed...” (Atwood, 1998: 32).

For the women, the penalty for being unable to follow rules is going to The Colonies where The Unwomen belongs, as quoted, “Anyways, what could you do, supposing? Go to the Colonies, Rita said. They have the choice. With the Unwomen, and starve to death and Lord knows all? said Cora. Catch you.” (Atwood, 1998: 10).

4.1.1.2. Desire for Freedom

Living in restrained life surely gives awful experience, considering that every man and woman expecting freedom. Offred, the Handmaid, desires freedom because she lives in terror of death penalty and alienation, so she finds ways to escape.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the reader would find Offred thinking about suicide, making her looks suicidal. The Republic of Gilead, the prevailing government, is afraid of the women escaping, and it is the other escape, the suicide attempt, which concerns them, not the literal running away, as quoted, “It isn't running away they're afraid of. We wouldn't get far. It's those other escapes,

the ones you can open in yourself, given a cutting edge". (Atwood, 1998: 8). Suicide attempt is considered an escape from reality, and it is the only choice to truly escape, given the inescapable place.

Even though she attempts to commit suicide, she might not apprehend doing it because of the thoughts of her family, which is the reason for her to achieve freedom. After several events in Offred's life, the reader would find her thinking deeply, imagining, about her daughter, especially when she is taking a bath before the Ceremony, as quoted,

"I step into the water, lie down, let it hold me. The water is soft as hands. I close my eyes, and she's there with me, suddenly, without warning... I put my face against the soft hair at the back of her neck and breathe her in, baby powder and child's washed flesh and shampoo, with an undertone, the faint scent of urine." (Atwood, 1998: 63).

The quotation shows how Offred misses her daughter that she is projecting the image of her baby in her mind. Offred could not accept the idea of suicide, so she escapes from her reality by imagining what she wants at the moment, which is her daughter, as an escape.

In order to keep herself sane because she could only imagine her family without getting what she imagines, and considering that she could not accept suicide, she starts thinking intentionally about everything hopeful as an escape. In a scene, readers could find her singing to herself the *Amazing Grace* song, a song which has the word "free", as quoted,

"Sometimes I sing to myself, in my head; something lugubrious, mournful, presbyterian:... *Was bound, but now am free*. I don't know if the words are right. I can't remember. Such songs are not sung anymore in public, especially the ones that use words like *free*. They are considered too dangerous. They belong to outlawed sects." (Atwood, 1998: 54).

4.1.1.3. Invitation to Revolt

In dystopian story, after waiting and trying to afford freedom from living restrained, there would be a moment for the main character to be invited to revolt against the rules and later, considering to join the resistance. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the invitation to revolt against the rules firstly comes from the Commander, the head of the household in which Offred lives. Offred is invited to see the Commander when she is sneaking into the sitting room to steal something, and Nick, the Commander's driver, approaches her and whispers to her, as quoted, "‘I was coming to find you,’ he says,... ‘he told me to,’ Nick says. ‘He wants to see you. In his office’... The Commander, it must be. See me? What does he mean by *see*? Hasn't he had enough of me?" (Atwood, 1998: 98). Offred accepts the invitation although she thinks it could be a trap, which she could be caught and punished severely for doing so, but she manages to slip into the Commander's room at night.

In first meeting, the Commander asks her to play Scrabble with her, reminding that playing Scrabble is against rules which forbid women to read and write, but she accepts the request. The other meetings with the Commander also contain outlawed purpose, including giving Offred magazines and books to read. After several meetings, the Commander finally asks her to wear a garment and to go outside of the house illegally in the night, as quoted, "‘It's a disguise,’ he says. ‘You'll need to paint your face too... You'll never get in without it’. ‘In where?’ I ask. ‘Tonight I'm taking you out.’" (Atwood, 1998: 231). The quotation shows how the Commander willingly invites Offred and himself to go outside, breaking

laws together, considering the Commander is fully aware the consequence of slipping a Handmaid out of her place.

Another invitation to revolt comes from Ofglen, the Handmaid with whom Offred is paired to walk, and she is the one to reveal to Offred everything Ofglen knows about the revolution. At one time in their prescribed walk, when they are walking in a quiet place, Ofglen starts showing her true self as a rebel by saying some restricted speculation. Later, she reveals that there is a resistance among them, as quoted, “‘You can join us,’... ‘You didn’t think I was the only one,’ she says.” (Atwood, 1998: 168-169).

4.1.1.4. Uprising of the Oppressed

Dystopian literature with oppressed people as victims usually would reach climax along with the uprising of the oppressed due to uncontainable anger toward the prevailing government concerning the restraining rules. In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, the Handmaids are the most oppressed women in the story, and the Handmaids tend to revolt. Some of the oppressed would start the mutiny, and the others would be encouraged to follow.

