

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

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# Female Characters in *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* Series From Feminist and Psychoanalytic Perspectives

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master in Language and Culture

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June 2023



## Dedications

*Praise be to Allah always and forever; blessings and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad, the most honored and upon all his family and companion.*

*To the light that illuminated my darkest days, To the unwavering cloud that provided shade and nurtured me selflessly, To the guiding hands that lifted me up when I stumbled, To the man who spared no effort to bring me happiness and prayed for my well-being.*

*To my beloved father, you are a beacon of love and support.*

*To the nurturing presence that has been my shelter in the storm, To the selfless cloud that showers me with care without expectation, To the one whose love and support have never wavered, To the woman who has sacrificed endlessly for my happiness and prayed for my success.*

*To my cherished mother, you are my source of strength and comfort.*

*To the one who shares my secrets and dreams with unwavering trust, To the cloud that showers me with encouragement and unwavering support, To the hands that wipe away my tears and applaud my victories,*

*To the confidante who lifts me up and believes in me unconditionally,*

*To my beloved sister Rayane, You are a treasure beyond measure.*

*To the person who inspires and pushes me to reach new heights, To the one who believes in me and never lets me settle, To the hands that clap for my achievements and wipe away my tears.*

*To my dearest brother Aymen, you are my rock and my greatest ally.*

*To the guiding presence that has helped me navigate life's challenges, To the hands that selflessly lend aid whenever I need, To the person who goes above and beyond to make a difference.*

*To my dear A, your presence in my life is a true blessing.*

*To all my beloved relatives and friends who have stood by my side through thick and thin, providing unwavering support and love.*

*To Mr. Riadh Abd'El-Aziz, my esteemed director, who bestowed upon me the precious opportunity to work and study, I am forever grateful for your guidance and assistance.*

*To everyone who extended their unwavering support when failure loomed near, igniting a fire of determination within me.*

*To each person who has loved me unconditionally, accepting me for who I am.*

*To my Nounou, my pet who has been with me in every single moment.*

*And most importantly, I extend heartfelt gratitude to myself. I recognize the hard work and dedication I poured into achieving this milestone, and I proudly acknowledge and thank myself for being unyielding in pursuit of my dreams.*

*This dedication is a testament to the collective power of love, support, and self-belief. Without all of you, my journey would not have been as meaningful and rewarding.*

*Thank you from the bottom of my heart.*

## Dedications

*Thanks to my source of inspiration, my family, whose love and support have been the bedrock of my journey. You believed in me when doubts consumed my mind, and your faith fueled my determination.*

*Thanks to my professors for guiding me through this intellectual journey, challenging my thoughts and nurturing my growth. You ignited the fire of curiosity within me.*

*Thanks to my friends and loved ones. Your encouragement and understanding lifted my spirit, and your presence brought joy to the arduous days.*

*This dissertation is dedicated to all those who have played a part in shaping my journey, fostering my growth, and instilling in me the pursuit of knowledge.*

*May this humble offering serve as a testament to our collective endeavor, and may it contribute, in its own small way, to the ever-expanding realm of human understanding.*

## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who have contributed to the completion of this dissertation. Their support, guidance, and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping this work.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to our supervisor, Mrs. Nassira Malek. Your expertise, patience, and insightful feedback have been invaluable throughout this entire process. Your support and belief in our abilities have been a constant source of motivation. We are truly grateful for the guidance you have provided and the knowledge you have imparted.

We would like to express our appreciation to our families for their support and belief in our abilities. Their love, encouragement, and understanding have been our pillar of strength throughout this challenging journey. We are forever grateful for their sacrifices and constant motivation.

To our friends and loved ones, thank you for your support, understanding, and encouragement. Your presence and belief in us have been a source of inspiration and joy. Your words of encouragement and moments of respite have helped us maintain balance and perspective during the ups and downs of this endeavor.

While We take full responsibility for any remaining shortcomings, We are grateful for the support and guidance We have received along this journey. It is with deep appreciation that we acknowledge all those who have contributed to the completion of this dissertation.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores female characters in "The Handmaid's Tale" series. Through a comprehensive analysis of feminism and psychoanalysis, this study aims to unveil the intersectionality between feminism and psychoanalysis. The research begins with a thorough review of relevant literature, examining the existing body of knowledge and identifying gaps or areas for further exploration. Building upon this foundation, the study presents a well-defined research framework and methodology, incorporating content analysis as the primary research method to collect and analyze data. The findings of this research sheds light on the use of manipulated biblical scriptures to justify the oppression of men on women and enforce gender roles, and its role in the formation of their psyche. Secondly, it presents ways in which female characters find and show resistance, and fight for their agency and individuality. Finally, it sheds light on the psychological transformations of female characters caused by the oppressive system of the Republic of Gilead. By examining these multifaceted aspects, this dissertation contributes to the existing literature on feminism and psychoanalysis by offering a comprehensive analysis of the female characters in "The Handmaid's Tale" series. It enhances our understanding of the intersectionality between feminism and psychoanalysis, providing valuable insights into the portrayal of women's experiences in dystopian societies. The findings of this study can serve as a basis for further research and foster dialogue on the complex interplay of gender, power, and psychoanalysis in contemporary literature and society.

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# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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In a world rife with gender inequality, literature and visual media have become powerful tools for challenging oppressive systems and amplifying the voices of marginalized groups. Within this landscape, Margaret Atwood's TV series "The Handmaid's Tale" stands as a compelling exploration of a dystopian society where women are subjugated and stripped of their agency. In this dissertation, we will embark on a journey to delve into the feminist and psychoanalysis dimensions of female characters in "The Handmaid's Tale" unraveling the complexities of their experiences and shedding light on the enduring effects of gender inequality on their psyche. "The Handmaid's Tale" is a critically acclaimed TV series based on Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel of the same name. Premiering in 2017, the series has garnered widespread attention for its haunting portrayal of a society where women are subjugated and stripped of their agency. Set in the near future, the story unfolds in the Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian regime that has replaced the United States. The story is narrated by Offred, a Handmaid whose real name is June Osborne. In Gilead, a catastrophic decline in fertility rates has led to a restructuring of society which is founded on a distorted interpretation of Christianity, where women are categorized based on their reproductive abilities. Wives, who are married to Commanders; Marthas, who are domestic servants; and Aunts, who are in charge of indoctrinating and monitoring the Handmaids. Handmaids are women forcibly assigned to bear children for high-ranking officials and their barren wives. They are subjected to strict rules, surveillance, and a dehumanizing system that reduces them to vessels for procreation. The series delves into the psychoanalysis and the physical suffering endured by the Handmaids, as they are subjected to ritualized rape known as "Ceremony" in an attempt to conceive a child. Their lives are filled with fear, surveillance, and constant control. Any acts of rebellion or defiance are met with severe punishment, including public executions.

"The Handmaid's Tale" novel and its TV series adaptation have several aspects that are fruitful to approach from a feminist and psychoanalysis point of view. Women in the novel and

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the adaptation are treated as unequal to men, and the society is patriarchal and hierarchical that uses different kinds of punishment that are both physically and psychologically harmful. Therefore, there is a lot of research on "The Handmaid's Tale" from a gender and psychoanalysis perspective.

Aya Bechar's "Patriarchal Dystopia and The Problematic Feminism in Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale'." (2019), discusses the theme of misogyny and sexism, particularly in the context of the American President Donald Trump's administration. It highlights the threat to women's rights and quotes Simone de Beauvoir to emphasize the fragility of these rights. The passage then explores the novel "The Handmaid's Tale" as a feminist narrative depicting female suffering and oppression, but also suggests that women themselves play a role in upholding the patriarchy. The author discusses Margaret Atwood's ambivalence towards feminism and suggests that the novel critiques the divisions within the feminist movement and the backlash against it (Bechar 63-64).

In her work "Women Disunited: Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' as a Critique of Feminism" (2008), Alanna A. Callaway examines the relationship between Atwood's novel and patriarchal control as well as traditional misogyny. Callaway also explores the concept of women's hatred towards other women within the patriarchal network. The author argues that the patriarchy's success relies on female collaboration, as the women in Gilead are conditioned to prioritize their loyalty to men over their loyalty to women. This dependence on the household hierarchy is crucial for the Republic of Gilead. Ultimately, "The Handmaid's Tale" portrays the lack of solidarity among women and the failure of the feminist revolution (Callaway 68).

Sayed Razak Amin Shah and Muhammad Hassan Khoso's "Freudian Analysis of 'The Handmaid's Tale': Analyzing the Defense Mechanisms." (2017), suggests that Margaret Atwood's novel "The Handmaid's Tale" revolves around the protagonist's use of defense

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mechanisms, as described in Freudian theory. The protagonist, Offred, is depicted as being trapped in a series of dilemmas, and she copes by employing defense mechanisms to avoid facing the harsh realities of her life. The passage further suggests that the novel can be seen as an embodiment of Freud's theory, as Offred's character aligns with the various defense mechanisms outlined by Freud (Shah and Khoso 121).

Juste Stupuraite's "Violence Has Never Been More Beautiful: the Aesthetics of Brutality in Filmic Adaptations of 'The Handmaid's Tale'." (2018) explores the process of adaptation in "The Handmaid's Tale" through the novel, film, and TV series versions and analyzes the shift from written to visual storytelling and focuses on the portrayal of violence in the different adaptations. The author concludes that the TV series is a more advantageous medium for adapting the novel due to its length and ability to explore serious themes in depth. They argue that it serves as a cultural object that raises social awareness about issues like inequality and violence against women. The quality of the TV series is recognized through awards and its popularity among audiences. In a time marked by political protests and women's rights movements, stories like "The Handmaid's Tale" play a crucial role in provoking thought and challenging the status quo. The upcoming season 2 of the TV series is seen as a hopeful sign that the story will continue to make an impact and encourage reflection on societal issues (Stupuraite 90-91-92-93).

Sibel SİPAHİOĞLU's "A Study of Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Novels: The Handmaid's Tale and Oryx and Crake." (2008), explores the theme of fear and its effects on society, particularly on women. It suggests that society is driven by a politics of fear, which leads to polarization and the fragmentation of unity. The author highlights the impact of language on women and the creation of the "other," which instills fear and alienation. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the influence of language in order to overcome repression and fear. By challenging societal norms and recognizing one's own identity, the

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author argues that both men and women can break free from the totalitarian state and establish a better world. The works of Margaret Atwood, specifically "The Handmaid's Tale" is mentioned as an example that addresses these themes and presents the power of language and individual narratives in shaping a new context and challenging repressive forces (SİPAHIOĞLU 93-94).

