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## Chronotopic Study of Gendered Space in Margaret Atwood Selected Works

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## **Dedications**

To my parents: **Benlahrech Fattoum & Selt Ahmed**, my pillars of support and guidance, I dedicate this work. They are the ones who have always believed in me and unhesitatingly pushed me to the highest crests of success. I would never be thankful enough to my wonderful sister, **Amel**, who never ceased assisting me throughout all my life. I am also grateful to my daughters **Maria** and **Dania** who immersed me with their unconditional love and tolerated my frequent absence.

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## **Abstract**

Within the context of postmodernism, the proliferation of scholarly studies concerning the deconstruction of the geographical borderlines of “socially constructed spaces” has mirrored a parallel growth among feminist studies of gender, space, time and power. Correspondingly, this study offers a spatio-temporal examination of the categorization of spaces which results in the production of gendered ones that are bound by parameters of power and resistance. It looks into how these gendered spaces are produced and represented in literature through selected works of Canadian writer Margaret Atwood whose fiction serves as a textual tribune that articulates female’s struggle against marginalization and detention. Through the use of an eclectic approach, the present thesis chiefly aims at conducting a chronotopic study of gendered spaces in order to illustrate the possibility of regarding them as chronotopes. Following a descriptive along with analytical methods, this research is qualitatively carried out on Mikhail Bakhtin’s literary chronotope in order to highlight the influence of the interplay of space and time on the process of the production of gendered spaces. It further draws upon Lefebvrian apprehension of space as social product as well as Michel Foucault’s views on power and resistance regarding the binary of male/female. The thesis concludes that there is a possibility of regarding gendered spaces as chronotopes in Margaret Atwood’s works that vary between dystopia, science fiction, cyberpunk and historical fiction.

**Key Words:** Chronotope, Gendered Space, Margaret Atwood, Space Production

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## **ACRONYMS**

**STDs** : Sexually Transmitted diseases.

**LGBT**: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender.

**Covid-19**: Corona virus disease that started in 2019.

**MSNBC**: Microsoft/National Broadcasting Company.

**DAWN**: Disabled Women's Network Canada.

**NOW**: National Organization for Women.

**VOW**: The Voice of Women.

**WLEAF**: Women's Legal Education and Action Fund.

**WIV**: Wuhan Institute of Virology.

# **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction**

The 'fin de siècle' is the time when the world witnessed a moment of fluid transition in which space and time began to constitute essential factors that directly affect the ability to cross or produce various ideologies. Ever since postmodernism started to forefront the academic fields, the proliferation of scholarly studies concerning the deconstruction of the geographical or civil borderlines of 'socially constructed spaces' has mirrored the parallel growth of feminist studies of gender and power relations. In this vein, the social theorist and philosopher Henry Lefebvre's conception of space contributes significantly in highlighting the quintessential role of society in forming and reformulating the spatial categorization that exists in the current world. This latter is held upon specific social traditions and cultural norms that delineate the nature of spaces.

Among the intrinsic parameters that influence the production of spaces in the post-modern world is gender. For Lefebvre, spaces cannot be regarded as merely empty stages upon which people act their lives; but rather, they are deeply embedded within cultural meanings and garnished with power relations dictated by societies. The patriarchal practices that impact the genderization of spaces are usually kept in the glooms, appearing only at the boundaries of power's dazzling glimmer. Likewise, Lefebvre's significant features of space are either political, ideological or included within the ode of space production. He claims that the gendered spaces, which are the outcome of socialism, consist a medium as well as an upshot of the human activity.

Thus, the importance of this research is echoed through its inclusion of widely debated concerns highlighting the postmodern 'spatial turn' as the focus of feminist struggle is achieving a 'spatial justice' and equality with men. Postmodern feminists tend to deal with the dialectic of sex as nothing but a biological trait that is not related to social

distribution of gender roles. In fact, the binary of sex and gender has long topped the postmodern controversies defining sex as a biological attribute whereas gender as a social construct. Therefore, the present research aims at shedding light on how contemporary feminist writers tend to project their concerns about patriarchal oppressions with a specific interest, not in spatiality per se, but rather in how it is being partitioned on a gender basis.

Correspondingly, the emerging sciences of space underwent a renaissance that recognized the importance of place and location in the contemporary literature in English, particularly the one reflecting Western societies. Recent literary studies tend to direct more attention to the importance of the setting in understanding the plot. Meanwhile, less attention is granted to its significance in relation to space, place and time. The interconnected relationship of the afore-mentioned notions engenders the holistic meaning of the chronotope as suggested by Bakhtin. The function of the latter in literary texts takes “an ideological index” (Ganser et.al, p1) through which history is articulated as an outcome of the fusion of space and time.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s views concerning the inherent role that time and space play in understanding and theorizing the novel has achieved a quantum leap in the field of literary theory. Thanks to his outstanding visions, Bakhtin was able to develop the relationship between these two essential narrative components in the novel and revealed the influential relationship between novelistic spatial dimensions and their temporal extensions. This has laid the groundwork for concepts such as dialogism and polyphony to foreground recent literary studies by dint of Bakhtin’s enriching reevaluation of the interwoven relationship between space, time and the narrative.

In the same context, tracing the interplay of space and time through Bakhtinian lens offers us the possibility of projecting it on postmodern fiction that is frequently marked out by rejection of totalities and maxims. This opens the debate for a possible

understanding of gendered spaces as outcomes of different chronotopes which overtly express gender dilemmas including the feminist struggle to voice women's plight under the tight grip of patriarchy. Margaret Eleanor Atwood stands as one of the eminent contemporary writers whose feminist tendencies are boldly articulated through her fiction. She presents speculative scenarios and eerie provisions about a potential genesis of post-apocalyptic worlds, often characterized by male chauvinism and supremacy.

With her unique way of criticizing the vices of the postmodern Western society, Atwood excels in writing a futuristic premise that allegorically aims at drawing the attention to the quandaries of the present world. Despite her reservations about being labeled as a (radical) feminist, she still insists on the urge of females to fulfill a status quo with their male counterparts. Her works artistically submit to cardinal ethos popularized by postmodernism; the thing that inspires diversity in the plotlines and the thematic construction of her novels.

Among her ground-breaking works is *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), a novel that achieved a wide acclaim amongst critics and readers alike. In fashioning a theocracy that denounces extremist religious indoctrination, environmental decay and sexist practices against women, *The Handmaid's Tale*(1985) can be rightly regarded as an inclusive tribune that announces females' inferiorization and detention to marginal spaces in dystopian societies. In a similar vein, her eleventh novel *Oryx and Crake*(2003)mirrors Atwood's political, feminist as well as ecological concerns about the hazardousness of the scientific progress and technological advancement which threaten our planet. Being classified as a cyberpunk, a literary genre that emanates as a new generic cluster within science fiction, *Oryx and Crake* (2003) pinpoints the sexist practices held against women that aim at materializing their bodies and rendering them sexual objects for men's uncontrollable desires.

What motivated this research is four-fold reasons; first, the deteriorating situation of women in different societies across the world. They are still being framed, constrained and limited by the social gender roles attributed to them because of different pretexts that vary between religion, culture and tradition. Secondly, the importance of spatiality in the postmodern world which has become a reflexive mirror of different ideologies especially the ones that directly influence the binary of male/female. Thirdly, being aware of the indissoluble relationship of space and time, choosing Bakhtin's chronotope served as an academic motive to contribute in enriching the field of gender studies. Finally, the pivotal role that writers such as Margaret Atwood play in portraying women's plight through their fiction. It is noteworthy to clap eyes on the fact that choosing Margaret Atwood's works for this thesis is chiefly because of the notable success she achieved after the adoption of *The Handmaid's Tale* TVseries that premiered in Hulu in 2017.

Likewise, the question that manifests itself at this point is: how can we achieve a chronotopic study of gendered spaces that are produced by female characters in Margaret Atwood's fiction on grounds of Bakhtin's chronotope? This query triggers the following sub-questions which are of a critical importance; first of all, to which extent can Margaret Atwood be regarded as a postmodernist writer who incorporates core postmodernist theories and literary techniques? Secondly, by noting that spatiality and gender are cardinal aspects within postmodernism what are the most relevant theoretical debates that might suggest a common ground between space, gender and the chronotope? Thirdly, how gendered spaces are produced, manipulated and challenged by major female characters in Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* as a sample? And finally how can we consider the fictional chronotopes in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* as gendered ones?

What can be hypothesized at this level is that Margaret Atwood's works can be classified as postmodern ones wherein her feminist inclinations are put forward. This

claim might be legitimate for many reasons atop of which her adoption of several postmodernist techniques such as parody, pastiche and intertextuality. In her novels, she creates parodied versions of classics including *The Penelopiad* (2005) that is also regarded as historical revision of Homer's *The Odyssey* (1614). In this novella for example, Atwood reflexively applies Lyotard's conception of 'incredulity towards Metanarratives' in order to grant a textual space and a voice to the silenced female characters in *The Odyssey* (1614) which has been told from a masculine perspective. She also makes use of pivotal postmodernist theories including Baudrillard's 'Simulation and simulacra' as she portrays simulated spaces that lack their originals. This can be traced in *Lady Oracle* (1976), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and *The Blind Assassin* (2000).

What could be further hypothesized concerning her profound adherence to her feminist views is her portrayal of female characters who struggle to maintain their agency in male-centered societies. For example, in her seminal work *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood portrays her protagonist Offred trapped in a space that maintains control over its inhabitants via discourse. Gilead's spaces are architecturally designed to confine women and objectify them using the Panopticon architecture. This latter is spitefully designed in order to indoctrinate the citizens' thoughts, bodies and actions. Accordingly, we hypothesize that the novel includes many gendered spaces starting with the novel's main spatial setting: 'Gilead'.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, since space and time formulate interconnected entities as far as narratives are concerned, we hypothesize that there is a possibility to consider the chronotopes found in Atwood works as gendered ones. Precisely, in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, we come across various spatial references that are time bound. These spatial references usually reflect essential chronotopes located in specific spaces and time frames. Because these spaces are gendered, then it might be possible to

consequently label their defining chronotopes gendered too. Examples of chronotopes that might be gendered may include: the chronotope of picaresque, the alien chronotope and the chronotope of the cyberpunk.

In an attempt to provide adequate answers to the previous problematic questions and verify the relevance of the hypotheses mentioned above, the present thesis hinges on an eclectic approach due to the diverse thematic constructions and styles that characterize Margaret Atwood's works. The present study adopts a multitude of theories and frameworks when combined together contribute in achieving a better understanding of the topic in question. It chiefly sets on the geocritical approach that represents the intersection of literature and cartography. It suggests that through literature, readers can discover spaces that are created fictitiously for the characters in any given book. This approach permits to figure out how gendered spaces are produced by dint of the spatial references dwelled by the female characters in Atwood's works. It scrutinizes them through the narrative in order to highlight how these spaces can be regarded as gendered chronotopes. Furthermore, this thesis opts for a postmodernist approach that allows us to theoretically allocate the selected novels of Atwood relying on the views of Mikhail Bakhtin, J.F Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Henry Lefebvre and finally Michel Foucault. This research is also approached from a feminist standpoint in order to bring to the fore the plight of females as it is represented through the selected novels. Finally, it abides by a qualitative method along with analytical and descriptive ones in order to achieve the core aim of the thesis.

The thesis at hand is methodologically divided into five chapters. Following a descriptive method, the first part of this thesis will offer an overview about the theoretical background escorting this thesis. The first chapter will cast light on the gradual shift from modernism to postmodernism while providing the major literary features of the latter. It

will also contextualize the Canadian literature within postmodernism through clarifying its scope and the span of its existence. Similarly, it will speculate the Canadian Literature's adherence to the dystopian genre. In addition, this chapter will elucidate the position of feminism with a specific interest in its four waves. Finally, the chapter concludes with the feminist tendencies exhibited by Canadian literature.

The second chapter, though, will provide an inclusive conception of theories related to space and spatiality with a particular focus on gender. A closer look will be taken at Lefebvre's chef d'oeuvre *The Production of Space* (1991) along with a Foucauldian understanding of space as "a locus of hegemony" by shedding light on the major factors that influence it atop of which "power". It will also investigate Bakhtin's chronotope and its components (time and space). This latter will be introduced with a particular interest in highlighting the inextricability of space and time. Additionally, the present chapter will also reveal the implications of the chronotope in literature and how it can be used as an analytical literary device.

The second part will be dedicated to the practical aspect of the present thesis. It begins with the third chapter which will offer an analytical reading of selected novels by Margaret Atwood for the sake of proving her adherence to postmodernist aesthetics. It will also review Atwood's own reservations of being called a feminist in addition to tracing how she understands feminism and how she reflects its main ideologies through her works. It will also highlight which wave of feminism that fits her own prospects. The novels that will be investigated are: *Lady Oracle* (1976), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1983), *The Blind Assassin* (2000), and *The Penelopiad* (2005).

Through following a geocritical approach, the fourth chapter will scrutinize the gendered spaces that exist in Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). It will also provide an overall picture about the architectural design of the Gileadean state and how it

is embedded within parameters of gender and power. Furthermore, it will track the life span of Offred, the novel's main character, to explore the different spaces she occupies along with other female characters. This chapter is theoretically based on Lefebvrian “production of space” as well as Foucauldian notions of power that will be applied to review the binary opposition of male/female within the context of dystopia.

Finally, the fifth chapter will be an examination of the different chronotopes that exist in Atwood's cyberpunk novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003). By adopting a geocritical approach combined with an analytical method, this chapter will apply Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope on the novel, using it as a literary device, to examine the possibility of “genderizing” it. It is noteworthy to underscore that this chapter consists the crux of this thesis as it tries to offer another reading of Bakhtinian chronotope with a specific focus on ‘topos’. Depending on this latter, we build our claim of the possibility of reading the chronotope within the context of the gender realm, forwarding, as a result, the idea of ‘gendered chronotopes’.

In order to conduct this research a number of scholarly articles and books have been consulted and used as references. To mention but a few, in tackling space as an important subject matter for the present work, theories of Henry Lefebvre are of a great importance. In his book *The Production Of space* (1992), Lefebvre tackles issues related to dialectical materialism, architecture, urban lifestyle and the experience of everyday life. His book formulates a mutual ground between mental and real spaces. He vindicates that space is a production process that takes place in terms of three interconnected dimensions. He defines these three dimensions in two ways: he uses the concepts of “spatial practice”, “representation of space” and “space representations”.

He further affirms that a social space contains not only a concrete materiality but a thought, a concept, a feeling and an experience out of which space emerges. The

quintessence of Lefebvre theory of production of space lays in his identification of three moments of production: material production, production of knowledge, and the production of meaning. Lefebvre theory is significant in the present research because it translates the experience of the oppressed women living in patriarchal societies that are characterized by a masculine supremacy and male-centrism. Through a Lefebvrian lens, we examine how women tend to produce their own spaces which can be regarded as both spaces of detention and/or empowerment. .

Furthermore, to illustrate the influential relationship between space production and power within the context of feminism Michel Foucault's views on the panopticon and bio-power are of a primordial significance to the present thesis. In his work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1975), Michel Foucault offers a description of the space of surveillance which he terms "Panopticon" referring to the architectural design introduced by the social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. He criticizes the current development of prisons and claims that the only thing that has changed compared to the old system of punishment of public executions and torture is that the focus is now directed to dominating the mind instead of the body. He presents his brilliant ideas that bring out another perspective of viewing the relationship between "voir", "savoir" and "pouvoir" to illustrate that being constantly under surveillance will make the prison's inmates disciplined because of fear.

The relationship between men and women is governed by power. The way men and women are categorized within spaces alludes to the powerful position that males occupy in the society. Thus, in order to study how the power relations affect the process of space production, an investigation of gender biases and preconceptions that exist since prehistory is needed. Her book *Geography and Gender: an Introduction to Feminist Geography* (2006), Sweely offers an overview about the socially constructed differences

between males and females and how they are projected via space. In the same strain, the book of *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction (2002)* is essential to establish the theoretical ground of this thesis. The writers of this book, Iain Borden, Barbara Penner and Jane Rendell expose the interdisciplinary relationship between space, gender and architecture. The book offers a comprehensive conception about the intersection of feminism and urbanism and gathers a range of significant works of the two last decades in the field of architecture. This book is essential in manifesting the notable influence of gender presumptions on the way spaces are divided and buildings are designed.

Considering the fact that analyzing spatial presentations in literature requires contextualizing them within their temporal frames, theories of Mikhail Bakhtin concerning the chronotope are vital for this research. In his book *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981), Bakhtin introduces his own conception concerning Rabelais and Dostoevsky's works. Bakhtin's essays tackle the importance of understanding space and time as inseparable entities, dealing with "the novel" as being idiosyncratically distinctive. In the essay of *Epic and the Novel*, he concentrates on manifesting the diversity that exists in the novel as genre which maintains its nature despite the variety of forms it encompasses. While in the second one entitled *From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse*, Bakhtin investigates the origins of the novel and claims that the focal point should be studying the elements that make the novel a unique literary genre. Nevertheless, in the third article *Forms of the Chronotope in the Novel*, which consists the kernel of this research, offers an overall understanding of how the structure of space and time is revealed through language and discourse. He engages with the indissoluble nature that characterizes the relationship between space and as time and how it is artistically expressed through literature.

More recently, many scholars have dealt with the chronotope in literature but mostly with a specific focus on time. Scholar Anthony Purdy presents a different view when dealing with the chronotope. In his article *Unearthing the past: The archaeology of bog bodies in Glob, Atwood, Hébert and Drabble* (2010) he forwards the concept of the mnemotope in the works of Margaret Atwood, Anne Hébert and Margaret Drabble while dealing with the poetics of bog bodies that he considers as sites of temporal compression and spaces wherein time becomes alive elucidating the presence of the past. His research is based upon the archeological findings of beautifully preserved Iron Age bodies in the peatbogs of Northwestern Europe. Relying on the Danish writer P.V. Glob archeological book entitled *The Bog People* (1965) reveals a repertoire of tropes, Purdy argues through his article that the poetic specificity of the bog body is seen through its extraordinary capacity to weed out the temporal distance and mediate between past and present.

Into the bargain, *Queering Time: The Temporal Body as Queer Chronotope in Virginia Woolf's Orlando* (2020) Scholar Pooja Mittal Biswas studies the binary of male/female with reference to the temporal binary of past/future. She focuses on the protagonist's sex change that influences straight time and disrupts its linearity. She traces the protagonist's 'Orlando' identity crisis and links it to the temporal aspect of time. The text, according to her analysis, takes both Orlando and the reader away from straight time and into queer time, which is multidirectional, non-linear and non-heteronormative. This latter tends to partially unhitch gender identity from biological sex through a process that she labels as 'gender lag'. The focal point of her article varies between dealing with the queer agency through the narrative in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and transgender connotations exhibited by the protagonist.

Finally, as it is illustrated above, there is a rapidly growing literature on the issues concerned with space, time, gender, power and their representation in literature. However,

less works have been written to set forth the relationship between these concepts within a spatio-temporal context. As a matter of fact, there are many scholarly productions that dealt with Atwood's works within the frame of Foucault's views of power. Others have sketched out parallel lines between Atwood's novel especially *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) with other dystopian works such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty four* (1949).

Notwithstanding, many subjects remain off the table including the relationship between the aforementioned concepts and the chronotope. Thus, this research comes as a tentative contribution that would enrich the academic discussion about the possibility of achieving a chronotopic study of gendered spaces through discussing the idea of genderizing the chronotope; the core quest of this thesis. It further suggests a less debated subject which is reading dystopian works through Bakhtinian chronotopes, including the potentiality of regarding the cyberpunk as a gendered chronotope.

## **Chapter One**

# **A postmodernist Exploration of Canadian Literature within the Context of Dystopia and Feminism**

## **Introduction**

Postmodernism is estimated to start from the mid twentieth century. Its influence is tracked through the spirit of questioning and skepticism that denies the existence of absolute truths. The movement constitutes a rejection of maxims as well as generic realities and welcomes revisions of modernist ideologies related to art and history. With its impulse towards reviewing the rational outcome of the Age of Enlightenment, postmodernism criticizes the universal validity of stable identities and knowledge, claiming that this latter is socially conditioned. The main ideologies of the movement are reflected through the twentieth century's literary productions which are characterized by specific thematic constructions responding to the postmodern condition.

Similarly, Canadian Literature, as a postmodern one, is known for its bold engagement with issues related to identity and historical heritage. It forms a reflection of postmodernist ethos since it can be regarded as a textual tribune through which Canadian writers address their national concerns about their identities and colonial past. It also mirrors the Canadian multicultural persona that embraces different populations ranging from different ethnicities. Because of its commitment to the portrayal of the situation of the individual in the postmodern world, Canadian literature voices the distress of the oppressed especially women which enriched the feminist literature.

For the afore-mentioned purposes, the present chapter follows a descriptive method relying on qualitative data. It aims at providing an overview about postmodernism as a literary movement whose influence is remarkable through the literary scope of the Canadian literature. It also offers a closer examination of the dystopian genre as a significant characteristic of the Canadian literature that is widely used by feminist writers in order to voice women's sufferings and detention in the current epoch. This chapter finishes by highlighting the different waves of feminism with reference to the Canadian

context.

### **1. Sliding into the Postmodern: bidding Farewell to modernism**

As far as literature and arts are concerned, modernism refers to the rejection of the Victorian values and the exploration of the historical changes that inspired the modern tendency towards dealing with subjects related to the industrial lifestyle and realistic concerns. In order to track the gradual shift from modernism to postmodernism, we need to swing by the scope and the main characteristics of both movements which will be given in details in the following lines.

Academically speaking, modernism has brought about significant changes in philosophy, arts, music and literature. Among its characteristics are the incoherence of meaning and the unreliability of the narrator as well as subjectivity, metafiction, split temporalities and interior monologue. Tracing back the emergence of this movement takes us back to the second industrial revolution (1870-1920), a period during which professionalism and a shift to an alienated urban lifestyle characterized the era. In fact, the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had witnessed a number of political crises that resulted in different revolutions and wars which contributed to a great extent in leading the world towards a ‘turning point’ that paved the way to the emergence of romanticism. This latter was a reaction against the drawbacks of the industrial revolution which despite the fact of being an economic success was a social failure.

This movement was characterized by an emphasis on the individual and subjectivity. It was also characterized by the glorification of nature as a source of inspiration and art as well as freedom of expression. Nevertheless, by the end of the mid-century the Romantic Movement witnessed a change in its essential ideas paving the way to positivism. In fact, during this time Romanticism was labeled by a stable governing form that influenced critics to call realist political as well as aesthetic ideologies “Victorian ones”. The word

modern describes everything that is produced within the current times; modernist, on the other hand, denotes the experimental elements that feature the traditional literary forms. Indeed, modern writings include history as an essential characteristic through which writers embed specific techniques and approaches to accomplish their literary works. In the same token, modernism can be defined according to Cuddon as follows:

A very comprehensive term applied to international tendencies and movements in all the creative arts since the latter end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Professor Kermode has made a distinction between Paleo-modernism and Neo-modernism. Paleo-modernism refers to early manifestations of new movements concluding, perhaps, c 1914-20, while neo-modernism refers to movements (like surrealism) since that time. As far as literature is concerned modernism reveals a breakaway from established rules, traditions and conventions, fresh ways of looking at man's position and function in the universe and many ( in some cases remarkable) experiments in form and style. (399)

As it is indicated in the quote above, despite the various divisions and controversies in labeling modernism and modernist periods, it remains a revolutionary movement. According to some western ideologies, it has formed a kind of detachment with the maintained rules and regulations and embracing new ways of viewing man and the universe.

### **1.1. Shifting towards Postmodernism**

If we speak of the current period, we undoubtedly speak of postmodern age. As a philosophical movement, Postmodernism is seen as a response to the previously maintained philosophical assumptions and values that used to characterize the modern period. Unlike Modernism, the term 'Postmodernism' engenders multiplicity of opinions concerning its emergence, existence as well as meaning. What stimulated its emergence is

the shift in perception attributed to the academic institutionalization and canonization of Modernism. In the same respect, T. Eagleton defines Postmodernism this way: “The contemporary movement of thought which rejects totalities, universal values, grand historical narratives, and solid foundations to human existence and the possibility of objective knowledge” (23). The term was first mentioned by Ihab Hassan to reveal that there is a break away with the ancient ‘avant-gardist’ style and to mark signs of resistance against modernist literature. His definition focused on the aesthetic side of postmodernism as far as the structure, language and form are concerned.

Even though it is difficult to draw a clear cutting-edge between modernism and postmodernism, this latter, still keeps track of modernism, following most of its ideas embodied in discarding all the boundaries that exist among high and low forms of art as well as denying stringent genre distinctions. Postmodernism also, affirms, parody, bricolage, pastiche, irony, and other techniques. Furthermore, it is worthy to mention that Postmodern art and thought supports reflexivity and self-awareness, fragmentation and discontinuity when it comes to narrative structures. Certain traits that are deemed to be essentially attributed to this controversial movement are: ambiguity and simultaneity, with a special interest in all that is de-structured, de-centered and marginalized subject.

It is noteworthy to mention that the shift towards postmodernism was characterized by confusion in the sense that many scholars such as Warren Montag observe that there is not a total break away with modernism but rather there is a blurring line of continuity between the two movements . In this respect he suggests:

The irreversibility of any theoretical break is necessarily linked to its unevenness and incompleteness to the obstacles that it inevitably throws up to its own development. Philosophy, in turn, is never simply the guardian of a theoretical truth; it is the space in which the meaning of the developments in knowledge is

constantly determined and fought over. It is a conflict between tendencies that seek to annul a given break or mutation (or, failing that, to exploit this 'event' to their ends) and tendencies that seek to clear the way to its further development. (89)

According to Warren, the separation between the two movements cannot be categorically set because of the continuity of the theoretical set of both movements. Also, by noting that the appellation is still the same with adding only the prefix "post" suggests that the postmodern is nothing but an extension to modernism as far as its temporal context is concerned.

Postmodernism and subjectivity may be considered as two faces of the same coin as both discard the concept of an absolute truth or an objective reality. It is applied to various disciplines starting from culture arriving at architecture. Among the pioneer philosophers to predict Postmodernism is Frederick Nietzsche who proclaimed: "Nihilism stands at the door" (11). Nietzsche's notion of nihilism relates to the postmodernist thought that rejects the idea of absolute truth and its canonic representation. His emphasis on the skeptical nature of the current world embraces the diversification of realities as well as the inauthenticity of truths. He promoted the emblem of "Death of God" (11) that consolidates the postmodern sense of dubiety and disbelief.

What characterizes this current time is the brisk advancement in technology and science. This change has impacted the mindset and the psyche of people. They can hardly discern reality in a world filled with replicate copies. The absence of absolute truths and unauthentic versions of reality has led people to remain stuck between the blurring lines of reality and delusion. This elucidates Baudrillard's ideas sustaining suspicion and doubt that characterizes the post-modern era as he suggests that what is happening is "... no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of sustaining the signs of the real, this distorted hyper-reality of Postmodernism" (Baudrillard

16). By taking literature as one of the forms that simulates reality and depicts it as it is with adding some fictitious elements to serve its aesthetic and artistic purposes, it is worth to mention that postmodern literature is no exception as it incorporates elements from social reality.

Certainly, postmodern thought, as far as literature is concerned, invites the reader to dig deeper into literary texts and extract related theories from them. It calls readers to be part of the works through moving beyond the mere reception of narrative into a sophisticated level of narrative self-reflections. In the same token, Jean-François Lyotard in his well recognized work *The Postmodern Condition: A report on Knowledge* (1984) contends that unlike modernist writers who sought to introduce meaning in a chaotic world, postmodernists abstained from this idea and instead promoted finding meaning among multiplicity of possibilities through “metanarratives” that direct more attention to “small narratives”.

There are numbers of themes and techniques that distinguish the postmodernist writings. First of all, there is the notion of metafiction. This latter focuses on the relationship that exists between reality and fiction through the use of irony and self-reflection. It is regarded as a challenging tool that writers use in order to defy the traditional authority of the author. It also serves to alter the linearity of plots so as to make unexpected moves and comment on it with preserving emotional distance. Secondly, the notion of intertextuality that emphasizes on the relationship between one text and another within the context of interwoven threads of literary works throughout the course of history. Third, there is fabulation; it is one of thoroughly used techniques within postmodernism. This technique eschews realism and the traditional notions of literature through merging fantastical elements including magic and myth as well as science fiction. With little resemblance to fabulation, hypre-reality is another postmodernist technique that

reveals how reality is mediated through its copy or its “simulation”. In the same way, fragmentation is the notion that suggests uncertainty and the idea of the absolute truth, suggesting that reality is manipulated by both people and states for purposes related to power.

Moreover, perhaps the most remarkable trait of postmodernist novels is the impossibility of writing original works which is popularized by the paradoxical themes of ‘End of writing’. In effect, the object of imitation and self-conscious reflexivity has come to light. Hence, Postmodernism shapes a break away with traditional ideologies and beliefs. Postmodern literature challenges the reader to look into the cultural assumptions of the function of literature through studying its themes relying on the appropriate techniques.

### **1.1.1. The Postmodern Novel**

Postmodern literature is described as the kind of literature that reflects its context. It describes the development of society, culture and their depiction in literary texts. It demonstrates various problematic issues that characterize the current time such as identity crisis, struggle for legitimization as well as survival in a dystopian society. The postmodern movement suggests a total breakaway with the traditional conventions and all what is canonic. Indeed This movement aims at democratization of the public life allowing minorities (ethnic, religious or sexual ones) to speak up boldly about their views and celebrate their differences and existence. This movement has ironically took place at the time when Eastern as well as Central European countries gained more authority under the influence of USSR. Moreover, with the spread of more liberal thoughts that allowed more opportunities of work and education to various minorities, Postmodernist literature has been and still is being continuously enriched by the contribution of writers descending from different ethnic backgrounds among which we mention: blacks, Hispanics and

different genders (feminist as well as gay and lesbian) literature.

To talk thoroughly about the postmodern novel, a deep explanation needs to be provided concerning its nature, themes and characteristics. As far as the thematic construction of the postmodern novel, the reflection the postmodern times is still evident even though it is not identical to reality. What characterizes this movement is the fresh view of arts and their forms that reject the traditional depiction of reality from an aesthetic perspective. Postmodernist writings are not far from reality they constitute realistic experiences with some pinches of fantastic elements. Most of the themes dealt with, within the context of postmodernism, are related to ecological crisis, the importance of freedom of expression and choice and the criticism of governments, condition and consumerism.

Furthermore, drawing on what is previously mentioned concerning the birth of uncertainty with existential thoughts, the postmodern age is referred to as the age of indeterminacy; nothing is sure or certain anymore. This feature that is warmly welcomed by novelists has become one of the characteristics of the postmodern novel on merit. This sense of indeterminacy is fueled by the current human sense of being fragmented. This latter is consolidated by the spread of the Nietzschean notion of Death of God that transmitted this sense of fragmentation to different spheres of life. Indeed, this uncertainty and fragmentation is reflected in the disconnection of the story parts, collage and mixing of genre that take place unexpectedly. Also, the postmodernist novel reflects perfectly how the post-modern era rejects canonization and embraces multiplicity of voices, ideas and orientations.

Furthermore, what makes the postmodern literary works distinct is the authors' admission of the lack of originality in their works. In a postmodern context, originality is often mocked at and parodied. Writers refuse to validate the thought of original works claiming that it cannot be attained. Falling into imitation and intertextuality is inevitable

whether intentionally or not. In the same respect, Michel de Certeau suggests:

By postmodern I mean a loss of the possibility of originality, which is articulated in two ways: one (the limit of the number of stories that can be told, two (the exhaustion of stylistic inflection and variation. Postmodernism, characteristically, instead of confronting this fact of the writing process, celebrated it, and thereby subverted it . Rather than worry about originality, postmodern authors have turned a lack of originality into a feature of its style.(82)

As it is elucidated in the quote above, postmodernist writers do not direct much prominence to the originality of ideas and thoughts they engage in, they rather consider the process of alluding to other works or sometimes copying their content with different linguistic or cultural contexts as a characteristic of their writings that either aims at providing a new understanding for them or simply parodying them.

Another feature that distinguishes postmodernist writers is the excessive use of metafiction. There is not a cutting-edge definition for Metafiction because defining it depends on several variables among which the context, the genre and the theme of the works dealt with. However, Ingen Christensen defines it as :

fiction whose primary concern is to express the novelist vision of experience by exploring the process of its own making .This definition indicates that only these works are considered metafiction where the novelist has a message to convey and he is not merely displaying his technical brilliance (11)

Thus, according to what is highlighted in the quote above, metafiction as a genre that postmodernist writers use because it aims at describing the beauty and the complexity of the experiences they speak of in order to find limitless freedom to express their own views.

The postmodern novel has provided a textual space that can be regarded as a

tribune through which writers find comfort to express themselves not as mere individuals but rather as samples of a larger community, a deeper history and a bigger struggle. In this context, it becomes necessary to state the intrinsic role of postcolonial literature, which forms a counter-discourse, to denounce the sufferings of the ex-colonized nations. Furthermore, this subject cannot be drawn upon without making reference to feminist movements that call for women's rights. They add an absurd and sarcastic tone to their works which seems to meet the postmodern sense of meaninglessness of life. This latter is the outcome of the existentialist thought.

### **1.1.2. High and Low Cultures in the Light of Postmodernism**

Keeping its nature of rejecting and refusing what was previously set by modernism, postmodernism refuses to admit the existing boundaries between high and low cultures and art. High one is defined as the kind of art that pushes the viewer to think deeply about its meaning. It is the kind of art that can be subject to many interpretations that might fit to various experiences and points of views. It is the art that stimulates thinking and leaves a beautiful sensation when dealing with it. However, low art that is also labeled as the art of masses is the kind of simple and flat one that craves attention.