Moira, one of the Handmaids, has attempted escape from the Red Centre, and this attempt inspires other Handmaids, including Offred, to have courage, as quoted, “I want gallantry from her, swash-buckling, heroism, single-handed combat. Something I lack.” (Atwood, 1998: 249). Offred has got news from her fellow Handmaid that Moira, Offred’s best friend, attempted to escape from the Red Centre, which the news says that Moira was successfully disarmed Aunt Elizabeth, but there is no further information afterwards. Later, Offred has a

chance to meet Moira, and Moira ensures Offred that she had Aunt Elizabeth cornered and managed to escape from the Red Centre, as quoted, “I left that old hag Aunt Elizabeth tied up like a Christmas turkey behind the furnace... I couldn’t believe how easy it was to get out of the Center. In that brown outfit I just walked right through.” (Atwood, 1998: 244). The attempt was successful even though Moira, later, was captured and then was taken to a brothel.

Another uprising comes from women who are captured and are taken to be hanged at Women’s Salvaging. There are three women, two Handmaids and one Wife, who are appointed to be hanged at the moment, but the government refuses to mention the criminality, as quoted,

“In the past... it has been the custom to precede the actual Salvagings with a detailed account of the crimes of which the prisoners stand convicted. However, we have found that such a public account... is followed by a rash... of exactly similar crimes. So we have decided in the best interests of all to discontinue this practice.” (Atwood, 1998: 275).

This quotation shows that a criminal endeavor, which in this case is escape attempt, might spread among other oppressed women if government shows what and how the crime is done. Therefore, in order to avoid similar crime, the government refuses to publish the criminality detail. Besides, these criminals are examples for the other oppressed women because, according to Offred, “Through them we show ourselves what we might be capable of, after all.” (Atwood, 1998: 275).

4.1.1.5. Resolving Event

Some dystopian literature might have a resolving event such as an overthrow of the prevailing government or broken chain of the oppressed, but in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the resolving event is staggering. The ending of *The Handmaid's Tale* story has the main character's Handmaid fellow committed suicide, and has the main character captured.

On the Women's Salvaging day, Offred meets Ofglen at the salvaging moment, but after lunch, at the time Offred has her prescribed walk with Ofglen, Offred finds Ofglen is replaced by another Handmaid, as quoted, "I wait at the corner for Ofglen. She's late. At last I see her coming,... Then, as she comes nearer, I think that there must be something wrong with her... Then when she's nearer still I see what it is. She isn't Ofglen." (Atwood, 1998: 282). This quotation shows the absence of Ofglen, who is replaced by another Handmaid, whom later, Offred knows as "treacherous Ofglen". At the end of the day with the new Ofglen, the new Ofglen tells Offred that the old Ofglen commit suicide, as quoted, "'She hanged herself,' she says. 'After the Salvaging. She saw the van coming for her. It was better.'" (Atwood, 1998: 285). This quotation tells the reader that Ofglen refuses to get captured, so she hangs herself so that she would not be tortured and later sentenced to death televised throughout the Gilead.

At last, Offred also gets captured by the Eyes, the special squad of the government who is responsible to shut any repercussions within Gilead. Before she gets captured, Offred is getting ready to commit suicide after Serena Joy finds out her infidelity with the Commander, but later, a black van approaches, and

there is Nick, the Commander's driver, as quoted, "As I'm standing up I hear the black van... It turns into the driveway, stops. I can just make out the white eye, the two wings... I expect stranger, but it's Nick who pushes open the door... Nick, the private Eye." (Atwood, 1998: 293). Even though the quotation shows Nick as the Eyes, later Nick tells Offred to trust him because the Eyes whom he brings with him are also rebels.

4.1.2. Characters in *The Handmaid's Tale*

There are plenty characters in the story which contribute in building plots, and these characters would be explored further. In the story, the characters conspicuously distinguished according to genders, women and men. The women are divided into two categories, women of the households and the Aunts.

4.1.2.1. Women of the Households

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the women of the households are the women who have place in maintaining households and have to wear robes in different colors. The women of the households are divided into three: the Handmaids, the Marthas, and the Wives.

4.1.2.1.1. The Handmaids

The Handmaids are the protagonist of this story, for they are the focus which the readers should pay attention. The Handmaids are the women of the households who wear red colored robe almost everywhere they go or send to, and red is an

identity of the Handmaids. Atwood describes the detailed description of the uniform which the Handmaids have to wear, "...in their red shoes, flat-heeled to save the spine and not for dancing. The red gloves are lying on the bed. Everything except the wings around my face is red: the color of blood, which defines us" (1998: 8). The wings are fashioned for the Handmaids in order to prevent them from seeing as much as they are from being seen, as quoted, "The white wings too are prescribed issue; they are to keep us from seeing, but also from being seen" (Atwood, 1998: 8). Everything which is related to the Handmaids is in red color, including the Red Centre, the place where the Handmaids are indoctrinated, and the Birthmobile.

