



## دراسة نقدية لأسلوب مارغريت آتود في رواية "حكاية الخادمة"

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## A critical study of Margret Atwood's style in the Handmaid's Tale

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### ملخص

ملخص يُعد التحليل النقدي لقضايا الأدب من القضايا الأساسية، إذ يُرسخ فهم المؤلفين ومعرفتهم العميقه بموضوع تخصصهم، ويُقدم خلفية البحث، ويُوضح كيفية انسجام البحث مع مجال دراسي أوسع، ويُقدم لمحة عامة عن المصادر التي استكشفت خلال بحث موضوع معين. تستكشف هذه الدراسة أسلوب مارغريت آنود في رواية "حكاية الجارية". وتسعى هذه الورقة إلى توضيح أسلوب مارغريت آنود في رواية "حكاية الجارية"، حيث يمكن اعتبار أسلوبها في المقاومة مظهراً من مظاهر سيطرتها على نظام جلعاد المونولوج القمعي، إلا أن محدوديتها في القيام بأفعال فعلية لتحرير نفسها تجعلها شخصية سلبية طوال الرواية. من الأمور التي تثير اهتماماً خاصاً في رواية "حكاية الجارية" لمارغريت آنود (1985) - التي تُعدّ حتى الآن أفضل رواية خيال علمي إنجليزية كندية - سلسلة الأحداث الطقوسية، ورمزية مرآة الرواق البيضاوية، ومكانتها العامة كنوع خاص مما يُسمى "المعاناة سياقية". يتميز هذا النوع عن المعاناة التقليدية



بنظرته للظروف التاريخية المتقطعة (غير المتوقعة في الخطاب البائس) التي أعقبت النظام البائى، وبالنتائج التفسيرية المتوازنة بعناية لهذا النظر. يُقابل نقد ماري مكارثي السلبي لرواية "حكایة الجاریة" جزئیاً بفشلها في إدراك هذا التمييز العام. لذا، تبحث هذه الدراسة في دور اللغة في رواية "حكایة الجاریة" لمارغريت آنود. وتستكشف كيف تُستخدم اللغة لقمع الشخصيات النسائية، وفي الوقت نفسه للتعبير عن الصوت الأنثوي داخل الرواية. الكلمات المفتاحية: مارغريت آنود، الأسلوب، حکایة الخادمة، المعاناة، الإدراك.

## Abstract

Critical analysis of literature issues is one of the fundamental issues because It establishes the authors' in-depth understanding and knowledge of their field subject. It gives the background of the research. Demonstrates how the research fits within a larger field of study. Provides an overview of the sources explored during the research of a particular topic. This study explores Margret Atwood's style in the Handmaid's Tale. This paper investigates to illustrate Margret At Wood's style in the Handmaid's as a form of resistance can be regarded as a manifestation of her power over oppressive monologic system of Gilead, but her limitation in performing actual actions in liberating herself makes her a passive character throughout the novel. Of particular interest in Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" (1985)-to date the best English Canadian SF novel-are the series of ritual events, the symbolism of the oval hallway mirror, and its generic status as a particular kind of what is termed a "Contextual Dystopia." This kind is distinguished from the traditional dystopia by virtue of both its consideration of the discontinuous historical circumstances (unanticipated within the dystopian discourse) which succeeded the dystopian regime, and of the judiciously balanced interpretative consequences of that consideration. Mary McCarthy's negative review of "The Handmaid's Tale" is countered partly in terms of her failure to recognize this generic distinction. Thus, this study investigates the role of language in the novel The Handmaid's Tale by Margret Atwood. It explores how language is used to oppress the female characters and at the same time is used to express the female voice within the novel.

## Introduction

The style of The Handmaid's Tale is introspective and nonlinear, weaving together narratives from Offred's past and present. Throughout the novel, Offred detaches from her present environment and recalls past events—such as her marriage to Luke and her time at the Red Center—



while admitting that she constructs her descriptions from memory since she has no way to write anything down. Offred describes her world in detailed, multi-clause sentences.

During the Ceremony, while the Commander is “fucking,” Offred describes the bedroom in detail even though she cannot see it: “What I would see, if I were to open my eyes, would be only the canopy, which manages to suggest at one and the same time, by the gauziness of its fabric and its heavy downward curve, both ethereality and matter.” This intricate, autobiographical revelation suggests that, for Offered, finding beauty and meaning wherever she can is a survival tactic, and even a form of resistance. She explains that she includes repetitive descriptions to impose some control on a story in which she is otherwise helpless: “I’ve tried to put some good things in as well. Flowers, for instance (Fraser, 2007).

Atwood has made a huge impact on Canadian literature. She is known for exploring ideas of gender, power, and identity, and for rewriting myths and fairy tales. Above all, perhaps, Atwood has made her mark with haunting visions of future dystopias. This has reached a new peak since *The Handmaid's Tale* premiered as a television show in 2017. Told from the first-person perspective of Offred, a woman kept as a slave in a totalitarian future version of the United States called the Republic of Gilead, the story has become a symbol for the country’s real-life political controversies.