As postmodernism rejects the idea of cultural elitism, it contributed to a great extent in promoting popular culture. Postmodernists tend to criticize all what is deemed fact and canonical that is why they also reject the ideologies of the Western intellectual thought. Indeed, as it is suggested by Jean-François Lyotard, the postmodern era is the era of crisis in the Western intellect. He validates his claim by referring to the excessive use of metanarratives in postmodernist works that is due to the urge of novelists and artists to express their doubt in God and scientific progress. Modernist accuses of popular art to be void and shallow is strongly declined by postmodern philosophy. In this respect the pioneer theorist of popular art and culture Lawrence Alloway explains:

The area of contact as mass produced urban culture: movies, advertising, science fiction, pop music. We felt none of the dislike of commercial culture standard among most intellectuals, but accepted it as a fact, discussed it in detail, and consumed it enthusiastically. One result of our discussions was to take pop culture out of the realm of escapism, sheer entertainment, relaxation, and to treat it with the seriousness of art (qtd. in Storey)

### **1.1. Postmodern Canadian literature**

Canadian literature is the appellation given to all the literary productions that originate from Canada. Mostly referred to as being a postcolonial literature, still there is a room for further debate about including other genres such as travel writings and immigrant writings. Long before the European settlement, Canadian literature has been diverse because of the indigenous people coming from North America. Speaking of a Canadian literature entails speaking of indigenous cultures that engender a variety of languages, identities and traditions which is the outcome of the different populations that occupied the land. Nevertheless, after European colonization, the dominant languages were French, English and Gaelic. This diversity has ultimately resulted in literature written in these languages. The variety of languages that exist in Canada hindered forming a unified national Canadian literature.

Consequently, starting from 1846, the year Canada achieved its independence from Britain, Canadian literature has been mostly known as containing two bodies of literature: one written in French stemming from French culture and another written in English generated from the British one. In his article "Am I a Canadian Writer", M.G. Vassanji questions his literary nationality; he embarks in a philosophical journey asking questions that might be described as aporetic to some extent. He investigates the nature of the Canadian literature, trying to find a solid ground on which a relevant definition of

Canadian literature can be found. He argues that:

Canadian literature, correspondingly, would be characterized in this traditional picture by something essentially Canadian; it would explore, address the core of what Canada is and means; you might think of the theme of survival; you might think of nature—the cold, the wilderness, the prairie, the mountains, the Atlantic; of a certain, privileged kind of colonial experience. We all know the Prairie-grandmother novel; the growing-up-in- Newfoundland-or-Nova Scotia, walking-along-the-beach-with-an-ancestor novel; the World War I novel; the cool thirty something or –forty something Vancouverite novel. These are all venerable Canadian themes (190-91)

The quote above embodies Vassanji's definition of Canadian literature relying on its themes that make it distinctive. Indeed, Canadian literature it is known for the recurring themes of survival, nature as well as colonial experiences. Each historical period impacted the writings of the Canadian literature, including the different events that remained memorable in the Canadian history as a whole.

Canadian literature written in English emerged when the novel of Frances Brooke *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) was written. This novel provided a vivid personification and a portrait of Canada of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is deemed to be culturally significant, not only for Canadians but also for Americans since it encompasses different themes such as gender roles and the encounter between the Old World and the new one. The novel has also been labeled as a feminist one because it deploys a female voice through the narrative with various enchanting characters. Furthermore, Historical fiction that takes the nature of tales was also among the characteristics of the early Canadian literature. Notable examples for this literary tendency are: John Richardson's *Wacousta* (1832), Oliver Goldsmith Jr.'s *The Rising Village* (1825), and Susanna Moodie's

*Roughing It in the Bush* (1852).

Nevertheless, with the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Canadian literature started to develop and enlarge. It encompassed a wider plethora of themes including those of survival, immigrant experiences, colonization and settlement. Likewise, important social themes were also present in addition to romance, comedies and other genres including lyric poetry that was mainly dedicated to describing nature.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Canadian literature was refreshed with an unprecedented outburst of literary productions which included a wide array of themes that reflected the multicultural background of Canada. Unlike the United States of America that promotes for the emblem of “a melting pot”, Canada disseminates multiculturalism which consists an enriching factor for the Canadian literature. Being the harvest of decades of cultivation, Canadian literature, mainly the one written in English, focuses on representing Canadian history of colonization, the frontier life as well as ethnic and the multicultural nature of the country. Other literary genres of literature are strongly present such as humoristic novels in which humor is laced with serious subject matters.

The 1960's witnessed the rise of highly qualified writers and novelists such as Margaret Atwood, Rudy Wiebe, George Bowering, Robertson Davies and others. Many writers during this period started re-writing about history responding to the public interest in revisiting history through the critical lens of skilful novelists. Novels that were tale-like re-explored the past historico-political events that had a direct relationship with the modern day Canada in an attempt to re-assess history. Among these novels were: Hugh MacLennan's *Barometer Rising* (1941), *The Scorched-Wood People* (1977), Findley's *The Wars* (1977). In addition, Canadian literature celebrates its diversity just like the country itself. The notion 'Canadianess' Does not only refer to a pure Canadian citizen, it further encompasses all those who write about Canada, born in Canada , Diasporic Canadian

people or those who inspire people to talk about Canada.

Postmodern Canadian literature is the one that is concerned with Canadian themes including those of history, identity and belonging. It makes use of all or some postmodernist traits that characterize the postmodern novel. Postmodernism paradoxically consists a continuation of modernism and a separation from it. The post-modernist narrative is featured by a renewed interest in fairylike writings in which the writer occupies the role of a story teller.

### **1.1.1. Postmodern Canadian literature from a Dystopian Lens**

As it was highlighted in the previous section, the Canadian literature is different from other bodies of literature ranging from England or the United States of America for example. It encompasses a plethora of themes that can be framed within a postcolonial, postwar as well as a landscape and nature contexts. Not only that, but the Canadian literature does allow a space for the dystopian genre to be part of its scope.

### **1.1.2. Speculating Dystopian Literature as a Spawn of Postmodernism**

Defining things by their contrasts is a common way to assert their reality. In order to provide a clear understanding about “dystopia”; a controversial appellation given to describe a futuristic yet gloomy conception about the world that contradicts what Utopia stands for, a closer examination of the latter term need to be put forward. The term Utopia suggests an optimistic conceptualization of the world. It explores various fictitious possibilities and alternatives that serve noble humanist objectives, relying on sustaining a positive view regarding politics and citizenship.

Utopia, from a philosophical perspective, owes much of its actual meaning to the views of social philosophers namely John Rawls whose theory of Ideal society has gained prominence thanks to its serious engagement with the idea of justice and its

dependencies. Nevertheless, Utopia was originally coined by Sir Thomas More in 1516 to describe his vision of an ideal or perfect society. The publication of his book Utopia consists a socio-political satire that relies on frame narrative through which he provided a vivid portrayal of an island with all its political, religious as well as social customs and traditions. The book is composed of two parts: book one entitled *Dialogue of Council* and book two entitled *Discourse on Utopia*. More has coined the term Utopia from the Greek word ou-topos which literarily means nowhere and another word that can be considered as a homophone to the previous: Eu-topos which means a good place. The combination of these two terms engenders Utopia which, for More, sits on questioning the possibility of having a perfect and ideal place. However, multiple readings of the book did not reach a consensus concerning its real impetus whether it is suggestion of how to formulate an ideal society or simply being a satirical version of reality.

From Utopia stems dystopia. A term that is often intermingled with critical Utopia, so what is the difference between the two? Etymologically speaking, Dystopia “is derived from two Greek words, dus and topos, meaning a diseased, bad, faulty, or unfavorable place” (Clayes 4) So Dystopia, in short, is a literary genre that provides a figurative portrayal of a, dehumanized and scientifically progressed community whose political systems are corrupt and manipulative following totalitarian regimes. The term was first used by the brilliant philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill in 1868 in a speech that he had delivered in the house of commons, referring to More’s Utopia : “ ‘it is, perhaps, too complimentary to call them Utopians, they ought rather to be called dystopians, or caco-topians. What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they appear to favor is too bad to be practicable.’ (Speech, March 12, 1868) (“dystopia”) For Mill, dystopia is inevitable in the current world. In the same token and with the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dystopia has become a literary genre that

explores consequences of living in an oppressive world under totalitarian systems that distort people's freedoms. Furthermore, the notion of dystopia entails a set of terminology that suggests corrupt and indecent practices such as: propaganda, tyranny, idol worshipping and last but not least, conformity.

Such representation of a darker version of reality is mainly due to the consequences of the World War II which has influenced writers to have a more authentic yet stark reflection of reality in their works. The aftermath of this war caused writers to cease from depicting utopian stories in their works that represent the world as a peaceful place where manners, laws and ethics are given importance. Through their portrayal of worst scenarios that would happen in the far future, they tend to criticize their present with predictions that might actually take place if our current world remained the same. Technically, the dystopian fiction emerged as a genre by overshadowing the utopian one which was unrealistic to some extent. Furthermore, with the postmodern thought foregrounding the different academic spheres including literary works and genres, it allowed more space for dystopian literature to be accepted among audiences since it focuses on unveiling the hidden face of utopia especially as far governments and political systems are concerned. It is noteworthy to mention that the recent failed utopias that some political leaders wanted to create in their countries have resulted in the decrease of the published utopian fiction in favor of the dystopian one. Among these failed systems we can mention: The Nazis in Germany, the Soviets in Russia and other governments across the world including China and North Korea.

In the same vein, dealing with dystopia as a postmodernist genre needs to be viewed within the frame of the post-modernism as a historical period. This latter is characterized by a remarkable advancement in technology and science which has resulted in the creation of a postmodern dystopian literature that focuses vehemently on

the twisting effects of technology in worsening people's lives especially when it is manipulated by corrupt politicians. Thus, literature that is categorized as postmodern one deploys the style, language as well as the thematic features of the movement. Regarding postmodernism as a rejection of the formalist and avant-gardist tendencies paves the way towards understanding dystopian literature as a part of the cultural facet of the movement which is mainly characterized by adopting a consumerist nature related to the late capitalism. In fact, dystopia as a theme and also as a genre overshadowed utopia after the failure of communism in Europe and the shift towards adopting capitalism as an essential economic ideology including oppressive political systems. The combination of these elements influenced people's mindsets, way of thinking as well as lifestyles.

The fact that capitalist ideologies are actively sweeping across the world, touching every single aspect related to the human life, resulted in rising awareness about the way capitalism operates. Speaking about technology and science as major fields in our current world, capitalist companies tend to control, monopolize and privatize the scientific discoveries especially in medicine by sponsoring research projects and medical laboratories. In return, the results attained and the discoveries unveiled have become expensive and manipulated by leading capitalist powers and in some cases used as biological weapons ( as it is the case of the controversial pandemic of Covid-19)<sup>1</sup>. This

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<sup>1</sup>There are various claims that deem Covid-19 as a biological weapon. For example, in their article entitled *Could SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19 Be a Biological Weapon?* Scholars Arezoo DEHGHANI and Gholamreza MASOUMI investigate the different reasons that might render this deadly virus man-made. They report the various scenarios launched by the USA including some articles that were published in January, 2, 2020 by Washington Times. They claimed the virus was part of a Chinese biological weapons program, based at the WIV. This claim was rejected by BBC and later by Washington Post, published an article debunking the conspiracy theory, citing US experts. Again, in Feb, U.S. Senator Tom Cotton suggested that the virus may have been a Chinese bioweapon. Another article entitled *Corona Virus is Warfare Biological Weapon* by scholar Robert Skopec deals with the views of Dr. Francis Boyle, who drafted the Biological Weapons Act He has provided a detailed statement in which he claims that the 2019 Wuhan Coronavirus is an offensive Biological Warfare Weapon and that the World Health Organization (WHO) already has

has influenced the postmodernist dystopian literature in using technology and science as sinister tools that corrupt the human soul instead of being a medium through which humanity can ascend, develop and survive.

Henceforth, what dystopian literature engages in has a tight relationship with the happenings of the post-modern era that Lyotard describes it as “condition” in which all grand narratives are put into question including those of history, religion and science. This urges a suspicious tendency that is expressed through discourse via Metanarrative. In the same spectrum, what connects dystopian literature to the post-modern era is that it formulates a vivid portrayal and a reflective mirror that celebrates the drastic change in people’s lifestyles to keep up with the current alterations in economy, politics as well as capitalist changes in finance and markets. Moreover, dystopian genre as a postmodernist one owes much of its themes to issues defended by postmodernism since this latter consists a tribune for the marginalized to join the center by rejecting maxims and absolutes.

## **1.2. Postmodern Canadian Literature as a Dystopian One**

As it was clarified earlier in this chapter, Canadian literature represents the literary productions emerging from Canada or about Canada. This literature is valuably rich of proliferation of fiction that deals with a variety of topics including those of history, landscape as well as nature. Being exposed to the changes and novelties in the literary field, Canadian literature tends to embrace all the different genres in literature that escort the various historical periods with their accompanying emblematic ideologies. Thus,

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an idea about it. Francis Boyle is a professor of international law at the University of Illinois College of Law.

Canadian literature, through its reflection of postmodernist views, includes themes that exhibit the concerns of the post-modern age. Speaking of dystopia as an emerging genre that is continuously gaining a worldwide acclaim, notably since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Canadian literature has embraced this genre and many laudable dystopian works by Canadian writers saw light.

The characteristics of this genre are heavily found in novels written by famous Canadian writers such as Margaret Atwood, William Gibson, Megan Crewe and others. Dystopian literature as defined by Lyman Tower Sargent: “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived” (9) Indeed, the afore-mentioned writers tend to produce fiction that deals with dystopian themes mainly about possible futuristic scenarios related to current problems in our real world. They only differ in the way through which they convey such futuristic forecasts. They tend to portray a visualized corrupt society operated by different kinds of oppressive control. This latter is exercised through technological, religious or bureaucratic means with preserving the illusive image of a perfect society.

The stark views expressed through their fiction are the result of the losses of the two World Wars that were mainly waged for competitive economic and hegemonic reasons between powerful European states which did not only leave a sense of despair and loss but also created serious concerns about the outbreak of a potential third World War that would mark the end of the human civilization. These feelings of hopelessness and helplessness have become overtly reflected through dystopian fiction which is seen as an outlet to express the current world’s anxious fears. Canada, being affected by the Two World Wars has endured its remaining. Thus, Canadian writers tried to recount their feelings and perspectives through their writings relying on dystopia by following its

tradition that roots back to the famous Orwellian dystopia *Nineteen Eighty-Four* along with Huxley's *Brave New World*. In this respect, Futuristic scenarios about the end of the world and the evanescence of humanity because of abused use of technology. Anne-Marie Kroller suggests that

Near-future fiction with under currents of horror include MacLennan's *Voices in Time* (1980) and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and *Oryx and Crake* (2003). All three are set in the future after the devastation of civilization as we know it, and involve a reconstruction of the past (or the reader's present in the first two) through various documents such as tapes which have been discovered. MacLennan and Atwood – the former more overtly didactic than the latter – draw on a utopian/dystopian tradition which includes the prolific writer James de Mille (*A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* [1888]), alongside writers such as H. G. Wells, William Morris, Huxley, and Orwell. (171)

As elucidated in the quote above, notable Canadian dystopian works tend to lean more towards envisioning the potential drawbacks of scientific advancement. In most of their works, Canadian writers picture post-apocalyptic stories that does not bring something unfamiliar or new but always tend to travel back in time wherein individual freedom is confiscated.

#### **1.4. Canadian Literature within the Context of Feminism**

Canadian literature communicates a wide range of literary tendencies that meet the various contemporary cultural as well as social outlets reflecting the anxiety of the post-modern world. A part from being dedicated to the retrieval of the Canadian historical heritage, it also consists a fertile ground through which women's concerns are articulated. Ever since females started to develop a sense self-worth within their patriarchal Western societies, feminist activism started to foreground all the spheres in an attempt to seek

social justice with men. In fact, women were regarded as properties confined within their limited gender roles that restrict their mobility and constrain their liberties. In France for example, “they were still compelled to cover their heads in public, and, in parts of Germany, a husband still had the right to sell his wife. Even as late as the early 20th century, women could neither vote nor hold elective office in Europe and in most of the United States” ( Britannica) their alarming situation has incited a spark of resistance that encouraged women to reclaim their denied rights.

In Canada, like other Western societies, women were suffering from marginalization. They were objects of masculine dominance and were often treated as non-persons in the Canadian law. The early sparks of feminism were traced with women’s protests against the limitations imposed on them regarding owning properties, education and the right of having a political say in their country. Several attempts were made by feminist activists in order to fulfill equal position with men. Generally , feminism can be defined as “... a set of political practices founded in analyses of the social/historical position of women as subordinated, oppressed or exploited either within dominant modes of production (such as capitalism) and/or by the set of social relations of patriarchy or male domination.”(Kuhn 4). In this section, an overview about Canadian feminism will be given through following its historical timelines from the first wave till the fourth one.

### **2.1.First Wave Feminism**

The outset of Canadian feminism roots back to the early nineteenth century with the rising awareness of women’s detention and inferiorization. The early steps towards formulating a solid Canadian feminist stand followed a political curve. The first wave feminism focused mainly on women’s suffrage and protested for the right of women to be treated equally to men. It is important to highlight that in the Canadian law, women were not considered as persons until 1929. This wave demanded that women should be equally

privileged with the right to vote and to form political parties. It also advocated women's rights of reaching an economic justice with their male counterparts as they directed their efforts "to highlight the wage gap between men and women who worked for pay, which led to a major campaign for "equal pay for work of equal value" (Cohen 216) In addition, this wave also focused on the necessity of allowing women to own properties and to be economically independent. Likewise, Canadian first wave feminism called for women's rights concerning child custody, education and citizenship.

Engaging with first wave feminism implies highlighting the role of "the famous five" feminists whose contribution to the establishment of this movement is deemed beyond significant. Their efforts in seeking a juridical justice regarding women's right to be considered as persons bore fruit in allowing women to be valued by the Canadian law. This group of feminists was led by Judge Emily Murphy who together with Henrietta Edwards, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung and Erene Parlby succeeded to establish the cornerstone of the Canadian feminism. Women protests were considered outlawed by the government and several attempts were made in order to contain them. Among the methods followed by Canadian government was considering these protests not as ways to seek for gender justice but rather to create a sense of chaos in the country.

First wave feminism culminated with the publication of *Opportunities for Choice* in 1976 by Gail Cook. This book explained the purpose of the early feminist movement in Canada whose aim was not to stimulate public agitations against the government but rather to drag the attention to the fact that this movement has nothing against the system per se but rather with the way it treated women. In this vein Marjorie Griffin Cohen rightly contends:

We were to fight not the system but how we were treated within it. While there were conflicts with those in power in the federal government, these were fairly

minimal. The overriding objective was to influence power - to exert influence behind the scenes, while at the same time claiming tremendous support for our position from the women's movement in general. This, in many respects, was a "subdued feminism " I do not mean to imply that feminism in Canada was at this time without fire and fight, but at the federal level we were not much of a threat to the government. (And this is probably why they continued to increase our funding.)

(217)

What Cohen is trying to make clear is the real impetus behind their protests against the way women are treated. She sheds light on the real political aims of the feminist movement which are solely set to influence the system for the sake of gaining support to their case. Nevertheless, their attempts were considered as protests against the system itself and not some parts of its ideologies.

In a Canadian context, the first wave feminism witnessed a surge of activity concerning the reclamation of women's basic rights. In this movement, the demands were mostly linked to the economic situation of women whose wages for example were less than those of men. In addition, this movement advocated the right of women to be treated as "persons" endowed with all the rights that Canadian citizenship offers compared to their male counterparts. Basically, this movement, unlike popularized for, did not seek superior rights over men but rather it sought to achieve a status quo with men especially the right to preserve their mobility outside the confines of domesticity.

#### **1.4.2. Second Wave Feminism**

The Second Wave Feminism roots back to the 1800s, a period known , as Judith Hole and Ellen Levine contend in their study *The Rebirth of Feminism*, for its "Geographic expansion, industrial development, growth of social reform movements, and a general intellectual ferment with a philosophical emphasis on individual freedom" (p 2).

This movement is vigorously known by its organizational method of struggle. It carried on the torch of the first wave feminism in the sense that it continued to articulate women's suffrage and marginalization. It worked to enhance women's situation in the household and in workplaces via shedding light on the importance of valuing their efforts by granting them full rights concerning child care, birth control as well as education and employment.

This movement focuses also on the way females are represented in media and aims to challenge the traditional view of how a woman should be, look like and dress. The early marker of this movement as far as Canada is concerned is traced through the establishment of The Voice of Women (VOW) which had peace and nuclear disarmament as primary goals and then it turned into Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (WLEAF). In this sense, activists for women rights sought to liberate women and achieve political equality with men in all the fields. As mentioned earlier, the second-wave feminism adopted political methods by forming organizations. Feminist Jane Pollock a former member in NOW (National Organization for Women) asserts that women are "[...] expected to enter into a faithful marriage, to live in a nuclear family, and to limit her activities to domestic concerns, volunteer works, and social interests, that [were] severely circumscribed" these gender roles are set by society on the basis of the biological differences between males and females that operate within a larger structure of sexist power. According to Pollock, again, this differentiation is tightly connected to the psyche of both genders. She contends: "psychologically enforced cultural myth, a set of assumptions and values concerning women that have been transmitted consciously and unconsciously for millennia". Pollock highlights the crucial role of psychology in implanting this sense of inferiority within women that is why the second-wave feminists focused on the importance of making women aware of the fact that their difference from their male counterparts is not an indicator for inferiority but rather a sign of difference that

implies no form of power or hegemony.

### **1.4.3. Third wave Feminism**

Thanks to the efforts of the first and second wave feminists, third wave activists for women's rights could establish a solid base to rest their feet on. This wave carries on the struggle that their ancestors started in order to achieve equality with men. Some of the founders of this wave were literally daughters of the first wave feminists such as Rebecca Walker the daughter of Alice Walker. Third wave feminists questioned the cultural implications of gender roles both inside the house and outside it and also raised their voices to denounce the inequality and injustice that women suffer from in workplaces.

Among the issues that this movement attacks is the division between genders. Activists of third wave feminism criticize the way feminine and masculine traits were attributed to genders. They also question the relationship between gender and gender role in the sense that they do not accept such distribution of activities because they place females in an inferior position. In spite of the fact that they share similar goals with their precedent feminists of the second wave, third wave feminists as elucidated by scholars Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford "have been extremely eager to define their feminism as something 'different' from previous feminisms. Identifying themselves as a wave, the attempt to offer at least a provisional delineation of the parameters of the third wave" (xxii) the fact that they grew up in a feminist atmosphere of struggle; they had high hopes of achieving social justice and gender equality. They call for breaking the binary of gender through highlighting that the gender identity and expression are fluid and should not be socially or culturally determined.

In a Canadian context, third wave feminism dates to 1985 according to the Canadian Encyclopedia. It focuses on the denunciation of sexism, racism and violence towards women. They extended their struggle not only against social injustice practiced

against women but they also addressed the importance of erasing social barriers maintained against the poor, people of color and the disabled. There are many organizations that campaigned for the right of the disabled women such as the DAWN (Disabled Women's Network Canada) that stood for the right of this category to fulfill a decent life and achieve recognition.

In addition to their major interest in different categories of deprived women, third wave feminists encouraged same sex marriage, LGBTs rights to be assimilated in public spheres and workplaces and the right of blacks to be treated equally with the white citizens. They also carried on the march of the second wave feminists in calling for the freedom of women to control their bodies and to have the right to choose whether to keep babies or abort them. Furthermore, women activists in this movement criticized and often distanced themselves from earlier waves of feminism because, in their view, they advocated dilemmas of white women belonging to the working class and ignored the sufferings of the colored females.

There were many third wave feminists who defended women's right generally and black women specifically. In fact, they disgrace the fact that previous feminists were almost racist because they did not include the sufferings of the Black females who were subdued twice. In this respect, Black feminist Lorde Audre, who joined the caravan of feminist protest by announcing her sexual preference (being a lesbian) and by writing about the situation of black women; she contends that "by and large within the women's movement today, white women focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class, and age. There is a pretense to homogeneity of experience ... that does not in fact exist."(p 116) like her contemporaries, she focused on echoing the plight of black females that are relegated to marginal spaces because of their ethnic background.

Just Like Audre Lorde , there are other Canadian feminists that soldiered up and used their writings as weapons to fight for their rights such as Eden Robinson, Rita Wong and Larissa Lai. This latter (Larissa Lai) works on encouraging women to break the taboos of silence, to overtly speak up about their rights to express their gender and sexual orientation. In this vein she suggests:

Those of us who want voice and rights for women need still to keep fighting for them. We also need to continue to work on the narrative of what equality, justice, rights or voice might mean and what they might look like... all the racism, sexism, classism and homophobia that are built into Western culture are alive and well but, at least in Canada, we've carefully crafted ways to avoid talking about these things while still enacting their ancient and deeply entrenched structures. (Lai)

Lai finds literature as one of the effective means of protest, a tribune through which the voiceless women can channel their thoughts and as a peaceful medium to express their urgent need in maintaining their existence. She calls attention to the different methods used to silence women among which raising them from cradle to avoid talking about their femininity, their rights and their sexual preferences.

#### **1.4.4. Fourth Wave Feminism**

The fourth wave feminism is estimated to start from 2012 with the emergence of various incidents that unveiled the extent to which women were oppressed and discriminated against in different societies with different cultural backgrounds. The main purpose of this movement is to denounce body shaming of women, sexual harassment, violence and rape. According to the Britannica Encyclopedia the movement sparked when a woman in India died after she was gang-raped. Later, women benefited from the digital space that was accessible at any moment to share their protests online using hashtags. These hashtags were often shared through social media including Facebook, Instagram,

Twitter, Snapchat and Tiktok. One of the famous movements organized by the fourth wave feminists is the #metoo movement. These latter constitutes a key word used by survivors of rape, violence and sexual harassment. It started earlier in 2006 in Myspace by activist TaranaBruke.

In addition to this movement there is another one that started having the hashtag of #YesAllWomen that was initiated by an anonymous Twitter user, a Muslim girl after the shootings that took place near to the university campus of California in Isla Vista. The hashtag denounced the idea of misogyny and claimed that it is not a rare thing but nearly all women have experienced it. The killer recorded a video before he committed his heinous crime saying: “all you girls who rejected me and looked down on me, treated me like scum while you gave yourselves to other men.” (Rodger) According to the MSNBC, the killer used a legally purchased gun. Even though mass killing is not a common thing but women who are shot by their partners are numerous.

The aim behind these virtual movements is to create a sense of solidarity and empathy among women. It also serves as a reminder for women that they are not alone in what they face. Fourth wave feminists harness technology to voice their demands which are like the fourth wave feminism wide and inclusive and have a political nature since they seek justice in the field of work under the banner of equal pay for equal work. They also call for the freedom for ethnic minorities to express their various identities and to define their bodies and genders according to their own perceptions. The movement impacted virally through media and several magazines dealt with it. The Washington Post described this movement as the New Wave Feminism instead of the Fourth wave feminism claiming that:

New Wave Feminism is shaped less by a shared struggle against oppression than by a collective embrace of individual freedoms; less concerned with targeting

narrowly defined enemies than with broadening feminism's reach through inclusiveness. It's held together not by a handful of national organizations and charismatic leaders but by the connective medium of the Internet and social media. (Sanzgiri)

The journalist of Washington Post explains that the reason behind the spread of the wave is the wide scope it addresses. The fourth wavers worked on raising awareness of the masses via social media. It is important to highlight that media has facilitated the task of spreading their principles and provided them with virtual rooms for meetings and discussion to express their opinions freely. It is noteworthy to mention that after the Arab Spring, social media has gained wide recognition because of its crucial political impact that could overthrow oppressive regimes that stood up for decades.

Thus, fourth wave feminism utilizes technology as a tool of self-expression. It covers a plethora of key issues related to oppressed women across the globe regardless to their race, ethnicity, color or physical appearance. It also defends the rights of the sexually abused trans-genders and calls for their total assimilation in the public life without being judged or discriminated against. As for the Canadian fourth wave feminism, it shares the same principles with the one in the USA and Europe. The fact that the internet has rendered the whole world a small village contributed to great extent in unifying the feminist claims. Since the sufferings of all women across the world are nearly the same despite the different pretexts adopted in order to detent them.

### **1.5. The Reflection of Feminism on Canadian Literature**

The binaries of male /female, men/ women and masculine/feminine entail different paradigms of power. In societies controlled by sexist cultural norms and religious preaching, women have been deprived from their simplest rights. Nevertheless, as Foucault rightly suggests: "where there is power, there is resistance" women resisted the

masculine hegemony and started to be aware of their ability to stand up for their rights. They used multiplicity of methods such as marches and protests in order to show their refusal to be treated in a humiliating way and harnessed every possible medium to make their voices heard. Among the effective methods that women followed in order to gain their rights and have equal opportunities with their male counterparts is through discourse. Canadian women were no exception; feminist literature in Canada is among the well-recognized bodies of literature simply because the issues they defend transcend the Canadian frontiers to encompass the sufferings of women all over the world.

Canadian feminist literature is closely tied to the thematic construction of the Canadian literature as a whole. Scholar Prentice connects the Canadian feminism to Canadian nationalism as they are both reflected in Canadian literature. He claims:

By the 1960s, issues related to women's lives and experiences were explicitly woven into [women's literature]. To speak of 'Can Lit' was to speak primarily of women writers and of women's experience. . . . With the evolution of Canada into an ethnically diverse society in the post-war *era*, and the heightened awareness of the need to preserve and promote more than Anglophone culture, thousands of women contributed to the cultural mosaic that was becoming a cornerstone of the Canadian identity. (340)

As elucidated in the quote above, Canadian literature is primarily concerned with feminism because this latter does not only stress out the need of the Canadian women to achieve social equity but also it tends to cover the voiceless ethnic minorities who make an essential part of the composition of the Canadian society as a whole.

## **Conclusion**

As a conclusion, this chapter offered an overview about postmodernism as a movement characterized by its rejection of maxims and absolute truths. It tackled different literary traits that characterize the postmodern literature in general and the postmodern novel in specific. By relying on qualitative data, the present chapter followed a descriptive method in order to highlight the various features that categorize the Canadian literature as a postmodern one. In addition, the present chapter traced the influence of the scientific and technological advancements that characterize the modern age on the emergence of the dystopian genre which constitutes an essential characteristic of the Canadian literature.

This latter, as previously elucidated in this chapter, is widely used by Canadian feminist writers who harness their pens to voice and denounce women's sufferings under the tight grip of patriarchy. To this end, this theoretical part included a historical account of the development of feminism through its four waves with reference to Canada. Finally, the present chapter concludes that the Canadian literature, with its impulse towards collapsing the binary between center and periphery aims to merge minorities' voices to the canon via creating a textual tribune through which oppressed social categories such as women could be given the chance to articulate their sufferings.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Politics of Space, Gender and the Chronotope**

## **Introduction**

The concept of space has always been traditionally linked to mathematics, geometry as well as astrology. Negotiating a “space” that could be produced with reference to societal standards was undiscussable. Even though space is being abridged namely by architects, constructors and planners to a mere physical object, it has a vigorous mental as well as social impact like it is elucidated in Henry Lefebvre’s book *The Production of Space*. Social discussions about space production connect it to parameters including those of gender. Various debates concerning the substance of space have linked it to time since it grants it vitality and dynamicity. The interplay of space and time results in what the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin labels as the chronotope.

Therefore, this chapter offers a theoretical overview about the interrelated relationship between space, time and gender. It also sheds light on Lefebvrian understanding of space and focuses on his theory of production of space, in which he focuses on the social influence on the process of space production. Through following a descriptive method, this chapter engages in highlighting the notable influence of gender stratification on the categorization of spaces which results in the production of gendered ones. The fact that space is manipulated by power calls into attention the Foucauldian notion of power relations that is discussed here with reference to space and spatiality. Furthermore, in an attempt to cover the different variables that directly influence space, a closer look at Bakhtinian conception of the chronotope is deemed significant for this chapter.

### **2.1. Henry Lefebvre on Space and Spatiality**

The notion of producing space was still nascent at the time when Lefebvre developed his theory. This theory asserts that space is fundamentally bound up with social

reality. For Lefebvre, space does not exist “in itself”: it is “produced”. Lefebvre’s theory emphasizes on the idea that the production of space can be divided into three dialectally interconnected dimensions: “spatial practice”, “representations of space” and “spaces of representation”. (33) They refer to perceived, conceived and lived spaces.

According to Henry Lefebvre (1991), space is one of the most intimately experienced phenomena of the human life and probably, it is the least aspect to be reflected on since for him, space is not passively given but rather it is being actively produced by human beings. He claims that space is not fixed or constructed on the basis of sensory data nor it is self-identified through history which varies the properties of space according to different experiences that people live in different or similar spaces.

By relying on what is mentioned above, it becomes legitimate to claim that space for Lefebvre is heterogeneous and heavily connected to society and social representations. Thus, the production of space can be apprehended through the relationship between the three qualitatively interwoven kinds of spatial production, namely “spatial practices”, “representations of space” and “representational spaces”. Firstly, according to Lefebvre, the spatial practices refer to a set of characteristics attributed to specific locations which guarantee continuity in the production and the reproduction of space. This latter demands a high level of competence and performance on the behalf of the person dwelling a given space. Secondly, representations of space; they are linked to the frontal and orderly implications of relations which are held within spaces. They also include codes, knowledge as well as signs agreed upon by societies. Thirdly, representational spaces are mainly related to the covered and under-ground side of society that is totally the contrary of the frontal one, embedding complex symbolism. These three spatial modes can be grasped through other cognitive modes, co-related to three kinds of production of space. Perceived, conceived and lived spaces. (Lefebvre 56)

The perceived space is vehemently related to spatial practices and shapes the spatial counterpart of the actual process of social production. However, the conceived space, which is the second kind accords to “representations of space” or as it is mostly conceived, the space in its truest sense refers to the nature of space and the way in which this latter is conceptualized whether in a life-world terms or in the light of a philosophical or even scientific ground. As for the lived space, which correlates with representational space, it speaks about not only space that is passively lived by inhabitants through unspoken symbols and images, but also, as it is appropriated by artists and architects and described by philosophers.

### **2.1.1. Conceptualization of Space as a Social Outcome**

Lefebvrian theory of production of space directs a paramount prominence to the social space. This is due to the chief role that the social conventions of any given society play in shaping its essence. Indeed, Lefebvre in his famous books *The Production of Space* suggests that the social space amalgamates the actions of both: the individual and the collective one at both levels. It encompasses the space of the living the same way it holds the one of the dead (the grave) the ones who suffer and the ones who enjoy a good life. The social space for Lefebvre is not momentum or instant, it is rather continuous that is likened to a process through which people’s lives, experiences and behaviors contribute in defining their social space be it on an individual scale or a collective one.