The Handmaids have one main direction which the other women could not do, which is to conceive and to bear a baby. The Handmaids might conceive from the prescribed sexual intercourse they have to do with their male superiors at appointed night, which is called the Ceremony. For the main character, she has her ceremonial sexual intercourse with the Commander because she is living in his household, as quoted,

"The Ceremony goes as usual. I lie on my back, fully clothed except for the healthy white cotton underdrawers... My red skirt is hitched up to my waist, though no higher. Below it the Commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body." (Atwood, 1998: 93-95).

4.1.2.1.2. The Marthas

The second group of the women of the households is The Marthas, and they are wearing green-colored robe whenever they are or they send to because green color is the identity of the Marthas. Atwood describes the uniform which the Marthas is

ought to wear, as quoted, “She’s in her usual Martha’s dress, which is dull green, like a surgeon’s gown of the time before. The dress is much like mine in shape, long and concealing...” (Atwood, 1998: 9). From the quotation, it could be seen that the Marthas look like the Handmaids, but they have green robe to wear instead of green, and the dress is concealing most of their bodies. However, different from the Handmaids, it is not an obligation for Marthas to wear the white wings around their heads and veil on their faces, as quoted, “...but with the bib apron over it and without the white wings and the veil. She puts on the veil to go outside, but nobody much cares who sees the face of a Martha. Her sleeves are rolled to the elbow, showing her brown arms.” (Atwood, 1998: 9). Marthas’ green dress also has apron since they are working in the kitchen, cooking and preparing meal, and they are also doing cleaning, so the apron is an obligatory, but they could roll their sleeves up while working, and none cares. These attitudes, which the Handmaids should not do, are special treatment for the Marthas, and they show more freedom in most of their time than the Handmaids could have.

4.1.2.1.3. The Wives

The third group of the women of the household is the Wives, and they are wearing blue-colored robe whenever they are or are going to because blue color is the identity of the Wives. Atwood describes the uniform which the Wives have to wear, as quoted, “I was expecting a Martha, but it was her instead, in her long powder-blue robe, unmistakable.” (Atwood, 1998: 13). Beside her robe, everything which the Wives has is also in blue color, as quoted, “There are several

umbrellas in it... blue, for the Commander's wife,..." (Atwood, 1998: 9). Beside the blue robe and umbrella, the Wives are also wearing veil, but their veil is light-blue instead of white, as quoted, "...a light-blue veil thrown over her wide gardening hat,..." (Atwood, 1998: 12).

4.1.2.2. The Aunts

In the story of *The Handmaid's Tale*, beside the women of the household, there are other women, who live as superior to the Handmaids in order to mentor them to be Handmaids. The women are the Aunts, and these women are first spotted in the story, warding the Handmaids, as quoted, "The lights were turned down but not out. Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth patrolled; they had electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts." (Atwood, 1998: 4). From the quotation, beside the names mentioned, the appearance of the Aunts is also described. In the Red Centre, the Aunts act as warden to the Handmaids, and the patrolling demeanor approves the statement that the Aunts are superior to the Handmaids, as if the Handmaids are the prisoners to be watched. Moreover, according to the story, they are carrying cattle prods, in case of disturbance from the Handmaids so that the commotion could be consoled.

4.2. Extrinsic Aspect

This part would discuss about the influence of political and social values existing in the story, and also how the characters are influenced by political and social issues. In this extrinsic aspect, the application of Marxist-feminism theory, which

is focusing on women, would be discussed, and the discussion would be described in several parts, which are women's social structure, Gileadean interpellation, and women as breeding apparatus.

4.2.1. Women's Social Structure

In this section, the writer would explain the women's social class in *The Handmaid's Tale*, about how a group of women dominates other groups of women while another is submissive toward others, and how each group influence each other in daily basis. As the reader have recognized, the women are the Handmaids, the Marthas, the Wives, and the Aunts.

4.2.1.1. The Handmaids

In the story of the oppressed women, the Handmaids are the lowest grade of women among the women of the households. Comparing to the Marthas, the Handmaids are slightly lower because the Handmaids accepts order from the Marthas in several cases. Whenever the household runs out of groceries, the Handmaids ought to buy the groceries while doing prescribed walking, and a scene is shown when Rita, one of the Marthas, sends Offred to get the ingredients she needs, as quoted,

“I take the tokens from Rita's outstretched hand. They have pictures on them, of the things they can be exchanged for... ‘Tell them fresh, for the eggs,’ she says. ‘Not like last time. And the chicken, tell them, not a hen... ‘All right,’ I say. I don't smile. Why tempt her to friendship?’” (Atwood: 1998: 11).

In the previous quote, it could be seen that there is an authority shown by Rita within the conversation, which she gives an order to Offred to get what she wants instead of what she needs, and it clearly gives a statement that the Handmaids are inferior to the Marthas. Moreover, there is a scene which shows Offred asking a match to Rita, as quoted, “Rita’s sitting at the kitchen table... ‘Could I have a match?’ I ask her. Surprising how much like a small, begging child she makes me feel, simply by her scowl, her stolidity;...” (Atwood, 1998: 207). This quotation shows Offred, as a Handmaid, needs permit from Rita, a Martha, to have a mere match, and this scene also shows how a Handmaid is under the authority of the Marthas.