It is worth noting that while there may not be extensive existing research specifically combining both psychoanalysis and feminist analyses of the TV series, scholars have engaged with related aspects in their studies on the novel, the series' adaptation, or in broader discussions of gender, power, resistance, and psychoanalysis.

In this dissertation, an interdisciplinary approach will be employed to bridge the gap between feminist literary criticism and psychoanalysis. By integrating insights from previous studies and examining the specific portrayal of the female characters in the TV series, this research aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the psychoanalytic and feminist dimensions within the female characters in "The Handmaid's Tale".

The objectives of this study are three. Firstly, we aim to examine the representation of female characters in "The Handmaid's Tale" series, particularly in the oppressive regime of Gilead. Through a careful analysis of their portrayal, we seek to uncover the nuances of their experiences. By exploring how they navigate these complexities, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of their experiences, and how they fight for their individuality.

Secondly, this study aims to explore the intersectionality between religion, oppression, and the psyche of female characters. By exploring the influence of religion on the formation of the superego and the use of defense mechanisms by female characters we can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to assert their agency within the oppressive system.

Thirdly, this study aims to explore and document the various psychological changes that occur within the female characters throughout their journey in the oppressive regime of Gilead. By closely examining the role of the id, ego, and superego in shaping their emotional responses, cognitive shifts, and behavioral adaptations, we seek to shed light on the transformative nature of their experiences. This objective involves delving into the psychoanalytic realm of the characters, understanding how their circumstances shape their identities, and documenting the profound effects these transformations have on their sense of self.

In order to reach the aforementioned objectives, this study will address the following research questions:

- How do female characters in "The Handmaid's Tale" series navigate the complexities of religion, oppression, and resistance in Gilead?
- How does religion affect the female characters' psyche and how they do struggle for their individuality?
- What psychological transformations do female characters undergo, and how do they affect their identities?

By actively pursuing these research objectives and exploring the proposed questions, this study aims to deepen our understanding of the experiences of female characters in the "The Handmaid's Tale" series, as well as their portrayal and psychological evolutions.

This research consists of two chapters that contribute to addressing the research objectives. The first chapter serves as the theoretical framework, exploring key concepts and frameworks related to the analysis of female characters' representation in "The Handmaid's Tale" series. It delves into feminism in literature, films, and series, discusses the significance of feminist literary criticism and its application to the study. Additionally, the chapter introduces the Freudian psyche, defense mechanisms, and the concept of psychological change. Building

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on this theoretical foundation, the second chapter focuses on the practical analysis of the series. Divided into two sections, the first section examines the portrayal of female characters, the role of religion in the subjugation of women, the depiction of motherhood, the role of language, and the way in which they find power and resistance in the source of oppression. The second section further investigates the role of religion in the formation of the superego, how female characters struggle for their individuality and how they use defense mechanisms to cope with their circumstances. As well as, the psychological transformations they undergo throughout their journey, shedding light on the way the id, ego, and superego influence their emotional responses, cognitive shifts, and behavioral adaptations.

# **THEORETICAL PART**

*"Nothing is more practical than a good theory."*

*Kurt Lewin*

## **CHAPTER I:**

# **An Overview of Feminism and Psychoanalysis**

### Chapter One

#### An Overview of Feminism and Psychoanalysis

##### **Introduction:**

In this theoretical chapter we attempt to present an overview of the main concepts regarding the current study. It will be divided into two main sections. In the first part we will give an overview of feminism in literature, the shift from theater into screen, as well as an insight into the feminist literary criticism. The second section is going to be merely about psychoanalysis where we will introduce the Freudian division of the mind, the Freudian theory of the psyche, the defense mechanisms, as well as the psychological changes that oppressed people go through.

##### **1. Feminism in Literature**

The idea of authorial identity being gendered and the exclusion of women writers from the literary canon is the focus of Virginia Woolf's essay, "A Room of One's Own" (Woolf 66). Woolf argues that the traditional notion of authorial identity was gendered, with the author's text being seen as an extension of his body. Women writers were often viewed as inferior to their male counterparts, and their writing was considered to be an expression of their femininity, rather than their individual creative abilities. They were expected to write within certain prescribed genres and styles, and any deviation from these norms was met with criticism and ridicule (Woolf 137). To achieve creative success, women writers had to deny their biological identity and adopt a more masculine identity, becoming "transvestites" (Woolf 114-115). Women needed a room of their own and financial independence to be able to write freely and creatively (Woolf 6). In this way, Woolf's work highlights the complex relationship between gender, identity, and creative expression, and it offers a powerful critique of the ways in which traditional gender roles have been used to exclude women from the creative process.

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Feminist literary criticism has long argued that traditional notions of authorship and literary value have been shaped by a patriarchal culture that privileges masculine modes of expression and marginalizes those associated with femininity (Showalter 402). The idea of the male-dominated society attempting to control and regulate female bodies, voices, and experiences is demonstrated in Margaret Atwood's novel, "The Handmaid's Tale" (Atwood ch. 18). Atwood in her novel, challenges traditional and conventional modes of writing and authorship, as well as the monological meaning system of Gilead. The Republic of Gilead, which is portrayed as a patriarchal and authoritarian society, enforces strict rules regarding language and communication. By using the personal marginalized discourse of the Handmaid, Atwood rewrites the narratives of Gilead from a feminist lens, highlighting the importance of diverse voices and resisting the homogenization of cultural narratives (Staels 459).

Woolf notes that these material constraints have led to a lack of female voices in literature and an underrepresentation of women's experiences and perspectives (Woolf 88-89-90). Despite these challenges, there have been numerous women throughout history who have defied societal norms and produced important works of literature. Woolf cites writers such as Aphra Behn, Jane Austen, and the Bronte sisters as examples of women who were able to break through the barriers of gender and create lasting works of literature (Woolf 98). Ultimately, Woolf argues that in order for women to continue to make progress in the literary world, they must be given the resources and opportunities necessary to develop their talents and share their unique perspectives with the world (Woolf 162-163).

In conclusion, Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own" highlights the gendered nature of authorial identity and the exclusion of women writers from the literary canon. Woolf argues that traditional gender roles have been used to marginalize women's experiences and perspectives and limit their creative expression. This is echoed in Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale," which challenges traditional modes of writing and highlights the importance

of diverse voices in resisting homogenization of cultural narratives. Despite the challenges faced by women writers, Woolf offers hope that with the necessary resources and opportunities, women can continue to break through these barriers and make progress in the literary world. Overall, this work offers a powerful critique of the ways in which gender and identity intersect with creative expression and offers an important perspective on the ongoing struggle for gender equality in the literary world.

### 2. Feminism in Films and Series

In the past few decades, film and television have become the primary means of storytelling, overtaking the role of theater. This transition has led to a greater variety of stories being told, and more importantly, new possibilities for female roles. While theater has always been a medium of artistic expression, it has been criticized for its limitations in portraying female characters, particularly their depth and complexity. On the other hand, film and television have the potential to provide more nuanced portrayals of women that reflect the changing role of women in society. This essay explores the shift from stage to screen and how it has allowed for more dynamic and complex female characters to be portrayed, reflecting the evolving societal roles of women.

Theater has indeed played a significant role in human history, tracing back its origins to ancient Greece. However, throughout its long history, it has been criticized for the way it portrays women. Traditional female roles in theater have been largely limited and stereotyped, often presenting women as silent, submissive and weak characters. Such depictions reflected the social norms and expectations of the time, as women were generally not granted the same opportunities and rights as men (Copenhaver 155,350,376).

The emergence of film and television has changed the way we tell stories, and more importantly, it has allowed for more complex and dynamic female characters to be portrayed (Tatsenko and Tatsenko 238-239). In theater, the audience is limited to the stage area, which

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can make it difficult to create complex and varied settings or portray characters with a wide range of experiences and backgrounds. In contrast, film and television can use various techniques, such as camera angles, editing, and special effects, to create a sense of space and time that is not limited by the physical setting. This allows filmmakers and television writers to develop more complex and advanced portrayals of women, as well as characters from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and sexual orientations.

The portrayal of women in film and television has evolved over time, and in the early days of film, women were primarily used as decorative objects, serving little purpose in the story (White 119). However, as women began to gain more social and political power, the portrayal of women in film and television began to change. Female characters started to play more significant and prominent roles, which reflected the evolution of women's place in society (Waters 47).

Contemporary film and television have continued this trend, with female characters taking on more active roles in the story and having a more significant impact on the plot. The portrayal of women in contemporary media is more diverse and complex, with female characters representing a wide range of experiences and backgrounds (Kik 98-99,104-105).

One example of a female character that reflects the changing societal roles of women is the character of Enola Holmes from the film *Enola Holmes* by Herry Bradbeer. Enola is a complex character who goes through a significant transformation as the story progresses. Enola defies the European culture of her time by not wearing hats, gloves and corsets. This is considered against the society's standards and traditions. The film took place in the Victorian era in England, and as we all know, women at that time were expected to follow strict gender roles and were not allowed to participate in any male dominated activities, such as detective work. Enola defies these gender norms and challenges the patriarchal society by becoming a detective and solving mysteries on her own. Her intelligence, critical thinking, and bravery

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serve as an example for young women, showing that they are capable of breaking free from societal expectations and pursuing their passions, no matter how unconventional they may be (Sarah 100,102,108-109).

Adapting novels and plays into films was and still considered as a brilliant idea, since it provides screenwriters and filmmakers with a valuable source of female characters who are often more intricately developed and multifaceted than those created solely for the screen. This can be exemplified by the depiction of female characters in adaptations like "Pride and Prejudice" and "The Color Purple," where they are realistically portrayed with complex personalities (McGrath and Spielberg). This can be attributed to the freedom that literary works offer authors to delve into the characters' backgrounds, motivations, and personalities, resulting in more developed and multi-dimensional female characters.

This idea resonates well with Margaret Atwood's novel "The Handmaid's Tale," which explores the oppressive regime of Gilead, where women are stripped of their freedom and are forced into various roles, including as Handmaids. The novel presents the protagonist Offred as a multidimensional character who is fighting to regain her freedom and to reunite with her daughter. The depth of the character development in the novel makes it a perfect candidate for adaptation to the screen, as it allows filmmakers to portray the character in a more detailed manner and offer a more comprehensive understanding of her character (Atwood).

In the television series adaptation of "The Handmaid's Tale," the character of Offred is brought to life by Elizabeth Moss, who portrays the character's inner turmoil, strength, and resilience. The series effectively depicts the character's struggles and sacrifices in the fight for her freedom, providing a more profound and realistic portrayal of the character (Moss). The adaptation of the novel highlights the importance of literary works in creating complex and developed female characters that are integral to the overall success of the story.