Atwood says she tends to handwrite her drafts because that is how she gets the best flow from brain to hand to the page. She describes herself as a “downhill skier”—she tries to go as fast as she can and then backtracks to fill in the gaps later.

Although she is known for the scale and perspicacity of her ideas, Atwood is adamant that is not where her books start, nor should they. “I never start with an idea,” says Atwood. “When people are teaching books, books that have already been finished—then they can talk about ideas, because by that time somebody might know what the idea is or what the ideas are” (Fraser, 2007).

“The way we were taught literature in high school was probably backward. We were taught that there was this container. The work of art. There were these ideas like prizes in a Cracker Jack box, but that isn't usually how writers write. They start with characters, they start with voices, they start with scenes. Sometimes my books have started with objects. And out of that comes a story. Because what are novels if not stories.”



Margret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) focuses on the female protagonist Offred, who lives in the society of Gilead. Gilead is a dystopian society in which women are deprived of their rights and live under male domination simply because they are women, and therefore are only meant for childbearing or a position of servitude. The quote above shows how Offred tried to escape her fate by pretending she was not part of the world around her. She ignored horrifying stories in the newspaper, about women being violated, because she did not want to believe the stories and did not want to be a part of them. Even though Offred believed she did not belong in the newspapers, she ended up in exactly that position. According to an article in *The New York Times* by Alexander Alter entitled "Uneasy about the future, readers turn to dystopian classics" references to Atwood's novel appeared on signs during the women's march in Washington on the 21st of January 2017. These women protested the inauguration of Donald Trump. There were various remarks and slogans on their signs, such as "Make Margaret Atwood Fiction Again".

Women who have read *The Handmaid's Tale* "see eerie parallels between the novel's oppressive society and the current Republican administration's policy goals of curtailing reproductive rights" (Alter). Trump's point of view on reproductive rights brings Atwood's novel rights back into the social debate.

According to the article, the sale of dystopian literature in general, *The Handmaid's Tale* among them, has grown significantly since the end of 2016. This happened to be around the time of Trump's presidential campaign. Alter claims that the many readers of these dystopian novels are "wary of the authoritarian overtones of some of Mr. Trump's rhetoric" (Alter). This wariness is connected to issues where Trump and his spokespersons issued statements that seemed to contradict reality, such as the question on the size of the crowd at the inauguration process and Trump's fractious relation with the American intelligence agencies.

Dystopian literature covers issues such as the alteration of facts and indoctrination through rhetorical methods. It is easy to imagine how wary citizens begin to embrace dystopian literature under these circumstances. *The Handmaid's Tale* covers both the topic of women's rights and the possibility of manipulation through language.

### Literature Review

Often, books in the science fiction genre are seen as separate from works of serious literary fiction, but Atwood blurs the boundaries





between the two. In fact, she purposefully avoids thinking about genre while writing; she leaves that task to the marketers.

This excerpt from Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," (1729) one of the most well-known satires in the English literary tradition, serves as an epigraph for *The Handmaid's Tale*. Swift's essay, in which he caustically suggests that social and economic problems in eighteenth-century Ireland could be remedied by butchering and eating the children of the poor, operates as a satire against those who refuse to consider realistic and logical options that will genuinely help the poor in Ireland. The use of this excerpt as an epigraph clearly invites a reading of *The Handmaid's Tale* as a satire in the same vein as Swift's. His ironic proposal and Atwood's Republic of Gilead, although separated by more than two centuries, are similar in their approaches: in an effort to point out the flaws of their respective societies, both offer an extreme solution that could be put in place by those who seek only to maintain their own wealth and power at the expense of others.

"What is the value of knowing the genre or type of book you're writing before you start?" she says. "Well, there may be a value in not knowing. And the value of not knowing may be that you may be able to do some genre-bending that if you lock yourself into a preconceived box, you might not be able to do." The particular type of sci-fi her works tend to fall into is speculative fiction, where the setting is similar to reality on earth, but with a few key invented elements. She says magazines like *New Scientist* or *Scientific American* can spark ideas for this kind of work.

She started writing the dystopian *Oryx and Crake* after reading about genetic experiments and ruminating on extinction.

"For speculative fiction, it has to have its roots in things we can already do, or are on the road to being able to do," she says. "So the growing of human organs in pigs had already started by the time I wrote *Oryx and Crake*. They had not quite succeeded, but now they have."

### How Does Margaret Atwood Approach Gender in Writing?

Since her very first novel, *The Edible Woman*, Atwood has frequently explored the female experience of the world through her books. Often, her main character is female, but even when it's not, she writes with a distinctive awareness of the role of gender in shaping their identity. This is intentional; she considers both the performative aspects of gender—what a person is taught to show the world—and the ways they might defy those norms. "What does it mean, for instance, in the Tudor era to be a male person? What does it mean to be a female person?" she says. "And in our age, we no longer think that there are only two



packages, pink and blue. And science has backed that up. It's a bell curve. It's a continuum. And your character can be situated anywhere on that continuum" (Farrugia, 2019).