The Handmaids are also inferior to the Wives, and the scene could be seen when Offred meets Serena Joy, the Commander’s Wife, for the first time, as quoted, “She didn’t step aside to let me in, she just stood there in the doorway, blocking the entrance. She wanted me to feel that I could not come into the house unless she said so.” (Atwood, 1998: 13). In the quotation, it could be said that Serena Joy, under whose authority Offred is living, is showing her authority by not giving permission for Offred to enter the Wife’s house until she permits her. The inferiority is also shown in the scene when Offred is standing while Serena Joy is sitting on her chair, as quoted, “In here, said the Commander’s Wife. When I went into the sitting room she was already in her chair, her left foot on the foot stool, with its petit point cushion, roses in a basket... I stood in front of her, hands folded” (Atwood, 1998: 14). This quotation, especially the described hand-folded

gesture, shows the submission of the Handmaid toward the Wife, and with such submission, it is clear that the Handmaids also inferior to the Wives in general.

4.2.1.2. The Marthas

Different from the Handmaids, The Marthas' level in the household is slightly higher than the Handmaids. The Marthas have more freedom in several things which the Handmaid could not freely do.

In the story, Offred explain that the Marthas knows things because they could talk more freely with other Marthas, so it means they have higher chance to meet other Marthas, as quoted, "The Marthas know things, they talk among themselves, passing the unofficial news from house to house. Like me, they listen at doors, no doubt, and see things even with their eyes averted." (Atwood, 1998: 11). This quotation shows that the Marthas have more freedom in delivering speeches among themselves, unlike the Handmaids who could meet other Handmaids only in special occasion, and stay in solitude more than the Marthas. Moreover, the Marthas have more freedom of speech in front of the Wives, unlike the Handmaids, because at a moment, Offred calls Serena Joy "Ma'am" and she scolds her, as quoted, "Yes, Ma'am, I said. Don't call me Ma'am, she said irritably. You're not a Martha." (Atwood, 1998: 15). This quotation shows that the Marthas could address the Wives more freely than the Handmaids.

The social level of Marthas could also be seen at the Women's Prayvaganza, a moment when all women of any social class gather for reciting. During the moment, each class of women has their own place to fill, and the

Marthas have their place, different from the Handmaids, as quoted, “The galleries above, with their concrete railings, are for the lower ranking women, the Marthas,... Attendance at Prayvaganzas isn’t compulsory for them, especially if they’re on duty or have young children,...” (Atwood, 1998: 213). In the quotation, it shows that the Marthas have freedom whether to come or not to the Prayvaganza, unlike the Handmaids which Prayvaganza is a requirement. Moreover, the quotation says that the Marthas have their place on the galleries, unlike the Handmaids who have segregated place to sit, as quoted, “Our area is cordoned off with a silky twisted scarlet rope... This rope segregate us, marks us off,...” (Atwood, 1998: 214).

4.2.1.3. The Wives

Compared to the Handmaids and the Marthas, the Wives are on the highest level among the women of the household, and the Wives have many privileges which the other women of the household could not afford, such as having luxuries and domination.

First, the Wives could have their own garden to maintain, and they spend most of their daylight activity in their garden, as quoted, “Many of the Wives have such gardens, it’s something for them to order and maintain and care for.” (Atwood, 1998: 12). Beside a place for themselves to be maintained, the Wives also could attain luxury, such as jewelries and miscellaneous items, including cigarettes which is only available in the Black Market, as quoted, “...her left hand on the ivory head of her cane, the large diamonds on the ring finger... She had a

cigarette, and she put it between her lips and gripped it there while she lit it... The cigarettes must have come from the black market,..." (Atwood, 1998: 14).

Second, the Wives have domination over the other women of the household, and their domination makes them overpower the other women of the household. In the story, Offred says, "...the transgressions of women in the household, whether Martha or Handmaid, are supposed to be under the jurisdiction of the Wives alone." (Atwood, 1998: 162). Previous quotation clearly shows that the Wives are holding power upon the other women of the household, and the other women of the household should be submissive to them because if the Wives want, they could send other women of the household easily to the Colonies with any false evidences.

4.2.1.4. The Aunts

Among entire women in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the Aunts are the women with privileges and exceptions of rules, and they are overpowering other women. In the story, there is a global prohibition for women to not to read and write, but the Aunts have privilege, and as flaw in the rule, that they could read and write, as quoted, "...Aunt Lydia would have said, without looking up from her desk, where she was writing something. For every rule there is always an exception: this too can be depended upon. The Aunts are allowed to read and write." (Atwood, 1998: 129). The privilege shows the superiority of the Aunts because they could write and read, unlike the women of the household who are not allowed to read and write.