### 3. Feminist Literary Criticism

Feminist literary criticism mentioned earlier is a new movement, perspective, phenomenon, or outlook towards women in literature. It is a part of the broader feminist movement, which seeks to achieve equality for women in all aspects of life. In the past, the way women were depicted in literature was seen as a way of shaping their behavior and expectations. It provided role models that showed women what was considered acceptable and what goals and dreams were considered appropriate for them (Rana and Rashid 94-95).

Feminists argue that in the 19th century, female characters in fiction rarely had jobs unless they were desperate. Instead, the focus was on the choices they made in marriage, which determined their social status and their happiness in life. This limited portrayal of women in literature reflected and reinforced the patriarchal norms and expectations of society (Rana and Rashid 95).

In the 1970s, feminist criticism emerged as a response to this unequal representation of women. It aimed to expose the ways in which patriarchal society influenced people's thinking and perpetuated gender inequality. Feminist critics sought to uncover the cultural beliefs and biases that shaped the portrayal of women in literature (Rana and Rashid 95).

However, in the 1980s, feminist criticism evolved and changed its approach. It became more open to different perspectives by drawing from other critical approaches like Marxism, structuralism, and linguistics. This shift allowed feminist critics to explore the female experience more comprehensively and reconstruct the stories and records that had been ignored or suppressed (Rana and Rashid 95).

Moreover, the emphasis was placed on highlighting women writers and their contributions. Feminist critics sought to rewrite the history of literary works to give these women more recognition and to challenge the dominance of male voices in the literary canon.

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By doing so, they aimed to create a more inclusive and representative literary landscape (Rana and Rashid 94-95).

Feminist literary criticism not only examines literature through a feminist lens but also serves as a practical means of influencing everyday conduct and attitudes. By analyzing and questioning the portrayal of women in literature, feminist critics aim to challenge societal norms and promote equality. It is a way of studying literature that focuses on women's experiences and aims to expose and dismantle the inequalities, restrictions, and discrimination faced by women throughout history (Rana and Rashid 94).

In summary, feminist literary criticism is a movement within the broader feminist movement that seeks to analyze and question the portrayal of women in literature. It aims to uncover and challenge the patriarchal influences that have shaped the depiction of women in literature. Over time, feminist criticism has evolved to incorporate different perspectives and approaches, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and highlighting women writers and their contributions. By engaging with literature through a feminist lens, critics aim to influence societal attitudes and behaviors towards women, ultimately working towards a more equal and inclusive society.

### **4. The Freudian Theory of the Human Psyche**

Sigmund Freud's theory of the human psyche is widely regarded as one of the most influential ideas in modern psychoanalysis. According to Freud's model, the psyche is made up of three distinct parts: the id, the ego, and the superego, which form the basic structure of individual personality. The id represents our most basic desires, such as hunger, thirst, and sexual drive, which are the individual's biological instincts, while the superego embodies our moral and ethical values, as well as cultural and societal norms. The ego on the other hand, is the one who mediates between the id and the external world, as it plays a crucial role in balancing these competing demands (Freud XXii).

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In "The Ego and the Id," Freud describes the ego as the "executive" part of the psyche, responsible for decision-making, problem-solving, and reality testing. Its primary function is to regulate behavior by creating a sense of order and structure, and by resisting the impulsive desires of the id. The ego acts as a filter, taking into account the desires of the id, but also the moral and ethical standards of the superego, which serve as the guiding principles for behavior (Freud XXXV,8,19).

While the ego is often seen as a distinct part of the psyche, Freud suggests that it has no clear separation with the id, and that instead, the lower section of the ego merges into the id, leading to an ongoing interaction between these two aspects of the psyche. This dynamic tension between the ego and the id is necessary for maintaining a sense of self and individual identity, as well as for regulating behavior in a way that balances the competing demands of internal desires and external constraints (Freud 33).

One of the key differences between the ego and the id is their respective goals. The id seeks immediate gratification of its desires, regardless of the consequences, while the ego is focused on long-term goals and the successful navigation of the external world. The ego allows individuals to delay gratification and to make sacrifices for future rewards, even if that means suppressing the desires of the id.

Overall, Freud's theory of the human psyche provides a framework for understanding the complexities of human behavior. The interplay between the id, ego, and superego helps us to better understand ourselves and others, and to navigate the often-conflicting demands of internal desires and external constraints. By understanding the role of the ego in mediating between the id and the superego, we can gain insight into how our own behavior is shaped by these competing forces and can work to achieve a greater sense of balance and harmony within ourselves.

### 5. The Freudian Three Levels of the Mind

Sigmund Freud, the renowned Austrian psychiatrist and founder of psychoanalysis, introduced a revolutionary perspective on the human mind that continues to influence the field of psychoanalysis to this day. According to Freud, our conscious mind represents merely a fraction of our overall mental processes, analogous to the visible tip of an iceberg. This conscious level of the mind is responsible for our immediate perceptions, memories, thoughts, and feelings (Sibi 76).

Beneath the conscious mind lies the preconscious mind, which serves as a repository of readily available memories that can be easily retrieved into consciousness when needed. However, Freud asserted that the most significant and expansive part of the mind is the unconscious. The unconscious mind harbors repressed thoughts, emotions, and memories, particularly those associated with traumatic experiences, and profoundly shapes an individual's personality and behavior (Sibi 76).

Freud's psychoanalytic theory places considerable emphasis on the immense influence of the unconscious mind in shaping human behavior. Governed by primal drives and impulses, the unconscious mind operates in conjunction with the preconscious level to mediate the flow of thoughts and information. Freud believed that gaining access to the unconscious mind could provide individuals with invaluable insights into their own personality dynamics and behavioral patterns, ultimately empowering them to exert greater control over their lives (Sibi 76).

By highlighting the significance of the unconscious mind, Freud revolutionized the understanding of human psychoanalysis, offering a new framework for comprehending the complexities of human behavior. His exploration of the unconscious mind continues to inspire further research and clinical applications, contributing to a deeper understanding of the human psyche and the potential for personal growth and self-realization.

### 6. Defense Mechanisms

Defense mechanisms serve as an essential psychological function, as they allow individuals to safeguard themselves from unpleasant emotions and thoughts. Phoebe Cramer, in her article "Understanding Defense Mechanisms," discusses the significance of these mechanisms, which can vary from simple behavioral responses such as denial to complex psychological processes such as sublimation (526-527,529). In this essay, we will delve into the importance of defense mechanisms in protecting one's mental health and explore the potential dangers of relying excessively on them, as well.

Defense mechanisms are essential for preserving one's mental health. They help people cope with difficult situations by allowing them to distance themselves from negative emotions and protect their self-esteem (Cramer 528). For example, when someone receives negative feedback on a project they worked hard on, they may use the defense mechanism of denial to avoid accepting the criticism and protect their self-esteem. This helps them feel less anxious or depressed and enables them to keep moving forward without being consumed by negative thoughts.

While it is true that defense mechanisms can help people deal with unpleasant emotions, overusing them can be a sign of psychological problems. In other words, overusing these mechanisms can cause difficulties and problems. For instance, if someone engages in avoidance as a defense technique too frequently, they risk missing out on significant learning experiences or chances to advance and develop. In extreme situations, overusing a person's defense systems can result in mental health illnesses like anxiety or depression. For a healthy adaptation in daily life, it is essential and important to use defense mechanisms within a reasonable range. Similar to this, some forms of defense are regarded as normal while others are not. In Cramer's analogy to physical health, having a regular heartbeat is essential for everyday functioning, but a heartbeat that is too fast or irregular may indicate cardiac problems (Cramer 10).

In conclusion, defense mechanisms are an essential aspect of human psychoanalysis that allow people to protect themselves from unpleasant thoughts and feelings. They are unconscious and range from simple behaviors like denial to complex mental processes like sublimation. The use of different types of defense mechanisms varies from person to person, and they can be healthy or unhealthy depending on the frequency and intensity of their use. While defense mechanisms can help individuals cope with unpleasant emotions, it is essential to recognize the potential dangers of over-reliance on them and seek help if necessary.

### **7. The Psychological Change of the Oppressed**

The psychological well-being and behavior of oppressed women are profoundly influenced by social oppression. This impact is not limited to diagnosable mental disorders or academic underperformance but encompasses the values perpetuated by society itself (Makki Alamdari 1). Ratner's research provides examples that illustrate the specific ways in which social oppression can shape individuals' experiences and behaviors (Makki Alamdari 1).

Internalizing oppression is a phenomenon where individuals who experience oppression begin to adopt and exhibit behaviors that align with the negative stereotypes associated with their oppressed group. These individuals start to accept and internalize the belief that they are somehow inferior or deserving of mistreatment. Consequently, internalized oppression leads to low self-esteem, self-hatred, and a range of negative behaviors. These behaviors may include undermining their own leaders, creating divisions within their community, constant self-criticism and criticism of others, pessimism, and a tendency to complain and speak negatively about others (Lakey and Lakey, qtd. in Makka 1). The internalized oppression is a result of the societal oppression they have endured, influencing their beliefs and actions at a personal level.

Labeling theory provides a conceptual framework that helps elucidate the socio-psychological processes experienced by individuals in an oppressive society. Labels, both societal and self-imposed, shape behaviors and self-identity. These labels are used to describe

## Chapter I: An Overview of Feminism and Psychoanalysis

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people's attributes and contribute to the formation of their beliefs and actions (Taylor, Walton, and Young, qtd. in Makki Alamdari 2-3).

Humiliation and revenge are also significant factors that affect the behavior of oppressed individuals. When subjected to oppression, individuals often experience intense negative emotions and develop a desire for revenge. This desire arises from the perception of being ignored or treated as inferior. Muenster and Lotto discuss how this appetite for revenge can manifest in acts of violence or other behaviors aimed at addressing the perceived injustice (qtd. In Makki Alamdari 3).

"The Handmaid's Tale" series provides a harrowing depiction of the psychological changes that occur in women subjected to extreme forms of oppression. Through the lens of social oppression, internalized oppression, labeling theory, and the desire for revenge, the series portrays the profound impact of oppressive systems on the psychological well-being and behavior of female characters. It serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of recognizing and addressing the psychological effects of oppression in real-world contexts, highlighting the need for social change and the empowerment of marginalized individuals.