Being influenced by Marxist philosophies of classes’ struggle as well as Foucauldian notions of power and power relations, Lefebvre affirms that space can be defined through the daily social activities that people carry out within the limits of their societies’ norms. He tends to highlight that the interplay of place and place-making is what engenders the definition of space as: “a part of interaction between subjects and their surroundings.” (18)

Thus, for Lefebvre, space is seen more as an abstraction. By digging further in its nature, we arrive at the point that space is not only concerned by reforming society or what he labels as “social space” but it extends to include the manners through which understanding the geographical space contributes to a whole history of change. Comprehending Lefebvrian theory of production of space necessitates the apprehension of what Lefebvre calls the three moments of production: material production, production of knowledge and production of meaning.

According to him, space can be understood within the context of the dynamic nature of a complex maze of relationships that are being produced and reproduced simultaneously with an active process that takes place through time. He theorizes space on the light of the relationship of people in different societies. His theory of production of space looks into how people are positioned in relation to one another. Lefebvre further postulates about the nature of space and the appellations that are labeled to certain ones by exemplifying the possible interpretations that might occur to people’s minds once they hear “room”, “street corner”, “marketplace” and “cultural center”. He suggests that the reason behind these appellations is deeply rooted in the social understanding of the aforementioned spaces. He believes that each space entails specific spatial practices that determine and shape its meaning; referring to the latter to be a spatial code. (Lefebvre 23)

### **2.1.2. The Influence of Power on Space Production**

Prior to the fact that space has been thoroughly discussed from various points of views and approached from different angles by mathematicians, architects and planners, it has also been mooted by philosophers from multidimensional perspectives with respect to place, society, gender and power. For some scholars, namely, Lefebvre, space is seen as a social construct that stems from people’s conceived, perceived and lived experiences in any given place. On the other hand, Michel Foucault avers that space is produced with

regard to the power relations that this latter entails. For Foucault, power relations are inevitable they govern each relationship set in between human beings regardless to their social class, gender or religion. He explains that power relations could be understood through the binary of power/resistance; this binary suggest that there is hardly a chance for one of them to exist without the other since their relationship has the type of cause/effect.

In the same token, he postulates:

[My way of studying power relations] consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out the point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies. For example to find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity. And what we mean by legality in the field of illegality (780)

Thus, drawing on Foucault's claim clarified in the quote above, we understand that power relations are to be mostly seen through the acts of resistance generated out of controlling situations. This explains why Foucault has chosen hospitals and asylums as sites to vindicate his thesis concerning the dualistic binary of power and resistance. Along the same line, Foucault does not only identify space as being a social construct but he further approaches it from a very personal level to include the body as a space in itself. When speaking about the body as a space we need first to discuss it as being a site. Since spaces are determined by social as well as cultural conventions that hold within them a hierarchy of power, then the differentiation of male/female is of an immense relevance. Consequently, the social codes and cultural modes of representation tend to restrict and

delimit the space of the body.

### **2.1.3. The Body as a Space**

The gender differentiation is held on the basis of the physical appearance that is originally premised on the biological genital and genetic traits that determine the gender. However, the roles that are attributed to both genders, apart from being distributed on a biological basis such as giving birth and breast feeding for females and holding the spermatozoa for males, it is mainly because of the cultural and social expectations from each gender. Women, being regarded socially and culturally inferior to men, triggered several feminist activists to call for retrieving their rights. Their efforts were directed to shed light on the arbitrary differentiation between men and women in terms of societal status. In this vein, Germaine Greer claims that:

[W]omen must learn how to question the most basic assumptions about feminine normality in order to reopen the possibilities for development which have been successively locked off by conditioning.... [F]rom the outset our observation of the female is consciously and unconsciously biased by assumptions that we cannot help making and cannot always identify when they have been made. The new assumption behind the discussion of the body is that everything that we may observe *could be otherwise.*" (4)

What Greer is trying to clarify through her words is that women do not have to accept their position for the sake of pleasing the social standards and the cultural conventions of their belongings, but rather, they need to contribute in the demystification of gender stratification that is merely a conventional adherence to arbitrary division held on patriarchal inclinations.

Nevertheless, the body as it might be regarded as an element for this differentiation; it is also seen as a site for struggle against the imposed roles, behaviors and

appearances of both genders. Simply because they delimit and constrain their freedom especially as far as women are concerned. Among the pioneers who discussed the controversies of gender and the body politics is Karl Marx; he worked on the deconstruction of the old notion of the 'body' that only gained acclaim "in the middle of the 19th century, it did not gain momentum until the last 20 years due to the work of the late Michel Foucault. Marx argued that a person's economic class affected his or her experience and definition of 'the body'" (Johnson 9) Indeed, Marxist contribution is recognizable in Foucault's "analysis of the body as the focal point for struggles over the shape of power" (Johnson 4) for which "the cultivation of the body is essential to the establishment of one's social role." (Johnson 6)

Foucault's debates about "the body" have been exclusively gender-neutral. For him, the body is a site for power that is determined by cultural as well as historical practices which are delineated, in return, by the effectiveness of the economic as well the historical vigor. Likewise, Foucault has been widely criticized by feminists for the way he tended to ignore the importance of gender in his writings about the body politics. It is thanks to feminist scholars that talking about the politics of the body started to forefront the academic spheres. In this regard, Bordo claims that: "the human body is itself a politically inscribed entity, its physiology and morphology shaped by histories and practices of containment and control." (188) In this sense, "the body", specifically, the female body can be considered as a marginalized or liminal space that women tend to be enclosed into in order to escape the patriarchal constraints imposed on them either by culture, society or religion. The Liminal space can be defined as a transformative space that exists in between two others neither of them is suitable.

Speaking about the female body as a liminal space applies mostly to patriarchal societies wherein women are deprived from access to other spaces. The division of space

to public, private, work space and domestic one is tightly connected to the gendered stratification that relegates women to inferior position compared to men. From early ages, women have become conditioned about submission and obedience to their male counterparts. This total acquiescence pertains to the cultural conventions and traditions that are manipulated by taboos of love, relationships, honor and shame.

## **2.2. Politics of Space and Gender: Production of “a Gendered Space”**

Gender is a crucial dimension as far as spatiality is concerned. It might be legitimate to claim that gender is about the common differentiation between males and females but it goes far beyond this. Apprehending gender demands differentiating between three crucial notions that are worth tackling: physical sex (appearance) gender expression (behavior) and gender identity (or gender definition). The physical sex pertains to “either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures” (“sex”) as defined Merriam Webster. Meanwhile, the physical appearance stands for the shape of the body, hormones, and other physical attributes that determine the gender identity.

The influence of gender as a significant factor in producing spaces is indisputable. Deciphering the codes of gendered spaces necessitates a closer look at geography; precisely, feminist geography. This latter can be defined as the field in geography that studies the influence of the cultural backgrounds and the social conventions on reshaping the gender structure of societies and the patterns of spatial activity related to genders. Likewise, McDowell and Sharp explain the fundamental role of culture and society in generating the meaning of the gendered space by arguing that:

The spaces in which social practices occur affect the nature of those practices,

who is 'in place', who is 'out of place' and even who is allowed to be there at all. But the spaces themselves in turn are constructed and given meaning through the social practices that define men and women as different and unequal ... They reinforce power, privileges and oppression and literally keep women in their place. (3).

The quote above highlights that the production of space is intimately connected to the social norms and cultural apprehension of gender. It affirms the claim that both genders' mobility in spaces is being regulated on the basis of their gender roles. Gendered space according to Lefebvre is the intersection of knowledge and action in the gender realm to which he ascribes political as well ideological parameters that allow the manipulation of space by the state or the sovereign.

Lefebvre's influence by Marxist ideologies cannot be neglected. Nevertheless, he believes that socialism is not the only factor that delineates how gendered spaces are produced but also power and the power relations that are usually exercised within spaces. He aligns with Foucault's thought of space being a means of control and a locus for hegemony. In this regard, it becomes of a critical importance to mention Foucault's famous lines about space arguing that: "the current epoch is perhaps above all the epoch of space" (22 Lefebvre's influence by the Foucauldian conception of power and how it directly affects the distribution of genders in spaces confirms the claim of spaces being means of domination and control. Foucauldian definition of power relations is elucidated in his essay *The subject and power: afterword to 'Michel Foucault, beyond structuralism and hermeneutics:*

The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others. Which is to say, of course, that something called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is

assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist.

(277)

Henceforth, power for Foucault is inevitable, it is extant in all levels of society from the microscopic level to the macroscopic one; affecting the continuum in which “individual actions affect authority structures, and public discourses influence individual opinions” (Sweely 26). Gender relations are no exception; they are controlled by parameters of power. Men are overtaken by the sense of manhood, the sense of being the stronger, the protector and the leader; nevertheless, this socially and culturally attributed image to men has been so overrated that it placed men in a superior position than women which caused imbalance in their relationship. By projecting Foucault’s claim: “where there is power, there is resistance” (95) on the nature of relationship between men and women, it becomes valid to assume that what results out of the arbitrary distribution of gender roles among men and women is refusal and objection. Cultural and social conventions tend to endow men with authority and power over women; however, these conventions are being criticized and devalued due to a rising awareness embodied in feminist movements whose aim is to seek equality with men if not superiority over them.

Analogously, the continuous debate about spaces and the legibility of accessing them has led to more controversy concerning the genderization of space. A considerable amount of literature was directed towards the anthropology of space, especially when it is related to the gender disparities. Within the same context Löw & Lawrence-Zúñiga define the gendered space as: “particular locales that cultures invest with gender meanings, sites in which differentiated-practice occur or settings that are used strategically to inform identity and produce and reproduce asymmetrical gender relations of power and authority” (p 7)

### 2.2.1. Gendering the Binary of Public/Private Spaces

Gender is closely linked to space and considered to be an intrinsic factor that influences the process of space production just like “power” does. In order to grasp the process through which gendered space is produced, we need to have a closer examination of public and private spaces. Scholars such as Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo argue that spaces are being produced with reference to the dichotomy of public and private. The Public spaces are always linked to men whereas private ones are regarded women’s spaces. As suggested in the book of *exploration in feminism*:

the way in which the carrying out of particular activities, and the associated use of particular places and spaces, come to be regarded as 'feminine' or 'masculine'. For example, 'women's space' is inside the home, waiting for children to come out of primary school, or at the shops, while 'men's space' is at work, in the pub or digging the garden. This division of labor and space is not totally rigid, of course, but sufficiently marked that certain activities and spaces come to symbolize femininity, others masculinity. An individual feels that frequenting particular places and undertaking particular activities constitute what it means to be female or male. Such feelings may run counter to actual behavior - for example, most women do some kind of waged work, but tend to feel that going out to work is not an integral part of being a woman, whereas it is for men. We shall point out here that many studies of everyday behavior in the social sciences are concerned with males rather than females, particularly those that focus on youth cultures and subcultures (McRobbie, 1980), demonstrating that the neglect of women is by no means confined to geography. (37)

Drawing on what is expressed in the quote above; we come to a conclusion that the dichotomy of public/private space is pre-determined by the gender differentiations and the

gender roles attributed to these spaces. In addition, what reinforces this division between private and public is the socially promoted idea of separated spheres that stands on deeply rooted cultural conventions. The categorization of space does not only cover the public /private dichotomy but rather it extends to encompass the semi-public one. Public spaces are usually linked to all what belonged to the state and are allowed to be accessed by people such as public gardens, roads and parks. Contrarily, the private space is embodied in homes, balconies, house gardens and cars. Nevertheless, the semi-public spaces are the ones that stand in between the public and private spaces in the sense that the access is permissible to all people with a certain extent of privacy allowed; these spaces are found in hospitals, hotels and coffee shops. Public and private spaces are regarded as antipodes that occupy: “an oppositional and an hierarchical system consisting of a dominant public male realm of production (the city) and a subordinate private female one of reproduction (the home).” (14) This division of public and private spaces is regarded as holding sexist connotations that sustains the inferior position of females in relation to their male counterparts.

Delving deeper in analyzing why spaces have been personalized and formulated to fit with certain cultural as well as social ideologies, the views of Pierre Bourdieu, Henri Lefebvre as well as Michelle de Certeau are of relevant pertinence. The afore mentioned theorists and philosophers settle on the apprehension of space as a social construct that plays a vital role in shaping the social identity of the individual. This latter, is by no means, influenced by culture which results in producing spaces that are being actively under progress, holding the ability to be modified. Following this claim, it becomes necessary to highlight the fact that the binary of public/private space can be projected on Male/female dichotomy, attributing public spaces to men and private ones to women. Indeed, what we see around us confirms this suggestion. Till nowadays, there are places

that are seen to be only men's and others that are only women's; as a result, gender is being used as a standard to label spaces.

Private space is mostly linked to the household and kitchens; on the other hand, public one is linked to work, schools, banks, street banks, spaces that are open. In these two different public and private spheres, activities, behaviors and dress codes change accordingly.

In the same vein, what controls the parameters of the binary public/private spaces (besides society) is culture and religion. For example, in Muslim societies, women tend to be restricted by a specific dress code (the veil) once they step out of their private space. On the contrary, men have a total and direct access to public spaces without having to change the way they look except for social conventions related to their society (which is mainly linked to etiquette and public appearance). Within the same plethora stand patriarchal societies. Due to the restrictions imposed by patriarchal dictations women do not have the freedom to access public spaces like men do and that is what fuels feminist radical views towards men as being their enemies. Frank Brown confirms the eminent role of the culture and social backgrounds in determining the substance of spaces. He posits that:

Some sort of relation exists between society and space, albeit an elusive one ... if this is so, the internal configuration of the house should be a matter of more than formal interest... it should yield information which can enrich our understanding of society and perhaps of social processes too. (90)

Brown, according to the quote above, stresses on the role of spaces in unveiling truths about societies. Each society has a specific and definite construction of space that stems from the social as well as cultural practices that are conducted within them. It is not solely the cultural background of societies that affects the production of spaces, but also the

economically based social classification. Indeed, this latter controls how spaces are being created and how people are dispersed among them. According to Bourdieu, spaces can be categorized as physical and social at the same time. He consolidates his claim by explaining that humans are at once biological beings and social agents (113) whose distribution on spaces is systematically dictated by certain metrics including those of gender.

### **2.2.2. Feminine Space as a Gendered One**

The word femininity stands for a set of characteristics and behaviors that are attributed to females. According to the Merriam Webster, femininity is defined as “the quality or nature of the female sex: the quality, state, or degree of being feminine or womanly” (Merriam Webster). Serious debates have been raised about whether femininity is a biological asset or a socially constructed concept. Less agreement is hardly found about the neutrality of the word “femininity”. Scholar Tara Williams in her book *Inventing Womanhood: Gender and Language in Later Middle English Writing* claims that the modern use of the concept of femininity traces back to the Medieval era, a period during which women were referred to by their social status related to their traditional tasks for example : maiden , widow and wife (179) . Nevertheless, due to certain conditions namely, the Black Death that had thrown considerable numbers of deaths, these roles have been slightly modified and changed to open the doors for women to access some positions that were conventionally men’s. Standing in the same line with this view, philosopher and psychologist Simone De Beauvoir rejects the conception of femininity or womanhood as being biologically innate and rather describes it to be constructed; she postulates, “ no biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in

society" and "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (34) De Beauvoir repudiates the categorization of women and stands against the social ramifications that prescribe how women should look like or behave. She endeavors to help women reach "transcendence", a status wherein women are able to "transcend "their femininity which she considers a social constraint. For her, the status of femininity downsizes women's roles and limits their capacities to be considered as mere "objects" (16) stuck in what she terms "eternal femininity" (17)

Along similar lines with De Beauvoir, Judith Butler agrees that the concept of womanhood with its accompanying connotations and obligations is a social construct and calls into attention the fact that distinctions should be made between gender and sex. She claims that sex is biologically determined however gender is being socially attributed relying on different metrics that have to do with cultural, social as well as religious backdrops. (6) By referring to what was mentioned earlier about space being a social construct, we suggest that space can be sectioned according to gender stratifications. The traditional division between genders leads to the creation of separate spaces that certainly include a "feminine" one. The production of space is determined by various standards; perhaps the most relevant ones are related to the powers that delineate its boundaries. A space cannot be judged as being powerful by itself; it is the spatial practices, the stereotypical gender roles as well as social conventions that determine power. Because of the feminine space is directly related to femininity and all what is womanly or girly, more privacy is attributed to such spaces. For centuries, public spaces were connected to males wherein significant decisions are deliberated and made. On the contrary, private ones have always been deemed feminine wherein women are expected to be obedient and submissive.

It is important to denote that the genderization of space and the creation of a

feminine one is not always a sign of relegation and submission but rather, it is can be considered as a sign of power, of choosing to be self-represented through architectural design that inspires femininity. A good example here can be seen in the contemporary architecture that manifests a significant interest towards feminine body:

For example, the large internal curvilinear spaces of Southeast Asia are often associated with the feminine body (womb, breast, and so on) as evidenced by the breast motifs of granaries or store houses used in vernacular architecture; the womb-like dark windowless chamber of the Ifugao fale and Kalinga dwellings whose slanting walls, sloping roof, and ceiling appear nearly spherical; and, even the bahay-na-bato, the 19th century abode of provincial aristocracy, was feminized (33, 34)

As it is clarified in the quote above, there are certain buildings that inspire femininity in South Asia. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to call into attention that the presence of such architectural designs does not confirm that we arrived at a certain balanced spatial representation for women. The feminine space does not involve a feminine architectural design in order to be produced. If speaking about a willingly produced feminine space, then it requires a female's desire to create her own space which is mostly held within a private sphere. Speaking of privacy, many scholars have shown their disapproval about the containment of women into private spaces to be their feminine ones. Among these scholars is Moisio et Al who link the division of private/feminine and public/masculine to the hegemony of males that allows men a total and free access to public spaces and denies women the right to have equal eligibility like their male counterparts.(300) Along the same path, Gorman-Murray claims that this masculine hegemony is derived from the ability of males to have paid jobs in public spaces in contrast to females who have unpaid work inside the house which is considered a private space.(312) Thus, we can suggest that

women's relegation to private spaces aims at marginalizing women and implanting the sense of subordination and inferiority within their psyches.

In fact, De Beauvoir defends this conception and suggests that women since childhood are subconsciously taught to be committed to their femininity, to be submissive and subordinate. She elucidates that this division between males and females is due to the teachings of parents (who are part of a society that sustains gender differentiation) and the way they choose toys for their kids in addition to the amount of privacy and freedom offered to their kids. In this respect, De Beauvoir states that: "while the boy seeks himself in his penis as an autonomous subject, the little girl pampers her doll and dresses her as she dreams of being dressed and pampered; inversely, she thinks of herself as a marvelous doll." (293) By taking into account what a "doll" symbolizes, we substantiate De Beauvoir's choice of the "doll", every typical little girl's favorite toy, which implicitly symbolizes what society expects women to be like.

All in all, spaces are dwelled by men and women differently. Just like they dwell their sexed bodies and get accustomed to the gender roles assigned to them by society. The production of feminine space is consequently produced as a result of the power relations that control the division of spaces into masculine and feminine ones. This classification is often related to the binary of public/private that offers more freedom to males to access public spaces and restricts females to private ones wherein they obtain less discretion. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy to draw attention to the fact that feminine spaces are not always regarded as spaces of marginalization or subservience, sometimes they transform into spaces of resistance at which point women challenge this binary division and turn these spaces into sites of empowerment where "femininity" is no longer socially predetermined and framed.

### **2.3. Apprehending Bakhtin's Chronotope**

The representation of time and space in literature has always been a central interest for scholars. Many attempts were made in order to figure out how these two intrinsic notions tend to operate within literary texts especially through the narrative. One of the brilliant scholars who were concerned with the interplay of time and space in novels is the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin whose works bore fruit in his discovery of the chronotope which can be utilized as an analytical tool to attain a speculative apprehension of the human action and attitude from an ethical perspective.

Originally, the term chronotope is the combination of two words derived from Greek Cronos (time) and topos (space) and their infusion to create an understandable whole that investigates temporal as well as spatial indicators in literature. In fact, the chronotope, as a concept, looks into the interrelationship of time and space. For long, these two concepts have been studied separately from one another; it is only thanks to Bakhtin's work that they started to be seen as inseparable and complementary entities. In his essay *Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel*, Bakhtin suggests that time and space are interlinked within the chronology of events forming an "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" (84)

#### **2.3.1. Chronos: the Notion of Time**

Ever since the Classical Antiquity, several attempts to understand the nature of time were made. Brilliant philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Kant along with well-established scientists such as Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein and Steven Hawking have been investigating the nature of time and its multidimensional functions. Defining time, just like it might seem axiomatic and simple at first glance, it holds within it a set of complications and intricacies that forces us to look into its meaning not only through science, but also

through philosophy and language.

Time, according to the Merriam Webster dictionary, literally means: “the measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues: duration. a non-spatial continuum that is measured in terms of events which succeed one another from past through present to future” ( Merriam Webster) Indeed time is about duration this duration is measured either by seconds , hours , days, years or even centuries but determines this duration ? Time is mainly categorized and approached through three main tenses past time which represents the gone by duration, a period of time that started and ended. Present time that stands for the actual duration that takes place at the same time of speaking. The future time that delineates the duration that is yet to come and maybe it will not even happen. There was, and still is, a heated debate among thinkers and philosopher about the existence of time.

Plato, a well-known philosopher whose ideas consist the cornerstone of most of the modern day studies along with his teacher Socrates and his student Aristotle. He is mostly credited for being the creator of the Academy in Athens that is marked as the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. Taking Plato as example, he identifies time as having a direct relationship to what he labels as celestial bodies. He suggests that they can be used to measure time or in this case “duration” because they are eternal and repetitive. They help in itemizing duration such as the duration of one day that is commonly known to start from dawn to sunset. ( Weinert 9) For Plato and Aristotle time has always been connected to motion. He suggests that to understand how time was ‘made’ there is an urgent need to refer to the creation of heavens, moon and sun and other five planets whose motion and Plato identifies time as “the moving image of Eternity”( qtd in Claghorn) he links it to motion and change and attributes the

quality of perpetuity to it that he links it to the galaxy and the seven celestial bodies. (68) He suggested that numbers that we attribute to time, pertaining to days, months and years do not represent the nature of time but they co-exist with it and considers them as the tools used in order to measure it.

In a slightly opposite position stands Aristotle. He claims that the nature of time is restricted and does not have a close relationship with movement since this latter is not a characteristic of time itself but rather it is for the objects within time. Paradoxically, he suggests that the nature of time cannot be apprehended away from movement in the sense that it is measured by the number of motions. Time is labeled as “the number of locomotion” (*Phys.* 223a29–34 qtd in Claghorn 84). For Plato, the movement is not solely measured by time but this latter is measured by movement following the steps of Aristotle who believes that it is thanks to the movement of the existing objects, namely, the planets is what constitutes the nature of time. This conception tends to explicitly conform to religious conception of cyclic motion of time that characterizes the Greek mind. (Frank 67) The two thinkers, Plato and Aristotle, meet in the spot where they both agree on the idea that the motion of the heavens (the celestial bodies) is what results in the numeration and the division of time into days, months and years. They make distinction between ‘time’ and ‘a time’ in the sense that a year is when all the orbits finish their revolution together, describing them as being instruments of time. (41a qtd in Claghorn84)

### **2.3.1. The theory of relativity within the context of time**

Albert Einstein is the founder of the theory of relativity of time. He attempted to provide nascent yet revolutionary explanation on the reality of time through clarifying its relationship to space; labeling time as the fourth dimension. By so doing, he superseded the Newtonian apprehension of time as being absolute and provided a ground-breaking

perspective about the nature of time, how it functions and how it can be understood and used. With his publication of *Theory of Relativity: The Special theory* in 1905 and *The General Theory* in 1916, Einstein has come up with unprecedented and convoluted explanation of time with the four dimensions of space-time, breaking the three dimensional view of time provided by Descartes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He indicates that time and space function within universe and cannot be separated from it. He elucidated his claim by giving an example about the importance of the speed and space in determining time exemplifying how can the speed of light that is for him invariable and absolute force the universe to be flexible and harmonize with it. According to Einstein's theory of relativity space and time can be regarded as the events that occur in different point or periods of time.

It is thanks to Herman Minkowski , Einstein's teacher and colleague, famous for coining the term and of “ proper time” a concept that stands for the elapsed time between two events and that does not solely lean on the events but on the time in between those events . For Einstein, everybody has a time for his own as far as relativity is concerned. Within the same line stands the philosophical view of Bertrand Russell claiming that: “There is no longer a universal time which can be applied without ambiguity to any part of the universe; there are only the various proper times of the various bodies in the universe.”(5) Contrarily, Minkowski describes the apparent time between the events as “a coordinate time” that is measured by an aloof observer that has his own way of measuring time between events. An event is defined, within the frame of relativity, a place and a time what happens in a certain point of space equals a moment in time. Thus, the relativity of time depends on how different time is from one place to another , from one person to another which defies the theory that suggest that time starts when the big bang happened With the same token, Blankson suggests:

(a) By the Einstein theory of frames, each with its own natural laws, meaning if time varies with conditions (or positions) then it would vary, also, in different frames, for they are different frames precisely because of their varying conditions, or metrics. (b) By Einstein's further analysis of order and simultaneity, proving that time cannot be the same everywhere, such that our second and other time units could be applied to other worlds without ambiguity. (Samuel 144)

It is thanks to Einstein's theory of relativity of time that modern thinkers and physicists ceased to support the idea that time is flowing or passing, delimiting its deep essence into a mere succession of events. Modern thought on time suggests that past, present and even future times still exist regardless to our ability to sense them which leads us to the second view of time which vehemently philosophical.

### **2.3.2. Eternalism and Presentism**

The philosophical study of being, ontology, studies all what is theorized to exist. Time, one of the most controversial concepts whose existence has been questioned ever since the beginning of the speculative thinking, is also investigated through ontology and metaphysics. The concept eternalism represents an approach to look into the reality of time. It tends to seek answers about the reality of time and the relevance of tenses (past/ present/ future) and tensed language with tenseless truth and conditions. It supports the claim that time exists and since time is marked by events that take place in certain points in space then the becoming of time is linked to all the events that are coming to existence and getting out of existence. (Elsevier 326) The notion of eternalism suggests that time, with all its tenses, exists unlike presentism that only confirms the existence of the present and denies the becoming of the other tenses. It stands for the theory of block universe or

block time which suggests that all tenses exist in different places even the “future”<sup>2</sup> it treats space-time as being four dimensional (agreeing with Einstein’s views mentioned earlier) unlike the traditional theory of the Enlightenment that believes the duality of space-time being three dimensional that changes with the passing or flow of time. Eternalism, thus, suggests the flow of time between past, present and future and encompasses all events that take place in each point in time.

Nevertheless, from a philosophical standpoint, presentism suggests that the past and the future do not exist. The past or future existence of events, people and emotions is totally denied and rejected. In this respect, Christian theologian Augustine Hippo likens the present as the cutting edge between the remote perceived past and the imaginary future. Presentist philosophers tend to deal very firmly with the notion of extension of time. Fyodor Shcherbatskoy, a leading scholar of the modern era on Buddhist philosophy, has written extensively on Buddhist presentism: "Everything past is unreal, everything future is unreal, everything imagined, absent, mental... is unreal. Ultimately, real is only the present moment of physical efficiency."(Johnson 116)

### **2.3.3. The Representation of Time through the Lens of Literature**

The expression and the representation of the notion of time in literature stand on the philosophical apprehension of time. Just like in philosophy, time in literature is not measured by minutes, days, months or years but rather it is measured in regard to culture and its perception at a specific point as well.<sup>3</sup>Time in literature is actually different from the common understanding of time in reality. In literature, time is represented in different

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<sup>2</sup>An example could be provided for this statement is when relating time to events and knowledge specifically. Someone (A) , who lives in a country, does not know about the situation of his family in a different country; while some others know and they are on their way to tell him (A). Their situation represents the present for them but knowing about it represents the future for (A). So, according to my humble thinking, not only time that plays a crucial role in defining tenses but also knowing about the events that take place in certain places at certain times.

<sup>3</sup>Ricoeur 1983

shapes. It consists a crucial element of fiction that allows the events of plots to unfold. Time may be portrayed to be chronologically a realistic time, a flashback, a flash-forward, or randomly chosen to serve the main interest of the story. The importance of time may be very intrinsic that it can be a pivotal character that stands fully by itself in the plot. Apprehending time, within the frame of fiction, requests being conscious about its different dimensions. which are: the time when the author wrote the work, the setting of the story and lastly the time when this work is actually read. Furthermore, the narrative style of the writer as well as his objective behind telling a certain part in the story, not to mention the importance of the events a minute in the life of the main character for example can be equal to a whole day in a random character in the novel.

#### **2.3.4. Topos : the duality of Space and Place**

Space derives its eminence from the social perspective. Similarly, Lefebvre tends to focus on space as an emergence rather than pre-existence. For him the emphasis should be oriented to the social side precisely “social space” of lived actions. Indeed, given the fact that human beings tend to be distributed and localized in different communities that tend to constrain them in a way or another. They constantly attempt to transgress the demarcated boundaries but fail in doing so. Defining space necessates making reference to the social and cultural backgrounds of places; far from geographical standpoint, it is important to mention that also the psychological aspect along with the social one consist intrinsic parameters that aid us to reveal the authentic meaning of space. Miller explains how space can be defined, apart from geography, as being “socially constructed, just as society is seen as inherently spatially constituted” (7). However, there is an urging need to highlight the distinction between the two notions as this distinction helps to clarify the meaning of each. One of the sophisticated views provided by scholars and researchers in

the realm of space is Doreen Massey. She expresses her point view concerning the binary of space/place as follows

The terms space and place have long histories and bear with them a multiplicity of meanings and connotations which reverberate with other debates and many aspects of life. 'Space' may call to mind the realm of the dead or the chaos of simultaneity and multiplicity. It may be used in reference to the synchronic systems of structuralists or employed to picture the n-dimensional space of identity. Likewise with place, though perhaps with more consistency, it can raise an image of one's place in the world, of the reputedly (but as we shall see, disputed) deep meanings of 'a place called home' or, with much greater intimations of mobility and agility, can be used in the context of discussions of positionality. (10)

Massey in the quote above tends to challenge the dualistic binary of space and place that often positions them as being antipodes. She explains their relationship as interrelated and strengthens her claim by illustrating that space is the outcome of a combination of emotions and experiences felt and lived by the people dwelling certain places. Of pertinent relevance to her argument, Henry Lefebvre states that it is variously produced as a result of the different actions of human beings. Since the modality of these human actions has undergone different changes over time, space consequently, ought to be understood basically as historical. This latter draws on the fact that space is incomplete and always a subject to the constant change of social and political conditions that affect the different aspects of human life.

Drawing upon Massey's claim about the intimate relationship between place and space, the views of Yi-Fu Tuan are of a notable resemblance with hers since they both emphasize on the eminent role that lived experiences of individuals play in shaping the meaning of space. He affirms that space is formed depending on: "the totality of means by

which we come to know the world: we know the world through sensation (feeling), perception, and conception.” What Tuan calls into question is the importance of the human experience in delineating the meaning of space. In addition, according to Tuan: “place is a space infused with human experience” (388) he postulates that a place derives its sense from the complex human experience and the actions endorsed within it. This place might be physical, mental, virtual or spiritual such as “heaven” and “hell”; imaginary concepts that hold religious connotations.

Space and place have been approached differently by geographers, philosophers and theorists. Nonetheless, a huge debate is rooted in the discussions of the two key figures of spatial studies: Henry Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. While De Certeau affirms that space can be defined as “a practiced place”, Lefebvre offers a dialectic definition that suggests a place being a moments in space. It is important to highlight that Lefebvrian definition of space is tightly linked to the social aspect he connects it to different parameters among which power. He suggests : “(Social) space is a (social) product ... the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action ... in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power” (26)

### **2.3.5. The inextricability of Time and Space in Literature within Bakhtin’s Chronotope**

For Bakhtin, the significance of the chronotope lies in its ability to help mediate the “image” of the character by reflecting its experience at specific moments and locations to create a meaning. He poetically describes the interrelationship between space and time that he labels as the chronotope by saying:

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time as it were thickens, takes on flesh,

[and] becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope (84).

Indeed, as it is clarified in the quote above, the chronotope for Bakhtin is immensely crucial for attributing a meaning to literary texts. Its significance is seen through the realistic dimension it adds to the events of the story. Albeit there is not a cutting edge definition for the chronotope provided by Bakhtin, many scholars attempted to unveil this ambiguity by trying to provide definitions and interpretations to the term. Basically, the term Chronotope was borrowed by Bakhtin in order to describe the continuum of space and time within literary texts that is established on the basis of altered spatial and temporal traits as well as narrative potentials that resolve which events can happen and how. In his essay the Dialogic Imagination, Bakhtin provided an inclusive view about the chronotope starting from the Greek adventure stories arriving at the European novel namely the works of François Rabelais that he was remarkably interested in. Bakhtin identifies the chronotope by saying:

Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements – philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work. Such is the representational significance of the chronotope (250)

According to Bakhtin's description, the chronotope indicates the formulation of a fictional world wherein the writer distances himself from the characters and remains outside the story. By so doing, multiple points of view are allowed to intermingle in a kind of cacophony to attribute a realistic dimension to the literary piece. Furthermore, a

chronotope is characterized by the existence of temporal indicators matched with spatial references that contribute together in accomplishing the meaning of any given fictional work.

The use of temporal indicators such as: yesterday, last year, now and last night introduces the reader to the narrator's /the characters' point of view of time shifting. Nevertheless, the spatial indicators such as: hotel rooms, coffee shops or thresholds inspire an image that can be perceived in the mind with its accompanying meaning. The combination of these temporal indicators and spatial references results in the production of a complete meaning that gives the story its significance. In the same token, Stam Robert confirms this view about the chronotope in his book: *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism and Film* as:

The chronotope mediates between two orders of experience and discourse: the historical and the artistic. [...] Bakhtin shows how concrete spatiotemporal structures in literature limit narrative possibility, shape characterisation, and mild a discursive simulacrum of life and the world. [...] Since the chronotope provides fictional environments implying historically specific constellations of power [...] it is ideally suited to a medium where 'spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole (40-41)

The quote above exemplifies the role of the chronotope as a historical discourse that mediates an artistic experience and its expression via language. Stam agrees and sustains Bakhtin's concept of dialogism as being the cornerstone of the human discourse. He also agrees with Bakhtin's view about the impossibility of arriving at a completely original artistic utterance; it could either be traced in a previous or a later discourse: "Within a Bakhtinian approach, there is no unitary text, no unitary producer, and nountary spectator; rather, there is a conflictual heteroglossia pervading producer, text, context and

reader/viewer.” (221) Thus, the chronotope according to Stam is the interplay of time and space that operates on both levels: the historical aspect of discourse as well as the artistic and aesthetic utterance of any given literary work.