Another example from the Aunts which show their authority upon other women is shown when the Salvaging is commenced at a moment. The reader could see that it is an Aunt, Aunt Lydia, who is leading the Salvaging ceremony, as quoted, “Now the official procession is approaching the stage, mounting the steps at the right: three women, one Aunt in front,... Behind them are the other Aunts... The three arrange themselves, turn towards us, the Aunt flanked by the two black robed Salvagers. It’s Aunt Lydia.” (Atwood, 1998: 274). From the quotation, it could be noticed that while the other women are sitting and standing at the Salvaging, the Aunts are leading the event. Considering the Salvaging is an event held by the government, the Aunts are representing the government to speak in front of the women, making The Aunts hold the authority over other women.

4.2.2. Gileadean Interpellation

In *The Handmaid’s Tale* story, the Republic of Gilead is the prevailing government, and the story tells that the pre-Gilead regime was once the United States of America, but with military force, the Gileadean overthrown the government of America. In maintaining the government so that they could achieve their goal, the Gileadean regime applies interpellation upon its citizens, especially the women, and there are many ways of interpellation to influence its people.

4.2.2.1. Aunts’ Indoctrination

In the story, the Aunts exist with the aim to indoctrinate the Handmaids so that the Handmaids would be submissive to rules of the Gileadean regime. At the ending

of the story, the story tells the reader about why there are women, the Aunts, who surpass other women in the Republic of Gilead, as quoted, "...was of the opinion from the outset that the best and most cost-effective way to control women for reproductive and other purposes was through woman themselves... control of the indigenous by members of their own group." (Atwood, 1998: 308). This quotation refers to the Aunts, concerning those only women who understand women; therefore, it should be through the Aunts in indoctrinating the Handmaids.

In the story, the Handmaids mostly have their own room in a house they live, and the Handmaids are prohibited to be unnecessarily out of their room, making the Handmaids more like prisoners. However, this problem are consoled by the Aunts through indoctrination, saying, "Where I am is not a prison but a privilege, as Aunt Lydia said, who was in love with either/or." (Atwood, 1998: 8). This indoctrination gives the Handmaids a chance to reconstruct their thought of a room, not as a prison with them as the prisoners, but as a working room for the Handmaids as important people. Offred, the Handmaid, once show her rejection to call her room as her own room, as quoted, "The door of the room – not *my* room, I refuse to say *my*..." (Atwood, 1998: 8). However, due to the indoctrination, Offred seems to get rid of her refusal, and later, she calls the given room as her own room, as quoted, "Was he invading? Was he in my room? I called it *mine*." (Atwood, 1998: 49).

Moreover, concerning freedom of the Handmaids, the Aunts also try to reconstruct the thought of freedom of the Handmaids as Aunt Lydia talk about two kinds of freedom, as quoted, "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, 1998: 24). This quotation shows about how Aunt Lydia indoctrinates the Handmaids about how the Handmaids should be grateful for being given freedom although the Gileadean regime has taken the freedom of the Handmaids, especially the "freedom to" or the active freedom. In order to reverse the fact that the Gileadean regime removes active freedom, the Aunts indoctrinate the Handmaids about the perception of passive freedom, and basically, the Gileadean regime pretends to provide passive freedom, the "freedom from", a protection. Therefore, the Handmaids would think that they should be thankful for the protection they have received, although the protection is just a mere illusion since the Handmaids are living under the pressure of death penalty and alienation.

The Handmaids are also the lowest and most despised women because of their capability of conceiving. The Handmaids might feel unworthy about themselves through the hate, but the Aunts try to convince the Handmaids as if the Handmaids are the most important among the women, as quoted, "Aunt Lydia said she was lobbying for the front. Yours is a position of honor, she said." (Atwood, 1998: 13). This endeavor done by the Aunts is to pacify the Handmaids so that the Handmaids believe their nature as a Handmaid is honorable. Through this indoctrination, the Handmaids grasp the false consciousness that being a Handmaid is a pride.

4.2.2.2. Influence of the Colored Outfits

The prescribed color of the outfits which the women, especially the Handmaids wear, are also an endeavor of the Gileadean regime to produce false consciousness. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the women living in the Gileadean regime are wearing robes as uniform; an identity which women of the Republic of Gilead should wear, and each group of women has their own color, which is red for the Handmaids. Those colors of robe are bestowed by the Gileadean to make false consciousness among women, which to segregate women based on the color of outfits, trying to make them believe that those colors hold power among each of group of women.

For the Handmaids, who are identified as women in red, they are being deceived by the government into false consciousness using their red robe identity, showing that they are the women for breeding purposes; therefore, in order to keep their fertility intact, they should live as chaste vessels. Offred, the narrator, tells about her past life, which is about how men were freely flirting, whistling at any women walking along the road. However, in Offred's recent life as a Handmaid, those random flirting and whistling from men are forbidden, especially toward the Handmaids, as quoted, "Now we walk along the same street, in red pairs, and no man shouts obscenities at us, speaks to us, touches us. No one whistles." (Atwood, 1998: 24). This quotation shows how people in the Gileadean regime are avoiding any pair of red, who is the Handmaids, in order to avoid any unnecessary perturbation. This avoiding behavior concerns with how the government tries to make false consciousness upon the Handmaids, which is to make the Handmaids feel as if they are sacred vessel and in any way are

prohibited to be harassed. However, this action also contributes in how the Handmaids have a stereotype as the despised and mostly segregated since they have to be avoided at glance because of their red color.