In conclusion, social oppression has a profound impact on the psychological well-being and behavior of oppressed women. It leads to the internalization of negative stereotypes, which results in low self-esteem, self-hatred, and a range of negative behaviors. The labeling theory highlights how societal and self-imposed labels shape individuals' behaviors and self-identity. Moreover, the experience of oppression often generates feelings of humiliation and a desire for revenge, which can manifest in destructive behaviors. Understanding these psychological processes is crucial for addressing the effects of oppression and working towards a more equitable and inclusive society.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter explored two main themes. Firstly, it discussed the historical marginalization of female authors and the portrayal of female characters as one-dimensional in literature due to gender roles. It highlighted how the shift from theater to screen provided female authors with an opportunity to depict female characters in a more complex and multifaceted manner. The introduction of feminist literary criticism as a means to analyze literature further revealed how patriarchy influenced the value of literary works. Secondly, it introduced important psychoanalytic concepts such as the Freudian division of the mind, the Freudian theory of the psyche, the defense mechanisms, and the psychological transformation of the oppressed. It emphasized that studying literature through a psychoanalytic lens allowed for a deeper exploration of the human mind and the complexities of character development. Ultimately, it discussed the marginalization of female authors, the evolution of female character portrayals, the role of feminist literary criticism in analyzing literature, and the application of psychoanalytic concepts to understand psychological transformation.

# **PRACTICAL PART**

*"The foundation of theory is practice."*

*Mao Tsé-Toung*

**CHAPTER II :**  
**A Feminist and Psychoanalytic Analysis of**  
**“THE HANDMAID’S TALE” Series**

## **Chapter Two**

### **A Feminist and Psychoanalytic Analysis of "The Handmaid's Tale" Series**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is the core target of the whole study. It will delve deep into the psychoanalytic and feminist dimensions of the series, aiming to unravel the intricate relationship between oppression, resistance, and the human psyche. It will be categorized into three main sections. The first section will reveal the invisible connections between religion, oppression, as well as the resistance. Section two will unravel the intersectionality between religion, the psyche, and resistance. Lastly, section three will give insights into the psychological changes that female characters experience throughout the series.

#### **Section One: A Feminist Analysis "The Handmaid's Tale" Series**

##### **1. The Portrayal of Female Characters**

The representation of female characters in "The Handmaid's Tale" series is central to the show's themes of oppression, resistance and survival. The ones who are especially important in this regard are the Handmaids. The Handmaids were depicted as either child-bearers or child-bearers and objects of pleasure for men.

##### **1.1. Female Characters as Reproductive Machines**

In the first episode of season one of "The Handmaid's Tale" series, there is a scene that reinforces the concept of female characters being viewed as reproductive machines. The scene takes place in the Red Center where June, Janine and other female characters are undergoing training to become Handmaids. Aunt Lydia, who is in charge of the training, explicitly explains to them their role as Handmaids and how their only purpose is to bear children for the ruling elite of Gilead. The scene serves as a reminder of the lack of agency and autonomy that the

Handmaids have over their own bodies and lives, and reinforces the idea that they are reduced to vessels for reproduction in Gilead’s society.

Later on in the episode, comes the Ceremony which happens once a month. The Ceremony is a highly ritualized sexual act that is meant to facilitate the Handmaid's role as a reproductive vessel for the Commander and his Wife. During the Ceremony, the Handmaid lies in the lap of the Commander's wife while the Commander has intercourse with her in order to impregnate her. The Handmaid is expected to remain silent and submissive during the Ceremony, and any resistance or disobedience is punished severely. These two scenes from the very first episode show how women were seen as machines of reproduction and how their fertility caused them oppression.

In Season 1, Episode 6, an air of anticipation fills the air in Gilead as the Handmaids are instructed to exhibit impeccable behavior. The Handmaids obediently line up, their crimson robes contrasting with the stark surroundings. Serena, ever vigilant, steps forward to check them, scrutinizing each Handmaid with a critical eye. As she spots the slightest imperfection, she calls upon Aunt Lydia to remove those damaged. The tension in the room rises as Aunt Lydia firmly carries out her task, separating the flawed from the acceptable.

Soon after, the reason behind this becomes clear as the foreign visitors arrive. Gilead wants to make a lasting impression. The moment arrives when the Handmaids and Gilead's children are introduced to the foreign guests. The handmaids, dressed in their symbolic attire, the young children playing, all products of a society built on rigid hierarchy and fertility worship. This is how they were presented to the Mexicans trying to get a trading deal with them. This particular scene serves as a reminder of how Gilead views its Handmaids, its only precious resource. They are reduced to mere commodities, valued solely for their reproductive abilities. In this twisted society, where women's autonomy is stripped away and their bodies are

commodified, Gilead seeks to forge alliances and get trade deals by offering the Handmaids as a bargaining chip.

As their fertility was a source of oppression, it was a tool for resistance as well. This is shown through many scenes. In Season 1, Episode 3, a particular scene unveils the secret relationship between Emily, a Handmaid, and a Martha. In Gilead, being labeled a gender traitor results in execution, a severe punishment for deviating from the regime's strict gender roles. The secret relationship is no longer secret and for that a punishment must take place. Emily's ability to bear children grants her a temporary reprieve from this judgment, but the fact that the Martha is lacking this reproductive capability left her unprotected, with the sentence promptly carried out. This illustrates how fertility serves as both a form of resistance and a means of protection within the oppressive society of Gilead.

Another particular scene that illustrates the idea that fertility is a source of resistance is from episode nine of season one, where Janine flees from her assigned post with her newborn baby. Despite being faced with the risk of severe punishment or even death, Janine is willing to take this risk in order to protect her child from a life of being subjected to the horrors of Gilead. This act of resistance is particularly significant, because it ultimately leads to a break in the rules of the regime. Her actions force those in power to confront the contradictions and injustices of their own system, ultimately leading them to allow her to stay with her baby rather than punishing her for her disobedience.

### **1.2. Female Characters as Objects of Desire**

Gilead is not as strict as it was depicted at first. Later on as the show progresses, the other side of Gilead is to be introduced. Jezebel, a secret nightclub where the elite of Gilead indulge in forbidden activities. At 00:08:00 to 00:33:50 from Season 1, Episode 8, Commander Fred, Offred's assigned master, takes her there, with his wife's blessing, to spice up their love life. But as they get ready for the night, Offred starts questioning the situation and where they

are going. As they arrive at Jezebel, Offred is confronted with the reality of Gilead's double standards. While the Commanders and their guests engage in sexual acts, the women are used as sexual objects and are not allowed to enjoy the same pleasures. This trip serves as a stark portrayal of the oppression of women in Gilead and highlights the harsh reality that they have to face on a daily basis.

Later on in the same Episode, an important scene unfolds, shedding light on Moira's harrowing journey after escaping the confines of the Red Center. Despite her desperate bid for freedom, she is eventually apprehended and forced into an unthinkable choice. Faced with the grim options of becoming a prostitute or being sent to the dreaded colonies, Moira's agency hangs in the balance. This scene unveils Moira's transformed existence. Stripped of her former identity, she now assumes the new persona of Ruby, an employee at the Jezebel. As Ruby, her path has led her down a dark and degrading path, relegated to serving the desires of others.

This scene serves as a stark representation of the objectification and commodification of female characters within the oppressive world of Gilead. Moira's transformation into Ruby epitomizes how women are reduced to objects of desire, stripped of their autonomy and agency, and forced into roles dictated by a patriarchal society. The revelation of Moira's new role and identity in Jezebel not only highlights the continued dehumanization of women but also serves as a reminder of the lengths Gilead will go to control and exploit female bodies. It reflects a society that views women primarily as objects to satisfy the desires of men, perpetuating a culture of oppression and objectification.

Although Jezebel is commonly known as a place of prostitution, it also serves as a starting point for the resistance movement in "The Handmaid's Tale" series. In Season 1, Episode 9, Offred is tasked with retrieving a package from Jezebel, and she persuades her commander to take her there. Upon arrival, she enlists the help of her friend Moira, now called Ruby, who has been there longer and has connections. Later in the episode, Offred receives the

package at a supermarket and resumes her life as a Handmaid. Offred's visit to Jezebel shows how women can use their agency and connections to subvert the system. By convincing her commander to take her there and enlisting Ruby's help, Offred uses her power to maneuver within the system and gain access to the package that ultimately exposes the oppressive reality of Gilead. Through Offred's actions, the series portrays how women can resist and fight back against patriarchal oppression, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Jezebel also serves as the backdrop for Moira's transformative journey, marking the shedding of her alter ego, Ruby. In that very episode, we witness Moira in a bathroom, preparing for her final escape mission. With determination in her eyes, she gets ready for what lies ahead. Every action she takes is deliberate, each step bringing her closer to freedom. It is here, within the confines of that bathroom at Jezebel that the tools of her liberation are assembled. The words "Hang on, Sugar, I'll be right there" that hold within them the promise of liberation, a lifeline that will propel her towards a new existence. A fragment of metal, ingeniously repurposed from the toilet flush mechanism. Then, there is the van, belonging to the man whose life will be tragically cut short. It becomes a necessary means of transportation. Ultimately, this suggests that women can resist the oppressive regime, adapt and transform their circumstances.

### **2. The Role of Religion in the Subjugation of Female Characters**

Subjugation of female characters in "The Handmaid's Tale" series is clearly its primary thematic concern as it is portrayed throughout the whole narrative. Those of authority and power justify their actions and choices in changing the laws and the system of the country as a whole to a patriarchal one using religion, since it is the easiest way to do it. The initial transition to a patriarchal system is prominently portrayed in the series, particularly through the character of Aunt Lydia, who is shown in a scene where she instructs and trains the Handmaids, preparing them for their assigned roles in Gilead's society. In this scene, Aunt Lydia rationalizes and

justifies the implementation of these changes by citing factors such as environmental degradation, abortion, the use of birth control pills, and female infertility.

In season one, episode one, in the Red Center, Aunt Lydia suggests that people turned the world into a mess, so god whipped up the plague of infertility. As fertility was a gift from god and they were lucky to have it, it was all for a biblical reason. Those women have to serve the leaders of the faithful and bear children for them as Bilhah served Rachel. Here Aunt Lydia used a manipulated biblical reference to justify the practice of assigning Handmaids to high-ranking Commanders in Gilead. By referencing the story of Bilhah and Rachel, Aunt Lydia draws parallels between the biblical narrative and the lives of the Handmaids in Gilead. She argues that just as Bilhah was chosen to bear children for Rachel, the Handmaids are chosen to fulfill their divine duty of procreation.