#### **2.4.1. The Chronotope as an Analytical Literary Device**

It has been previously highlighted that despite Bakhtin’s thorough engagement with the concept of the chronotope, still there is not a definitive and unequivocal definition for it. Nevertheless, applying the term as an analytical device to figure out the configurations of time and space in literary works is attainable. The chronotope is based on extracting the structural and the figurative meaning out of the existing spatial as well as temporal references that exist in works of fiction. Bakhtin postulates that the chronotope is of a considerable importance in understanding the characters in fiction. He claims that the interplay of time and space that is manifested through recounting the story at certain points of time and specific locations would help the reader to extract the meaning and thereof understanding the character. Bakhtin places a significant interest in relating the chronotope to the core of the existence of man as he suggests: “the image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic”( Bakhtin 85) the chronotope as a literary device is originally intended to follow a figurative arc in stories of fiction , theatre and historical records that take the shape of Ballads and epics.

One convenient example of the importance of chronotope in sustaining the image of man is its use by geographers, linguists and anthropologists in unveiling the mysteries of history through testimonies of people and places. Keith Basso, a linguistic anthropologist conducted a research about the narratives of the Western Apache and he founded his work on the basis of Bakhtin’s chronotope. Basso has found that within the Apache’s culture, places have appellations that literally describe them or provide a

glimpse about a remarkable event that took place. In his research entitled *Stalking with Stories : Names, Places, and Moral Narratives among the Western Apache*, Basso finds that Bakhtin's chronotope applies well on his research, he claims that : “ The Apache landscape is full of named locations where time and space and where, through the agency of historical tales, their intersection is made visible for human contemplation” ( 45) he suggests that these landmarks are filled with personal , social as well as cultural relevance that together provide a complete image about the Apache.

Basso in his research makes evidence of the adequacy of using Bakhtin's chronotope as an analytical device that helps to study the interplay of time and space and their significance in highlighting and sustaining the human existence and experience. He also carries on Bakhtin's claim who describes the chronotope as: “points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for the human contemplations; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history.”(Bakhtin 7) Within the same context , the concept of the chronotope has been imbedded within literature after it was used only within scientific contexts related to physics to become a three dimensional concept that operates mainly at the levels of space, time and space markers like it is the case of Basso's research about the Apache's stories.

In his article *Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin brings out his visualization about the chronotope claiming that each chronotope represents a specific ideology about a specific historical event. He suggests that each historical period engenders a specific culture which translates through its writings. For him, the chronotope is very essential in the narrative because it is what validates its events and bring them to life. He deals with the epics that contain songs about heroic events that started and finished in the past , we cannot conjecture a full conception about that time but we can actually visualize it through

imagination.

Bakhtin also discusses the generic development of the chronotope through mainly a triad of historical stages that the novel went through. Firstly, the Greek Romance of adventure which is characterized by a particular diction of time that inspires adventure such as: “suddenly”, “in the meantime” and “I was surprised by”. Secondly, the adventures of everyday in which novels detail the happenings of a character’s everyday life and sometimes comparing it to what they imagine their life to be. In this type of novels, we can only come to terms with the character’s thoughts through what they imagine not what they live in their reality .Lastly, the ancient biographical novel which recounts the life of their writers through different phases each with it specific time and space markers.( Bakhtin 129)

According to Bakhtin, in one single body of literature more than one chronotope can be found. These chronotopes exist in a harmonic way creating a sense of dialogic relationship (252) For him, what makes the literary work heterochronous is the fact that time and space change and shift depending on the change of authors and readers. The action of writing, the one of reading and even the events that are told in any given literary piece represent specific points in time and space. He stresses on the necessity of taking into consideration the animation of the text as it should speak to its readers in different times and within different circumstances (256) In other words, every literary work should be read not only within the context of its original chronotope but rather each reader is allowed to interpret the work according to their own chronotope taking account to its original one. In this regard, Bakhtin affirms:

The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the

creative perception of listeners and readers. Of course this process of exchange is itself chronotopic: it occurs first and foremost in the historically developing social world, but without ever losing contact with changing historical space. (254)

In the quote above, retained from his famous essay *Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin explains clearly the overlapping relationship between the chronotope of the fictitious work and the one of reader that represents the real world. He suggests that the multiple chronotopes of the different readers who come from various backgrounds are what bring the works into life. The exchange that occurs between the two chronotopes offers an indulging experience that allows the reader to be part of the work with total preservation to its original historical space. In a similar vein, Eduard Vlassov, a Russian scholar who dedicated a significant attention to the works of his compatriot Mikhail Bakhtin emphasizes on the literary importance of Bakhtin's chronotope and provides a detailed explanation of the concept and its usefulness in literary analysis.

#### **2.4. Types of the Chronotope**

In the same context, Vlassov clarifies Bakhtin's definition of chronotope through providing a convenient categorization of the term as he sections it into three spatial types:

- 1. Chronotopes with affinity to real-to-life historical and geographical markers:**
  - a. Abstract chronotope :** refers to a realistic place but not directly connected to any concrete geographical one nor it is related to any specific nation, somewhere that Bakhtin calls " a place of geographical and historical indifference" (qtd in Vlassov 43)
  - b. Concrete Chronotope:** stands for veritable places that exist in the real words .Vlassov quotes Bakhtin's definition : "one that can be identified as true or very near to a realistic/naturalistic place" (43)

2. Chronotopes with influential relationship between the protagonist and the spatiality of the novel :

a. Alien Chronotope: it refers to the sense of detachment that the protagonist feels toward the novel's spatial form as this latter is presented as dreadful, unfamiliar and odd. Bakhtin likens the relationship between the protagonist and the place to the one between the reader and the work by saying: "the two can never be united peacefully. This relationship is often seen as a picture or a symbol of the external reality outside the novel"(43)

b. Native chronotope: it pertains to where the protagonist grew up , unlike the alien chronotope , the native one is familiar and well known by the protagonist as it might be his homeland.

3. Chronotopes with possibility or non-possibility to transform or remain the same :

a. Dynamic chronotope: which applies to the places that witness change along the course of events in the novel. They never stay the same and are in constant change.

b. Static (43) chronotope: the term relates to places that do not change and remain as they are. The adjective static is Vlassov's own invention and he bases his claim on the fact that Bakhtin's non-opposition to the term since this kind of chronotope is practically static.

In addition, the aforementioned chronotopes, Bakhtin has also mentioned other types that are of similar importance including the chronotope of the road that is likely to be found in novels of adventure. The road, literarily, symbolizes the unexpected meetings and the human impulse towards change and constant movement. Moreover, there are the chronotopes of parlors and salons (Vlassov 45) wherein the public and private spaces intersect. Finally, the space of threshold like the one found in Dostoevsky's novels.

Bakhtin's categorization of the chronotope in the novels is not limited to the aforementioned types; it rather extends to include other types that play a vital role in the analysis of the succession of events in novels within the context of space and time. The Folkloric chronotope stems from the adventure chronotope and the one of everyday life. According to Propp, Folkloric chronotope's expression of the past is not held with its conventional 'historical' meaning. "Just as there is only empirical space, there is only empirical time measured not by dates, days, or years but by the personages' actions." (25) This type of chronotope focuses on time and chronological context of the novel more than the spatial one. In addition, there are other types of chronotope that Bakhtin distinguishes, among which we mention: the castle and the provincial town chronotopes. (qtd in Vlassov 45)

Bakhtin's careful categorization of the chronotope serves as a substantial and accurate means of literary analysis that helps to read the text within and outside its patio-temporal context. It en figuring out the different strata of meaning expressed in the novel through the lens of space and time incorporated with their historical and cultural backdrops. Bakhtin's primordial purpose was to "read history through discourse" (127) which is what lies behind his desire to analyze and trace back the development of the novel ever since the Greek writings. His commitment to explore the novel as an effective literary genre is due to the ability of the novelist to allow textual spaces for each character to express their points of views in a polyphonic manner. Unlike other genres such as poetry, novels can vividly portray place/space and time in a way that makes them valid to be read in any epoch and any place as he claims that it is in "a maximal contact with the present" and "its multi-linguaged consciousness" (Bakhtin 11)

In addition, what makes the novel a favored genre by Bakhtin is his interest in and fascination by Fuodor Dostoevsky's writings that are characterized by a centrifugal

fashion. Dostoevsky distances himself from the characters he creates, allowing different ideologies to be articulated. Indeed, reading his novels crystallizes an equivocal conception about his views concerning religion and socialism; sometimes he appears to be with and other times, against. In a nutshell, through the chronotope, Bakhtin aims at presenting a powerful tool for literary analysis that incites a thorough debate about profound problematic situations related to language, art and human experience. He argues that “every entry into the sphere of meaning is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope” (258) Thus , the importance of understanding the chronotope and distinguishing its types lies in the fact that it helps readers to extract meaning from the succession of events that take place within specific spatio-temporal contexts.

## **Conclusion**

By relying on qualitative data embodied in a number of consulted books and articles related to the field of gender studies and spatiality , the present chapter constituted an analysis of the different factors that influence the production of space namely power, time and gender. After conducting an analytical reading of the Lefebvrian views on space as a social construct along with Bakhtinian apprehension of the interplay of space and time , the result attained stressed on the inextricable nature of the afore mentioned concepts and their direct influence by gender. The chapter also engaged with the literary representations of space and how it is operated by power with special reference to the binary of male/female. It also conceptualized the different forms of gendered spaces regarding them as both means of control (by referring to Foucauldian views) and women’s subjugation and also as sites of empowerment. Finally, the examination of Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the chronotope has bore fruit in highlighting the different forms of the chronotope in the novel and the possibility of regarding it as a literary analytical tool.



## **Chapter Three**

# **A Postmodernist Reflection on Atwood's Novels as a Feminist Fiction**

## **Introduction**

Recently, feminism has begun to maintain its spot as one of the most remarkable literary spawns of postmodernism as it constitutes one of its substantial ethos. The struggle of feminists to abolish the oppressive patriarchal practices entrenched in the Western society has taken every possible way including fiction. Correspondingly, much ink has been spilled in order to bring to the fore the sufferings of females under the tight wrap of masculine hegemony. Margaret Atwood is one of Canada's finest yet most controversial writers whose novels are regarded as fiction of protest.

The Canadian feminist strives to unveil the complexity of sexual power politics and their manifestations by offering a stark criticism to the way women are inferiorized and deprived from their simplest rights compared to their male counterparts. Being a postmodernist writer, Atwood has excelled in writing dystopian fiction which depicts the horrors of a potential apocalypse that would destroy the world and replace it with one wherein humanity goes astray. In the same thread, this chapter investigates Margaret Atwood's literary profile as being a postmodernist writer whose specialization in dystopian fiction stems from her solid feminist stands.

Following a descriptive method, a number of Atwood novels have been selected in order to showcase her commitment to postmodernist literary techniques such as pastiche, parody and intertextuality. In addition, the present chapter also explores postmodernist theories pertaining to notable scholars including Jean Baudrillard (Simulation and simulacra), Roland Barthes (Death of the Author) and John François Lyotard (Metanarratives).

### **3.1. Margaret Atwood as a Postmodernist Writer**

Postmodern literature can be referred to as the one produced after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World

War. No final agreement has been made yet considering where the movement has exactly started, but it is mostly linked to the death of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce who were regarded as the pioneers of modernism. John François Lyotard states in his essay *The Postmodern Condition*: “the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age” (3) he carries on and defines the postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives. While modernists believe that techniques such as pastiche and fragmentation represent their existential crisis that creates a Freudian struggle inside them, postmodernists consider this chaotic situation as a condition that cannot be overcome and the only solution is to learn how to cope with it. In the same vein, several postmodernist writers employ such techniques along with metafiction in order to defy centrality and represent reality from a more subjective perspective. In this respect, Frederic Jameson in his seminal essay *Periodizing the Sixties* postulates that: “postmodernism emerges as a way of making creative space for artists now oppressed by those henceforth hegemonic modernist categories of irony, complexity, ambiguity, dense temporality, and particularly, aesthetic and utopian monumentality.” (195) He suggests that these modernist elements were what stimulated a change in postmodernism which grew out of it.

Postmodernism allows more space for creativity to writers by offering aesthetic shifts that are embodied in what Jameson calls “the culture of the simulacrum”(195) besides intertextuality, pastiche and what Roland Barth labels ‘the death of the author’. Margaret Atwood, a Canadian literary hallmark and one of the remarkable feminist writers in the post-modern era, is mostly noted for her unique style in which she combines her feminist views with elements of both: the postmodern as well as the dystopian genre. What makes her writings exceptional is her mastery of sophisticated postmodernist narrative techniques that travel with readers back and forth in time and space, allowing her novels to

become a universal blueprint. Writers such as Atwood do not confine themselves within their limits as skillful novelists who excel in writing fiction, but rather, they consider themselves as political activists, concerned about changing and bettering the world around them. Atwood, famous for her inimitable talent, she could successfully write more than 14 novels, over 40 books of comics, poetry and children books most of them were translated to over 30 languages.

The diversity that she offers to her readers as she writes a versatile of novels that vary between crime and mystery fiction such as *Bodily Harm* (1981), historical novels such as *The Blind Assassin* (2001) which won the Booker Prize, dystopian fiction such as *The Handmaid Tale* (1985) and *The Testaments* (2019) along others like Romance in *Lady Oracle* (1976), Science fiction such as *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and novels that resemble fairy tales and myths like *Penelopiad* (2005). Trough these novels and others including, *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1973), *Life Before Men* (1980) *Cat's Eye* (1989), Atwood could successfully maintain her spot as a high-volume writer that is not only fighting for women to regain their lost rights but also by leading campaigns for raising awareness about the necessity of protecting the planet from potential dangers of some bold and random scientific experiments.

### **3.1.1. Atwoodian reflections on Baudrillard's Simulation and Simulacra**

Being a postmodernist writer, Atwood made use of plentiful of postmodernist techniques and deployed some of its aesthetics in a number of her works. Returning to what was highlighted by Jameson concerning "the culture of simulacrum", he defines it as a medium utilized : "to convey some specificity of a reproducible object world, not of copies or reproductions marked as such, but of a proliferation of trompe-l'oeil copies without originals); the relation of this last to media culture or the "society of the

spectacle” (195) in the same token, Baudrillard suggests that the postmodern world with its accompanying representations and images that we deem real are not actually as we apprehend them but rather they reflect a simulation to reality “to simulate is to feign what one doesn’t have” (3) . He likens simulation to faking a copy that has barely an original version; he postulates: “simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal” (1) for him, simulacrum offers a forged copy that has no roots in reality he carries on and says: “it is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real”(1) he connotes that the postmodern society has become vehemently media-laden that we arrived at the death of the real and its replacement with blurred copies that have no history or origin. Examples might be given on the level of TV shows, movies and Disneyland.

Margaret Atwood, being a postmodernist, sometimes classified a science fiction writer or a dystopian one, creates specific setting for her novels. In *The Handmaid Tale* for example, a novel wherein Atwood’s feminist inclinations and her solid stand against the norms and values of the Western society are put forward, Baudrillard’s notion of the simulation is vividly present. The novel centers upon the protagonist Offred and her journey from being a common woman leading normal life in a country named America to being a subjugated female whose identity and freedom are dispossessed from her. The novel takes place in Gilead a hyperreal state that replaced the old one. This state is controlled by a patriarchal system that is based on dictatorship and sexism which objectifies women and diminishes their roles to merely child-bearers. Like many of Atwood’s novels of speculative and post-apocalyptic fiction, the plotline of the story is triggered after a failed scientific experiment that rendered all females sterile and few women could make it out; among them is Offred.

The state of Gilead is built on a rigid religious system; it inspires all its legislations from the Bible. Ironically, everything about this place contradicts what it supposed to be like. This takes us back to Baudrillard's claim concerning the hyperreal as being a blurred copy of the original and in some cases it lacks an original. In this case the state of Gilead consists a simulation to Gilead mentioned in the Bible but in a total contradiction. The one mentioned in the Bible is a refuge and a safe haven for David when he escaped from Absalom. However, the Atwoodian Gilead is the total inverse; it is a state of abduction and subjugation. Even the version of the Bible is a copy of the original; falsified and faked in order to sustain the tyrannical system's rule. Atwood's protagonist notices the difference and is fully aware of the government's falsifications. She discloses the Gileadean's manipulations of the Bible. In this regard, Offred states that : "The Bible is kept locked up, the way people once kept tea locked up, so the servants wouldn't steal it. It is an incendiary device: who knows what we'd make of it, if we ever got our hands on it? We can be read to from it, by him, but we cannot read" (Atwood 43). All in all, Gilead represents a blurred copy that looks nothing like its intended original. The process of simulation (or may be referred to as falsification) is cleverly set in order to ensure its replacement to the original one. Through her novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood enshrines Baudrillard's concerns about the post-modern world that became inventoried and replicated; a world where the real is replaced by the hyperreal.

Another Novel that Atwood presents to her readers, *lady Oracle*, a gothic romance that details the story of Joan, a writer that fakes her death in order to recreate a new life free from the constraints of her past that haunt her. Standing in the same line with her works that are considered by many as novels of protest, Atwood voices women's concerns and brings their sufferings to the limelight in order to seek justice for women in the face of a society dominated by male chauvinism. In *Lady Oracle*, Atwood's criticism to and

refusal of the post-modern condition and values is emphatically built on the way females are being framed and restricted to meet the expectations of society. In the case of Joan, the protagonist of *Lady Oracle*, Baudrillardian simulacra is manifested through the strong wish of Joan to escape her life and recreate another one, a copy of the original that is supposed to look nothing like it. Nevertheless, Joan ends up living in a blurred copy of her life because she is unable to free her mind from memories of childhood that had a vigorous impact on her adult life.

Another aspect of simulation that is expressed through the novel and that embodies Atwood's censure to the postmodern consumerist society manipulated by media is the way beauty standards are promoted for and that causes a severe detachment from reality. In a similar vein, Baudrillard's *Simulacra* suggests that the produced copies do not feign to be real but rather they start to replace the real and control how the real should be like, he postulates: "now impossible to isolate the process of the real, or to prove the real" (467). Indeed, since simulacra is a reproduction of reality out of which copies are remade until the original ceases to exist, the same way is noticed when it comes to delineating beauty standards for women. Post-modern media focuses on promoting for how a female body should be like. Ironically, even when most people are aware of the fallacious nature of media which presents photoshopped images of women with perfect bodies and skins, still very few are satisfied with the way they look compared to what is found on media. Here, we come back to Baudrillard's claim about simulation when the copy replaces the original. In *Lady Oracle*, the protagonist Joan is confined by her looks because she was an overweight child, rejected by her mother who did not accept her daughter being less beautiful. Joan describes her old self when she was a fat child as follows: "the problem was fairly simple: in the short, pink skirt, with my waist, arms and legs exposed, I was grotesque" (Atwood 42) She felt repudiated because of her fat body. Whenever Joan looks

back at her past, she tries to eliminate the part where she used to be a fat kid, as if it never existed. In fact, because of her mother's rejection she turned to binge food as a punishment, not to herself, but rather to spite her mother. Food for her was a way through which she finds self-approval. She says: "I ate to defy her, but I also ate from panic. Sometimes I was afraid I wasn't really there, I was an accident"(74). Another form of simulation is when Joan changes her identity to become Luisa. K Delacourt, she adopts this name as her publishing name since she writes secretly and hides her career as a writer from her husband Arthur. She says:

It was the fact that I was two people at once, with two sets of identification papers, two bank accounts, and two different groups of people who believed I existed. I was Joan Foster, there was no doubt about that; people called me by that name and I had authentic documents to prove it. But I was also Louisa K. Delacourt. (204)

In the above quote, Joan speaks about her dual identity referring to herself as being two people at once. This takes us back to Baudrillard's notion of simulacra that sustains the idea that the copies re/generated from the original may look very authentic that they cause confusion. Atwood, through her main character Joan, intends to validate Baudrillard's worldview of the postmodern as being the age of simulacra through showing the power of the media in reproducing reality and creating what Baudrillard terms the "hyperreal".

In addition to Atwood's *lady Oracle*, her seminal novel *The Blind Assassin* reflects Baudrillard's views on the simulacrum through the process of narration. The novel is an interesting historical fiction that revolves around the Chase family and their sufferings after the Great Depression hit around. On the surface, the novel seems to be a historical account of life adventures of the two main characters Iris and Laura who happen to fall in love with the same man Alex Thomas. Although their lives take different

trajectories, they meet at some points where their destiny changes radically. The sisters Iris and Laura are the offspring of Norval Chase a rich owner of manufactories in Ontario of Ticonderoga. As the novel unfolds, the readers learn about the love relationship that springs between Laura and Alex, a radical politician with communist mindset. After a riot starts, Alex is accused of being the one who stimulated it and an order to arrest him is released. Laura helps him by hiding him in their house with the help of her sister who becomes attracted to him and finally they fall in love with each other.

The novel, as previously mentioned, is composed of multy-layered narratives in which readers are exposed to three stories wherein the embedded one ( the replica) gives us keys and clues about the events that happen or will happen in the original story. Nevertheless, the third one, a science fiction story follows the tradition of Atwood's writing as she uses it as a medium through which she criticizes the hypocrisy of society and the oppressive nature of tradition in repressing women. The focus, here, is fully directed to this mythical story set in the imaginative planet called Zycron.

The fictional story is told by Alex describing an imaginative city called "Sakiel-Norm" that is characterized by a dystopian atmosphere. This city is governed by a group of wealthy men called Snilfards who deem themselves superiors and oppress the poor citizens who are referred to by the narrator as Ygniroids. Resembling capitalism to a great extent, the Ygniroids can never reach the status of a Sakiel-Norm no matter how hard they work. Alex describes them as follows:

If a Snilfard should become bankrupt, he might be demoted to an Ygnirod. Or he might avoid such a fate by selling his wife or children in order to redeem his debt. It was much rarer for an Ygnirod to achieve the status of Snilfard, since the way up

is usually more arduous than the way down: even if he were able to amass the necessary cash and acquire a Snilfard bride for himself or his son, a certain amount of bribery was involved, and it might be some time before he was accepted by Snilfard society. (18-19)

The story that Alex recounts looks like the life of the Chase family. Norval Chase, Iris and Laura's father has agreed to marry his daughter Iris to the wealthy man Richard in order to help him stand back on his feet after he has lost all his money. Even though the story seems to be an embodiment of Alex's Communist philosophy and contempt to capitalism as Iris tells him: "I suppose this is your Bolshevism coming out, she says. I knew you'd get around to that, sooner or later." (18-19) he tries to distance himself from it by pretending being an objective narrator claiming that: "On the contrary. The culture I describe is based on ancient Mesopotamia. It is the Code of Hammurabi, the laws of the Hittites and so forth." (18-19).

Hence, what is happening in the real story is reflected through the dystopian fiction that Alex creates and the fictional planet of Zycron consists of an alien chronotope of enchantment in which time is disrupted and space is appropriated by the ones in control. This space is a gendered one because it underrates women and materializes them like commodities. As Alex carries on telling the story we learn about how women are sold to rich men as sexual objects and how their beauty becomes a curse after it was a blessing. We also learn about the bravery of these women and how they were trying to escape by faking their death and running away in mysterious circumstances or maybe this is what Iris wanted to hear about them. The planet of Zycron is a hyperreal and simulated space that consists of a replica of the real.

### 3.1.2. Examining Barthes' Death of the Author through Atwood's Novels

Atwood's deployment of postmodernist techniques and aesthetics extends to encompass Roland Barthes's notion of 'the death of the author'. A notion that submits to postmodernist ethos as it holds some of its trends including the collapse of meaning, lack of originality and death of God. In his seminal work *The Death of the Author*, Barthes contends that: "as soon as a fact is narrated... the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, and writing begins" (142). Barthes' 'the death of the author' is an enriching concept for literary criticism that marks a quantum leap. He argues that a text should cease being read in reference to its author (a biographical analysis/criticism) and calls for freeing it from any binding analysis that connects the text to its owner. In this regard Barthes postulates that:

"The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centered on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire's work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh's his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice. The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us." (143)

Barthes poststructuralist approach of literary texts is applicable on Atwood's novel *Lady Oracle* because this latter expresses the struggle of the main character's divided self. In the novel, we find out that Joan is living with two personalities. The first personality is related to a typical housewife that strives to gain her husband's approval by trying to embody the docile wife that is obedient to her companion. Arthur, Joan's husband is the

epitome of the rigid man that opts for the traditional life in which his spot is maintained as the family supporter whose wife stays at home to take care of him and the household. However, the second personality is quite contradictory to the first one in the sense that Joan becomes Louisa. KDelacourt, a writer of Gothic Romance and a poet.

After her life is messed up with her husband because she was afraid that he might have discovered her love affair with a man named The Royal Porcupine, she fakes her death and embraces her identity as a writer. Barthes' notion of the death of the author is manifested through the protagonist Joan who distances herself from her works; it is what Barthes describes as "prerequisite impersonality" (143) wherein "it is language which speaks, not the author." (143) and this is the case with the protagonist Joan. We might also assume Margaret Atwood herself as a dead writer for this novel because she expresses views that do not fully reflect her ideas concerning feminism. She implicitly blames the emotional instability of her protagonist Joan to her disturbed relationship with her mother from her early childhood. She barely relates it to the men she has encountered in her life, not even Arthur.

Another facet of viewing Atwood's leaning to embrace Barthes' notion of the death of the author can be traced through her non-fiction work entitled *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* wherein she describes her profile as a writer and engages with fruitful discussions about her views concerning the position of the author vis-à-vis their work and their readers. In the book, Atwood suggests that the writer does not interfere in what he writes, nor does he aim to impose his views on the characters he creates. She suggests that the role of the writer resembles the one of the messenger whose main mission is to ensure a literal transmission of the message from those who are in need to voice something. She describes writers as mediums that bridge the gap between the dead and the living. In this token, she hypothesizes "that not just some, but *all* writing of

the narrative kind, and perhaps all writing, is motivated . . . by a desire to make the risky trip to the Underworld and to bring something or someone back from the dead” (156)

Atwood has never overtly spoken up about her disagreement or approval with Barthes’ notable notion of the death of the author. Nevertheless, according to scholar PhebeAnnWolframe, Atwood does adopt Barthes view and she supports her claim by commenting on an epigraph in Atwood’s office that says: “wanting to meet an author because you like his work is like wanting to meet a duck because you like *pâté*” Wolframe comments by saying: “at least metaphorically,” “[t]he Author, the one who writes, can never be present, because the Author, like the duck in the paté [sic], is dead,” (p 19) Wolframe assumes that Atwood alludes for Barthes’ notion about the death of the author as the dead duck maybe a symbol for the dead author.

### **3.1.3 Exploring Historiographic Metafiction in Atwood’s Works through Deconstructing the “Grand Narratives”**

Atwood’s postmodernist inclinations are also seen through her employment of techniques such as parody, pastiche and fragmentation. There is a heated debate concerning the postmodern loss of originality and the fall into the trap of imitation and replication. We earlier in this chapter shed light on the notion of simulation and simulacra by Baudrillard through which he describes the postmodern age as being the era of the hyperreal and blurred copies, then we talked about Roland Barthes’ notion of the death of the author. Although different in scopes, both theorists share the idea of the lack of originality in postmodernist art and literature. In this respect, Atwood is widely acknowledged for her remarkable talent in using parody. This latter is defined in the Merriam Webster as: “a literary or musical work in which the style of an author or work is closely imitated for comic effect or in ridicule” (Merriam Webster) this definition pertains to the postmodernist sense of the impossibility of originality and authenticity.

Through alleviating the original work, a parody represents a less serious imitated work for the sake of being: “complicitous with the values it inscribes as well as subverts, but the subversion is still there” ( Hutcheon, 106).

In her novel *The Penelopiad* (2005), Atwood skillfully appropriates the use of myths and deconstructs the traditional narrative. In the Greek mythology, Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, loses her husband after the Trojan War. Ever since, many chieftains revealed their desire to marry her. However, Penelope was deeply faithful to her husband and kept waiting for his return. Because of the immense pressure on her to marry one of her suitors, she stipulated that she can only marry if she finishes weaving a shroud for Laertes, the father of Odysseus. She spends three years waving the piece by day and unraveling it by night. After this period, Odysseus returns and she gets back to him after confirming his identity (“Penelope”).

The story is recounted in Homer’s *Odyssey* wherein Penelope is considered as the epitome of the faithful wife and is often linked to marital fidelity. Atwood tends to narrate the story from a female’s point of view in which the character of Penelope and the twelve killed maids are given voice. The story is told in a humoristic manner; she pictures Odysseus in a way that makes readers doubt about his profile as hero. Odysseus was described as a short-legged man with barrel chest who is endowed with shrewd intelligence that enables him to win the contest that Penelope’s father has arranged for her suitors. He cheats and finally gets the chance to marry her. It is through the use of parody that Atwood attempts to provide the readers a chance to question what the “grand narratives” offer. By so doing, she aims at shaking the ground under the feet of this narrative in an implicit way that many would think of it as a merely retold story. Giving the voice to the maids to retell the story from their perspective seems at some points sarcastic.

The novelist tries to turn each situation that looked very serious in Homer's *Odyssey* into a hilarious one in order to convey encrypted messages that might be considered as criticism. One appropriate example is when Penelope is talking about the shroud she weaves and how people start making stories about it, she says:

The shroud itself became a story almost instantly. 'Penelope's web', it was called; people used to say that of any task that remained mysteriously unfinished. I did not appreciate the term web. If the shroud was a web, then I was a spider. But I had not been attempting to catch men like flies: on the contrary, I'd merely been trying to avoid entanglement myself. (6)

These lines taken from the novel unveil Atwood's expertise in re/generating the meaning to always fit the opposite context. The sarcastic manner she uses in order to show the other face of the coin is cleverly maintained. The example provided reveals that everything has two meanings: the appearing superficial denotation and the hidden deep one. The shroud that Penelope uses as a means of sending away suitors is likened to a web which catches insects and does the total opposite thing that Penelope's is supposed to do. This actually can be seen from another perspective that is related to history.

Within a postmodernist context, history has always been questioned. Keeping up with what the postmodern came to discard; the impossibility of arriving at the absolute truth and the rejection of maxims, Linda Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction becomes quintessential in reviewing Atwood's *Penelopiad*. What Atwood does in her novel appears as an attempt to parody Homer's *The Odyssey* in a sarcastic way. Nevertheless, what Atwood actually does is revisiting history and re/reading it from different perspectives through giving voice to the voiceless or to the "silenced". Hutcheon describes such narratives as being ambivalent in the sense that they add pinches of reality to their fiction. In this regard she contends:

Narrative representation – fictive and historical – comes under similar subversive scrutiny in the paradoxical postmodern form I would like to call ‘historiographic metafiction.’ Perhaps, as Lennard Davis (1987: 225) has convincingly argued, the novel has been inherently ambivalent since its inception: it has always been both fictional and worldly. If this is so, then postmodern historiographic metafiction merely foregrounds this inherent paradox by having its historical and socio-political grounding sit uneasily (14)

Thus, according to what was highlighted in the quote above, Hutcheon draws on Lennard Davis claim and explains that historiographic metafiction can be defined as the contextualization of fiction within history. It is a literary tendency that writers like Margaret Atwood adopt in order to undermine the dominant discourse and allow a space for ‘the small histories’ to fill in the gaps left by the grand narratives. In the same respect, Atwood through *The Penelopiad* revives the dead and grants them a chance to tell the story. In her book, *Negotiating with the Dead: a Writer on Writing*, Atwood postulates that :“Hypothesis that not just some, but *all* writing of the narrative kind, and perhaps all writing, is motivated by a desire to make the risky trip to the Underworld, and to bring something or someone back from the dead” (156). What she states in this book applies perfectly on what she has done in *The Penelopiad* wherein she brought the twelve executed maids back to life to tell their version of story and describe their feelings of injustice and grievance. Sigrid Renaux illustrates the sufferings of the maids from being outcasted and objectified in the following lines:

Atwood makes the maids present their true and unknown story in a chorus in several chapters, and as a counterpoint to Penelope’s narrative. (...) This creation of Atwood reveals the submission which these maids were subjected to, from their obscure birth to their execution and posthumous life in Hades: forced to work for

their masters since they were children, submissive to them and to the visitors as concubines (76)

Along the course of the novel, the maids are given voice in the form of interludes through chorus lines, in which they describe how they were wrongly executed. They speak of their dreams of having free lives in which they would be treated decently. Atwood's version of re-telling the *Odyssey* cannot be read without referring to feminism.

From the surface, the most notable difference between the original story by Homer and the novel of Atwood is the title: the first one inspires its title from Odysseus and the second one from Penelope. Atwood does not only try to create a powerful feminist counter-discourse but she rather tries to make 'the subaltern speak' and in this case the subaltern is a woman. This actually takes us to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notable work *Can the Subaltern Speak?* In which she calls into attention the situation of women in an Indian Context. In fact, her research pertains to the novel into question: *The Penelopiad* in the sense that the sufferings of Indian women (being ex-colonized, lower class subjects and oppressed by their own culture) can be similar to the sufferings of the killed maids especially that they both range from lower classes and suffer from being subdued twice by their masters and their male counterparts.

Spivak in her afore-mentioned work concludes that: "the subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with woman as pious item." (104) But Atwood tends to prove the inverse through giving the narrative voice not only to Penelope that might privilege from her situation as a woman who belongs to the ruling class but also yielding these marginalized women a space to speak up their own story. Thus, Atwood's use of parody operates as a means of undermining the dominant discourse through merging what French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard terms "petits récits" (small histories). He describes the postmodern condition by saying: "I define postmodern as

incredulity towards metanarratives (les grands récits)" (xxiv) what Lyotard criticizes is not only the ambit of metanarratives, but rather, he questions their legitimacy and nature.

In the same vein, Grenz suggests that:

What makes our condition "postmodern" is not only that people no longer cling to the myths of modernity. The postmodern outlook entails the end of the appeal to any central legitimating myth whatsoever. Not only have all the reigning master narratives lost their credibility, but the idea of a grand narrative is itself no longer credible...Consequently, the postmodern outlook demands an attack on any claimant to universality-it demands, in fact, a "war on totality." (45)

Grenz suggests that what actually characterizes postmodernism is its assaults on universal records and grand narratives that are deemed dominant. It is exactly what Atwood does by rewriting another version of a story that has been long regarded as a referential tale in the Greek mythology. She indeed gives voice to the voiceless and articulates their sufferings by imagining what they would say if they are brought back to life.