The endeavor of making false consciousness upon the Handmaids is also shown at the Prayvaganza moment, or at any women's gathering moment. In such moment, the Handmaids would get their own place according to their red color, as quoted,

“Here there are no chairs. Our area is cordoned off with a silky twisted scarlet rope, like the kind they used to have in movie theaters to restrain the customers. This rope segregates us, marks us off, keeps the other from contamination by us,... so into it we go, arranging ourselves in rows, which we know very well how to do, kneeling then on the cement floor.” (Atwood, 1998: 214).

This quotation shows how the Handmaids are being treated lowly as they have to sit in segregated area and they have to kneel instead of sitting. This behavior is also a regulation from the Gileadean regime to produce false consciousness which tell people that the Handmaids are different from other women. Moreover, the scarlet rope also works as a place marker, which the red color identifies the Handmaids, and the red color also segregates them from other women, or other women from them. The kneeling position also confirms the false consciousness which indirectly says that the Handmaids are the lowest among other groups of women.

Unlike the Handmaids, the Marthas and the Wives are into different false consciousness in their green and blue robe. For the Marthas, who are identified as women in green, they are more likely to be ignored instead of being avoided while on the street, as quoted, “She puts on the veil to go outside, but nobody much

cares who sees the face of a Martha.” (Atwood, 1998: 9). This quotation shows how people treat Marthas differently from the Handmaids, and it might be because of the green robe which the Marthas wear so that people are ignoring them. This behavior produces such less alertness upon the Marthas, and therefore, making the green color as the color to ignore.

For the Wives, the Gileadean regime makes them the highest women among women of the households with the blue color of the Wives’ robes as the blue color identifies the Wives. In the story, Wives would be spotted wearing blue, and any women with blue color usually have their authority to show, as in the moment when Serena Joy meets Offred at the first time, as quoted,

“...but it was her instead, in her long powder-blue robe, unmistakable. So, you’re the new one, she said. She didn’t step aside to let me in, she just stood there in the doorway, blocking the entrance. She wanted me to feel that I could not come into the house unless she said so... Leave it on the porch. She said this to the Guardian, who was carrying my bag... The Guardian set down the bag and saluted her.” (Atwood, 1998: 14).

From the quotation, it shows that the behavior from a woman in a blue dress contains authority towards both the Handmaid and the Guardian. It is because of the blue color so that Offred and the guardian bows before Serena Joy, making her overpower them, and this is the endeavor to reach false consciousness, believing that the blue color of an outfit contains power.

4.2.2.3. Religion as Propaganda

In *The Handmaid’s Tale* story, the Gileadean regime has overthrown the previous government in order to fulfill their goal, which is to repopulate, because of low birth rate in the pre-Gileadean regime. There are various causes of the low birth

rate, which are infertility, AIDS epidemic, stillbirths, miscarriages, and genetic deformities, and concerning these causes, several solutions might be done to overcome these issues in order to increase birth rate, such as “artificial insemination, fertility clinics, and the use of surrogate mothers” (Atwood, 1998: 305). However, according to the story,

“Gilead outlawed the first two as irreligious but legitimized and enforced the third, which was considered to have Biblical precedents; they thus replaced the serial polygamy common in the pre-Gilead period with the older form of simultaneous polygamy practiced both in early Old Testament times and in the former state of Utah in the nineteenth century.” (Atwood, 1998: 305).

This quotation shows how the Gileadean regime applies religion as propaganda in order to fulfill its aim to repopulate. This religion propaganda is also applied to produce false consciousness upon its people, making the Handmaids and other women believe that the Handmaids are the blessed vessel to deliver babies; therefore, they have to consider themselves to be chaste. In such false consciousness, the Handmaids would also be easier to be shaped through religion, and as the matter of fact, the Gileadean regime controls the religion.

In the story, the infiltration of religion could be seen throughout the life of the narrator, the Handmaid, since religious aspect is indoctrinated to the Handmaids in the Red Center, and also the Handmaids are the subject of the propaganda due to their purpose to conceive. The application of the religion could be seen before the Ceremony, the intercourse ceremony, when the Commander has to read a verse from the Bible concerning the “surrogate mother” application, as quoted,

“The Commander, as if reluctantly, begins to read. He isn’t very good at it. Maybe he’s merely bored. It’s the usual story, the usual stories. God to Adam, God to Noah. *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.* Then comes the moldy old Rachel and Leah stuff we had drummed into us at the Center. *Give me children or else I die. Am I in God’s stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? Behold my maid Bilhah. She shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.* And so on and so forth.” (Atwood, 1998: 88).