Aunt Lydia suggests that the Handmaids' purpose is to provide a solution to the infertility crisis in Gilead, much like Bilhah did for Rachel. Through this manipulation of religious text, Aunt Lydia attempts to portray the subjugation and exploitation of the Handmaids as a righteous and necessary act. She presents their role as a sacred duty, reinforcing the idea that their sole purpose is to fulfill their reproductive function and contribute to the survival of Gilead's society. By linking their suffering to a biblical precedent, Aunt Lydia seeks to legitimize the oppression imposed upon the Handmaids and discourage any resistance or questioning of their role. Aunt Lydia in "The Handmaid's Tale" picks certain parts of the Bible story that support Gilead's oppressive actions. She talks about how Bilhah became a surrogate mother for Rachel, focusing on this one role rather than considering the whole story and the characters' relationships.

By doing this, Aunt Lydia ignores that Bilhah had her own choices and independence. Instead, she uses Bilhah's role to make it seem okay to control and mistreat the Handmaids in Gilead. Aunt Lydia changes the real meaning of the biblical story to fit Gilead's oppressive

plans. The original story of Bilhah and Rachel is complicated and includes different elements like power, personal desires, and the culture of that time. But Aunt Lydia makes it simpler and says that women choose to be only for having babies. By doing this, she ignores that the Handmaids did not agree to this role willingly and did not have control over their own lives. She treats them like objects meant only for making babies, not as people with their own choices and rights.

### **3. Empowerment as a Response to Religious Oppression on Female Characters**

This oppression is what brought female characters together and their resistance came as a response to it. Women in Gilead engage in acts of rebellion, both small and large, to assert their autonomy and challenge the oppressive system. This can include small acts of defiance in their everyday lives or larger acts of rebellion aimed at undermining Gilead's authority. Alliances and solidarity among women also play a crucial role in the feminist resistance. Women form secret gatherings, support networks, and alliances to share information, provide emotional support, and strategize ways to resist Gilead's control. These alliances and friendships are often formed in secret, as any form of association or communication between women is closely monitored and discouraged by the regime. The feminist resistance in "The Handmaid's Tale" is characterized by the determination to reclaim their identities, challenge societal norms, and strive for freedom. Through acts of rebellion, alliances with other women, and secret gatherings, they work towards subverting the oppressive laws and ideologies imposed upon them by Gilead.

In season 2, episode 13, Serena Joy proposes a new amendment to be considered in a reunion with men. She speaks on behalf of other women and suggests that as faithful servants it is their duty to ensure that the children of Gilead, boys and girls, lived by the laws of the scripture, should be taught how to read the bible. She, later opens the bible and reads a verse out loud to show how serious her proposal was. This situation reflects the patriarchal nature of

Gilead's society, where women's voices and agency are often suppressed or marginalized, yet Serena Joy's presence and proposal can be seen as a resistance against such power dynamics by making her voice heard. Serena Joy's suggestion that children should be taught to read the Bible implies a reinterpretation of religious texts from a feminist perspective, as well. By emphasizing the importance of educating both boys and girls, she challenges the traditional interpretation of scripture that limits women's access to education or religious knowledge. This reflects a feminist effort to reclaim and redefine religious narratives.

Episode 13 of Season 3 presents another example of feminist resistance within the series. In this episode, a significant act of rebellion is organized by Mayday, involving the escape of numerous children and Marthas from the oppressive regime of Gilead, reflecting the power of alliances and secret gatherings in advancing the collective cause of resistance. This scene sheds light on the interconnected themes of feminism. Mayday's involvement and successful execution of the escape plan exemplify the significance of solidarity and collective action in challenging patriarchal structures. The escape of Marthas showcases women's agency and their ability to defy assigned roles, actively shaping their destinies. Besides, the use of secret gatherings and operations draws attention to the importance of secrecy as a strategic tool for resistance, protecting individuals and enabling effective defiance against the repressive regime's surveillance and control.

In summary, "The Handmaid's Tale" explores the manipulation of religious scriptures to establish a subjugated system in Gilead. The series highlights acts of rebellion, alliances, and secret gatherings as means of defying and resisting this oppressive regime. Through the lens of religious interpretation, the show portrays how select readings of scriptures are used to justify and enforce gender inequality within Gilead. This analysis sheds light on the profound impact of religious ideology on shaping social structures. In response to their subjugation, the characters in "The Handmaid's Tale" engage in acts of rebellion, forming alliances and

participating in secret gatherings. These acts represent their defiance against the oppressive system and their determination to reclaim agency and freedom.

#### 4. The Depiction of Motherhood

The portrayal of motherhood in "The Handmaid's Tale" series is entangled to the larger themes of oppression and resistance. As the Gilead's society is obsessed with reproduction, the series explores the complex experiences of motherhood, highlighting the ways in which it is used to take control over the Handmaids, as well as the ways in which it can be a source of strength and resistance.

The series depicts motherhood as a form of oppression, particularly for the Handmaids who were not abiding by the rules. In Season 1, Episode 10, June and Serena were captured in the car, driving to a specific place. June kept wondering where they are going, but Serena never answered. As they arrived, Serena stepped out of the car, leaving June behind momentarily. Serena entered a nearby house and soon reemerged, accompanied by a young girl. To June's overwhelming joy and heartache, she realized that the girl Serena brought out was none other than her beloved daughter, Hannah.

In this scene, June could not contain her emotions and desperately begged Serena to allow her to see her daughter. She pleaded for even a brief moment of connection with Hannah, yearning for the chance to hold her, to feel her presence. Despite June's impassioned plea, Serena remained cold and unmoved, choosing to ignore June's heartfelt words. Serena stated that Hannah was fine and has a caring family. Then she added:

Listen to me.

As long my baby is safe, so is yours.

This was a direct threat from Serena suggesting that if June does not have a healthy child, Hannah would be in danger. This shows how they use the love of a mother for her child to make her be obedient and under control.

In season 4, episode 3, at 00:34:10 to 00:42:24, June was caught up after escaping with few other Handmaids. This scene shows how they used motherhood as a means of manipulation and controlling June to get the information they seek. After using many other ways, such as torturing and killing, Gilead reached the point of using a child to get to know where the Handmaids were hiding. Using June’s daughter, Hannah, as a tool of manipulation by threatening to hurt her was the straw that broke the camel’s back.

The series shows how mother love can be a source of power and resistance, as well. June, for instance, is driven by her desire to be reunited with her daughters, and is willing to risk everything to protect them. This was depicted in the episode entitled “Seeds”. It takes place in the hospital when June was talking to her unborn child letting her know that she will do anything to change their current situation. June says:

You're tough, aren't you?

Now, you listen to me, 'kay?

I will not let you grow up in this place.

I won't do it.

Do you hear me?

They...

They do not own you.

And they do not own what you will become.

Do you hear me ?

I'm gonna get you out of here.

I'm gonna get us out of here.

I promise you.

I promise.

If this suggests anything, it suggests that June is willing to do anything to protect her daughters and get them to a safer place where they can be their true selves and live as free as they can be. It highlights the strength and resilience that maternal love can give to a mother even in the face of oppressive structures such as Gilead’s.

### 5. The Role of Language

Language plays a quite important role in reinforcing gender roles and maintaining power dynamics in Gilead. At the same time, it serves as a means of resistance and opposition to the system for female characters who challenge the status quo, as well. From the very first episode, we notice the use of unique vocabulary, such as “Handmaids”, “Marthas”, “Wives”, “Commanders”, “Eyes”. This puts people into categories dictating on them their roles and showing them their ranks and power within the society. The Handmaids for instance are the fertile women who are assigned to bear children for the wealthy families. This means that their role within the society was reduced to mere reproduction only.

By categorizing people, it is easier for those of power to control them, but this was not the case for the Handmaids. In season 1, episode 10, at 00:06:07, Offred says:

It's their own fault,  
They should have never given  
Us uniforms if they didn't  
Want us to be an army.

This suggests that putting them into categories was not a brilliant idea as they thought, but it helped in strengthening and creating solidarity between them. This is depicted later on in the same episode at 00:45:00 to 00:50:00, where the Handmaids were tasked to punish Ofdaniel who was convicted of endangering a child and the punishment for such a crime was death by stoning. The Handmaids stand up against the rules and refused to do their duty. This reinforces

the idea that the handmaids have agency and power in the society, despite their subservient status.

Another thing worth mentioning is related to reading and writing; women were not allowed to engage in any intellectual activities. This denial of education is a way of exerting power over women and keeping them in a subordinate position. By depriving women of the ability to read and write, Gilead's leaders are able to control what women know and think, and limit their ability to challenge the dominant power structures. Furthermore, by limiting women's access to education, Gilead reinforces traditional gender roles, where women are expected to be passive and obedient, and men are expected to be active and in control. This leads to the idea that women are inferior to men and should be controlled by them. However, the character of Moira and June break this rule.

There is a scene that depicts the breaking of this exact rule by both June and Moira and it takes place in season 1, episode 4 at 00:02:50 to 00:06:34. It starts by June saying that she wants to discover things in this new world and that this would be better than being lost in the past as a lunatic. As she opens her wardrobe, she discovers some expression written in Latin, which translates to “don't let the bastards grind you down”. This expression was probably written by the Offred before her to help supporting the Offreds after her emotionally. Same as for Moira, she wanted to support other Handmaids by writing an expression on the wall that reads, “Aunt Lydia Sucks” to express her defiance and let others know they are not alone in their opposition to the oppressive regime. Both of these expressions represent acts of rebellion and resistance against the oppressive society. From here we can conclude that language was used to dehumanize women and make them inferior to men, but it also worked as a tool for resistance and support by characters who chose to challenge the system and refused to accept their assigned roles in society.

### Section Two: A psychoanalytic Analysis of "The Handmaid's Tale" Series

#### 1. Religion and the Superego in Gilead

The series portrays a society in which women are subjugated and forced to conform to strict gender roles, and where religion is used as a tool for social control as already mentioned. The influence of religion on the formation and maintenance of the superego is evident throughout the show. The Republic of Gilead, which is the oppressive regime in power, uses a distorted interpretation of Christianity to justify its control over women and to enforce conformity to strict gender roles. The Aunts, who are responsible for indoctrinating and training the Handmaids, use religious language and symbolism to reinforce their control over the women. This portrayal of religion highlights its potential to be used as a tool of social control and the ways in which it can shape individual psychoanalysis.

The fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity serving as the superego for the citizens of Gilead. The superego in this context serves to maintain social order by imposing religious beliefs and practices on the population. Women are not allowed to read, write or work, and are forced to cover their bodies in long robes to signify their subservience. The character of Offred, serves as a prime example of the superego's influence on the population. She struggles to reconcile her own desires and beliefs with the strict religious doctrine she is forced to live by, leading to internal conflict and psychological distress.