Like many of Atwood novels that deal with the issue of female victimization, *The Penelopiad* offers an account for females who range from lower social strata. Besides her use of parody, Atwood presents the story of the maids in fragments. Fragmentation is a postmodernist technique related to the representation of post-modernism as an era that is characterized by the loss of connectedness. The need for fragmentation stems from the sense of chaos and meaninglessness of the current times. Nevertheless, Atwood's use of fragmentation responds to her efforts as a postmodernist writer to deconstruct dominant discourses and imbed the occluded stories that were left unspoken. Thus, the reason behind presenting the story of the maids in the form of fragmented chorus lines is an attempt to mend the cracks of the original story by adding the little stories of the maids. Likely, Nunes Ruan suggests:

By choosing to write a novel, Atwood is able to expose the conventionality of not only the epic, but also of the other genres used by the maids in their chorus line. The novel, unlike the epic, allows the story to be fragmented, a fact which creates the uncertainty of who might be telling the whole story in *The Penelopiad*: Penelope herself or the maids? (231)

Penelope is also blamed for the death of the twelve maids. In fact, the maids tell different versions of the story of their execution blaming Odysseus on the one hand and blaming Penelope on the other. The protagonist Penelope is blamed because, according to the maids, she bears the weight of not standing up for them. They consider that it was her fault in the first place as Penelope herself admits: “I told my twelve young maids ... to hang around the Suitors and spy on them, using whatever enticing arts they could invent” (115) and carries on to add “In retrospect I can see that my actions were ill-considered, and caused harm” (118) So Penelope also feels guilty for the death of her beloved maids but paradoxically she feels that they deserved such sentence as the maids assume that she said : “feckless and / disloyal ... / and not fit to be / The dotting slaves of such a Lord as he [Odysseus]!” (150)

Thus, by taking into account the different versions of the story told from the maids’ point of view and comparing it to the one told by Penelope, we deduce that arriving at the absolute truth is impossible. Atwood aims at deconstructing *The Odyssey*’s metanarrative in order to demonstrate that these narratives are too generic and operated by power that they discard the “little (hi)stories” which are usually recounted by less powerful voices. In addition, having the story of the maids told through fragments and with different versions, measures to the premise that history is never complete and is recorded through fragments to which historians try to create links. In the same token Garrett-Petts claims that: “systems of discourse are often synonymous with systems of power. (83) In the sense that history is

controlled by power and often told from the point of view of the powerful or the triumphed.

### **3.2. Visualizing Feminism through Atwoodian Lens**

In an era that is characterized by an impulse towards emancipation and freedom, women claimed their rights not only via political protests and feminist organizations but also through their writings. Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood is one of the feminist writers who dedicated their works to voice women's demands regardless to their social, political or religious backgrounds. Her works are considered as a textual space of resistance through which Atwood brought women's derogation and plight into prominence. Her choice of female characters responds greatly to her own concerns as a female as she herself confirms:

I am always confused with [my characters]. [...] Some of them are people I couldn't possibly be, but I get confused with them anyway. [...] Women are still considered to be more subjective; so you get the view that all women can really do is tell the story of their feelings, their own feelings, not their characters. (127)

The quote above asserts that Atwood, the female, is deeply indulged in her writings. She aims at unveiling the sexist disposition of the Western society that she herself has suffered from in her beginnings as a writer. When Atwood started her literary career, she was an object for criticism for long. The reviews written about her works were focusing on her gender more than the quality of the art that she offers to readers. For example, the critic Melvin Maddoks wrote a review about Atwood's novel *Surfacing* in Times Magazine where he describes her as "the mistress of controlled Hysteria" ("Out of the Woods" 19 Mar. 1973) the term hysteria refers to a recently classified mental disease that used to be associated with females. In fact, there was a considerable amount of research conducted by major neurologists and psychiatrists such as Jean-Martin Charcot and Sigmund Freud

about Hysteria and the patients were females. The term has been used to describe females who did not act or behave according to the gender roles attributed to them.

Keeping up with Atwood's engagement with controversial feminist issues, Atwood's *Dancing Girls* is a collection of short stories that was first published in 1977. It has echoed successfully and received a positive acclaim. It won the St. Lawrence Award for Fiction as well as the award of The Periodical Distributors of Canada for Short Fiction. The book is composed of fourteen stories that portray a set of characters often dysfunctional and suffer from psychological problems. She portrays her characters to be ranging from different backgrounds but share the same sense of failure in maintaining stable and healthy relationships. The stories are entitled : *The War in the Bathroom, The Man from Mars, Polarities, Under Glass, The Grave of the Famous Poet, Rape Fantasies, Hair Jewellery, When it Happens, A Travel Piece, The Resplendent Quetzal, Training, Lives of the Poets, Dancing Girls, Giving Birth*. The focus of the present investigation will be directed to *Rape Fantasies, Dancing Girls* and *Giving Birth* since the three of them manifest signs of gender stratification and articulate women's sufferings with male oriented societies. Atwood's way of dealing with such serious subjects seems to be comic and humorous; she tries to break the taboos of female subjugation through dealing with topics related to giving birth and rape in a funny way in order to drift the attention towards the necessity of articulating them in an attempt to normalize the debate about such topics.

In *Rape Fantasies*, Margaret Atwood reports the discussion of female coworkers during their break time. The short story pivots around the imagined scenarios about being raped. The ladies gather around and start recounting what they expect if they got raped. Rape means a forced sexual relationship that is usually practiced against women. Scholars Cretilli and Bivona define it as: "involving the use of physical force, threat of force, or incapacitation through, for example, sleep or intoxication, to coerce a woman into sexual

activity against her will” (85) in the same article Cretili and Bivona suggest that the rape fantasy is common among women more than men. A study conducted by Moreaut and Follingstad showed that women are more likely to fantasize about rape and this might be due to the social stigmatization of women that frames them within the binary of shame and honor . Women tend to escape the feeling of guilt through the pretention of being helpless and forced.

In addition to the studies showed above, there are other researches that link rape fantasies not to the previous hypothesis that attributes it to guilt and social framing of women, but rather to some women’s openness about their sexuality. On the other hand, studies reported that women with rape fantasies are kind of erotophilic who long for experiencing sex differently (405) It might be attributed to some psychological conditions such as Stockholm Syndrome. Even though this latter has not yet been classified as a mental illness, but it was vehemently popularized through media in the 1970s after a bank robbery in Sweden wherein the captives showed signs of compassion and attachment to their captors that they refused to testify against them in court.

This kind of unusual relationship might be projected on Atwood’s characters of *Rape Fantasies* Mainly Greta, Chrissy as well as the central character and narrator Estelle. Their rape fantasies are much like sexual ones that are far from the definition of rape. For example, when Greta starts recounting what she fantasizes about rape, she imagines a man all dressed in black, wearing gloves, reaches up to her in her 8<sup>th</sup> floor’s balcony using a rope. Chrissy, on the other hand, imagines an unknown man gets into apartment , precisely while she is in her “bathtub, with no cloths on” ( Atwood 33) and slowly undresses himself and joins her in the bathtub. Estelle interrupts her and comments: “those aren’t rape fantasies. [. . .] Rape is when they’ve got a knife or something and you

won't want to" (33).

Atwood's short story *Giving Birth* centers upon a woman who becomes a mother for the first time narrated by Jeanie. As the story reaches its end, Jeanie appears to be the same person she narrates about. In this short story, Atwood chooses a title that vividly reflects her feminist tendencies. Giving birth is a feminine quality through which women experience another dimension of their physical relationship with men. In the story, Jeanie describes the process of pregnancy with its positive sides and troublesome moments. At times she praises the greatness of the female body and its ability to bestow life, and at others she describes pregnancy as an ordeal that women endure as a consequence of being a female.

Unlike other novels and short stories wherein males are not usually portrayed as dedicated and supportive, Jeanie's husband is a good man who attends with her pre-natal classes to be well prepared for her delivery day and the aftermath of the baby's birth. The protagonist and narrator of the short story is not portrayed to be having troubles with her pregnancy but rather she is described as: " vitaminized, conscientious, well-read... has managed to avoid morning sickness , varicose veins, stretch marks , toxemia and depression... has had no aberrations of appetite, no blurrings of vision" (131) . Atwood's focus on describing the labor experience calls the attention to apprehend the meaning of being a female.

### **3.2.1. Atwood's Criticism as a Feminist Writer**

Atwood also has suffered from being always linked to her female characters. Most of reviews were related to the extent to which Atwood tends to express her own ideas through her works, making her look as a frustrated female more than a skilful writer. A good example is seen in Margaret Wimsatt criticism to Atwood's novel *Surfacing* in

Commonweal as she argues: “the book itself seems a stage, on which the author exercises [...] the old demons and nameless shades of childhood, turning them into rabbits and amusing stunts to drain them of the terror they once held” (7 Sept.1973, 483) The critic tends to draw parallels between the novel’s events and the novelist’s life. Atwood comments on the reviews wherein most critics draw between her and her novels by saying that: “it doesn’t happen as much to men as it does to women, probably because women are viewed as more subjective and less capable of invention” (“Margaret Atwood: Poet”) Atwood denounces the implication of gender in formulating critical readings for novels. She contends that the fact of being a female writer makes it difficult to be evaluated in terms of their talent.

Atwood’s feminist sympathy is boldly articulated through her writings as most of her novels and poetry denote the struggle of women to free themselves from the constraints of patriarchy and the social degradation of females that mostly range from cultural and religious backdrops. In many interviews, Atwood is frequently asked whether she classifies herself as a feminist. In a recent interview that famous Harry Potter actress Emma Watson held with Margaret Atwood, she asked her whether she considers herself as a feminist. Atwood replies by saying: “So I usually say, ‘Tell me what you mean by that word and then we can talk. If people can’t tell me what they mean, then they don’t really have an idea in their heads of what they’re talking about. So do we mean equal legal rights?’” (Atwood) She carries on and argues:

So, if we mean, should women as citizens have equal rights, I’m all for it and a number of advances have been made in my lifetime regarding property rights and divorce and custody of children and all of those things, but do we mean, are

women always right? Give me a break! I'm sorry, but no! Theresa May is a woman, for heaven's sakes! (Atwood)

Atwood is very careful when it comes to defining feminism. She makes it clear that she is a feminist in the sense that she considers herself a defender of women's rights and calls for equality among men and women. Nevertheless, Atwood's novels hardly ever show females that are satisfied with their positions as subjugated, ignored or discarded. She always creates female characters that are able to surmount the hindrances they face in male-centered societies to achieve their ultimate goal of freeing themselves from the restrictions that limit their liberties. The starting point is frequently embodied in a victimized woman whose role is shortened to a mere housewife that is occupied with house work or a sexually exploited female that struggles to be valued and respected. The image of a strong willing to change woman is what characterizes her novels; perhaps the choice is related to her as being a moderate feminist that does not aim at enhancing women's representation at any cost.

### **3.2.2. Margaret Atwood and Second-Wave Feminism**

The works of Margaret Atwood have been linked to the second-wave feminism. This latter started to foreground the academic spheres with the dawn of the 1960s and continued to be effective until the 1970s. The movement is influenced by Simone De Beauvoir's seminal work *The Second Sex* in 1949 as well as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. De Beauvoir's work was mainly popular in Europe and extended its influence to reach the United States of America. In this respect, scholar Tolan Fiona suggests that the book has "constructed an epic account of gender division throughout history, examining biological, psychological, historical, and cultural explanations for the reduction of women to a second and lesser sex". (320) Standing in the same line with De

Beauvoir, the work of Freidan impacted largely in USA. In fact, Friedan tends to draw upon De Beauvoir's view about femininity being a socially constructed as scholar Gerhard claims that: "femininity was a cultural construct permeated with social values that had little basis in biology or genuine female experience." (88)

The second-wave feminism, unlike the first wave (that mainly stood up for women's suffrage), advocated women's rights in issues related to sexuality, family life as well as workplaces. It consisted a critique to the way women are treated in male-dominated societies and denounced the sexist practices held against them within the frame of patriarchy. There are many reasons to deem Atwood's works as being representatives of the second-wave feminism among which her approval of some of its principles including the rejection of women's objectification which was articulated in her novel *The Handmaid's tale* in the lines that show Offred's mother as a devoted feminist combatant. She takes young Offred to the local park in order to burn pornographic magazines. Offred comments on the magazine by saying: "it had a pretty woman on it, with no clothes on, hanging from the ceiling by a chain wound around her hands. I looked at it with interest. It didn't frighten me. I thought she was swinging, like Tarzan from a vine, on the TV." (36) Thus, burning these magazines that contain photos of women degraded into mere objects for sexual pleasure was presumed as an act of resistance by the second-wave feminists.

There are other examples found in the works of Atwood that embody the main ethos of the second-wave feminism. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, we find that Offred's mother participates in protests and marches against the strict rules that deny women the right of abortion. In fact, what Atwood does to denounce her feminist concerns is not limited to creating characters that support feminism, but also through offering a critique to the way male-centered societies justify men's horrible deeds towards women ( such as

rape ) and lay all the blame on them. In an incident where the handmaids gather to testify, one of the girls named Janine was talking about how she was gang-raped at a young age, Offred recounts: “It's Janine, telling about how she was gang-raped at fourteen and had an abortion. She told the same story last week. She seemed almost proud of it, while she was telling. It may not even be true.” (62) Regardless to Janine’s honesty, the surprising thing is the Aunts and the other handmaids’ (taught) reply:

“But *whose* fault was it? Aunt Helena says, holding up one plump finger.

*Her* fault, *her* fault, *her* fault, we chant in unison.

*Who* led them on? Aunt Helena beams, pleased with us.

*She* did. *She* did. *She* did.

Why did God allow such a terrible thing to happen?

Teach her a *lesson*. Teach her a *lesson*. Teach her a *lesson*.” (62)

This shows the unjust and inequitable treatment of women in the Gileadean state. Even when a female is wrongly and brutally raped, she is held responsible for it. In fact, what Atwood aims at through portraying such incidents is shedding light on women’s subjugation which is justified by distorted religious pretexts and biased patriarchal conventions that degrade women and diminish their value. In the same vein, Atwood does not solely expose the wrongdoings of dominant male-oriented agendas in limiting women’s liberties, but rather she divulges the hidden facet of women’s subjugation which is linked to other females.

### **3.2.3. Atwood’s Reservations about Being Called a Feminist**

In her novel *The Handmaid’s tale*, she criticizes and condemns the antipathy of the female communities. The novel’s protagonist Offred recalls her mother who used to be a radical feminist. She aspired for a feminine world where women take the lead. Offred creates an imaginary dialogue with her mother and here she says: “Mother, I think.

Wherever you may be. Can you hear me? You wanted a women's culture. Well, now there is one. It isn't what you mean, but it exists. Be thankful for small mercies" (137) she feels disappointed as she sees how women are oppressing other women. Atwood, through this depiction is criticizing how feminism is being twisted and driven to the extreme. Feminists like Offred's mother are decried by Atwood. Separatists represent the extremist form of the second-wave feminism from which Atwood distances herself. In fact, this is the reason why she keeps on insisting on interviewers to precise which kind of feminism they ask her about. She often tries to clarify why most reader as well critics think of her as a feminist, she argues:

"As writers, women writers are like other writers', but 'As biological specimens and as citizens ... women are like other women: subject to the same discriminatory laws, encountering the same demeaning attitudes, burdened with the same good reasons for not walking through the park alone after dark. They too have bodies" (Atwood 194)

In the quote above, Atwood aims at highlighting the fact that all what she writes does not have necessarily to be ascribed into any feminist frame. She links her categorization as a feminist to her attempt to reflect reality and to articulate what is wrong in the current world. She accepts to be labeled a feminist only when it comes to assisting women to have equal rights with men.

Atwood's refusal to explicitly align herself with feminist movements ranges from the different interpretations attributed to the notion. Albeit the fact that most of her novels' protagonists are females, precisely, victimized ones, she justifies her choice by claiming that it is due to her knowledge of what a female thinks and feels. In addition what pushes the novelist to be carefully called a feminist is the negative impact that radical feminists have on the movement. Bell Hooks describes the radical feminists as:

Fundamentally, they argued *that all men are the enemies of all women* and proposed as solutions to this problem a Utopian woman nation, separatist communities, and even the subjugation or extermination of all men. Their anger may have been a catalyst for individual liberatory resistance and change. It may have encouraged bonding with other women to raise consciousness. It did not strengthen public understanding of the significance of authentic feminist movement. (34)

Indeed, the afore-mentioned quote taken from Hooks' *Feminist Theory from margin to Center* accurately pinpoints the radical feminism and spots why it is rejected by most feminists. She explains that it is due to its fanatic orientations that public sympathy lessened towards it and this is the reason why Atwood is very careful when it comes to labeling herself as a dedicated feminist.

## **Conclusion**

On a final note, this chapter embarked in a literary journey within which Margaret Atwood's works were analyzed from a postmodernist perspective. It consisted an attempt to link her dedicated feminist inclinations with her interest in writing speculative fiction that mostly deals with the drawbacks of scientific advancement, religious fanaticism as well as capitalist ideologies. The research conducted in this chapter bore fruit in proving Atwood's categorization as a postmodernist writer depending on her use of postmodernist technique such as parody, pastiche in her novel *The Penelopiad*. This latter has also been examined in the light of Lyotard's views on the metanarratives which proved Atwood's agreement with the idea that the current epoch is characterized by "Incredulity towards metanarratives" In addition, her works have been mostly read and analyzed by scholars referring to her as a female, the thing that she has always objected on. In fact this was the

starting point upon which Barthes' conception of the death of the author was applied on the novel of *Lady Oracle*.

This chapter also highlighted Atwood's adoption of one of the significant postmodern theories which is Baudrillard's simulation and simulacra. It was projected on Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Blind Assassin*. Both novels revealed the fallacies of the current epoch in which everything is overtaken by the loss of originality and its replacement with replicas. It concluded with an analysis to Atwood's feminist tendencies and her own view about feminism.

## **Chapter Four**

# **Gendered Spaces in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale***

## **Introduction**

Space and gender have been recently studied from different perspectives, starting from geography arriving at anthropology. Their reflection in literature is often traced among works that engage with controversial topics such as feminism, sexism and social categorization. Since gender has always been one of the intrinsic parameters through which power operates; it is worthwhile to mention its tight relationship with space production and spatiality. In a similar vein, Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* is a reflection of how gendered spaces are produced and manipulated through knowledge and discourse for the sake of sustaining masculine supremacy. It constitutes a textual space through which Atwood's feminist concerns are boldly put forward to denounce women marginalization and detention under the shades of patriarchy.

Likewise, this chapter offers a descriptive analysis of how female characters are forced to be confined within pre-determined gendered spaces in a post-apocalyptic world that is governed by fundamentalist misogynists. By following a geocritical approach, the present chapter will apply Lefebvrian views of space production to track the impact of politics and history on rendering space a social construct operated by power relations namely those related to gender stratification. Finally, it will also project Foucauldian notions of bio-power and surveillance along with Bentham's "panopticon" to trace the notable impact of architecture and discourse (especially the religious one ) on the inferiorization of women.

### **4.1. Spatiality and Gender in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale***

. Ever since space started to be investigated outside its original context, several theorists and philosophers engaged with the term and attempted to fathom its essence. Among the prominent figures whose works received a wide acclaim in spatial studies is Henry Lefebvre with his seminal work *The Production of Space*. His work is considered to

be among the prominent inspirations for “the spatial turn” in the field of humanities since the 1970s. According to Lefebvre, the theory of production of space draws a principal importance on the concept of social space. He defines social space in the light of Marxist philosophies of class struggle and the power of the state. He further suggests that space can be delineated as: “a part of an interaction between subjects and their surroundings.” (18)

In the broadest sense, Lefebvre directs a notable interest to the process through which space is produced. He identifies it as being the outcome of the daily experiences that people undergo through their lifetime. This definition, as Lefebvre confirms, links space to history and deems this latter as an essential element in investigating how space is being produced. In the same vein, social spaces are defined and distinguished according to the practices that are held within them; for example, coffee shops, stadiums, gyms and backstreets are labels or terms that are frequently used in our everyday discourse. These appellations are inspired by the activities that people engage in through their daily lives. Divisions of space are held chiefly on a social basis; other benchmarks that have a direct influence on space production can be attributed to cultural, economic, political as well as religious parameters. It is noteworthy to claim that generic divisions of spaces are split into public and private ones. This differentiation is above all related to gender roles that are socially “constructed”.

Social stratification, power relations as well as gender distinctions lead to the productions of various spaces that respond to the standards of any given society, depending predominantly on its economic, political and cultural backgrounds. As a result, public, private as well as gendered spaces start to be remarkably produced. The public spaces usually are the ones in which public practices and transactions take place. They also refer to spaces that are open and accessible to everyone regardless to their gender,

race or social background. They are usually the ones owned by the state; among these spaces we mention: streets, roads, gardens, beaches and parks. Nevertheless, not every public space is characterized by an open access; there are some spaces that are labeled as public but with reservations such as school yards, libraries, stadiums, hotels, cemeteries as well as concert halls. On the other hand, there are other spaces which are private in the sense that there are limitations that restrict their accessibility. These private spaces are embodied in: houses, kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms.

Besides public and private spaces that are delineated according to certain characteristics related to social conventions and political implications, there are other spaces that are gendered; these spaces are the ones that are mapped out depending on the gender roles or practices that place each gender in a specific space according to what Butler labels as 'the performance of gender'. In the same respect Gal and Kligman conceive this categorization of space as a result of what society perceives as a man's place and a woman's spot. They claim that: "gender is socially and culturally produced ideas about male-female differences, power and inequality that structure the reproduction of these differences in the institutionalized politics of society" (4) indeed, this distinction between genders comes as a result of the powerful position that males occupy in society. Speaking about power takes us to the thoughtful Foucauldian conception that stresses on the tremendous influence of power which operates at all levels of society. For Foucault, "power is everywhere" (93) it strictly outlines gender roles into what a man should do and a woman should make. This differentiation is frequently related to attributes holding "masculine" and "feminine" connotations respectively.

Males are considered as superiors of females who are by force of patriarchal conventions deemed dependent and subservient. From a feminist standpoint, Foucault's views of power are vividly embraced by feminists because, according to their convictions,

the relationship between men and women is overwhelmed by the binaries of domination and submission, autonomy and subordination order and obedience. Males are endowed with control over women because of the biological differences according to which societies regard males as more potent than their female counterparts. In addition, women have always been stuck in the dilemma of being defined, represented and apprehended in relation to men, labeling women as men's "other". In her article, *The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body*, scholar Angela King postulates that:

The idea of men and women as opposites is supported by polarized categories such as mind/body, culture/nature, spirit/matter that have been inflected with gender ideologies. In the mind/body dualism the body and mind are regarded as quite separate, the body is merely the crude container of the mind. Mind and reason are superior to the emotions and senses and divorced from one another. Man is mind and represents culture: the rational, unified, thinking subject; woman is body and represents nature: irrational, emotional and driven by instinct and physical need. Mind/culture/man must harness and control this potentially unruly body/nature/woman through the application of knowledge and willpower. (31)

What King tries to highlight in the quote above is the process through which the female is being othered and inferiorized by her male counterparts, with the blessing of the social conventions that place males in a superior position. This societal labeling is promoted by different cultural and religious beliefs that support masculine supremacy. In her views, the duality of male/female is primarily connected to rational/irrational in the sense that females are in a constant need for guidance.

The gendered stratification is not only witnessed at the social level but it is also encountered in the way cities and suburbs are designed. The architectural discourse adopts terms and appellations that are derived from the cultural conventions which represent their

accompanying societies. In his article, *Heterosexuality and Home: Intimacies of Space and Spaces of Touch*, Morrison contends that the spatial structure and the architectural design of the space sustain power relations that characterize the relationship between men and women. Indeed, there are spaces that are designed for females including households, beauty centers and kitchens and others that are viewed as men's such as workplaces and gaming rooms. The nature of these gendered spaces embodies power relations in many ways.

In the same token, Löw and Lawrence-Zúñiga define them as: “particular locales that cultures invest with gender meanings, sites in which differentiated-practice occur or settings that are used strategically to inform identity and produce and reproduce asymmetrical gender relations of power and authority” (7). The representations of such gendered spaces in literature have been traced through the works of a number of feminist writers who engage with bringing to the fore the subjugation of women in an attempt to seek equality with their male counterparts. Margaret Atwood is among these novelists whose writing falls into the novels of protest that seek to translate women's feelings of marginalization and social framing through her speculative plots set in dystopian settings.

## **5.2. Gendered Spaces in *The Handmaid's Tale***

*The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood's sixth novel, is considered by many to be her most significant work, especially after the remarkable impact that it had after being adopted as a TV series by Hulu in 2017. The novel is a textual translation of feminist protest against the masculine hegemony and chauvinism. It can also be regarded as a political critic of monolithic regimes that distort realities and confiscate people's liberties. The novel also offers a speculative vision about a futuristic state named Gilead that rises on the ashes of the overthrown government of the United States of America. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian novel through which she boldly advocates women's marginalization

and inferiorization in favor of the opposite gender that is done systematically via oppressive regimes. In this vein, the story centers upon Offred and her journey towards freeing herself from the constraints imposed on her by the male dominators of the Gileadean state.

Through her dedicated engagement with feminist concerns, Atwood succeeds to project her speculative conception about the situation of women in a futuristic world that is characterized by being fossil and fanatic in spite of being scientifically and technologically advanced. The novelist tends to draw a parallel line between the state of Gilead and Europe during the middle Ages proving that history repeats itself. During the Medieval times, religion was vigorous and the church was an absolute power. Similarly, in the imagined Gileadean state that derives its appellation from the Bible and adopts a theocratic system, heavily based on distorted religious precepts and false biblical provisions. Throughout the novel, we follow Offred's journey from Red Center to the house of the commander and we detect the metamorphosis of her persona as a female.

#### **4.2.1. Apprehending Gilead as a Gendered Space**

The novel takes the fictional state of Gilead as a setting through which Atwood envisages the recreation of a theocratic system that is characterized by dictatorship and injustice especially towards women. The state is fictionally described to be located in the United States of America, having Washington DC as the capital city. It is politically ruled by "the committee" and derives its legislations from the Bible. The Gileadean state follows an oligarchic system whose leaders firmly follow a fundamental Christian cult aiming at creating a purified and godly state based on strict religious preaching. In fact, the way religion is imposed on people and the punishment exercised on the Gileadean citizens if they do not repent resembles to a great extent the medieval rule.

The eerie Gileadean state adopts a puritan philosophy that is pushed to the extreme.

The state's legislations are inspired from Biblical teachings of the Old Testaments; according to which the leaders consider the Gileadean people as being fallen creatures that are prone to sin. Pursuant to their (mis) understanding of the Bible, they consider women as lesser creatures that need to be tamed and watched over in order not to tempt men and cause them to commit sins. They reduce their role in society and draw restrictions on their femininity to be seen merely as "two-legged wombs" (146) being kept as child bearers as most women in Gilead have become infertile.

The social stratum of the Gileadean state is composed of separate classification having men as superiors in all cases. The male classes were categorized into: the leaders also referred to as the Commanders of Faithful, the Angels who are the soldiers residing on the frontlines of the state, Guardians as policemen, bodyguards or personal drivers for the Commanders, Professionals as doctors, dentists or the state's elites and finally the economen who are allowed to have jobs and own properties. Meanwhile, female classification includes: Wives who are the women married to the Commanders, they can order the Aunts and Guardians but their power is limited and unreal. They are followed by the Widows or ex-Commanders wives who are forced to wear black to show their grief over their dead husbands. Then, the Aunts, who are in charge of watching over the Handmaids, Daughters and the Wives. They are endowed with certain rights such as reading and writing as well as attending public executions and reporting the irregularities of Commanders and their Wives. The Aunts should be pure, good and unmarried women.

In a lower position, The Handmaids: are the fertile women whose role is to produce children. Whenever a Handmaid is pregnant she enjoys a higher status. The Marthas: are the servants that should be unmarried. The Daughters, are the offspring of Commanders from the Handmaids, they are allowed to school but never taught to read or write. Econowives: are married to Economen, they are allowed to raise their own children if

they are fertile. Jezebels: an appellation given to the state's prostitutes. Finally, the Unwomen are the infertile bad women. They are usually exiled to the colonies which are polluted by toxic radioactive; they live there until they die.

Based on the afore-mentioned depiction of the Gileadean state, it can be considered as a gendered space in which power is manipulated in favor of males who are religiously and politically deemed superiors. The social hierarchy imposed by the state strengthens the masculine primacy and diminishes women's value and worth to merely child bearers. In the novel, The Gileadean state has come into being after nuclear warfare and failed biological experiments that have resulted in a sharp decrease in births as women became infertile. Nevertheless, fertile women were forced to become Handmaids for the sake of giving birth. They were denied the right of choosing their partners or enjoying any kind of love relationship. The dress code that associated their social ranking "red" signified their fertility. As Offred, the novel's protagonist recounts, they were formed and trained to become Handmaids in the Red Center which was previously a gymnasium.

What makes Gilead a gendered space is the combination of social practices that exist in it. Despite the fact that Henry Lefebvre's theory of production of space did not engage with space from a feminist point of view, several feminist scholars have relied on his work in order to elucidate the vital role of gender differentiation in delineating the way gendered spaces are being produced. In this esteem, feminist urbanism started to foreground the academic spheres as many feminist scholars started to draw the link between urbanism, feminism and Lefebvrian theory of production of space. Among the notable contributors to this field is the scholar Dolores Hayden, a spatial historian that devoted her work to examine the tight relationship between space and gender. She investigates the impact of architecture on gender by drawing the link between spaces and the social practices enrolled in them. Hayden in her book *Redesigning the America*

*Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* engages in a fruitful debate concerning the division of spaces into private and public ones, showing the process through which women were systematically excluded from urban environment. She opens her section entitled *Domesticating Urban Spaces* by criticizing the famous phrase: “a woman’s place is in her home” and contends that: “what’s a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?” has reflected the public attitude toward women in public, urban space.” (150) She inspires from Lefebvrian conception of the right to the city in revealing women’s exclusion from certain environmental setting ever since the medieval time like it is discussed in Lefebvre’s *The Right to the City*.

Drawing on Henry Lefebvre’s views about ‘the right to the city’ that he tightly links to the everyday, it is important to highlight the fact that women in Gilead are deprived full access to various spaces because of their gender. Lefebvrian conception of the right to the city can be explained as a process of rethinking the purpose, the definition and grounds of belonging to any given political community that dwells the city. He associates the right to the city to ‘inhabitation’ meaning that the ones who inhabit the city have the right to it which is inherently earned by simply occupying a space within it. The concept of the right to the city entails two main rights; the right to appropriate an urban space with a full right to inhabit (and use) and the right to participation which can be defined as the right of inhabitants to own a centripetal role in decision making concerning the production of urban spaces. In this vein, Dikec elucidates that the right to the city involves the right of inhabitants in maintaining control over the urban life including taking parts in politics, management and administration of the city.

From a gendered perspective, the right to the city is questioned since Lefebvre links it with the right to difference as an essential part in achieving the holistic meaning of having a full right to the city. He contends that: “the right not to be classified forcibly into

categories which have been determined by the necessarily homogenizing powers” (qtd. In Dikec, 35) consequently, what blocks the process of belonging to city is the conflicting powers that endeavors to invade urban spaces. In the case of the city of Gilead, women do not have a total right to their city because of many reasons atop which being an oppressed gender, a silenced citizen that is depleted of the right to decision making.

The genderization of the Gileadean space is processed through the social practices that take place within it. By referring to Lefebvrian theory of production of space, it becomes legitimate to claim that the power relations and parameters that Gilead as a space entails is what renders it a gendered space with an overwhelming masculinity. Accordingly, Lefebvre suggests that:

...That the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and action; that in addition to being a means of production, it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet, that, as such it escapes in part from those who would make use of it. The social and political (state) forces which engendered this space now seek, but fail, to master it completely; the very agency that has forced spatial reality towards a sort of uncontrollable autonomy now strives to run it into the ground, then shackle and enslave it. (26)

By projecting Lefebvre’s views on the production of space on Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, we find out that the space of Gilead indeed responds to the way Lefebvre describes the process through which space shifts from being a means of production into a means of control. Every aspect in the Gileadean state operates by power. The leaders impose their authority through the architecture of the city; the way buildings are designed serves to reinforce the different social strata and the order of power. In this regard, as Foucault describes the concept of surveillance and its influence to keep everything under constant supervision and control is an effective means that sustains the power of state over its

citizens. He further suggests that the seventeenth century's urgent need to contain the plague demanded a spatial division of cities and towns into quarters supplied with checkpoints. Foucault aims at clarifying that being surveilled is not enough unless it is combined with discipline.

In the same token, Foucault highlights the importance of the panopticon as an architectural design in maintaining power through a firm surveillance mechanism that delimits people's liberties by making them perpetually observed. For him, the inmate will live by the feeling of being constantly watched that even when he is not watched, he will assume that he is and act accordingly. He asserts:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (202-203)

This happens in Gilead; mainly, through the protagonist Offred. She cannot enjoy her private space in her room because she knows that she is being watched. In fact, the handmaids are not even allowed to suicide. There are firm safety measures undertaken by the state in order to prevent any suicide attempt. Women were very carefully kept in control that they do not even have the right to choose to die.

The Gileadean state tends to impose power on women to subjugate them through the use of religion as a pretext; scholar Norberto Bobbio affirms: "a power founded on force alone may be considered effective but not legitimate" (81) indeed, the state of Gilead consists a recreation of the policy of the Middle Ages. It uses religion as a source of legislation in order to attribute authority to a divine power that nobody dares to question. In this concern, Bobbio inspires his views concerning the legitimization of authority via religion from the philosopher Thomas Hobbes who believes that: "authority and not

reason that makes the law” (Bobbio 84). Bobbio concludes that: “In a pyramidal conception of authority the ultimate authority is the will of God” (84) Again, following the policy of the church during the Medieval times, the Bible is used as a tool through which power is imposed on populations. In the case of Gilead which is heavily based on the subjugation of women, the holy text is kept out of reach of all the citizens especially women. This is affirmed by Offred as she describes the way they used to recite slogans allegedly taken from the Bible: “Not every Commander has a Handmaid: some of their Wives have children. *From each*, says the slogan, according to her ability; *to each according to his needs*. We recited that, three times, after dessert. It was from the Bible, or so they said.” (117)

Across the novel, there are multiple signs that reinforce the claim of “Gilead” being a gendered space. The process of subduing women and relegating them to marginal spaces is being done through manifold facets. Apart from being predicated by the state, women in control also try to implant the sense of inferiority within other women simply because they acquiesce to their male masters. In one passage, Offred describes the time of watching movies, which is supposed to be a leisure time by having Aunt Lydia displaying:

an old porno film, from the seventies or eighties. Women kneeling, sucking penises or guns, women tied up or chained or with dog collars around their necks, women hanging from trees, or upside-down, naked, with their legs held apart, women being raped, beaten. (56)

The purpose of streaming such movies is to give a moral lesson for the handmaids. The aunts try to convince them that what they are doing in their current life is a blessing and they need to be thankful that they did not live in that time when women were degraded to mere sex slaves.