This quotation contains a verse from the Bible, Genesis 30: 1-3, and the verse is the main idea of the whole system which the Gileadean regime applies to repopulate through the Handmaids. Moreover, through this verse also the Gileadean regime makes the Handmaids, and other women believe that the “surrogate mother” is legal and compulsory as a tribute to the religion. This verse would be proclaimed at every pre-Ceremony moment by the Commander, and through time, this verse would make the Handmaids believe that they are destined to be the “surrogate mother”, and later be a true believer under the Gileadean regime.

In order to control people through religion, the Gileadean regime uses the word “God”, or any kind of addressing which refers to God or any religious words, in several moments and places, considering the Gileadean regime as the representation of God so that people bow under the Gileadean regime as if they are kneeling before God. This addressing could be seen in the Handmaids’ salutation to other Handmaids, such as “Blessed be the fruit”, “May the Lord open”, “Praise be”, and “Under His Eye” (Atwood, 1998: 19-20). These phrases are prescribed to be mentioned, as the “Blessed be the fruit” and “May the Lord open” are the phrases mentioned when a pair of Handmaids see each other, and the “Under His Eye” is the phrase mentioned when a pair of Handmaids is about

to split. These religious phrases are Gileadean's interpellation, especially the "Under His Eye" phrase, which tries to make the Handmaids afraid of anything rebellious so that the Gileadean regime could avoid any repercussion concerning revolution.

4.2.3. Women as Breeding Apparatus

After several explanations about the Republic of Gilead, and how the Gileadean regime oppresses women to reach its goal, it is clear that Gileadean regime is a government which is based on patriarchal idea, and this argument is also mentioned in the story, as quoted, "Gilead was, although undoubtedly patriarchal in form,..." (Atwood, 1998: 308). As patriarchal government, the Republic of Gilead surely escalates men's social status but degrades women's social status by positioning men in the government while making women only for breeding purposes. According to the story,

"It was clear from the internal evidence that she was among the first wave of women recruited for reproductive process and allotted to those who both required such services... The regime created an instant pool of such women by... declaring all second marriages and nonmarital liaisons adulterous, arresting the female partners,... Men highly placed in the regime were thus able to pick and choose among women who had demonstrated their reproductive fitness by having produced one or more healthy children,..." (Atwood, 1998: 304).

From the previous quotation, it could be seen that the women are gathered according to their reproductive capability, separating the usable women from the women who are barren and useless as women, and men could choose any of those capable women to be their Handmaids. These women, the Handmaids, who are

capable of conceiving and bearing healthy baby, are later considered as women for breeding purposes only, as quoted, “We are for breeding purposes: we aren’t concubines, geisha girls, courtesans” (Atwood, 1998: 136). As the matter of fact that the Handmaids are only for breeding and for nonmarital liaison, the Ceremony which the liaison occurs should not contain any affection, but only sexual intercourse, as quoted,

“My red skirt is hitched up to my waist, though no higher. Below it the Commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I do not say making love, because this is not what he’s doing... What’s going on in this room,...is not exciting. It has nothing to do with passion or love or romance or any of those other notions we used to titillate ourselves with... Arousal and orgasm are no longer thought necessary; they would be a symptom of frivolity merely, like jazz garters or beauty spots: superfluous distractions for the light-minded. Outdated.” (Atwood, 1998: 94).

Previous quotation shows how the Ceremony, the sexual intercourse between male superior and a Handmaid, goes without affection, and this unavailability of affection or romance during the liaison concerns with the consideration of women only as breeding apparatus. Since any romance is considered outdated and prohibited, the Handmaids are just a mere heartless device to conceive.

Aside from the absence of affection between the male superior and the Handmaids, the Handmaids as the breeding apparatus also prohibited to own the baby they have delivered, making the Handmaids only as baby bearer but not as the mother. This issue occurs at the time Janine, of the Handmaids, is delivering a baby, as quoted,

“Aunt Elizabeth is gently washing the baby off, it isn’t crying much, it stops. As quietly as possible, so as not to startle it, we rise, crowd around Janine, squeezing her, patting her. She’s crying too. The two Wives in blue help the third Wife, the Wife of the household, down from the Birthing Stool and over the bed, where they lay her down and tuck her in. The baby, washed now and quiet, is placed ceremoniously in her arms... The Wives are here to bear witness to the naming. It’s the Wives who do the naming, around here.” (Atwood, 1998: 126).

From the quotation, it is clear that Janine, the Handmaid, who does the delivering of the baby, but after the baby has born, the Wife of the household owns it, and instead of Janine, it is the Wife who gives the name. This occurrence explains that Handmaids do their direction only as mere breeding apparatus since Janine only conceiving and delivering, but she does not own her baby. The Handmaids are allowed to nurture the baby whom they have delivered, but only for a couple months, as quoted, “She’ll be allowed to nurse the baby, for a few months, they believe in mother’s milk. After that she’ll be transferred, to see if she can do it again, with someone else who needs a turn.” (Atwood, 1998: 127). This quotation shows, in addition, how the Handmaids are needed in a childless household, and they would be transferred to another household to bear another child if they could. Such event could be evidence that the Handmaids are only a tool for the Gileadean regime to repopulate, but the Handmaids do not have the rights to be a mother.