Throughout the series, the role of the superego is explored in depth, as characters are forced to navigate the complex and often contradictory demands of the religious leaders and the society as a whole. The superego is presented as a powerful force that can shape individuals and societies in profound ways, with both positive and negative consequences. One example of the influence of religion on the superego in "The Handmaid's Tale" can be seen in one of the most memorable scenes in the series which takes place in Season 1, Episode 2. In this scene, "Aunt Lydia" one of the Aunts who trains and oversees the Handmaids, and a devout

believer in the religious values of Gilead who sees herself as a moral authority. Her superego is heavily influenced by her religious beliefs, and she believes that her role in Gilead is to ensure that women fulfill their God-given duty to bear children for their assigned Commanders.

Aunt Lydia leads a group of Handmaids in a prayer circle. The Handmaids are made to kneel in a circle and recite the phrase "blessed be the fruit" in reference to the children they are expected to bear. She instructs them to add the phrase "may the Lord open" in reference to the Handmaid's reproductive organs. These expressions illustrate how religion is used in Gilead to reinforce the societal norms and expectations placed on women. By tying reproduction to religious devotion, Gilead reinforces the idea that a woman's purpose is solely to bear children. Aunt Lydia's role in leading the prayer circle further demonstrates the influence of religious leaders in shaping the superego of Gilead's citizens. Overall, the use of religion serves as a powerful tool for the regime to control and manipulate its citizens, particularly in terms of shaping their superego and reinforcing societal expectations and norms.

Another memorable scene that highlights the role of religion in shaping the superego takes place in Season 2, Episode 1. After Janine's suicide attempt, Aunt Lydia tries to use religion to justify punishing her. She orders the Handmaids to stone Janine to death, but they refuse. Later, Aunt Lydia criticizes the Handmaids for not following through with God's punishment, saying that Janine would have gone to God quickly and that they had done her no good. Instead, Janine is sent to the colonies, which is another example of how religious beliefs are used to justify cruel and inhumane treatment of people who are seen as disobedient or sinful.

Aunt Lydia's superego is heavily influenced by her religious beliefs, but those beliefs are used to justify the punishment and exploitation of other women. The scene also shows the psychological toll that Gilead's religious teachings can have on individuals, as Janine is pushed to the brink of despair by Aunt Lydia's punishment.

Throughout the series, the role of the superego is explored in depth, as characters are forced to navigate the complex and often contradictory demands of the religious leaders and the society as a whole. The superego is presented as a powerful force that can shape individuals and societies in profound ways, with both positive and negative consequences.

In conclusion, Aunt Lydia's character is used to demonstrate how religious beliefs can be used to justify oppression and to manipulate the superegos of both the oppressor and the oppressed. The show highlights the importance of critically examining the ways in which religious beliefs are used to maintain oppressive power structures and the impact that these beliefs can have on individuals' superegos.

### **2. The Struggle for Individuality**

The struggle for individuality in the face of societal and religious expectations is a central theme in many works of literature and media. "The Handmaid's Tale" is no exception, exploring the conflict between individuality and the role of the superego in a dystopian society. In this world, the state's religious doctrine heavily influences the superego, leading characters to struggle with their sense of self and personal beliefs. Through the experiences of various characters, the series highlights the importance of resisting oppressive power structures and maintaining a sense of individuality in the face of societal pressure. In the following examples, we will examine how two characters, Offred and Nick, navigate this struggle and attempt to reconcile their personal beliefs with the expectations placed on them by society.

Offred, the main character of "The Handmaid's Tale," is a woman who has been stripped of her individuality and forced into a role as a reproductive vessel for the ruling class. She struggles to reconcile her own beliefs and desires with the rigid expectations placed on her by the society she lives in. One salient example of this struggle is her relationship with her Commander, a man who is both her oppressor and, in some ways, her ally. Offred recognizes

the power dynamic between them, but she also finds herself drawn to him on a personal level, leading to a complex and emotionally fraught relationship.

Nick, a driver for the ruling class, is another character who struggles with the conflict between his own individuality and the expectations placed on him by society. As a member of the lower class, Nick is constantly reminded of his place in the hierarchy, and he is expected to obey the rules and norms of the society he lives in. However, he also harbors secret desires and ambitions, leading him to engage in forbidden activities and relationships. Nick's struggle is particularly poignant because he is a relatively minor character in the series, and his experiences serve to highlight the ways in which even those who seem to have little power can still resist and struggle against oppressive systems.

Overall, the struggles of Offred and Nick demonstrate the importance of individuality and the potential for resistance in the face of oppressive societal norms. While both characters face significant challenges in their attempts to reconcile their personal beliefs with the expectations placed on them, they also find ways to push back against the rigid structures of their society and maintain a sense of self. The superego represents their internalized moral and ethical values, which are in conflict with the values of the society. The struggle for individuality is a struggle against the oppressive values of the society, and the characters must fight to maintain their own sense of self and resist the erasure of their individuality.

### **3. Defense Mechanisms**

The oppressive regime depicted in "The Handmaid's Tale" has a profound psychological impact on the female characters, and like any human beings, they naturally employ defense mechanisms to cope with their harsh and unpleasant circumstances. These defense mechanisms serve as psychological strategies to protect themselves from the overwhelming anxiety, fear, and emotional distress caused by Gilead's oppressive rules.

In the first episode of "The Handmaid's Tale" Season 1, during the ceremony in which the Handmaid is subjected to the oppressive and controlling rules of Gilead, the character Offred remains devoid of any visible emotions, resistance, or acts of obedience. This serves as a moving portrayal of how her feelings, thoughts, and desires are repressed under the oppressive regime, emphasizing the extent to which she is denied the freedom to express herself and assert her individuality. Repression is one of the most prominent defense mechanisms observed throughout the series. The Handmaids repress their true emotions, desires, and identities as a means of survival. They must bury their authentic selves deep within and refrain from expressing their anger, resentment, and resistance openly. By repressing their emotions, they can avoid drawing unwanted attention from the regime's enforcers and reduce the risk of severe punishment or execution.

In Season 1, Episode 9, when Janine flees her assigned post with her newborn baby in search of safety and protection. Her actions in this scene can be interpreted as a combination of many defense mechanisms such as denial, rationalization, and regression. However, the most prominent defense mechanism is regression, as Janine reverts to childlike behavior and attempts to escape for the sake of her own and her child's safety. Regression as any other defense mechanism often arises in response to high levels of stress or trauma, allowing individuals to retreat to a perceived state of safety and innocence (Carmer 529). In the scene, Janine is portrayed as a small child holding her doll. Her mother attempts to encourage good behavior by promising her fries for dinner if she falls asleep. This portrayal emphasizes Janine's regressed state and her longing for a sense of safety and innocence.

In Season 1, Episodes 8 and 9 of "The Handmaid's Tale," entitled "Jezebels" and "The Bridge," respectively, crucial scenes unfold at Jezebel's, the secret club within Gilead. These episodes present a stark contrast to the oppressive world of Gilead, as Offred (June) finds herself involved in the secret atmosphere of Jezebel's. Throughout both scenes, Offred maintains a

facade of composure, hiding her true intentions while maneuvering the treacherous world of Jezebel's. These moments serve as turning points for Offred, exposing her to the hidden depths of corruption and providing her with newfound knowledge that may influence her choices and actions in her fight against Gilead.

The scenes highlight Offred's courage, resourcefulness, and willingness to go to great lengths to gather information and play her part in the resistance, all while operating within the shadows of a world filled with hypocrisy and hidden desires. Offred employs various defense mechanisms to navigate the challenging environment introduced by the revelation of Jezebel's. In these episodes, Offred's defense mechanisms serve as coping mechanisms as she confronts the oppressive reality of her existence. She engages in repression, suppressing her true emotions and feelings about her life as a Handmaid in Gilead, and dissociates from her reality to adapt to the environment at Jezebel's. Offred also rationalizes her presence at Jezebel's as an opportunity for gathering information and potentially finding a way to resist or escape Gilead, justifying her actions by believing that her engagement at the club may provide crucial knowledge or connections. Offred rationalizes her presence at Jezebel's by creating a justification for her actions and this can be shown through her conversation with Nick:

You know I had to go

With him last night, right?

You know

I didn't have a choice.

I don't have any choice.

And in a conversation with Ruby (Moira) at Jazebel:

Ruby: so you're a spy now?

June: I guess.

Despite the fact that Jezebel's is a place where Handmaids are brought for the sexual pleasure of the elite men of Gilead, Offred convinces herself that being there is to spy which serves a larger purpose. She rationalizes that by engaging with the club's clientele, she can gather important information and potentially find a way to resist or escape Gilead. This rationalization allows her to view her participation at Jezebel's as an opportunity rather than a degrading and oppressive experience. By rationalizing her presence, Offred is able to alleviate any guilt or conflict she might feel about engaging in activities that go against her principles. It helps her maintain a sense of control and agency in a situation where she has very little. It also allows her to preserve her self-image as a strong and resourceful individual, actively working towards her own liberation.

Furthermore, Offred sublimates her desire for freedom and agency by actively seeking information and building alliances at Jezebel's, channeling her repressed emotions and frustrations into strategic pursuits that may offer an advantage against Gilead or lead to liberation. Lastly, she employs intellectualization as a defense mechanism, analyzing power dynamics and hidden motives of those she encounters at Jezebel's, thereby maintaining a sense of control and detachment from the emotionally charged environment. These defense mechanisms assist Offred in navigating the dangerous world of Jezebel's, protecting herself psychologically while continuing her covert resistance against Gilead.

Repression is indeed prominently depicted as a defense mechanism utilized by female characters throughout the series. Yet, overusing this defense mechanism can lead individuals to displace their suppressed emotions onto other objects or individuals. This displacement is exemplified in various scenes, including Season 1, Episode 1, where the Handmaids express their anger and frustration by actively participating in the violent punishment of a convicted rapist. While their actions are endorsed by the oppressive regime of Gilead, they are essentially redirecting their pent-up rage towards the individual, engaging in his public execution as a

means of releasing their repressed emotions through an act of violence. This portrayal highlights the consequences of over-reliance on repression and the ways in which it can manifest in displaced aggression.

### **4. The Psychological Change of Female Characters**

#### **4.1. June Osborne**

"The Handmaid's Tale" portrays the harrowing journey of June/Offred as she navigates the oppressive society of Gilead. Throughout the series, June undergoes significant psychological transformations influenced by her instinctual desires and drives, which can be analyzed through the exploration of the id. By examining key scenes we gain insight into June's psychological evolution and the interplay between her desires and the constraints of Gilead's regime.