Nevertheless, the Aunts notice the handmaids' secret disapproval to the way they

are treated but try to convince them that for the coming generations it will be fun. Offred reports: “you are a transitional generation, said Aunt Lydia. It is the hardest for you. We know the sacrifices you are being expected to make. It is hard when men revile you. For the ones who come after you, it will be easier. They will accept their duties with willing hearts.” (93) This shows how women’s subjugation is being systematically implemented in them. The Gileadean state uses women to subjugate other women as a means of further strengthening the masculine supremacy. Offred, here, demonstrates that the sense of submission is being indoctrinated as part of the state’s political agenda.

In a nutshell, the Gileadean state constitutes a gendered space that is characterized by being a site for oppressing women. The masculine hegemony expands its authority over them at all levels via diminishing their value and restricting their liberties. Women in Gilead are nothing but sex machines that are used to save the nation’s future as most women became sterile. The state Commanders patriarchal tendencies are clearly manifested through their policy which works on devoicing women and objectifying them. Scholar Mackinnon contends that: “all the ways in which women are suppressed and subjected [...] as what sex is for women and as the meaning and content of femininity” (6) Mackinnon claims that sexual harassment and rape are among the ways that sustain women’s oppression. Likewise, Offred’s description of the sexual intercourse she often has with the Commander resembles to a degraded status of women being merely a “two legged wombs” (146).

#### **4.2.2. The Female Body as a Gendered Space in The Handmaid’s Tale**

Gendered space as apprehended by Lefebvre is the intersection of knowledge and action in the gender realm. His influence by the Marxist philosophy is manifested in his focus on the role of socialism in creating gendered spaces. In a similar vein, Lefebvre delineates specific parameters that are either ideological, political or embedded within the

code of space production. For him, what affects the production of space in general and gendered space specifically is the social practices enacted within them. These spaces are not only set by socialism but also by the interference of states in individuals. The interplay between gender and power is manifested through the influence of power in outlining the gendered classification into a male /superior and female/ inferior. Prior to Lefebvrian influence by Marxism, a Foucauldian leaning can be traced through his conceptualization of creating space. Both, Lefebvre and Foucault tend to agree on the idea that suggests space being a locus of hegemony that is: “exercised over society as a whole, culture and knowledge included, and generally via human mediation: policies and political leaders, parties as also a good many intellectuals such as experts” (Shields 156). Nevertheless, they tend to disagree on the source of power and its nature. While Lefebvre attains it to politics, Foucault believes that it is enacted by force through what he labels bio-power.

In the Gileadean state, women were socially, psychologically and physically oppressed. The power of the state or the sovereign was primarily exercised over women as the whole conception of the creation of Gilead is based on the detention of women for using them as tools of sexual pleasure and bearing children. In fact, Atwood’s interest in presenting the female body in all its forms is manifested through her detailed description of how this latter is being physically, philosophically, ethically, socially and culturally exploited. In an interview with Elizabeth Meese, she draws a parallel connection between how the body is culturally conceptualized. She suggests: “The body as a concept has always been a concern of mine .... I think that people very much experience themselves through their bodies and through concepts of the body which get applied to their bodies” (104) similarly, in the *Handmaid’s Tale*, female characters are entrapped in the social framing of their bodies. They are being abusively exploited because of their capacities of bearing children and even when they are infertile their bodies are again harnessed as

objects for sexual pleasure.

The patriarchal tendency of the Gileadean state attains its legitimacy from Biblical inspiration. The Christian oligarchy of Gilead focuses primarily on the submission and exploitation of women to win men's approval who are divinely endowed with the right of being supreme over women. There are many examples wherein the female body can be conceptualized as a gendered space among which the limitation of women's sexuality by using them for sexual affairs that are void of any kind of pleasure (for the sake of impregnating them). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, spaces operate through power and the accompanying power relations. This Foucauldian notion applies to every spatial distinction in the novel. The Gileadean state does not only rely on politics to exercise its authority over its citizens precisely women, but also utilizes their bodies as tools of subjugation to sustain their vigor.

The Female body in *The Handmaid's Tale* is regarded as a productive machine of making children without the consent of the fertile women that are enslaved. It is sexualized in the sense that women are only valued as long as they are fertile and their wombs are capable of holding babies. The novel's plot tends to translate the feminist concerns about the materialization of the female body that renders it an object for male's sexual desire. Among the significant examples which proves that the female body is objectified is preventing the handmaids from taking care of their bodies. They are not allowed to look beautiful or seductive, they are not even allowed to protect their skin or their hair; all they have to be is sexually healthy to be able to reproduce. This limitation that is imposed on women is considered as an assault on their femininity.

Offred describes how she secretly keeps a piece of butter in order to moisturize her skin saying: "I rub the butter over my face, work it into the skin of my hands. There's no longer any hand lotion or face cream, not for us. Such things are considered vanities."

(Atwood, 17) The Gileadean state follows a strict theocratic system that regards women as source of sin that is why they do not have to look beautiful or appealing. The handmaids are deprived from the right of enjoying their bodies and embrace their femininity because as Offred explains: “We are containers: it's only the insides of our bodies that are important. The outside can become hard and wrinkled, for all they care, like the shell of a nut.”(17) Offred here is aware of the fact that what keeps her safe from being ruthlessly sent to the colonies is being fertile. She does not have to look pretty; all she has to be is fertile. Likewise, the reward of being able to give birth to a child is to never be classified as an unwoman as Offred speaks about Janine who has just delivered her baby: “she'll be allowed to nurse the baby [...] after that she'll be transferred, to see if she can do it again, with someone else who needs a turn. But she'll never be sent to the Colonies, she'll never be declared Unwoman. That is her reward.”(100)

Back in the Red Center, the handmaids were taught to be obedient and submissive. They were obliged to hide their feminine and seductive body parts and were even compelled to hide their faces by using “white wings”(14) whose primary function is to keep them not only “from seeing, but also from being seen.” (14) The sexist practices enacted within the Gileadean state are deeply rooted in the female body. In her book, *The Second Sex*, Feminist Simone De Beauvoir suggests that: “He [the man] thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection to the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it” (15) The view that De Beauvoir presents in her quote submits to the way male leaders view their female counterparts. They do not consider women as autonomous entities but rather, they define them according to their own expectations as source of evil unless they are tamed. On the other hand, males are placed in a superior position because they are divinely endowed of this supremacy.

The women who were sent to the colonies are described as “unwomen”. They are called as such for many reasons: they cannot (or refuse to) bear children and because they were previously lesbians, radical feminists or political activists against the fundamentalist Gileadean rule. The appellation holds multiple sexist connotations as in different cultures; the female is expected to be docile, obedient and delicate. Once a female decides to be self defined outside this frame, her femininity is confiscated and her bodily traits that biologically determine her as a female are of no use. In fact, labeling this category of rebellious women as “unwomen” sounds to be more degrading in the masculine view of Gilead. In Aristotelian conception: “the female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities” as if she represents an incomplete man. He further contends: “we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness” (De Beauvoir, 7). Indeed, in the Gileadean state, women are devalued and circumscribed within their feminine nature. Their bodies are fragmented and all what matters is their uterus.

In addition to the unwomen whose bodies are deemed useless by Giledean authorities, the handmaids’ bodies are valued because of their reproductive features. Following a fundamental oligarchic system, the authorities of Gilead deliberately insist on implanting a sense of shame regarding the female body. Foucault describes the situation wherein the body becomes an integral part in controlling systems and how they aim: “to discipline the body, optimize its capabilities, extort its forces, increase its usefulness and docility, integrate it into systems of efficient and economic controls” (Foucault, 139) for the sake of constraining them. Similarly, the protagonist Offred, like other handmaids, is forced to cover up all her body to the extent that she no longer feels comfortable being naked. This is shown in the novel when Japanese tourist came over wearing skirts that “reach just below the knee and the legs come out from beneath them” (Atwood, 29) she describes them being “nearly naked” (29) and “blatant” (29).

Offred was looking at them fascinated by their freedom of choosing what to wear. She keeps staring at them and reminiscing about the time she was as free as these women. Nevertheless, the way she described them as being blatant shows that she is deeply influenced by the theocratic tendency of the Gileadean state that obliges women to be “modest” through inculcating religious preaching about the sanctity of the female body. The only place where the handmaids are allowed to be naked is the bathroom that is why Offred believes that taking bath is something to be thankful about. She says: “the bath is a requirement, but it is also a luxury. Merely to lift off the heavy white wings and the veil is a luxury.” (72) The heaviness of the white wings and the veil is not real but rather figurative. She does not feel comfortable being obliged to walk around covered up; she feels that her body is being appropriated. Her inability to choose what to wear makes her hates her body because she thinks that it is why her freedom is being constrained. She declares:

My nakedness is strange to me already. My body seems outdated. Did I really wear bathing suits, at the beach? I did, without thought, among men, without caring that my legs, my arms, my thighs and back were on display, could be seen. Shameful, immodest. I avoid looking down t my body, not so much because it's shameful or immodest but because I don't want to see it. I don't want to look at something that determines me so completely. (63)

Offred has unconsciously become integrated within the patriarchal system of Gilead as she started to take part in shaming her body and avoiding looking at it. She is now imbued with Aunt Lydia’s preaching about women’s “modesty” that she equates to invisibility: “modesty is invisibility”(30) she tries to render her body invisible by ignoring it and wondering how was she used to sit in the beach half naked not having a care in the world.

The genderization of the female body works first by using it a medium through

which power is exercised. It is also fragmented and given value as long as it is useful. Foucault describes the body as a passive entity that is in constant dominance by discourse and other forms of power. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, women are put in a situation where they have to comply with the Gileadean rules. Their bodies are transformed into spaces of subjugation and control as Rich describes the female body: "the terrain on which patriarchy is erected" (55) the novel seems to lean more towards following the journey of Offred with her self-definition beyond the borders of her body. As the story unfolds, she engages in repetitive dialogues with her body and about her body. She seeks reconciliation with her femininity and wants to redeem her body from the confines of patriarchy that the misogynist Gileadean authority strives to repress.

The commodification of Offred's body is traced throughout the novel when she was depicting the tattoo she has on her ankle. A part from being a sign that her body is watched and always under surveillance, it is, also, a sign of empowerment since this tattoo offers her the privilege of being protected as long as she is able to give birth to children. Her mobility is restricted and she cannot go anywhere outside Gilead; surprisingly, this does not bother her. What really bothers her is the fact that she is considered as a commodity whose worth is tightly related to her usefulness. She describes herself as "a national resource" (57) by which she means being a mine of producing children. Using the handmaids as commodities resembles using gas and oil to ensure the growth and prosperity of the state. Furthermore, inscribing tattoos in the bodies of the handmaids renders them a property just like articles for sale that are labeled by identification numbers and price tags. A tattoo is permanent, painful and cannot be removed easily which stands for the dominance of Gileadean leaders whose control seems to be permanent.

Having the tattoo of an eye carved into her body affords insights into the Foucauldian apprehension of surveillance and Bentham's panopticon. Just like it is a

constant reminder for the handmaids that they are no longer free, the tattoo is also a memento of their subservience and imprisonment. The notion of the panopticon is of Greek origins coined by Jeremy Bentham which means “all seeing eye”. The embodiment of this concept is tracked through its architectural design that places a central tower in the middle of a group of prison cells in a circular shape. Bentham has inspired the idea after visiting his brother’s workshop in Belarus. He conceptualized it as a successful way to impose order in prisons by making the inmates on probation and ensuring that they are conscious about it: “the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so” (Foucault 201). The feeling of being watched creates a sense of fear to behave in a way that might anger the authorities. This model of prison is believed to be an effective method of maintaining order within capitalist societies as Foucault contends:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (200)

This is strongly manifested in the novel through Offred who lives under the pressure of being watched. She even started to detach herself from her body as she finds it a medium through which authoritative control is practiced. The tyrannical Gileadean government does not refrain from harnessing every possible way to impose its power on the citizens. It inscribes its vigor within the most personal and intimate level: the body.

In fact genderizing the female body is not only discussed in Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, she has already tackled it in her short story *Rape fantasies*. In *Rape Fantasies*, Margaret Atwood reports the discussion of female coworkers during their break time. The short story pivots around the imagined scenarios about being raped. The ladies

gather around and start recounting what they expect if they got raped. Rape means a forced sexual relationship that is usually practiced against women. Scholars Cretilli and Bivona define it as: “involving the use of physical force, threat of force, or incapacitation through, for example, sleep or intoxication, to coerce a woman into sexual activity against her will” (85) in the same article Cretilli and Bivona suggest that the rape fantasy is common among women more than men. A study conducted by Moreault and Follingstad<sup>4</sup> showed that women are more likely to fantasize about rape and this might be due to the social stigmatization of women that frames them within the binary of shame and honor . Women tend to escape the feeling of guilt through the pretention of being helpless and forced.

In addition to the studies showed above, there are other researches that link rape fantasies not to the previous hypothesis that attributes it to guilt and social framing of women, but rather to some women’s openness about their sexuality. On the other hand, studies reported that women with rape fantasies are kind of erotophilic who long for experiencing sex differently (405) It might be attributed to some psychological conditions such as Stockholm Syndrome. Even though this latter has not yet been classified as a mental illness, but it was vehemently popularized through media in the 1970s after a bank robbery in Sweden wherein the captives showed signs of compassion and attachment to their captors that they refused to testify against them in court. This kind of unusual relationship might be projected on Atwood’s characters of *Rape Fantasies* Mainly Greta, Chrissy as well as the central character and narrator Estelle. Their rape fantasies are much like sexual ones that are far from the definition of rape. For example, when Greta starts recounting what she fantasizes about rape, she imagines a man all dressed in black,

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<sup>4</sup> Moreault, Denise; Follingstad, Diane R. (December 1978). [\*"Sexual Fantasies of Females as a Function of Sex Guilt and Experimenta". Journal of Consulting and Clinical\*](#)

wearing gloves, reaches up to her in her 8<sup>th</sup> floor's balcony using a rope. Chrissy, on the other hand, imagines an unknown man gets into apartment, precisely while she is in her "bathtub, with no cloths on" (33) and slowly undresses himself and joins her in the bathtub. Estelle interrupts her and comments: "those aren't rape fantasies. [. . .] Rape is when they've got a knife or something and you won't want to" (33).

When it is Estelle's turn, she speaks about her rape fantasies that are realistic to some extent. She tells them about imaginative stories that stretch back to her adolescence years and early adulthood. Among the six different stories she recounts, there is one story that seems more to be a reality than a fantasy. This rape story happens when she was living with her mother "In this one I'm not in the apartment where I live now, I'm back in my mother's house in Leamington the fellow's been hiding in the cellar"(35) she describes it to be the scariest one. In this fantasy, Estelle narrates how the strange man comes in through the coal chute. She does not recall his face but she perfectly remembers his feet and the kind of shoes he wears. The man is reported by Estelle as being "nut" and hears voices. What makes the story scary is the way he gets close to her and grabs her arm. Nevertheless, she manages to get away from him as she fools him that she also hears voices from angels that tell her she is going to conceive the reincarnation of St Anne who is going to give birth to the Virgin Mary. She convinces him that St Anne will pave the way to the end of the world that is going to be marked by the rebirth of Jesus the Christ. Finally, the strange man believes her, apologizes and climbs back the chute coal. The imagined stories of Estelle reflect more a kind of traumatic experience with rape.

Female characters of *Rape Fantasies* make up their imagined tales in a way that shows their determination to have a command over the ending. They appropriate this fantasized space to be the controllers of their fate despite the fact that real rape stories do

not have a satisfactory ending for females. Depending on the previously provided overview about the gendered spaces, we can consider the imagined stories of the characters as a reflection of the mental spaces they create as a response to a potential experience of rape. The mental space is defined by Gilles Fauconnier in his book *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language* as the one that is created out of the real world but is idealized and set according to: “models of the actual world, or a possible world, or an actual or possible situation. Possible worlds and situations are not models of the human mind, but models of the world as it is assumed to be or might be.”(xi) In common stories of rape, we rarely meet a woman that gets out triumphant. It is either she gets violently raped with no sign of resistance or she defends herself to the degree of harming (and some cases murdering) her rapist. Nonetheless, in Atwood’s short story of *Rape Fantasies*, most female characters succeed in escaping rape with no harm. Mental spaces are often operated by a diverged form of reality where power balance is weighted to the one that creates it. In the present case, the mental space is being gendered in the sense that it is appropriated by the female characters that turn it into a space of empowerment rather than a space of oppression and detention.

Lefebvre confirms that the mental space cannot be detached from social relations that are established in the physical world. His triad of space implicates that the conceived space is formulated mentally where all historical, cultural as well as social ideologies are inscribed. It consists a record of past experiences with their accompanying emotions and feelings that help to recreate other spaces out of the lived ones. In *Rape Fantasies*, the imagined stories constitute a textual translation of a harsh dilemma that women across the world suffer from. Atwood portrays her female characters as having a command over the creation of gendered “mental” spaces because they succeed in engendering a different or simulated reality wherein their gender is more powerful and effective.

### **4.3. The Manipulation of Gendered Spaces through Discourse in *The Handmaid's Tale***

The concept of gender has always been tightly linked to power relations as far as societal structure is concerned. Issues that are connected to conquests and ownership of space seem to appear hand in hand with the ones concerned with gender. This is actually inevitable due to the patriarchal nature of the relationship between men and women, regulated by society. In the same respect, Theda Wrede claims “Both gender and space, as social constructs, not only share common traits but are also used to reinforce each other”(12). The paradigm of gendered space is vehemently influenced by patriarchy. This latter, has for long been controlling the distribution of roles in spaces and has been firmly setting their borderlines. A good example of this is the separation of men and women in a way that consolidates gender stratification. This can be seen through juxtaposing public spaces with private ones. Such as kitchens and banks. In totalitarian regimes, men tend to impose the rules of how a society should be. They maintain their superior position over women and convince people that this hegemonic trait attributed to men is a *prima facie*.

The production of gendered space is commonly associated to power and power relations inscribed in the process of space production. Similarly, gendered space is identified as the one that is “forced” to be produced. In her study, *Heterosexuality and Home: Intimacies of Space and Spaces of Touch*, Morrison argues that the spatial structure and the architecture design of the space delineate the order of power among men and women. It is important to highlight that what sets the basis of any given architectural design is the discourse that frames its dimensions. From a Foucauldian perspective a discourse is defined as:

ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning.

They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon 108).

As clarified in the quote above, discourse for Foucault depends for the most part on the set of social practices and power relations that control the formulation of knowledge. This latter is neither innocent nor objective as it is in a continuous process of alteration. For Foucault, knowledge is outlined by different forms of power that control how people apprehend, normalize and delineate “truth” that is never absolute. In Weedon’s words, power for Foucault is: “a dynamic of control and lack of control between discourses and the subjects, constituted by discourses, who are their agents. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects (113).

By noting the fundamental influence of the Foucauldian notion of power on the feminist discourse, it becomes legitimate to project it on Atwood’s novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The female characters in the novel are portrayed as victims of marginalization and subjugation by their male counterparts. Their relegation to marginal spaces which are profoundly gendered is done through various mediums among which: discourse. In this part, we are going to scrutinize how power is being manipulated through discourse for the sake of restricting women within the confines of Gilead’s gendered spaces.

#### **4.3.1. Muddling the Religious Discourse**

The crucial influence of the religious discourse on the manipulation of gendered spaces in the novel is undeniable. The religious overtones are considerably critical to the unfolding of the events as they add an extra phantasmagorical tendency to the plot. Classified as a dystopian work, *The Handmaid’s Tale* depicts a bleak futuristic scenario about the decline of the United States of America and its replacement by a state that adopts an oligarchic system inspired from fundamentalist Christianity. Its leaders choose the name of Gilead as an appellation in order to give it a religious orientation and show

their commitment to the Christian faith. It is important to note that this religious tendency is set as a pretext to legitimize women's detention and inferiority for the sake of maintaining masculine hegemony. The novel constitutes a critique of the Western society's marginalization of women and a tribune through which "reinvigorated hatred of women and the explosive growth of religious fundamentalism" (Jones 4) is denounced. It also consists a protest against the objectification of women that renders them as mere sexual things used for producing children. According to Ruether, the subjugation of women throughout history has been tightly linked to religion as an overriding need to maintain social equilibrium. He contends: "the subjugation of the woman to the man is analogous to the subjugation of the body to its head ... The male leaders of society are God's representatives on earth. Because God is father, women cannot represent God" (56-58). The very essence of his claim stands on the sexist nature of the divine texts that choose the masculine gender as a representative of God, forming an equation between masculinity and superiority.

In the novel, the religious discourse takes a monologic nature. The Gileadean state imposes its dominance on the citizens through manipulating language. The leaders of the state (the commanders) use the Bible as a pretext to sustain their control and legitimize their exploitation of the handmaids. In fact, the founders of Gilead convince people that the curse of infertility is due to God's wrath on secular communities and the only way to salvation is following a strict religious path. The biblical texts in the novel are very common especially when the handmaids have their breakfast. Offred describes how the commanders read them specific lines from the bible which constitute constant reminders of their main duty of bearing children. She says:

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, 74)

The above quote proves that the commanders are aware of the deep impact of discourse in reinforcing their might on the population of Gilead, especially women. Their endeavor to implant fear and obedience among the handmaids is fulfilled through their literal application of the biblical text in reality. The handmaids are forced to lie on the Wives' knees or between them in both situations while intercourse and during giving birth. Such a humiliating experience that every fertile handmaid has to go through just because the commanders are hypocritically trying to commit to the divine orders of the Old Testament. They deem selves as the representatives of God on earth and try to recreate a replica for all biblical doctrines and tales in a way that ensures their dominance over the citizens.

In addition, there are other indicators in the novel that show how the religious discourse is being faked and manipulated to inscribe the Commanders' dictatorship and tyranny over all citizens generally and the female ones specifically. The commanders violate the handmaid's bodies and utilize them as mere containers vacant of emotions and lacking will. They forcefully impregnate them ignoring all the pain they endure during sex and later childbirth. In fact, the physical pain they undergo is nothing compared to the psychological harm they bear. They are deprived of enjoying their motherhood: first, they have confiscated their children from early marriages and now they are obliged to produce babies, nurture them with their instinctive love and care to be later enforced to grant them to the Wives. In this vein, Irigaray rightly describes the feeling of motherhood by saying: "[w]e bring something other than children into the world, we engender something other than children: love, desire, language, art, the social, the political, the religious for

example.” (43) This applies perfectly to the handmaids who are put in a hard situation of “bargain”; their lives are at stake unless they bear children and give them up. There is nothing more torturous than depriving a mother from her child. Janine, one of the handmaids gives birth to a flawed baby which causes her trouble. The baby is taken away from her instantly; it was a girl that they named Angela. In Gilead, the handmaid who fails to give birth to a healthy baby may be sent to the colonies like the “Unwomen”. Offred comments on the situation of Janine after losing her child by saying: “It's like Janine, though, to take it upon herself, to decide the baby's flaws were due to her alone. But people will do anything rather than admit that their lives have no meaning.” (169) Offred here explains why Janine had to admit that the baby’s flaws are her fault because she does not want to risk her life by blaming the Commanders for giving her disfigured sperm. In fact, it is forbidden to accuse them of infertility as this latter is solely related to females.

The biblical quotations approved by the commanders are chosen carefully for the sake of silencing, intimidating and subduing the handmaids. The Gileadean leaders legitimize their power through distorting the bible and attributing their legislations to divinity in order to create a religious taboo that people fear to break. They prevent the citizens from reading the bible and only allow them to listen to some selected passages that support their ideologies. They oblige the Aunts to perform daily prayers inspired from the bible and recorded by a male voice. They send subliminal messages that aim at inscribing the sense of subservience among the handmaids as Katharina Harjucontends : “In the Gileadean society it is the bible that controls the government; it is a holy text and nobody except the people from the higher social class who are allowed to own one”.(7) Offred was not ignorant. She could tell when the passages are twisted and manipulated. They play recorded tapes of Beautitudes which do not exist in the bible: “Blessed be the meek. Blessed are the silent. I knew they made that up, I knew it was wrong, and they left

things out, too, but there was no way of checking. Blessed be those that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” ( 43) the passage is carefully chosen and altered by the commanders to domesticate the handmaids and keep them contented with their sorrowful situation. It reflects the common notion of sacrifice that exists in most religious texts. This notion entails that men must endure the burdens of life in order to gain God’s mercy. The same quote exists in the bible (Mathew) but with different wording:

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3–10 NIV)

Offred instantly realizes that the quote is distorted because she is aware of the manipulation of the commanders. They add the word “silent” which connotes obedience and servility. To keep order and stability maintained, there must be no objection or discussion.

There is an inverse relationship between power and silence. This latter is an important medium through which power operates. If speaking equals resistance, then silence equals submission and acceptance. In the ceremony of impregnating the handmaids, the commander reads quotes from the bible: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” “For Adam was first formed, then Eve.” “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” (173) This quote taken from the bible is again totally twisted to silence women. It suggests that Adam and Eve’s exclusion from heaven is not Adam’s fault but Eve’s and that is why all women should be silent because their words lack wisdom.

Nevertheless, in the original quote, the one who is blamed is Adam: “Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come” (Romans 5:14 NIV). Thus, the commanders manipulate religious discourse to legitimize their patriarchal and misogynist practices. They objectify women and reduce their worth to mere sexual and breeding machines whose desires are muted. They follow a selective method through which they choose which texts would serve their masculine views and exclude what proves the inverse. The Gileadean commanders use multiple methods to ensure that people are silenced. They sent the ones who object their rules to the colonies and execute the others publicly and hang their bodies on a brick wall next to the church. The wall serves as a reminder of the regime’s power and a warning to whoever dares to protest or oppose the commanders.

#### **4.3.2. Language Distortion**

Language consists an important motif in the novel as far as gendered spaces are concerned. The division of space into gendered ones is basically held on the social roles dictated on both genders. In the Gileadean state, there is a strict spatial paradigm that ensures masculine dominance over women. The names given to important spatial markers such as stores and streets reflect the fundamentalist principles of the monotheocracy of Gilead. Even the names given to the handmaids reflect the masculine egocentrism of the commanders. A language is primarily spoken, read or written but these activities are forbidden in the state. They employ a theological jargon derived from the bible and attribute religious names to every institution in the state. For example the Lilies of the Field which is now a store from which the handmaids order their red uniforms used to be a movie theater. This change is very significant considering the fact that theaters are semi-public spaces of entertaining and enjoyment that are not gendered in Western cultures. The

transformation indicates that the state excludes any form of entertainment for women and validates a different way which is allowing them to shop what is “allowed” for women to have. This appellation is inspired from the book of Luke: “Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Luke 12:27). The passage signifies the divine protection and likewise the dresses of the handmaids are designed for protecting the handmaids as the Gileadean government alleges.

Another significant appellation is Jezebel. This latter is defined in the Merriam Webster as: “the Phoenician wife of Ahab who according to the account in I and II Kings pressed the cult of Baal on the Israelite kingdom but was finally killed in accordance with Elijah's prophecy” and as : “an impudent, shameless, or morally unrestrained woman” (Merriam-webster) and in the bible jezebel’s story is found as follows :“And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and [at]tired her head, and looked out at a window” (2 Kings 9:30). The name is given to brothel in Gilead; a certified night club that women are sent to be sexually exploited. The genderization of this space starts right from its appellation. The language here is used as a signifier of the space and to the kind of practices that are enacted within it. Jezebel symbolizes all women who refuse to conform to the Gileadean rules and become handmaids. It is a social stigmatization on women who refuse to be a part in a hypocrite monolithic system.

Prior to the previously highlighted designations, there is Rachel and Leah Center or the Red Center. Through its name that holds a biblical notion about the two wives of Jacob, we become acquainted with the reason why the handmaids are gathered there. They are being prepared and trained to be containers of the commanders’ babies and are taught that what they are doing is a divine duty. The appellation “Red” stands for the color of the

dress of the handmaids which signifies danger in an attempt to make the handmaids aware of their sensitive position. The manipulation of language reaches its peak as the commanders are not satisfied with changing the names of streets and stores but also the names of the people pertaining to them.

After claiming the handmaids to be their owned properties, they change their names in a way that suggests subordination. For example, the name of the narrator is never revealed but the aunts give her the name “June”. She is referred to as “Offred” a designation composed of the name of the commander “Fred” and the prefix “of” symbolizing ownership. Another example is Ofglen composed of “Glen” the name of another commander and the prefix “of”. This manipulation of language aims at degrading the value of women and defining them not only with reference to their productive roles as handmaids but also to affirm that their existence is tightly linked to the male commanders who control their fate.

Language is very important as it is not only a means of control but also a means of manipulation that men traditionally use in order to gain women. This is manifested in the novel when the commander Fred invites Offred to his room at night only to play scrabble with him. The commander is very clever and wanted to make Offred willing to risk her life only to come to his room. He started first by asking her for a kiss and then little by little he made her indulge into a sexual relationship with him outside the ceremonies. Offred’s lack of using language is what makes her risk her life by being the commander’s mistress. She likens the pleasure of being able to play the scrabble to having sex and both are forbidden in the Gileadean law. Offred feels that she now can transcend the gendered space she is relegated to as she finds the commander’s offer “something different. Now it’s forbidden, for us. Now it’s dangerous. Now it’s indecent. Now it’s something he can’t do with his Wife. Now it’s desirable” (110) the commander has succeeded in offering

Offred what she lusts for and she wants to reward him by faking that she enjoys being in a relationship with him.

In a nutshell, the manipulation of language for the sake of repressing women is a common theme among dystopian novels. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, language is restricted in all its forms. The government forbids any kind of communication to limit contact among the citizens in order to make sure that no clans are to be formed as a result. The jargon used and approved by the commanders is the religious one which is derived from falsified copies of the bible. Nevertheless, despite the limitations of language and the censorship of knowledge, the Gileadean citizens especially women have founded other ways to articulate their thoughts either secretly or via mimetic conversations.

## **Conclusion**

Within a spatial context, space and gender consist two intrinsic notions that are deliberately operated by power. The influence of cultural conventions and traditional norms in determining the categorization of space results in the production of gendered spaces that are characterized by a masculine dominance and feminine subservience. The inferiorization of women has been systematically conducted through religious pretexts and social costumes that deem women less potent and in dire need to be watched over. Although seemingly protective, fanatic patriarchs have deprived women from their essential rights of agency and self-actualization following different methods of control. This has incited feminist thinkers and activists to draw the attention to the necessity of liberating women and treating them equally as their male counterparts.

Margaret Atwood is one of these feminist activists who is concerned about the situation of women in western societies. Her novels are classified as fiction of protest since she audaciously articulates their sufferings within the tight grip of patriarchy and phoney freedom. Her novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, a dystopian account of feminist

struggle, provides a provisional scenario of what would happen if our world slips into a monolithic control ruled by sexist fanatics. This chapter consisted an analytical and descriptive study of how women are inferiorized and relegated to marginal spaces that are gendered.

The study of these gendered spaces was held on light of Lefebvre's theory of production of space and Foucault's bi-power. It showcased how the post-apocalyptic Gileadean government seized control and rendered women as mere sexual objects and breeding machines by adopting distorted religious pretexts. The present chapter concluded that the power relations which operate within spaces inspire their sexist parameters from a combination of constructed social norms and falsified religious beliefs that degrade women and objectifies them.

## **Chapter Five**

### **A Chronotopic Analysis of Gendered Spaces in**

*Atwood's Oryx and Crake*

## **Introduction**

with the dawn of postmodernism, a notable attention has begun to be directed to spatiality, a scientific field that looks into the way objects and bodies are distributed across spaces. Correspondingly, Contemporary writers exhibited a major concern in projecting the postmodern multidimensional conception of space and time in their works. Drawing on Henry Lefebvre's understanding of space as a social construct, feminist debates about the genderization of spaces has started to preside postmodern debates pertaining to spatial justice. In a similar vein, Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin has achieved a remarkable breakthrough in the way spaces are reflected through fiction. In his views, spaces cannot be studied outside their accompanying time frames. He coins the term of the chronotope, a concept that describes the inextricable relationship that exists between space and time. The application of the term appears to be rightly projected on dystopian tales, cyberpunk novels as well as science fiction.

Margaret Atwood, a brilliant Canadian writer whose writings mostly fall into the cluster of dystopian fiction with a clear feminist inclination showcases the feminist struggle in a world governed by technology and science. On that account, this chapter provides an examination of the different chronotopes that exist in Atwood's cyberpunk novel *Oryx and Crake*. By following a geocritical approach, important spatial markers and temporal references have been investigated as gendered chronotopes in the novel to prove the possibility of the genderization of Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope.

### **5.1 Reading *Oryx and Crake* within the Realm of Gender**

Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* is one of the remarkable dystopian works that exposes the dangerous effects of scientific advancement and failed genetic experiments on the ecological future of our planet. From the surface to the subtle, the novel's plot reflects Atwood's concerns regarding the situation of women who suffer

under the shades of patriarchy in the Western society. Like in her other dystopian novels, Atwood makes an interesting social criticism through her skilful anticipatory sarcasm that denounces the multifaceted realities leading to the abusive materialization of the female body which starts from their early childhood. The story is told by Snowman who recounts how things have developed leading to where he is now, believing that he is the only human left on earth. Through flashbacks, we are introduced to the past life of Snowman (previously known as Jimmy) and his friendship with Crake and romantic affair with a porn actress named Oryx.

As the story unfolds, we learn that there is a clear interchangeability in the spatio-temporal setting of the novel as it moves back and forth in time allowing readers to encounter different spatial markers which directly influence the plot. Jimmy's description of his past life offers an overview about a world that is wholly influenced by science and genetically altered food, animals and human organs. It pictures the eerie architectural design of cities which were traditionally divided into two main blocks that were awkwardly surrounded by walls. Jimmy speaks of the Pleebands and the Compounds. Because science was the most interesting domain, the Compounds used to be more important than the Pleebands which were owned by large companies that sponsor their workers and offer them housing services. Scientists who live in the Compounds, including Jimmy's father, are portrayed as strayed and lacking ethics.