Moreover, beside the inability to be a mother for their own babies, the Handmaids, and also other women, are being threatened to be alienated if they are not capable of conceiving or breeding. Basically, any women who are infertile might be luckily ended as the Marthas, the Wives, or the Aunts, as quoted,

“There was, too, a negative inducement: childless or older women who were not married could take service in the Aunts and thereby escape redundancy, and consequent shipment to the infamous Colonies which were composed of portable populations used mainly as expendable toxic-cleanup squads, though if lucky you could be assigned to less hazardous tasks, such as cotton picking and fruit harvesting.” (Atwood, 1998: 308).

However, according to the previous quotation, any women who are infertile are mostly going to the Colonies, where the Unwomen are living alienated to do dirty works, as the matter of fact that women are living in the Gileadean regime only to reproduce and to repopulate. For the Handmaids, who are considered fertile, would have trials in conceiving, and if they are able to conceive and deliver the baby, they would not be sent to the Colonies, and Janine is the example, as quoted, “But she’ll never be sent to the Colonies, she’ll never be declared Unwoman. That is her reward.” (Atwood, 1998: 127). Nevertheless, if the Handmaids, whose job is only to conceive and to bear a baby, fail to bear a baby for three times, they are likely to be discarded to the Colonies, as quoted, “...and Handmaids who’ve screwed up their three chances, and incorrigibles like me. Discards, all of us. They’re sterile, of course.” (Atwood, 1998: 248). This also could be a reason of why the Handmaids, and other women, exist under the Gileadean regime only as the breeding apparatus, whose job is to deliver a baby for the government.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study about Marxist-feminism theory, which is using *The Handmaid's Tale* novel as an object, is finally reaching to conclusion. In the discussion of intrinsic aspect, in the formula of the novel, it could be concluded that *The Handmaid's Tale* novel has dystopian fiction formula, which consists of five consecutive events.

The first occurring event is the beginning of dystopian story, which is telling how the rules and restrictions in which the main character lives suppress and limit her rights. The second event is about the desire of the main character to be free from rules and restrictions which bind her freedom. The third event happens when the desire for freedom meets the invitation to revolt by other characters, and the main character is intrigue to join the resistant against the prevailing government. There are several characters which have joined the resistant, and they are fighting for freedom, and this fourth event tells about the uprising of the oppressed. Later, there is an ending of the story which tells about the fate which the main character holds toward the ending, which is the fifth event, the resolving event.

The Handmaid's Tale also has numbers of characters, and most of them are women, and they are the center of the conflict. The women of the households are the main characters, and they are living according to the color of their outfit. The first group of women is the Handmaids, who are wearing red outfits and are

adjusted to conceive and deliver babies for the Republic of Gilead. The second group of women is the Marthas, who are wearing green outfits and are working in house maintenance, which are cooking and cleaning. The third group of women is the Wives, who are wearing blue outfits and holding the status as life companion for high-positioned men in the government. These women of the households are being restrained in illiteracy, for they are not allowed to read and write, especially for the Handmaids whose goal is only to conceive and deliver babies. However, there is a group of women who are living with freedom of literacy and are surmounting the other women, and these women are the Aunts. The Aunts are the women who indoctrinate the Handmaids to be proper Handmaids before being sent to houses, and the Aunts are the only group of women who are allowed to read and write.

In the discussion of extrinsic aspect, there are numbers of result which could be concluded. First, the women of the households are, in fact, social class in which women are living, and the highest women in the household are the Wives, but outside the household, the Aunts overpowered the Wives. The Handmaids are the lowest among other women because they are submissive toward the Marthas and the Wives. The Marthas are higher than the Handmaids, but both the Handmaids and the Marthas are inferior toward the Wives because the authority of the women of the households is in the Wives. However, compared to the Aunts, the Wives are less-privileged since the Aunts are literate while the Wives are prohibited to read and write. The Aunts also play role as hands of the government, for they are leading the women of the households in any women public events.

Second, in order to keep holding authority and power, the Republic of Gilead is applying interpellation upon its citizens, especially the women. The Republic of Gilead uses the Aunts to indoctrinate the Handmaids by telling that their work as baby bearer is sacred and saying that the Handmaids should be grateful for being given freedom. Besides, the Republic of Gilead also uses the women's outfit as a symbol of their authority, which is making the women believe that they are in charge of the household, yet, as the matter of fact, they are just mere tools for the Republic of Gilead. Moreover, the Republic of Gilead uses religion as propaganda, making its citizen to believe that Gilead's authority in choosing the "surrogate mothers" is purposeful and holy because it is according to biblical verse. Finally, the Republic of Gilead is using women only as tools for their purpose, which is to repopulate.

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