In Season 1, Episode 1, June is forcibly separated from her daughter by the authorities of Gilead. Initially weak and afraid, she is overwhelmed by despair and fear, as any mother would be when torn apart from her child. Her psychological state at this point reflects the devastating impact of Gilead's oppressive regime on individual autonomy and maternal bonds. Through the exploration of the id, we can understand June's instinctual desire to be with her child and the devastating psychological consequences of having that desire denied. The scene showcases June's initial weakness and fear, which intensify into overwhelming despair as she realizes the gravity of the separation. It highlights the profound toll of Gilead's regime on individual autonomy and maternal instincts, as the id's desires are forcefully suppressed.

June, throughout the series, had many attempts to escape and get her daughter back. Despite the oppressive atmosphere, June demonstrates defiance and refuses to accept her assigned role as a Handmaid. She maintains her spirit and determination to escape and get her daughters out of the confines of the rigid society, which showcases her initial psychological resilience and sets the stage for her journey towards reclaiming her agency. This underscores

June's early psychological transformation from a victim to a defiant rebel. Through the exploration of the id, we observe that June's instinctual desires for freedom, autonomy, and self-determination drive her actions. Her refusal to conform and determination to escape Gilead with her daughters are fueled by the id's pursuit of immediate gratification and resistance against the regime's constraints. By embracing her id-driven motivations, June challenges the oppressive system and asserts her individuality. This rebellion signifies a psychological transformation influenced by the id's desires and motivations. It highlights the profound impact of instinctual drives on June's defiance and her quest for a better future outside of Gilead.

One example scene on an attempt escape from Gilead organized by June is captured in Season 3, Episode 13. In this episode, June with the help of Handmaids, Marthas, and Commander Lawrence, succeeded at helping numerous children and Marthas to escape from Gilead to Canada. we can see the ego's role in the characters' actions and decision-making processes. June, as the main protagonist, embodies the ego's function by navigating between her desire to escape from Gilead (representing the id's impulses) and the practical considerations of executing the escape plan successfully (representing the demands of reality).

The ego is responsible for finding compromises and practical solutions to satisfy the id's desires while considering the external circumstances. In this scene, June collaborates with other characters, such as the Handmaids, Marthas, and Commander Lawrence, to create a coordinated and organized plan for the escape. The ego is actively involved in coordinating their efforts and managing the logistics of the operation.

Additionally, the ego's role can be observed in June's assessment of risks and consequences. Despite her strong desire to escape, she must carefully evaluate the potential dangers and make calculated decisions to minimize harm to herself, the children, and the other individuals involved. This demonstrates the ego's function of weighing the id's impulses against the practical realities and potential consequences.

In Season 4, Episode 10, June's journey takes a dramatic turn as she learns of Fred Waterford's return to Gilead. Fueled by a potent mix of anger, vengeance, and a desire for justice, June takes a bold and daring decision that will leave an indelible mark on the narrative. Determined to prevent him from perpetuating further atrocities, June with the help of a group of Handmaids who had previously found refuge in Canada, united by their shared trauma and a collective yearning for freedom, these resilient women embark on a covert mission to infiltrate Gilead once again. They cross the border back into the United States, prepared to confront the very embodiment of their torment. They capture Fred on his way to Gilead and murder him in a barbaric manner. Determined to send a message to the oppressive regime of Gilead, they decide to hang Fred on a wall.

The act of hanging Fred Waterford on a wall is a powerful expression of vengeance. In June's case, Fred Waterford represents the embodiment of the system that has oppressed her and countless others. By taking revenge and publicly displaying Fred's punishment, June and the other Handmaids are asserting their agency and reclaiming power over their own lives. This act of vengeance serves as a cathartic release for the characters and a symbolic rebellion against the oppressive regime.

While the id is often associated with primal and impulsive behaviors, it can also represent the part of the psyche that rebels against societal norms and constraints. June's decision to savage Fred Waterford and hang him on a wall can be seen as an expression of the id, as she taps into her primal instincts and unleashes her anger and desire for justice in a raw and immediate manner. The id represents the untamed and impulsive aspects of human nature, which June and the Handmaids embody through their act of vengeance.

Finally, the id's influence contributes to June's growing strength and resilience. As she taps into her instinctual drives, she becomes more empowered to resist and fight against the

oppressive regime. Her psychological transformation is marked by a shift from a passive victim to an active agent, driven by her innate desires for freedom, self-determination, and vengeance.

### 4.2. Emily

In Season 2, Episode 2, there are significant flashbacks that focus on the character Emily, also known as Ofglen. These flashbacks provide insight into Emily's life before the formation of Gilead. The flashbacks reveal that Emily was a university professor and an openly gay woman. However, as Gilead's ideology takes hold, Emily's life drastically changes. The regime begins targeting and persecuting members of the LGBTQ+ community, branding them as "Gender Traitors" and subjecting them to severe punishments. In these flashbacks, we see Emily's relationship with her wife depicted, showing the love and happiness they share. However, their lives are soon shattered when a government agent confronts Emily, informing her that she is no longer allowed to teach and that her marriage is nullified under Gilead's law. Emily does not take his words seriously, but in a subsequent flashback, we witness a deeply shocking scene. Emily walks out of the university only to witness the execution of the government agent due to his homosexuality. The intensity of the moment is evident in Emily's eyes, displaying the fear and realization of the severity of the situation.

Emily's initial happiness and love shared with her wife exemplify the id's pursuit of pleasure and fulfillment. However, Gilead's ideology and oppressive policies suppress her id-driven desires and impose strict regulations on her personal life. Emily's initial disbelief and lack of seriousness when confronted by the government agent can be seen as an expression of her ego. The ego tries to maintain a sense of normalcy and rationality, refusing to fully accept the gravity of the situation. However, as the events unfold and Emily witnesses the execution of the agent, her eyes reflect fear and realization. This signifies a shift in her perception of reality and a growing awareness of the severe consequences imposed by Gilead's regime. Her ego is challenged by the harsh realities she faces.

In Season 1, Episode 3, it is revealed that Emily forms a secret romantic relationship with a Martha, their relationship was discovered, and as a result, Emily is called in for punishment. Aunt Lydia, as a responsible for disciplining the Handmaids, punishes Emily. To punish Emily, Aunt Lydia arranges for the removal of a portion of Emily's clitoris, an act known as genital mutilation or female genital cutting. Emily's secret romantic relationship with the Martha can be seen as an expression of her id. She desires love and companionship, which are basic human needs, and she engages in this relationship despite the strict rules of Gilead that prohibit such connections.

The punishment is intended to be both physically and psychologically devastating, reinforcing Gilead's power over women and suppressing any expressions of sexuality that go against their strict religious ideology. This punishment scene serves to highlight the extreme measures Gilead takes to control and suppress any form of dissent or non-conforming behavior, which for Emily becomes a traumatic experience that further fuels her determination to resist and fight against the oppressive regime of Gilead. It adds another layer to her character development, showcasing her resilience and unwavering spirit in the face of such brutal repression.

After Emily's fights and sacrifices to resist the regime and break free from its oppression, she finally makes it. Her life is no longer the same for her psychological instability, though. In Season 5, Episode 1, there is a scene where June pays a visit to Emily in Canada, but Emily is long time gone. Her wife says that Emily called and let her know that she is going to find Aunt Lydia and to fight back. This shows that Emily undergoes a profound psychological change driven by a deep-seated desire for vengeance against Aunt Lydia and the oppressive regime that caused her immense suffering. The punishment she endured under Aunt Lydia's watch has a lasting and devastating impact on her psychological well-being, rendering her unable to live a normal life. Emily's unwavering determination and desire for vengeance against

Aunt Lydia and the oppressive regime can be seen as an expression of her id. The intense suffering she endured under Gilead's rule, including the brutal act of genital mutilation, has left lasting scars on her psyche. These traumatic experiences have fueled her burning need for revenge, consuming her thoughts and driving her actions. Emily's unwavering determination to seek retribution and her decision to find Aunt Lydia reflect the id's relentless pursuit of satisfying its desires without considering the consequences or societal norms.

This episode underscores the profound psychological toll Gilead's punishments have taken on Emily, transforming her into an unwavering force seeking vengeance. It highlights the enduring effects of trauma and the all-consuming desire for justice, forever altering an individual's well-being and preventing them from returning to a normal life.

### **4.3. Serena Joy**

In Season 1, Episode 6, in a flashback, Serena Joy and her husband are captured experiencing moments of happiness as they prepare for an intimate act, but their struggle becomes apparent as they confront the conflict between their religious beliefs and the sinful world they inhabit. This suggests that their id-driven desires for pleasure and intimacy are being fulfilled. The id disregards the conflict between their religious beliefs and the sinful world they inhabit, focusing solely on their immediate gratification and the pleasure they derive from their actions. The scene highlights their internal struggle as conservatives in a perceived sinful world, they long for a return to a morally upright society, reflecting their rigid thinking, and hints at their internal conflict, as they desire freedoms and pleasures but are bound by the religious beliefs.

In a subsequent flashback, Serena and her husband were having a conversation about her work as an author at the cinema. She had new ideas for a new book about fertility issues. As they are talking about her plans, they receive the news about the systemic changes that were about to happen. Fred was a little hesitant and afraid, and Serena was the one supporting the

patriarchal system. Serena's desire to pursue her new ideas for a book about fertility issues can be seen as a manifestation of her personal desires and ambitions. It reflects her individualistic drive and creative impulses, which align with the id's pursuit of personal gratification. She expresses her interest in writing a new book centered around fertility issues. This demonstrates her intellectual and creative side, as well as her engagement with subjects that are relevant to Gilead's society.

Furthermore, as the conversation unfolds and news of impending systemic changes reaches them, Serena Joy's character and psychoanalysis are further illuminated. While Fred appears hesitant and fearful in the face of these changes, Serena Joy takes a different stance. She becomes the one who supports the patriarchal system that is being implemented. This reveals her alignment with the ideology and power structure of Gilead, showcasing her willingness to embrace and defend the oppressive regime.

In Season 1, Episode 6, Serena and her husband were captured initiating an intimate act, which according to the system they helped create was forbidden. This suggests the presence of the id. Despite being instrumental in establishing the strict rules and regulations of Gilead, Serena Joy is driven by her innate desires for personal connection, intimacy, and emotional fulfillment. Furthermore, the internal conflict within Serena Joy showcases the struggle between her id-driven desires and the constraints imposed by the oppressive regime of Gilead. This conflict suggests that Serena Joy may feel a sense of dissatisfaction and longing for personal freedoms that have been taken away from her. It implies that her id desires for autonomy, emotional fulfillment, and personal freedoms are suppressed within the confines of Gilead's oppressive structure.