Besides its interest in debunking the unethical turn that dominates the scientific spheres, the novel tends to stand in the same line with other Atwoodian works which can be classified as literature of protest. There are many instances in the novel that overtly articulate Atwood's feminism. She always links her uncanny futuristic visions about the world to the females' detention and oppression. She sheds light on one of the most dehumanizing acts that involves child sexual exploitation. The style of narration, the

themes and the way Atwood presents the characters shows her commitment to her feminist stands. She sets up female characters as strong and owning some traits that are commonly attributed to men and does the inverse to her male characters.

Atwood's feminist views are not only limited to showing how women in Western societies suffer, but also, they are extended to portray women who have been long subjected to oppression as capable of being self-defined outside the sense of sympathy. This actually reflects one of the aspects of feminism that aims at empowering women. This is showcased in the novel through turning the space of pornography studios that are thought of as spaces wherein women are degraded to worthless sexual objects into spaces where women are showed as wild, strong and controlling.

In the part where Jimmy, the novel's central character, asks questions about Oryx concerning her former imprisonment in a garage and forced career as a porn actress aiming to make her share her weakness with him, she turns him down and preserves her rigidity. This is a sign of strength and empowerment especially for a woman who survived a difficult childhood in the porn industry. Nevertheless, critics showed that maybe what Atwood aims through the portrayal of Oryx as a rigid female is not because she is strong but because she is cold. The way she talks about her past traumas and the way she has been sold to Uncle En who forced her to work in porn shows that she, at least, felt lucky that she had something to trade for money.

The materialization of the female body is portrayed in the novel through the character of Oryx. Earlier, we talked about how she is turned into a commodity when she was sold to Uncle En and now, we will shed light on how she has become imbibed with this idea and accepts to be treated as such. The thing that proves this claim is accepting being a sexual toy for Crake to satisfy his sexual frustration. Even though the female body is not used as mere commodity in this case (because Crake falls in love with her), it is still

being used as a sign of male dominance and female subservience. It links the existence of females as mere objects whose main care in the world is to satisfy males. A significant aspect in materializing women is their use as sexual objects. In fact this is shown in the novel through Crake and Jimmy's early addiction to pornography and dark web. They used to enjoyably watch little kids being sexually abused and people brutally executed until the moment they crossed a porn film starring Oryx.

To carry on this debate, it is important to highlight how the world, as portrayed through Atwood's eyes, is unethically drowning towards uncontrollable sexual thirst that allows greedy men to use and abuse women of different ages. Analogously, in the novel, when the epiphany that occurred to the protagonists Crake and Jimmy after seeing Oryx in porn clip, both of them realized how dehumanized they have become. As a result, Crake decides that what corrupts the human soul (men's souls in specific) is their sexual lust that renders them slaves to their desires. He embarks in his project of making a pharmaceutical pill that he calls "BlyssPluss". He promotes for it for being the youth pill that grants men peerless sexual prowess and strength and offers a total protection from STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases). Nevertheless, what Crake aims by creating this pill is to sterilize males as the pill is originally a permanent contraceptive.

As the novel's events continue to unfold, we learn that this pill has actually caused a pandemic that ended the lives of a considerable number of populations. This confirms Crake's views about what corrupts humanity the most is their inability to tame their wild sexual desires that pushes them to drift towards unethical deeds.

## **5.2. Gendering the Chronotope: a Bakhtinian Reflection**

As far as the chronotope is concerned, there is a tight relationship between time, space and the various social, cultural and political parameters that directly influence the production of different spaces. This results in the distinction of different spatial categories

among which we mention public, private, and gendered spaces. Despite the fact that Bakhtinian apprehension of the relationship between space and time is held upon its inextricable nature, he finds that time is more important than space “It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time” (85) he asserts that the importance of chronotope lies in its ability to reveal the embodiment of time through the physical space of our world.

Bakhtin’s interest in manifesting the significance of the chronotope lies in its ability not only to puzzle out the configurations of time and space in the fictional narratives, but rather to demonstrate that the fictional chronotope draws an equivalent reflection on realistic world as far as space and time are concerned. His exerted efforts in tracing the development of the chronotope through history resulted in a remarkable examination of the influence of the spatio-temporal manifestations in fiction. He suggests that the perception of time differs between the ancient and modern man. He exemplifies his argument by referring to the Greek novel of adventure and its “adventure time” that leaves the heroes untouchable since it does not submit to the “repetitive aspects of the natural human life” (91). On the other hand, he suggests that the continuous development of the novel extends to encompass other representation of everydayness including the “everyday time” and “biographical time” that bring realistic and subjective dimensions to the narrative via following the “crises “ and “rebirth” of the protagonist exactly like what we find in the *buildungsroman*.(91)

In the narrative, the chronotope resembles a two face coin when related to space and time. Even though it is “time” that attains Bakhtin’s interest the most; still, the importance of “space” as a quintessential variable in deciphering the meaning of the story is undeniable. There are many aspects that influence space; be it the fictional or the

realistic one. Since the focus of this chapter is primarily directed to the examination of the gendered spaces through Bakhtin's chronotope, it is necessary to have a closer look at the different factors that influence space and renders it gendered. The value of space transcends the limits of geography to include culture, economy, and politics. They have a significant psychophysical influence on the people who dwell in it. In this vein, Lefebvre claims that space is not a neutral entity but rather it is a subjective one that is operated by various power ideologies. He postulates that:

Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology or politics; it has always been political and strategic. [. . .] Space has been fashioned and molded from historical and natural elements, but in a political way. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally populated with ideologies. (170-171)

Lefebvre's above-cited quote hypothesizes space as a subjective entity that entails social practices and power relations which delineate its production. Among the forms of power relations is the one related to the binary of male/female, a relationship that is controlled by masculine supremacy and feminine inferiority as an inevitable outcome of a combination of social norms and cultural conventions.

From a feminist stand point, space is viewed as being "tied up with, both directly and indirectly, particular social constructions of gender relations" (Massey 2) the genderization of spaces is manifested through the architectural designs of modern and postmodern cities by the number of limitations imposed on women and also by the categorization of spaces into public/male and private/female ones, this "restriction that women face on their mobility [. . .] allows masculinism to reveal itself an unnatural constraint on women's lives" (Rose 30). Likewise, the representation of such gendered spaces in fiction has been quite an urge for feminist writers to denounce the female sufferings from detention and marginalization.

### **5.3. Forms of Gendered Chronotopes in the novel:**

As highlighted earlier, the concept of the chronotope does not solely look into the interplay of space and time in fiction but also it tends to draw a parallel line between the novel's fictional spatio-temporal context and its reflective match in the real world. Bakhtin identifies two main types of the chronotope and labels them as major chronotopes embodied in: the historical chronotope, the (auto) biographical chronotope and the chronotope of adventure. In addition, there are other types that he considers as minor chronotopes among which we mention alien chronotope, folkloric chronotope, abstract chronotope and others. In the selected novel *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood manages successfully to incorporate the different dimensions of space and time and excelled to reflect them skillfully through her narrative in order to provide readers with unique experience of literary delight. Her feminist inclinations are clearly revealed through her works. She has spilled much ink to utter women's suffering and deemed herself as a dedicated spokeswoman that harnesses her writing to be used as textual spaces that aim at denouncing patriarchal and sexist injustice.

#### **5.3.1. The Chronotopes of Cyberpunk**

Margaret Atwood has been widely acknowledged for her artistic writing through which she succeeds to combine between her feminist tendencies and her ecological concerns about the world we live in. She uses her novels as tribunes through which she aims to call the attention into the potential dangers of technological as well as scientific advancements that might be harmful to the planet. Aside from being categorized as feminist writer, her works are often labeled within the dystopian genre since she incorporates speculative provisions about the future world that is characterized by being void, bleak and unethical.

### 5.3.2. The chronotope of Cyberpunk as a gendered one

The dystopian fiction is a literary genre that engages with the portrayal of speculative scenarios about imagined societies that try to survive in a post apocalyptic world. It portrays oppressed communities suffering under the shades of despotic systems that plunder people's liberties via distorted realities and propagandas. These communities are usually portrayed as groups of helpless individuals whose struggle to escape the dehumanizing conditions of their lives is often fruitless.

This literary genre presents a gloomy setting such as barren places that hold the signs of destruction and doom due to natural catastrophes caused by scientific intervention which by a way or another alters the climax and causes an unexpected environmental adjust. In addition, in some dystopian works, we encounter a different description of the setting as it might be an abandoned land, a war zone, and regions of failed scientific experiments that may result in the production of a deadly radioactive or a virtual world with simulated realities.

Nevertheless, the cyberpunk is a subgenre of science fiction that focuses on the portrayal of speculative world that is governed by technological advancement and artificial intelligence. In this kind of fiction, we tend to read about futuristic visions about the world if technology and science are to rule over. *Oryx and Crake*, a post-apocalyptic novel that centers upon a man named “Snowman” whom we follow the span of his life before, during and after the apocalypse. Atwood creates a disruptive narrative in the sense that events move back and forth in time to track the past life of Jimmy /snowman in a pre-apocalyptic dystopian world and a present post-apocalyptic times. In addition to Jimmy, we also follow the life of Oryx, Crake and his creation the “Crakers”. Crake, a passionate scientist succeeds to split human genes and reproduces new creatures that have animal bodies and human-like brains with lower intelligence.

The study of gendered spaces as chronotopes requires following a roadmap to stop by each spatial reference that might allude to gendered practices. In addition, the study of these spatial references has to be framed within their temporal contexts to be able to achieve a chronotopic analysis to the different indications of gender. There is also a need to conduct a dialogic examination to extract the different voices (polyphony) and perspectives from which Atwood tends to portray the struggle of her characters that are at the heart of two life changing events; the deadly virus that swept off humanity and the loss of ethics in a humanoid world. Just like other apocalyptic stories, the concepts of space and time witness a radical change that replicates ancient spaces and recreates similar ones but with different practices and different appellations.

The power of words to portray events and to provide descriptions about time and space is peerless. In this regard, Nele Bemong Pieter Boghart describe the language used in the genre of dystopia and cyberpunk to be the easiest one as it is formulated in simple sentences and phrases that have strong meanings which influence the reader's conceptions and causes an overlap between the fictional time and the factual one ( the one of the reader) . They contend:

On the first level, we situate "micro-chronotopes". Language is charged with chronotopic energy, and the vitality of language grows, in part, out of the tension between the 'centrifugal' chronotopic implications of individual words and phrases, and the 'centripetal' forces [such as syntax] that subordinate these centrifugal energies to coherent overarching meanings. Micro-chronotopes are generated out of units of language smaller than the sentence through the harnessing of these energies in literary texts. (6)

The micro-chronotopes are necessary as they provide language with vitality like elucidated in the quote above. There are many examples of the micro-chronotopes in the novel of

*Oryx and Crake* that express time and space continuum and transcendence beyond their fictional frames which is expressed by medium of language.

One example of the micro-chronotopes that allude to the genderization of space in the novel at hand is: “a grateful woman would go the extra mile.” (115). A sentence said by Jimmy also known as snowman. Adding an article “a” to “woman”, removes the specificity, extracts this sentence from the context of the novel and allows it to be applicable and useful regardless to the context of time and space. Jimmy, here, is describing how he casts his charm over women and how he manipulates them. Manipulation of women in order to get them is a way that is used by men since they are aware of the emotional sensitivity of women.

Jimmy utilizes emotional manipulation as a tool to exercise his masculine power over women. Another example of minor chronotopes that allude to a gendered space is the social and the cultural conception or typecast of women being docile, leaning more towards art and emotional stuff and being less carried out by science and “manly” business. Nevertheless, Oryx, the novel’s female protagonist, is described as “an expert business woman” (368). This can be viewed as another minor chronotope that indicates a whole uncommon view about women, especially with regard to the stereotypical conception about women being traditionally less intelligent and less capable of handling work and financial incomes.

Another example that alludes for the genderization of spaces and attributing conventional typecasts on male/female tendencies is women’s exclusion from the field of science that even when a woman is brilliant in the field she would always be regarded as good as a man and not simply referred to as a woman. This is traced in the novel through calling Ramona, a lab technologist, “a valuable asset” (7). She is also described by Jimmy’s father as: “right-hand man” (59) this refers to a genderization of scientific

institution's space that it is traditionally linked to men as they are popularized to be cleverer than women. In fact, this shows that granting women the freedom to access such masculine fields does not eliminate the gender hierarchies that always place males in a superior position in relation to their female counterparts.

In addition to the micro-chronotopes, Bakhtin also presents the minor chronotopes which are the motifs of the setting that indicate space and time. In this regard, Bakhtin suggests that:

each such chronotope can include within it an unlimited number of minor chronotopes; in fact [...] any motif may have a specific chronotope of its own. Within the limits of a single work and within the total literary output of a single author we may notice a number of different chronotopes and complex interactions among them," (252)

Bakhtin insists on the importance of the minor chronotopes in understanding the overall story and regards them as motifs. Again Bemong and Boghart offer an understanding of Bakhtin's claim by commenting: "Bakhtin on occasion uses the terms chronotope and motif as synonyms, for example when he uses the phrase "chronotope of meeting" interchangeably with "motif of meeting"." (6)

In *Oryx and Crake*, Crake creates a plantation for his creatures "the Crakers" (genetically modified humanoids) and he names it "Paradise". This latter consists a reflective projection of Crake's masculine urge for domination and power. Even Crake is an atheist and does not believe in spirituality or divine existence, he deems himself as a God for the Crakers and tends to recreate a creed similar to Christianity (or possibly any religion that believes in divine existence) and enjoys being regarded as such. Just like in religious texts, women are not given importance as the one given to men. The abstraction of God is always gendered and God is always referred to as "male" the same thing in the

new world that Crake has created.

Another example of the minor chronotope that is again gendered is the chronotope of the cyber space. The events of the novel are triggered when Crake, while surfing the net watching hardcore pornography, stops by a video that catches his attention about an eight years old girl who is being sexually abused by an old man. This girl is the protagonist of the novel *Oryx*. She inspires an epiphany to Crake and makes him think about creating a whole brand new world filled with humans that lack the desires of lust, greed and cruelty. The cyber space here can be considered as a gendered minor chronotope since it portrays one of the most disgusting ways of humiliating and degrading females through materializing their bodies and rendering them not only as tools for male's pleasure but as mediums through which males exercise their sadist and dark sexual fantasies.

As for the major chronotopes, Bakhtin defines them as follows: "The major chronotopes, those that are most fundamental and wide-ranging" (252) they have been attributed to the literary genres that novel might be belonging to. Tara Collington claims that:

"Given that major structural chronotopes are linked to the formation of distinct literary genres, a chronotopic approach to adaptation encourages us to compare the adaptation and its source in terms of their ability to conform to or deviate from generic models that establish our horizon of expectations." (191)

In the novel of *Oryx and Crake*, the major chronotope can be linked to two main literary genres, dystopia and cyberpunk. The events of the novel take place in a post-apocalyptic world that is governed by chaos. Ethics and laws are not applicable and humanity is endangered by total extinction due to a planned virus release through a medicine that Crake invents to make sure that humanity is finished. In addition, what alludes to the cyberpunk is the scientific atmosphere that predominates the novel. The humanoids

created by Crake are extracted from the virtual world which draws the attention to the huge impact of technology and since most of the cyberpunk works are characterized by “a combination of low-life and high-tech” (Sterling xiv).

On the other hand, Atwood herself does not designate her works to be dystopian or cyberpunk, but rather she coins the term “ustopia” by which she means: “the imagined perfect society and its opposite—because, each contains a latent version of the other” (Atwood) this is highly applicable on the protagonist of the novel crake. As it was clarified earlier, he was too angry at how human being became ruthless and barbaric that he wanted to create another world that according to his own standards is perfect and utopian. Thus, ustopia does not entail any judgmental futuristic scenarios that are necessarily bad or evil but as critic Canila Ciobanu puts it commenting on Atwood’s novel and agreeing with her own views about the nature of her works generally and *Oryx and Crake* specifically:

As Atwood figures it, however, the end of the Anthropocene is hardly the end of the world—it is simply the end of our world, the end of the world as we know it. As such, it is also an opportunity to imagine how a world that has been radically undone by that anthropo of the “Anthropocene” might come to reconstitute itself anew. (153-54)

Hence, as it is elucidated in the quote above, the end of the world might be the end of the familiar world as we know it. Notwithstanding, it might also be the beginning of a new world that is characterized by new ethics, laws and lifestyles. In the case of the novel at hand, this post-apocalyptic anthropocene would be technological. The chronotope of the cyberpunk is thus a major chronotope that encompasses within it a number of micro chronotopes and minor ones whose fusion contributes to the formation of meaning as far as the duality of space and time is concerned.

### 5.3.2. Gendering the Chronotope of Adventure

Bakhtin derived the concept of the chronotope as a result of his analysis of the Greek literature. For Bakhtin, the chronotope is basically the view of space and time as fused entities that cannot be separated from each other. He directs a paramount importance to time as, for him; time is embodied and conveyed through space. In his analysis of the chronotope of adventure, he suggests that: “in it there is a sharp hiatus between two moments of biographical time, a hiatus that leaves no *trace* in the life of the heroes or in their personalities” (90) he contends that the time lapse that interrupts the continuity of events in any given story is described as “the adventure time”. He explains it by saying: “moments of adventuristic time that occur when...the normal...sequence of life’s events is interrupted. These points provide an opening for the intrusion of nonhuman forces” (95). Hence, we expect to meet many sudden changes that reflect the non-linearity of adventuristic time as one of the narrative tools.

There are many examples of this type of chronotope in Atwood’s novel of *Oryx and Crake* and most of them are integrated into a gendered context. We have highlighted earlier the reason that pushed the protagonist Crake to create his affinity “Paradise”. In fact, Crake have been an addict of pornographic videos especially the dark ones. As he was surfing the net for some videos of this kind, he came across the video of young Oryx in a time where she was only eight years old. What happened at that moment can be described as a time freeze, an outstanding moment or even it might be labeled as a life changing one: an epiphany. This latter is defined as a sudden moment of realization and it applies perfectly to the adventure of recreating a new world by interference of external forces. Thus, external forces are not necessarily to be alien powers or supernatural ones but rather an unexpected intervention like in this case, a virus launched to exterminate the human kind.

Moreover, as far as adventure time is concerned, there is another chronotope of adventure that lingers throughout the present work. It is characterized by repetition of the happenings or expecting what is going to happen. A good example is the young Oryx that Uncle En uses as a prostitute. Within time (the past) and place (a hotel room where the girl was sexually abused) she describes how she used to feel empowered as a little girl in a place wherein she is supposed to feel the inverse: “she somewhat regretted her part. But at the same time she enjoyed it. It made her feel strong to know that the men thought she was helpless but she was not. It was they, who were helpless” (133) what changed the principal indication of this chronotope is “the sadden” entrance of Uncle En after the man has taken off his clothes, saving her from him.

In addition, according to Bakhtin, the chronotope of adventure, in regard to the chivalric romance, of the Greek times too, focuses on the metamorphosis of the character. He contends: “Metamorphosis serves as the basis for a method of portraying the whole of an individual’s life in its more important moments of *crisis*: for showing *how an individual becomes other than what he was.*” (155) this chronotope is embodied through the character of Snowman, formerly known as Jimmy. He was the close friend to Crake, they used to meet and surf the net together, watch videos and play video games. Nevertheless, even though they have many similarities, they tend to differ when it comes to preferences. Crake is a fan of science whereas Jimmy is a student of art in a time that is characterized by the sweep away from artistic tendencies. As the novel’s events reach their peak, we find out another facet of Jimmy’s personality especially after killing Crake and taking the torch of teaching, enlightening and guiding the Crakers.

The chronotope of adventure that indicates metamorphosis can also be gendered. Previously, Oryx was manipulated, harmed and oppressed by the sexual exploitation of all the people that she encountered in her life, starting with her family that sold her. With the

passing of time, Oryx has developed immunity against the feeling of being subjugated and abused by turning what she does in pornography from a space of humiliation and degradation into a space of empowerment. Oryx speaks about how her view towards pornography and prostitution changes as she starts to extract the things that benefit her and move her out from the victimized subaltern zone. She says: “I traded him [...] He taught me to read. To speak English and to read English words. Talking first, then reading [...] it was a good trade” (166). As it is clarified here, Oryx has got past her early traumatizing events of sexual abuse and becomes totally keen with what she does. She is the epitome of the radical feminists who regard pornography as a liberating act for women since they choose to be selling pleasure to men. This indeed indicates a metamorphosis chronotope that shows how the character of Oryx has changed even if this change is only tracked through her psychological state and mindset.

Another aspect related to the chronotope of adventure, is the picaresque. It stands for a genre of prose fiction wherein the character is thrown into a vast world and readers trail its adventures across the road. The chronotope of this genre can be also found in *Oryx and Crake*, as in some way, the novel can be considered as a picaresque since the adventures that our main characters embark in are all located in the familiar world and not an alien or fantastical one. One of the “sudden” and “wondrous” moments is Jimmy finding out that the girl he has always been taken by her “gaze” is close to him. The moment he knew that meeting her is close is fantastically described as follows:

Gazing into those eyes, Jimmy had a moment of pure bliss, pure terror, because now she was no longer a picture – no longer merely an image, residing in secrecy and darkness in the flat Printout currently stashed between his mattress and the third cross-slat of his new Rejoov-suite bed. Suddenly she was real, three-dimensional. He felt he’d dreamed her. How could a person be caught that way, in

an instant, by a glance, the lift of an eyebrow, the curve of an arm? But he was.  
(362-63)

Since our aim is to find out how this chronotope is gendered, we aspire to utilize the micro chronotope of “the gaze” as a starting point. As far as time is concerned, the gaze takes more time than to simply look at. The word “gaze” has been contextualized within power relations as it was discussed in Foucault’s *The Birth of the Clinic* to describe the way doctors look at their patients to diagnose. This implies power dynamics and cultural hegemony between doctors and people outside their field in general. The “gaze” has been also included within the feminist discourse to allude to the power of the male’s dominance over women by keeping them under their constant watch. The binary of male/female has always been a subject to power relation.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the power of the gaze as a medium of imposing power is crucial; he contends:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, and material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself.(155)

Thus from a feminist standpoint, the gaze connotes male dominance and power in the sense that it tends to frame the female and keep her a subject for male’s pleasure. In this vein, Mulvey suggests that: “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure”(19) Mulvey’s claim can be perfectly applied to the chosen chronotope of the gaze within the novel as both male protagonists Jimmy and

Crake have been sexually objectifying Oryx and drawing a fantastical image of her beautiful eyes and perfect body standards.

Considering the chronotope of adventure as a gendered one implies the presence of many “suddenlys” and “time lapses” that result in plot twists and changes in the flow of events in fictitious works. Tracing this chronotope throughout Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* has bore fruit in analyzing how this latter is being gendered in favor of masculine hegemony as male characters try to exercise their masculine authority over their female counterparts. Nevertheless, being aware of Atwood’s feminist inclinations that constantly linger in her works, this chronotope is being challenged by feminine presence as a sign of rebellion. Eventually, this voices Atwood’s own hopeful insights about enhancing women’s conditions in Western societies.

### **5.3.2. The Chronotope of the Road as a Gendered One**

. The spatio-temporal relationship in the context of Bakhtinian chronotope tends to alternate; for example, in the chronotope of the everyday, time seems to precede space whereas in idyllic one space preponderate time and the attention is directed to the spatial setting more than the temporal one. It is important to highlight that the chronotope is affected by parameters of history, race, gender and social stratification.(Ganser et.al 1).Similarly, in *Oryx and Crake* , the road makes an important motif in the unfolding of events. Bakhtin describes the chronotope of the road in *Dialogic Imagination*:

[o]f special importance is the close link between the motif of meeting and the chronotope of the road ('the open road'), and of various types of meeting on the road. In the chronotope of the road, the unity of time and space markers is exhibited with exceptional precision and clarity. (98)

The chronotope of the road for Bakhtin represents a convergence spot wherein social

difference and cultural distance collapse to create a sense of familiarity. It is where “the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another.”(Bakhtin, 244) This chronotope is often linked to the chronotope of adventure and travel. In this kind of novels, events do not fall into a regular timeline but rather readers are exposed to story of unexpected events full of sudden moments and strange places as “should something happen a minute earlier or a minute later, that is, should there be no chance simultaneity or chance disjunctions in time, there would be no plot at all” (Bakhtin, 92) In *Oryx and Crake*, the chronotope of the road has multiplicity of interpretations as it significantly affects the plot.

The road in the novel plays an intrinsic role in describing the changes that occur throughout the events of any given literary work. At the beginning, the chronotope of the road submits to Bakhtin’s description of its meaning as it describes how the protagonist Oryx was sold out and taken by Uncle En along with two other girls who are a few years older than her. The journey of three little girls through this road is filled with jumbled feelings of fear, despair and excitement. Oryx describes how fearful she was as she did not know what is awaiting for her after this long road. For her, it is the road to the unknown.

Since the novel starts with descriptions of familiar settings that are located in the pre-apocalypse, the familiarity of the road is characterized by the inclusion of familiar encounters and regular meetings that cannot be described as sudden or unexpected. Oryx expresses her fear when the car is stopped by two soldiers who suspect Uncle En. The two Soldiers ask him about his relationship to the kids sitting in the backseat of his car and he sarcastically replies that these kids are his nieces. The soldiers did not believe him so he pulled Oryx and asked her about his name and she rightly answered. The soldiers laughed in a sarcastic way and asked him to get out of the car.

Oryx noticed that Uncle En gave them money and that is why they were allowed to carry on their trip. This part shows that the road is indeed full of devious people who are not worth to trust. It also sheds light on an ironic situation personified in the soldiers who are supposed to protect the citizens and ensure their safety but in this case they are pictured as corrupt, tricky and not at the level of the nobility of their profession. Oryx and the girls still feel fearful but ironically feel happy as “they had a money value: they represented a cash profit to others. They must have sensed that – sensed they were worth something.” (143)

The consideration of the road as a gendered chronotope in the novel can be proven through the act of (female) child abduction. Besides the fact that abusing children and forcing them to enroll in sexual scenes is illegal, it holds sexist dimensions when the child is a female. In *Oryx and Crake*, the villagers are depicted as helpless poor families who live in low life conditions. Their situation has pushed many greedy gold-diggers to take advantage of their situation and bargain about their kids especially the female ones. The rich men often try to comfort their families that their kids are going to be safe and sound. They gave them money and promised that their kids will work and send them money too but this was not true as Oryx confirms. The female children are used in pornography as part of what is termed child porn.

Choosing the female little girls as material for porn industry is what reinforces the idea of the road as a gendered chronotope because it maintains male supremacy and omnipotence over females, let alone being a dehumanizing act (sexually abusing children). Oryx’s journey from her village to the city wherein she is expected to be exploited as a sexual doll for perverts and pedophiles and her description of the spatial and temporal setting of the road stands for Bakhtin’s definition of the chronotope of the road as part of the one of adventure which is filled with time lapses and spatial images that contribute in

maintaining the generic of images that Oryx tries to collect from her past.

#### **5.3.4. Gendering the Alien Chronotope**

The Alien chronotope refers to the unfamiliar space that the main characters ignore what it really is. What represents the alien chronotope in the novel is Crake's creation of a small world that he calls "paradise". The gateway to this facility is digital and he uses the picture of the beautiful Oryx as an access code. What renders "paradise" an alien chronotope is the amount of differences yet similarities with the real world. This resembles the planet Zycron in Atwood's other novel *The Blind Assassin*. The story of the Zycron planet that the work's protagonist Alex recounts reveals his own views concerning political corruption, social oppression and marginalization of less powerful groups such as females.

Considering the Zycron as an alien chronotope that is gendered can be proven since: "this type of novelistic world is totally opposed to the hero; it is strange, absolutely and often dangerous for him" (Vlassov, 43) which is the case of the female characters of the embedded story of *The Blind Assassin* are suffering from being exploited by their families who sell them to wealthy people to ensure their living. The genderization of the Zycron generally and the Sakiel-Norm specifically stems from the spatial practices undertaken within this space. These spatial practices are manifested through the unbalanced power relations among the citizens and the political corruption of leaders. In fact, the city consists an imaginative Thirdspace through which Alex seeks a free space of expression to announce his opposition to the actual ruling class of Port Ticonderoga through his criticism of the Snilfards.

In a similar vein, "paradise" consists a simulated space that takes its roots from reality but the only reality it casts is the one believed by its creator. The brilliant scientist crake, as previously mentioned, witnessed a moment of revelation after being long taken

by his own dark side. He and Jimmy, his adolescence years' companion, have been spending considerable time surfing the net for horrific videos that did not move them or incite any sense of compassion. It is only when they saw the mesmerizing Oryx that they started reviewing their situation and how they have been so driven by their dark desires of sexual pleasure and watching people suffer.

Crake is the epitome of the dedicative scientist. He believes in the power of science in making the world either of the two: a good place to live in or a hell that burns out its inhabitants. He undermines art and thinks that it is the reason of the degradation of humanity. He also contends religion and blames it for being a tool that clever people from high ranks use in order to impose their control over naïve people who believe in their mythological tales of the idea of God. He does not believe in the existence of God and declares himself an atheist. Nevertheless, besides his rigidity and dark inclinations, Crake wanted to sweep away the horrors done to women, children and weak people and decided to harness his knowledge in the scientific field to do something to save the world from the evils of humanity.

The alienation that Crake feels in the real world is what pushed him to create another "alien" world that he views as the alternative of the one he lives in. He starts his plan by making up what he calls the BlyssPluss Pill that sterilizes people and weakens their immunity system to pave the way for a pandemic which would exterminate a considerable number of the earth's population. He seeks help from his lover Oryx who popularizes it across sexual clinics and his friend Jimmy to take care of the advertising aesthetics. Meanwhile, he is secretly working on enhanced humanoids and started genetically modifying them since they were embryos. His daring scientific adventure results in the creation of what he labels as children of Crake. These genetically modified humanoids have been created in a way that, in his own beliefs, will save the humanity.

These newly created humanoids called “the Crakers” lack feelings of jealousy, hate, racism, and wild sexual pleasures. Crake believes that since humans cannot live in a perpetual youth nor attain immortality, he predestined “his children “to die at the age of thirty in order to save them from the mere idea of aging and mortality. The Crakers symbolize different races, colors and even their genders are left vague, allowing them to choose their sexual orientation and identity. He charged Oryx to teach them the main skills of life. She taught them about what to eat, drink and how to speak some words. He sent them to the facility of the Paradise that is only accessible by Crake’s crew, Oryx and Jimmy.

The affinity of paradise consists an alien chronotope whose existence is bound up with a specific time-space paradigm. Its alienation stems from two main reasons: the first one is its secret location that is unknown to almost everybody and the second one is from its awkwardness when compared to the regular world. The chronotope of the paradise represents salvation for the main character Crake. He created it in order to give humanity another chance to learn from its mistakes and to correct all the vices that corrupt the human mind and soul.

Thus, the alien chronotope of the paradise is revealed through the narrative that eclectically alternates between the past (the pre-apocalypse) and the present (the post-apocalypse) granting more importance to the time before the apocalypse because it is when intrinsic events occur and the character along with the reader decipher the enigmatic events of the present. In this regard, the journey that Jimmy makes by crossing the border between two places reminds us of Bakhtin’s view about the novel of travel. He postulates:

First and foremost, we have at the center of the travel novel’s world the *author’s own real home-land*, which serves as organizing center for the point of view, the scales of comparison, the approaches and evaluations determining how alien

countries and cultures are seen and understood (it is not compulsory that the native country be evaluated positively, but it must absolutely provide us with a scale and a background). (103)

Likewise, in the novel, the author does inspire the spatial setting of the novel from the real world she lives in. It is important to note that authors whose fiction deals with such dystopian topics label their works as cautionary tales that warn people about the dangers of taking science, politics and extremist ideologies too far. Thus, portraying a post-apocalyptic world based on realistic data approves Bakhtin's idea that the writer always tries to present the spatio-temporal context of his work on: "the scales of comparison, the approaches and evaluations determining how alien countries and cultures are seen and understood" (Bakhtin 103)

Nevertheless, for Jimmy (in the past) the alien chronotope of the "paradise" affinity represented the unknown, the tricky and the uncanny. He did not have a clue about Crake's plan and he believed that he was just conducting a regular scientific experiment until Crake shows him the place and urges him to keep it secret. The facility and the way to get into it are described in the following passage:

Crake led Jimmy along and around; then they were standing in front of a large picture window. No: a one-way mirror. Jimmy looked in. There was a large central space filled with trees and plants, above them a blue sky. (Not really a blue sky, only the curved ceiling of the bubble-dome, with a clever projection device that simulated dawn, sunlight, evening, night. There was a fake moon that went through its phases, he discovered later. There was fake rain. (Bakhtin 319)

Later, as the novel events unfurl, readers learn that Snowman is the same character as Jimmy but after the apocalypse he names himself Snowman and he settles down in "paradise", looking after the Crakers (Children of Crake). Now, Jimmy finds himself

responsible for the heritage of his late friend Crake that through flashbacks, we learn that he killed him because he slaughtered Oryx and this is the last thing he remembers from the past.

Another interesting aspect within the alien chronotope of paradise is that it represents a replica of the original story recounted in religious books namely in the bible. The appellation paradise resembles paradise, a term whose literal definition in the Merriam Webster is “an intermediate place or state where the souls of the righteous await resurrection and the final judgment” and also as: “a place or state of bliss, felicity, or delight” (“paradise”). Crake has intended to give another chance for humanity through it.

However, the striking contradiction in this newly created facility is that it contravenes Crake's beliefs. Crake does not believe in God and thinks that all regions are made up for the purpose of controlling the masses and. In fact, what happens later in paradise consists a recreation of the past mistakes as the Crakers were always in an urgent need for guidance. When they saw Snowman (Jimmy) they kept asking questions about their father Crake and teacher Oryx. Questions that Snowman could not find convincing answers to so he started faking stories in order to keep them under control.