Initially, Serena Joy fully embraced the principles of Gilead and actively supported the subjugation of women. Her driving force was her deep longing for a child, which led her to play a key role in establishing the Handmaid system, can be associated with the id. Serena believed

this system would fulfill her maternal desires and grant her a sense of purpose and contentment. However, Serena's interactions with June (Offred) began to challenge her convictions and plant seeds of doubt regarding the oppressive regime she had helped create. This conflict and doubt within Serena's mind indicate the presence of the ego. It is the ego that allows her to critically evaluate the information and question the principles of Gilead, prompting her to consider potential changes within the system.

In Season 2, Episode 13, June and Serena discovers that Nick's wife, Eden Spencer, has been secretly reading and annotating the Bible in an attempt to understand God. Despite such an act being strictly forbidden, June cleverly exploits this information to prompt Serena into suggesting a change within Gilead, since a wife has more power than a Handmaid.

Serena's doubts about Gilead increase when she learns the truth about the execution of Eden, a mere fifteen-year-old girl, and discovers that her own father had played a role in her capture. This revelation struck a chord within Serena, reinforcing her belief that her daughter cannot thrive in the confines of Gilead. Deep down, she acknowledges the inherent flaws and dangers of the society she once supported. Serena's psychoanalysis reveals an internal conflict between her desire for power and control, and her genuine concern for her daughter's future. This conflict becomes more apparent as she assists June in escaping with her child, defying the very system she once upheld. It shows that Serena is willing to take risks and challenge Gilead's principles in order to offer her daughter a chance at freedom and a better life.

The events discussed showcase the profound psychological change within Serena Joy. Her encounters with June, the discovery of forbidden actions, and the disturbing revelations about Eden's fate all contribute to her gradual disillusionment with Gilead. Serena's actions reflect her growing recognition of the flaws and dangers of the society she once championed, as she ultimately prioritizes her daughter's well-being over the patriarchal system.

The psychological changes of female characters in "The Handmaid's Tale" can be examined through the exploration of the id, ego, and superego. The id represents their desires, the ego is the executive part of the psyche, while the superego reflects the societal norms and moral standards. Throughout the series, characters undergo significant psychological transformations, achieving a harmonious balance between the id and superego proves elusive for these characters. The societal constraints of Gilead and the traumatic experiences they endure hinder their ability to reconcile their inner desires with the external moral standards imposed upon them. The characters find themselves torn between their individualistic needs and the oppressive norms of their society, leading to internal conflicts and psychological turmoil. It is through this ongoing struggle between the id and superego that the complexity of these female characters is unveiled. Their psychological changes demonstrate the challenges they face in reconciling their own desires and instincts with the rigid expectations and moral frameworks imposed upon them. Ultimately, the inability to find a true equilibrium between the id and superego underscores the perpetual tension these characters endure throughout their journeys in the TV series "The Handmaid's Tale".

### **Conclusion**

Through this chapter, we have illuminated the profound insights garnered from "The Handmaid's Tale" series, emphasizing the intersectionality between oppression, resistance, and the human psyche. By exploring the interplay of oppression, resistance, and psychoanalysis; and observing the psychological transformations caused by oppression, we have expanded our understanding of the complexities inherent in oppressive systems. This analysis serves as a foundation for future inquiries, fostering a deeper appreciation for the resilience.

# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

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The first part of the theoretical chapter delved into feminism in literature, highlighting the idea of authorial identity and the marginalization of women through the use of gender roles. Within the realm of literature, gender roles have been historically employed as tools to marginalize and limit the creative expression of female authors. These restrictive roles have often resulted in the portrayal of female characters that are one-dimensional, submissive, and conforming to societal expectations. However, with the transition from theater to screen, there has been a notable shift that has allowed for the portrayal of more complex and multifaceted female characters. This transformation provides a platform for female authors to challenge traditional gender roles, break free from societal constraints, and present narratives that reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of women, as was the case for "The Handmaid's Tale" series. Feminist literary criticism explores the way in which patriarchy shapes the portrayal of female characters in literature. By employing specific angles of analysis, literary works can be examined through a lens that unveils the underlying power dynamics, patriarchal systems, and societal structures that contribute to the marginalization of women in literature.

The second part of the theoretical chapter explored the realm of psychological theories, offering a deeper understanding of the characters' inner worlds and their transformative journeys. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, key concepts such as the three levels of the mind, the Freudian theory of the psyche, the defense mechanisms, and the psychological change are examined. Understanding the human psyche provides insights into the complexities of characters' thoughts, emotions, and motivations. It allows us to delve into their deepest desires, fears, and struggles, shedding light on the intricate layers of their experiences. Exploring defense mechanisms illuminates the strategies characters employ to protect themselves from emotional pain or psychological threats, revealing the ways in which they navigate and cope with challenging circumstances. Psychological change, another critical concept, captures the

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

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transformative journeys of characters throughout a narrative. It explores their personal growth, emotional development, and shifts in perspective. By tracking these changes, we can witness the characters' evolution as they confront challenges, challenge societal norms, and redefine their identities. By incorporating these psychological frameworks, the analysis of characters in literature becomes richer and more nuanced. It deepens our understanding of their internal struggles, motivations, and the complex interplay between their psychological makeup and the external factors that shape their lives. This psychological exploration enhances our appreciation of the characters' depth, making their transformative journeys more meaningful and resonant with the human experience.

Chapter two of the research delved into the portrayal of female characters within Gilead's oppressive regime. It examined how women were reduced to their reproductive abilities and objectified as vessels and objects of desire for men. The chapter emphasized the resistance and empowerment of these female characters through the use of language, highlighting their solidarity in the face of religious oppression. In addition, the chapter explored the intricate experiences of motherhood depicted in the series and shed light on the psychological toll it takes on the characters. It discussed their desperate attempts to protect their children, showcasing the challenges they face within the oppressive regime. Furthermore, the chapter explored the intersectionality between religion, the psyche, and the struggle for individuality. It analyzed the defense mechanisms employed by the female characters and examined the psychological transformations they experienced. By analyzing scenes from different seasons, the chapter illustrated how the id, ego, and superego relate to their personal growth, emotional development, and shift in perspectives as they navigate the oppressive regime.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

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This research has shed light on the profound insights garnered from "The Handmaid's Tale" series, emphasizing the inseparable connection between psychoanalysis and feminism.

By

delving into the interplay of oppression, resistance, and psychoanalysis, we have gained a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics at play within oppressive systems. The analysis has provided a thorough examination of how religion is used as a manipulative tool within the series, further elucidating the ways in which patriarchal structures operate. By unraveling the psychological transformations experienced by the characters due to the weight of oppression, we have uncovered the profound effects that such systems can have on individuals. These findings serve as a foundational basis for future inquiries, offering a framework to explore and understand the complexities of gendered oppression and the resilience demonstrated by women. The research fosters a deeper appreciation for the strength and determination of individuals facing oppressive systems, while also highlighting the importance of psychological understanding in the realm of feminism.

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## Résumé

Ce mémoire explore les personnages féminins de la série *La Servante écarlate* (*The Handmaid's Tale*). En analysant le féminisme et la psychologie en profondeur, cette étude cherche à dévoiler comment ces deux domaines s'entrecroisent. Pour ce faire, une revue exhaustive de la littérature pertinente est réalisée, afin d'examiner les connaissances existantes et d'identifier les lacunes ou les sujets nécessitant une exploration approfondie. En s'appuyant sur ces fondements, cette recherche présente un cadre et une méthodologie de recherche bien définis, qui utilisent l'analyse de contenu comme principale méthode de collecte et d'analyse des données. Les résultats de cette étude mettent en lumière l'utilisation de passages bibliques manipulés pour justifier l'oppression des hommes sur les femmes et imposer des rôles de genre, et examinent leur impact sur la formation de la psyché des personnages féminins. De plus, elle présente les différentes formes de résistance et de lutte pour l'autonomie et l'individualité que les personnages féminins expriment. Enfin, elle souligne les transformations psychologiques que subissent ces personnages en raison du système oppressif de la République de Gilead. En examinant ces aspects complexes, ce mémoire contribue à la littérature existante sur le féminisme et la psychologie en offrant une analyse complète des personnages féminins de la série *La Servante écarlate*. Il enrichit notre compréhension de l'intersectionnalité entre le féminisme et la psychologie, en fournissant des perspectives précieuses sur la représentation des expériences des femmes dans les sociétés dystopiques. Les résultats de cette étude peuvent servir de base à de futures recherches et favoriser le dialogue sur l'interaction complexe entre le genre, le pouvoir et le bien-être psychologique dans la littérature contemporaine et la société.

## الملخص

تستكشف هذه الرسالة البحثية شخصيات النساء في سلسلة "حاملة الجنين". من خلال تحليل شامل للنسوية وعلم النفس، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى كشف التداخل بين النسوية وعلم النفس. تبدأ البحث بمراجعة شاملة للأدب ذي الصلة، مع دراسة المعرفة الحالية وتحديد الفجوات أو المجالات التي تستدعي مزيداً من الاستكشاف. وعلى أساس ذلك، يقدم البحث إطاراً بحثياً ومنهجية محددة، يضمن تضمين تحليل المحتوى كطريقة رئيسية لجمع وتحليل البيانات. تسلط نتائج هذا البحث الضوء على استخدام نصوص دينية مشوهة لتبرير قمع الرجال للنساء وفرض أدوار جنسية، ودورها في تشكيل نفسيتهن. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، يعرض البحث طرق التصدي والمقاومة التي تستخدمها الشخصيات النسائية للحفاظ على هويتهن ووكالتهن. وفي النهاية، يلقي الضوء على التحولات النفسية التي تعاني منها الشخصيات النسائية نتيجة للنظام القمعي في جمهورية جيليا. من خلال استكشاف هذه الجوانب المتعددة، تسهم هذه الرسالة البحثية في إثراء الأدب القائم على النسوية وعلم النفس من خلال تقديم تحليل شامل لشخصيات النساء في سلسلة "حاملة الجنين". وتعزز فهمنا للتداخل بين النسوية وعلم النفس، وتوفر نظرات قيمة في تصوير تجارب المرأة في المجتمعات المستقبلية الدرامية. ويمكن أن تكون نتائج هذه الدراسة أساساً للبحوث المستقبلية وتعزيز الحوار حول التفاعل المعقد بين الجنس والسلطة والرفاهية النفسية في الأدب والمجتمع المعاصر.