The idea that Crake might have had a tendency of becoming a God himself kept haunting snowman (Jimmy) as he was surprised by the diversity he had created in his newly established “world”. Describing the Crakers, Jimmy says: “they were naked, but not like the Noodle News: there was no self-consciousness, none at all. At first he couldn't believe them, they were so beautiful. Black, yellow, white, brown, all available skin colors. Each individual was exquisite” (119). Indeed, whether was it expected by Crake or no, the Crakers started to long for the arrival of Snowman in order to hear more news about their father Crake. Snowman (Jimmy) felt as if he is a prophet and Crake is the God

and started delineating the doctrine of the Crakers' religion: "he was beginning to find this conversation of interest, like a game. These people were like blank pages, he could write whatever he wanted on them." (366)

Returning to the main focus of this part which is proving the genderization of the Alien chronotope of Paradise, a closer look will be taken at how the newly created humanoids interact among each other and whether they are free from stereotypical and sexist attitudes towards females. Nevertheless, the power structure of the male dominance and hegemony tends to recreate itself unintentionally. One of the Crakers that Snowman names Abraham as in Abraham Lincoln starts to exhibit signs of leadership and gives orders to the rest. He also claims himself as a spokesman for the crew and this captivates Snowman's attention.

The impulse towards the gender stratification tends to be implicitly imbedded within the humanoids. Bearing in mind that these human-like creatures constitute a simulation to the extinct human race, it shows that gender is not a social construct but rather a tendency that is inspired by nature. In one of the passages wherein Snowman was describing how the Crakers were preparing food for him he says: "the women stand in the tidal pools and call the unlucky fish by name – only *fish*, nothing more specific. Then they point it out, and the men kill it with rocks and sticks. That way the unpleasantness is shared among them and no single person is guilty of shedding the fish's blood." (118) this reflects that the inclination to be exposed to dangers has always been a male's quality and the tendency towards seeking a safe shelter is a female's quality.

There are many views that support the idea that gender is not a social construct as advocated by notable scholars including the French Simone De Beauvoir. For example, there is the theory that alludes to the primitive times, often referred to as the Hunter-gatherer duality. The hunter is the male and gatherer is the female. In fact, this social

paradigm is still applicable in some nomadic cultures wherein people still live a primitive life in this regard, Arizona State University's Kim Hill, a specialist in human evolutionary anthropology suggests that: "you can't just stop in the middle of stalking a deer in order to nurse a crying baby," she carries on to claim :

With few exceptions, the researchers who study hunting and gathering groups—regardless of which continent they work on—presume that a sexual division of labor was universal and rigid and because it is commonsensical, they then have a hard time explaining why female-bodied individuals also bear the skeletal markers of hunting or have hunting tool kits as grave goods (Wei-Haas)

This traditional image of the male hunter and the female gatherer is brought to the fore in the newly established Paradise out of which the Crakers were taken.

In addition, there is another suggestion that seems to fit rightly to the simulated ideology of Paradise. As mentioned earlier, the Paradise tends to be a replica of the Biblical story. Adam and Eve were created and God allowed them to live in the paradise he created for them on the condition that they would not get close to the forbidden tree. However, tempted by Satan, they eat from the Tree of Knowledge and get expelled from heaven as a punishment. Even though the Crakers did not do anything wrong and were not expelled from their Paradise. But by only following the orders of Snowman, they got outside their paradise and travelled to a sinful land which allowed the recreation of the past mistakes of humans among which the gender binary that would later create a superiority/inferiority paradigm.

Thus the alien chronotope of Paradise is a gendered one because it represents a continuum for the familiar one wherein females were regarded as objects for sexual pleasure. In the pre-apocalypse, women were portrayed as merchandise traded for sex and money. They were confined by their looks and their ability to offer their male

counterparts the satisfaction of leadership and dominance. The same thing is being paved for the Paradise dome as the time and space change but the social dimension accompanying them remains the same. In addition, before the physical realization of Paradise, it was an idea, a conception that inhabited Crake's mind. He was not a feminist nor did he have a specific sympathy with females so automatically, he exhibited signs of masculinity and male chauvinism.

Analogously, Lefebvre confirms that the mental space cannot be detached from social relations that are established in the physical world. His triad of space implicates that the conceived space is formulated mentally where all historical, cultural as well as social ideologies are inscribed. It formulates a record of past experiences with their accompanying emotions and feelings that help to recreate other spaces out of the lived ones. Thus, Paradise serves as a gendered chronotope wherein females will surely carry on their struggle for self-realization outside the confines of male dominance.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter offered a thorough examination of Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* with a specific interest in gender, space and chronotope. It started by offering a feminist reading of the novel through which we traced the different indicators that show Atwood's commitment to her feminist ideals. Then, following a geocritical approach, it scrutinized the different chronotopes that exist in the novel and focused on the ones that are directly influenced by the gender paradigm. Among the chronotopes that were proven to be gendered we mention the chronotope of the cyberpunk which reflects the danger of unethical scientific practices especially the ones adhering to technology and biotech. This chronotope disrupts time and space as the narrative of the novel alternates between the past and the present. It can be read as a gendered one since it mirrors how dystopian societies inferiorize women and minimalize their value to mere sexual objects like what

happened with Oryx. In addition, the chronotope of the road, a part of the one of adventure, has been too proven to be a gendered one based on the fact that it constitutes one of the spatial markers wherein our protagonist was first sold by her family to join porn industry. Similarly, the alien chronotope also was analyzed as a gendered one. With its boundless time frame and unspecific spatial location, it provided evidence for being a temporal continuum and a spatial extension wherein oppressive and authoritative attitudes kept being practiced against women despite the change of the setting. This chronotope has been studied with reference to the Paradise dome invented by Crake.

## **General Conclusion**

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Space and time are two intrinsic dimensions upon which human beings cast their existence. Theoretically speaking, the notion of time had incited notorious debates concerning the diachronic and historical aspects it confers. It is only until the twentieth century that scholars have turned their attention to space and spatiality, precluding to what is commonly known as “the spatial turn”. This latter is defined by Julian Wolfreys as “an emerging interdisciplinary formation centered on the problematics of ‘space’, ‘place’ and ‘cultural geography” ( Wolfreys, p 180) . Indeed, there is a rapidly growing interest in comprehending space and how it is produced, inhabited and politicized. Correspondingly, there are several theories that attempted to dismantle the ambiguity that surrounds it for the sake of figuring out its essence; notably, Henry Lefebvre’s theory of production of space. According to him, space is a social product that is formed as a result of a set of socially constructed ideas enrobed with a multiplicity of cultural conventions.

When speaking about the significant influence of society and culture in delineating how individuals are distributed across spaces, it becomes a necessity to hint at the importance of gender as an impacting factor for demarcating how spaces are produced. Therefore, this thesis aimed at tracing the influence of gender on space production, leading to what is termed as the gendered space. Because spaces are time-bound, there had been an exigent need to link space to its inseparable twin “time”. The postmodernist apprehension of the relationship between space and time is manifested through the views of Mikhail Bakhtin, who tried to reexamine both concepts not as separable entities but rather as a unified whole whose segments cannot exist without one another.

In this context, the present research had the aim of examining the possibility of achieving a chronotopic study of gendered spaces through maintaining a common ground between the concept of “gendered space” and “the chronotope” relying on the debate that

what influences space would certainly influence time as far as Bakhtin's views of the chronotope are concerned. With a specific interest in manifesting how gendered spaces are produced in the postmodern fiction, a closer examination at the main feminist tendencies in literature was held. Among the notable feminist writers whose feminist inclinations are boldly laid out through their fiction is the Canadian hallmark Margaret Eleanor Atwood. Her solid feminist stands to bring to the fore women's detention and inferiorization that is legitimately naturalized among Western societies are gallantly articulated through her creative writings. She harnesses her pen in order to grant a textual space for women whose rights have been violated in male-centered societies.

In a similar vein, this research was based on investigating Atwood's feminist tendencies upon which our study of gendered spaces is held. This study is applied on fiction, which is originally an artistic creation that has its own space which serves as a container for the plot and the events of its accompanying narrative. Correspondingly, this thesis was divided into two parts: a theoretical part composed of two chapters and a practical one that contains three chapters. In the first part, we tackled postmodernism as both a historical period and as a literary movement. We traced its main characteristics and sketched a parallel line between the postmodern literature and the Canadian one. The focus was directed to the Canadian literature because it is where Margaret Atwood's works are ascribed to. Furthermore, due to the feminist propensity of the present thesis, a closer look at feminism was taken in order to verify its relevance to the body of the Canadian Literature.

To carry on this thesis' debates about the gendered spaces and the chronotopes, the research at hand was structured by a number of theoretical notions that enabled us to explore the process of space production with reference to gender. In order to provide an overview about how spaces are produced, precisely by female characters, the views of

Henry Lefebvre were of a great importance , through following the space triad that he offers in his book *The Production of space* which suggests that the social production of space works through different processes within both physical and mental categories. The model of “the separate spheres”, which is a hierarchical system, separates space into two sections: a dominating/masculine public space and a subordinate/feminine private one. This categorization is intentionally made in order to sustain male supremacy in male-dominated societies.

Furthermore, being aware of the fact that spaces are operated by power, particularly power relations, Michel Foucault’s views on bio-power, the panopticon and body politics were thoroughly discussed in the second chapter. Foucault’s contribution to this research is traced through setting the ground for understanding how spaces are operated and manipulated by power with reference to the binary of male/female. In addition, the second chapter also investigated Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope and presented a systematic understanding of its two main segments space and time. It further examined its types and its use as a literary device. This study was conducted in order to apply the chronotope on Atwood’s works and to examine the gendered spaces existing specifically in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Furthermore, this chapter sets the corner stone for the possibility of reading the chronotopes existing in Atwood’s Novel *Oryx and Crake* as gendered ones.

On the other hand, the practical part of the present thesis was opened up by a postmodern study of Margaret Atwood’s works. The third chapter aimed at validating the claim of Atwood being a postmodernist writer who makes use of its main theoretical debates as well as techniques. The results obtained, after this quest was done, unveiled Atwood’s postmodernist profile through tracing a number of significant postmodern techniques including parody and pastiche that she brings into play in *The Blind Assassin*.

In addition, her leaning towards the deconstruction of masculine narrative through rewriting history from a feminine perspective was seen through her novel *The Penelopiad* which confirmed her adherence to Lyotard's Metanarrative. Her conviction of Barthes' "the death of the author" was manifested in *Lady Oracle* in which she creates a narrative that separates between the author and the fictional characters he creates. The chapter also examined Baudrillard's Simulation and simulacra in the novel of *The Handmaid's Tale* reflecting the postmodern sense of loss of originality.

The major concern of this thesis was to extract the gendered spaces that exist in Atwood's fiction namely *The Handmaid's Tale*. The research conducted in the fourth chapter of this thesis had revealed the extent to which gender is tied to space production. Relying on Foucault's bio power and panopticon, we arrived at the conclusion that spaces are manipulated by power and this latter is seen through two levels: a macroscopic one embodied in the state and how it politicizes spaces and manipulates them in order to maintain its vigor over its inhabitants and a microscopic one manifested in how males tend to dominate females and reduce their value to merely sex machines used for bearing children.

As the analysis of the major variables of this thesis continues, we arrive at the last chapter of this humble work. In this chapter, we applied Bakhtin's chronotope on the novel of *Oryx and Crake* in order to scrutinize the different chronotopes existing in work and study the possibility of regarding them as gendered chronotopes. Our quest divulged that there are multiple chronotopes which can be regarded as gendered ones including the chronotope of the cyberpunk, adventure and the alien one. By focusing the on spatial aspect of the chronotope, we approached the chronotopes of the novel from a feminist perspective in order to prove the process of gendering them, creating a binary opposition between masculine and feminine spaces.

All in all, by returning to the problematic questions that fueled this research, it becomes closely evident that the methodological plan followed in this study and that adopted an eclectic approach primarily based on a geocritical one fitted the main query of this research. This latter was embodied in offering a chronotopic analysis of gendered spaces that are found in Margaret Atwood's selected works. Through following a descriptive method, the first part provided a theoretical overview about postmodernism, the realm within which the thesis' theories and writer are contextualized. It achieved a close examination at the Canadian literature vis-à-vis feminism and dystopia in order to situate Margaret Atwood's fiction in the following chapters. Similarly, by following a geocritical approach along with an analytical method, this research studied the gendered spaces and chronotopes in Atwood's novels: *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* respectively. The research concluded that Bakhtin's chronotope consists an effective literary device through which gendered spaces could be studied. It also proved the possibility of gendering the literary chronotopes based on a feminist analysis of the influence of gender on space production.

In addition, it is worth to mention that the accomplishment of this research was not as manageable as it was expected before embarking in its journey. Aside from the difficulty in purchasing the documents needed to conduct this research, their availability in a compatible way to the title of this project was humbly present. Furthermore, the emerging studies concerning space, time and chronotope in fiction are one of the nascent fields of scholarly productions in humanities. Indeed, the study of gendered spaces in fiction did not attain the deserved attention from scholars. There were a limited number of references concerning the use of the chronotope as a literary device especially with reference to gendered spaces.

Besides, what considered as a difficulty in conducting this research was dealing

with other problematic questions that sprung out amid the process of this research. These problematic issues, if to be included in this project, could take it to another direction and cause a deviation from its main research problem. Among these enquiries we mention: what is the influence of feminist geographies on mapping the production of gendered spaces? To which extent a chronotopic study of feminist literature is applicable especially with regard to the emerging field of gynocriticism? And finally can we consider the queer space as a gendered one? Using these problematic questions could fuel an interesting research which would enrich the academic field as far as studies on space, gender and chronotope are concerned.

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# **Appendices**

**Appendix A**



**Margaret Eleanor Atwood**

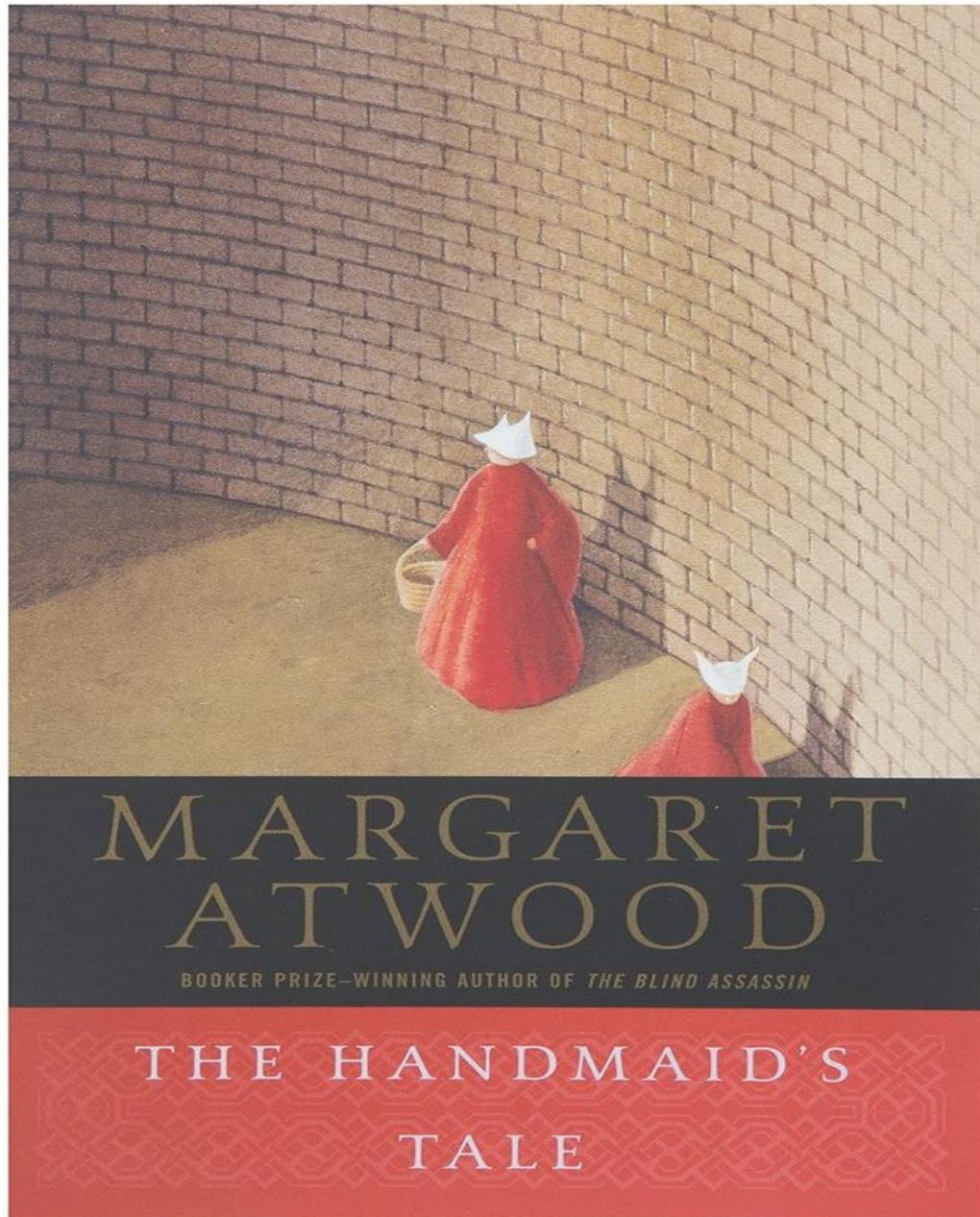
## Appendix B

**Margaret Eleanor Atwood**, (born November 18, 1939, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada), Canadian writer best known for her prose fiction and for her feminist perspective. She is Canada's most eminent novelist and poet, and also writes short stories, critical studies, screenplays, radio scripts and books for children; her works have been translated into over 30 languages. Her reviews and critical articles have appeared in various eminent magazines and she has also edited many books, including *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English* (1983) and, with Robert Weaver, *The Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English* (1986). She has been a full-time writer since 1972, first teaching English, then holding a variety of academic posts and writer residencies. She was President of the Writers Union of Canada from 1981-1982 and President of PEN, Canada from 1984-1986. Her first publication was a book of poetry, *The Circle Game* (1964), which received the Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry (Canada). Several more poetry collections have followed, including *Interlunar* (1988), *Morning in the Burned House* (1995) and *Eating Fire: Selected Poetry, 1965-1995* (1998). Her books of short fiction include *Dancing Girls and Other Stories* (1982), *Wilderness Tips* (1991) and *Good Bones* (1992).

She is perhaps best known, however, for her novels, in which she creates strong, often enigmatic, women characters and excels in telling open-ended stories, while dissecting contemporary urban life and sexual politics. Her first novel was *The Edible Woman* (1969), about a woman who cannot eat and feels that she is being eaten. This was followed by: *Surfacing* (1973), which deals with a woman's investigation into her father's

disappearance; *Lady Oracle* (1977); *Life Before Man* (1980); *Bodily Harm* (1982), the story of Rennie Wilford, a young journalist recuperating on a Caribbean island; and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986), a futuristic novel describing a woman's struggle to break free from her role. She subsequently published *Cat's Eye* (1989), dealing with the subject of bullying among young girls; *The Robber Bride* (1993); *Alias Grace* (1996), the tale of a woman who is convicted for her involvement in two murders about which she claims to have no memory; *The Blind Assassin* (2000), a multi-layered family memoir; and *Oryx and Crake* (2003), a vision of a scientific dystopia, which was shortlisted for the 2003 Man Booker Prize for Fiction and for the 2004 Orange Prize for Fiction. *Alias Grace*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Cat's Eye* were all shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction; *The Blind Assassin* won this prize in 2000.

Appendix B



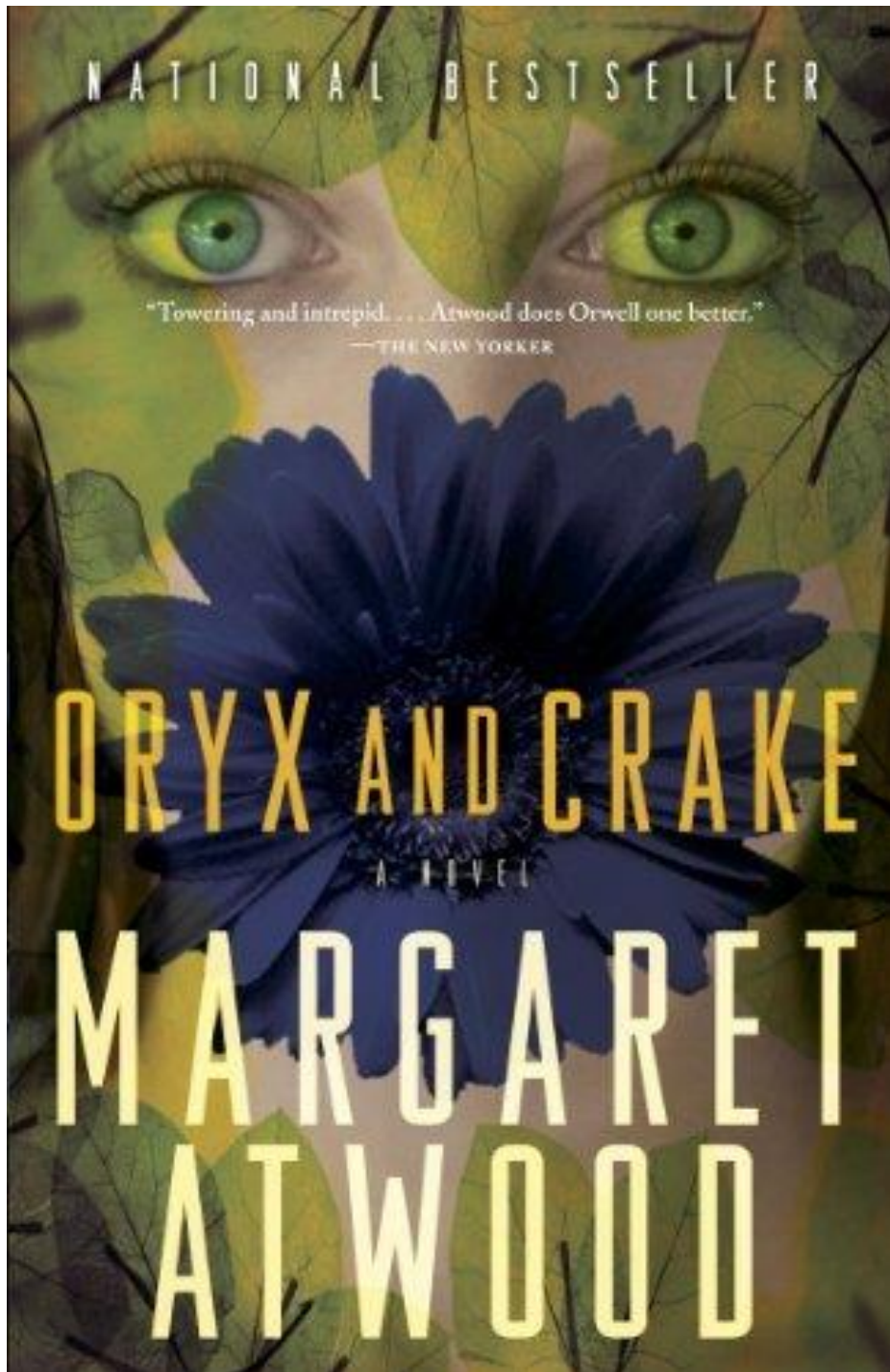
The Handmaid's Tale 1998

## Appendix C

### Synopsis

*The Handmaid's Tale* can be ranked at once as a work of science fiction, a satire, and a dystopia. It is often studied in accordance with classics like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty four*, because they all portray an oppressive atmosphere of specific societies usually take place in the future. This futuristic tale pivots around a terrifying scenario of what has become of the United States of America after its "speculative" overthrow and the author's deep social concerns. It, also, questions the situation of women in the North American society, hinting at the different pretexts that are used in order to frame women and detain them. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is thus a provoking work of fiction about the domination and of women by both, the state as well as men. It presents a dystopian account of women's restriction because of the new Christian government's extreme policies, developing a structure of a monolithic state and a patriarchal society founded on the Compulsory-Christian regime of the Old Testament by which the Gileadian regime is influenced. On the other hand, the novel can be also considered as an empowerment tale for women as the protagonist of novel 'Offred' has always portrayed as a resilient character that despite all hardships she encounters, she still determines to cross all the red lines drawn to her by the sexist government and in constant attempts to break the rules .

Appendix D



The cover of Oryx and Crake

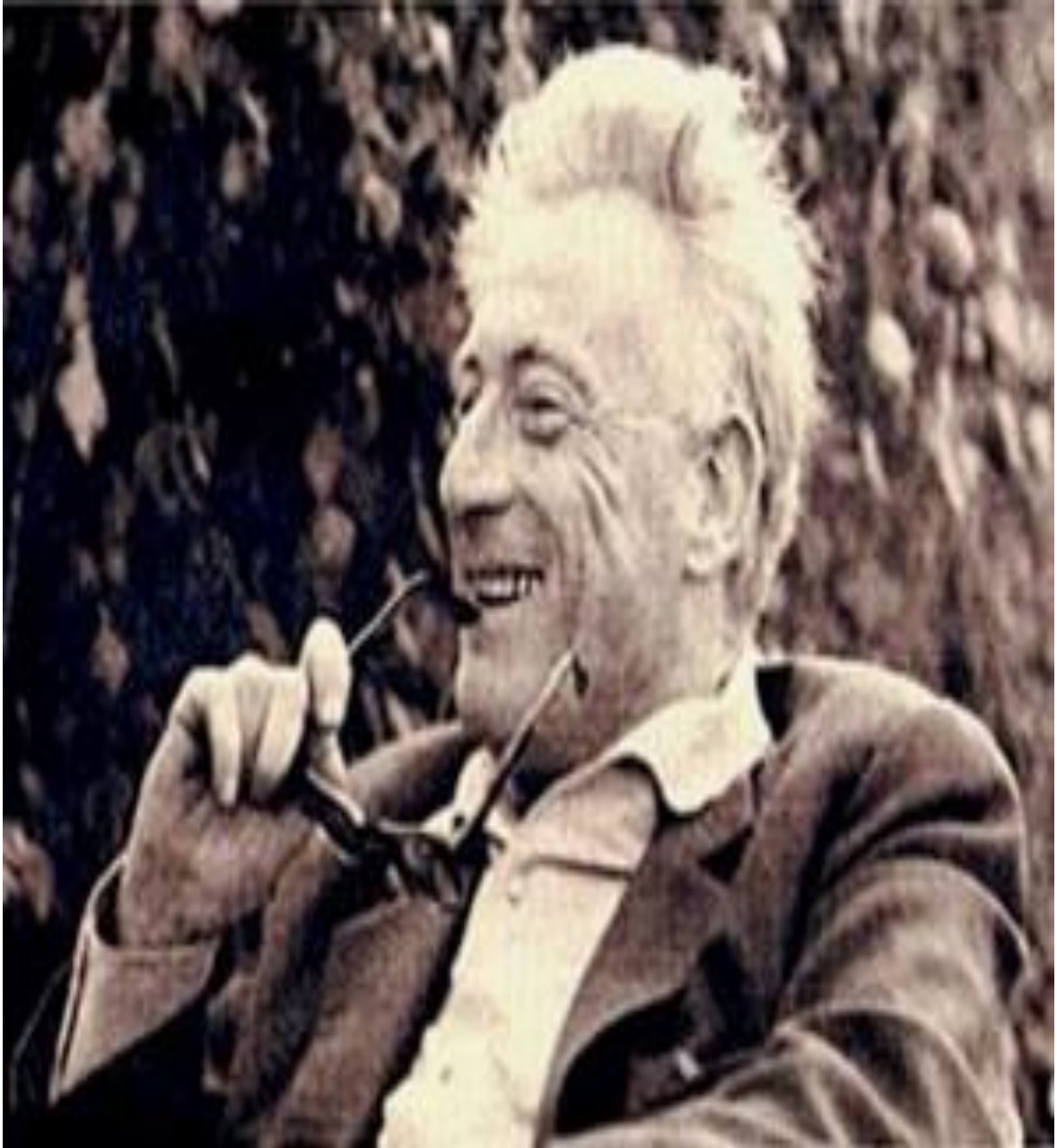
## Appendix E

*Oryx and Crake* (2003) is Margaret Atwood's eleventh novel. The events of the work take place in the future. The story flicks between the past and the present of one of the main characters 'Snowman' who recounts his plight and mission to survive in a post-apocalyptic world. Atwood formulates her fiction as a sequence of flashbacks alluding to 'Snowman' previously known as Jimmy and how he ended up as possibly the last human in the world. Both Jimmy and Crake, even different in mindset and way of thinking, are alienated from social life. They spend most of their time playing video games or watching deep web videos of massacres or child porn. The story effectively starts when Crake and Jimmy accidentally see Oryx in a porn movie as a child and they cannot ignore her beauty and astonishing gaze. In fact, this latter is shown in the cover of the book epitomizing Oryx's gaze that created an epiphany for Crake and inspired him to think about the evil nature of humanity.

The alienation that Crake feels in the real world is what stimulated him to create another "alien" world that he views as the alternative of the one he lives in. He starts his plan by making up what he calls the BlyssPlus Pill that sterilizes people and weakens their immunity system to pave the way for a pandemic which would exterminate a considerable number of the earth's population. He seeks help from his lover Oryx who popularizes it across sexual clinics and his friend Jimmy to take care of the advertising aesthetics. What motivated him to think about exterminating the human race is the amount of evil that (he thinks) exists in them. He thought of creating another world populated by humanoids without gender, creed or color.



**Appendix F**



**Henry Lefebvre (16 June 1901 – 29 June 1991)**

## Appendix G

Henry Lefebvre was born in Hagetmau, Landes, France. He studied philosophy at the University of Paris (the Sorbonne), and graduated in 1920. By the year 1924 he was working with Paul Nizan, Norbert Guterman, Georges Friedmann, Georges Politzer and Pierre Morhange in the *Philosophies* group seeking a "philosophical revolution". This has influenced him to maintain connections with the Surrealists, Dadaists, and other groups, before they were oriented to the French Communist Party. He was a Marxist who introduced into France a whole body of humanist Marxism. But he was a Marxist who seemed to reinvent himself, conceive a new sound, probe a new idea, reach new note, almost every decade.

Each reinvention built on an already accomplished body of work, yet took it further, propelled it onward. Frequently, these restless formulations recreated the old world in a new way; other times they somehow anticipated what was about to unfold in reality. He authored more than sixty books, since translated into thirty different languages, and made brilliant analyses on dialectics and alienation, everyday life and urbanism. The "retired" professor never let up in the 1970s and 1980s, never rested on his emeritus laurels.

**Appendix H**



**Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975)**

## Appendix I

The Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was the essential figure of an effective intellectual circle that focused on the social nature of language, literature, and meaning in the years between World War I and World War II. Even if his major works were not academically common until after the 1960s, his ideas were later adopted by many academic spheres and have contributed to new directions in philosophy, linguistics, and literary theory

Regardless to the fact that Bakhtin remained in shades during his lifetime, his writings have had a significant influence in the fields of literary theory, linguistics, and philosophy. In works such as *Problems of Doestovscky's Poetics* (1929, 1963), *Rabelais and His World* (1965), and *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), Bakhtin outlined theories on the social nature of language, literature, and meaning. With the spread of his ideas in the Western academic world, Bakhtin has become one of the major figures of twentieth-century literary theory\*<sup>5</sup>

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• Find more in :<https://biography.yourdictionary.com/mikhail-mikhailovich-bakhtin>

## **Résumé**

Dans le contexte du postmodernisme, la prolifération des études savantes concernant la déconstruction des frontières géographiques des « espaces socialement construits » a reflété une croissance parallèle des études féministes sur le genre, l'espace, le temps et le pouvoir. En conséquence, cette étude propose un examen spatio-temporel de la catégorisation des espaces qui aboutit à la production d'espaces genrés liés par des paramètres de pouvoir et de résistance. Il examine comment ces espaces sexués sont produits et représentés dans la littérature à travers des œuvres sélectionnées de l'écrivaine canadienne Margaret Atwood dont la fiction sert de tribune textuelle qui articule la lutte des femmes contre la marginalisation et la détention. Par l'utilisation d'une approche géocritique, la présente thèse vise principalement à mener une étude chronotopique des espaces genrés afin d'illustrer la possibilité de les considérer comme des chronotopes. Suivant une démarche descriptive et analytique, cette recherche est menée sur le chronotope littéraire de Mikhaïl Bakhtine afin de mettre en évidence l'influence du jeu de l'espace et du temps sur le processus de production des espaces genrés. Il s'appuie en outre sur l'appréhension Lefebvrienne de l'espace en tant que produit social ainsi que sur les vues de Michel Foucault sur le pouvoir et la résistance concernant le binôme masculin/féminin. La thèse conclut qu'il existe une possibilité de considérer les espaces genrés comme des chronotopes dans les œuvres de Margaret Atwood oscillant entre dystopie, science-fiction, cyberpunk et fiction historique.

**Mots clés :** Chronotope, Espace genré, Margaret Atwood, Production spatiale

## ملخص:

في سياق ما بعد الحداثة، أدى انتشار الدراسات العلمية المتعلقة بتفكيك الحدود الجغرافية "المساحات المشيدة اجتماعياً" إلى نمو موازٍ بين الدراسات النسوية للجنس، المكان، الزمان والسلطة. في المقابل، تقدم هذه الدراسة فحصاً مكانياً زمانياً لتصنيف المساحات مما يتمخض عنه إنتاج مسافات جندرية مرتبطة بمعايير القوة والمقاومة. علاوة على ذلك، هذه الدراسة تبحث في كيفية إنتاج هذه المساحات الجندرية وتمثيلها في الأدب من خلال أعمال مختارة للكاتبة الكندية مارجريت أتوود التي تشكل رواياتها منصة نصية تعبر عن نضال الإناث ضد التهميش والاحتجاز. من خلال استخدام نهج انتقائي، تهدف الأطروحة الحالية بشكل أساسي إلى إجراء دراسة كرونوتوبية للمساحات الجندرية من أجل رصد إمكانية اعتبارها كرونوتوبات. باتباع طرق وصفية وتحليلية، تم إجراء هذا البحث على الكرونوتوب الأدبي لميخائيل باختين من أجل إبراز تأثير التفاعل بين المكان والزمان على عملية إنتاج الفضاءات الجندرية كما أنه يعتمد على منظورات هنري لوفيفر حول الفضاء كمنتج اجتماعي بالإضافة إلى آراء ميشيل فوكو حول السلطة والمقاومة فيما يتعلق بثنائية الذكر / الأنثى. تخلص الأطروحة إلى أن هناك إمكانية اعتبار المساحات الجنسانية على أنها كرونوتوب في أعمال مارجريت أتوود التي تختلف بين الواقع المرير، الخيال العلمي، السيربانك والرواية التاريخية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كرونوتوب، الفضاء الجنساني، مارجريت أتوود، إنتاج الفضاء