When she's writing women, she values imperfection and even villainy. She wrote *The Robber Bride*—the name comes from a gender switch on a Grimm's fairytale called *The Robber Bridegroom*—in indignation after someone told her there were no female conmen. "Women come in all shapes and sizes, ages and stages, heights and colors, and different parts of the world," she says. "And to expect or demand that they be angelic and perfect is very Victorian. There's limited space on a pedestal. You don't get to move around a lot."

### Methodology

The exploration of *The Handmaid's Tale* as a postmodern text will focus on 57 the ways in which Atwood subverts, undermines, and calls into question traditional conventions of truth, narrative authority, and identity.

### Literary Analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale*

A one-of-a-kind tour de force, Margaret Atwood's futuristic *The Handmaid's Tale* refuses categorization into a single style, slant, or genre. Rather, it blends a number of approaches and formats in a radical departure from predictable sci-fi or thriller fiction or feminist literature. Paramount to the novel's success are the following determinants:

Existential apologia a defense and celebration of the desperate coping mechanisms by which endangered women survive, outwit, and undermine devaluation, coercion, enslavement, torture, potential death sentences, and outright genocide. Like Zhukov in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Offred clings to sanity through enjoyment of simple pleasures:

smoothing lotion on her dry skin and smoking a cigarette with Moira and her lesbian sisterhood in the washroom at Jezebel's; remembering better times with her mother, husband, and daughter, even the veiled sniping between Luke and his mother-in-law; recollecting the pleasant frivolities and diversions that women once enjoyed — for example, eye makeup, fashions, and jewelry, and women's magazines; and allowing herself moderate hope for some alleviation of present misery, although Offred never gives way to a fantasy of rescue, reunion with her family, and return to her old life.

Oral history a frequent vehicle of oppressed people who, by nature of their disenfranchisement through loss of personal freedoms, turn to the personal narrative as a means of preserving meaningful experience, and to recitation of eyewitness accounts of historical events in an effort to clarify gaps, myths, errors, and misconceptions. Similar to Jane, the





participant in the Louisiana civil rights movement and title character in Ernest Gaines' fictional Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, and to Jack Crabb, the bi-national spokesman and picaresque participant at the Battle of the Little Big Horn in Thomas Berger's Little Big Man, Offred offers an inside view of the effects of political change on ordinary citizens — that is, the powerless, who are most likely to suffer from a swift, decisively murderous revolution. As a desperate refugee on the "Underground Frailroad," her harrowing flight contrasts the knowing titters of the International Historical Association studying Gilead from the safety of women's rights and academic freedom two centuries in the future (Farrugia, 2019). Speculative fiction a form of jeremiad — an intentionally unsettling blend of surmise and warning based on current political, social, economic, and religious trends. As a modern-day Cassandra, Offred seems emotionally and spiritually compelled to tell her story, if only to relieve the ennui of her once nun-like existence and to touch base with reality. Her bleak fictional narrative connects real events of the 1980s with possible ramifications for a society headed too far into conservatism and a mutated form of World War II fascism. By frequent references

and allusions to Hitler's Third Reich and its "final solution" for Jews, Atwood reminds the reader that outrageous grabs for power and rampant megalomania have happened before, complete with tattoos on the limbs of victims, systemized selection and annihilation, virulent regimentation, and engineered reproduction to Confession an autobiographical revelation of private life or philosophy produce a prevailing Caucasian race.

intended as a psychological release from guilt and blame through introspection and rationalization. Like the weeping survivors of the doomed boy-kingdom in William Golding's Lord of the Flies and Holden Caulfield rehashing his failures and foibles from a private California psychiatric hospital in J.D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye, Offred frequently castigates herself for trying to maintain her humanity and fidelity to cherished morals and beliefs in a milieu that crushes dissent. In frequent night scenes, during which Offred gazes through shatterproof glass into the night sky in an effort to shore up her flagging soul, her debates with herself reflect the thin edge that separates endurance from crazed panic. By the end of her tale, she has undergone so much treachery and loss of belief and trust that the likelihood of total mental, spiritual, and familial reclamation is slim. The most she can hope for is physical escape from the terrors of Gilead and the healing inherent in telling her story to future generations (Farrugia, 2019). Dystopia an imaginary world gone sour through idealism that fails to correspond to the





expectations, principles, and behaviors of real people. In the face of rampant sexual license, gang rape, pornography, venereal disease, abortion protest, and the undermining of traditional values, the fundamentalists who set up Gilead fully expect to improve human life. However, as the Commander admits, some people are fated to fall short of the template within which the new society is shaped, the ethical yardstick by which behavior is measured. His chauvinistic comment is significant in its designation of "some people." These "some people" are nearly all female, homosexual, underground, and non-fundamentalist victims — a considerable portion of the U.S. population. Indigenous to dystopian fiction is the perversion of technology, as evidenced in *Brave New World*, *1984*, *Anthem*, and *R.U.R.* In Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*, loss of freedom begins with what appears to be merely a banking error.

Only after repeated attempts to access her funds does Offred realize that control of assets no longer exists for the women of Gilead.

From credit card subversion, the faceless radical hierarchy moves quickly to presidential assassination, murder of members of Congress, prohibition of women from schools and the work force, control of the media, and banning of basic freedoms. Without books or newspapers, telephones or television, Offred has no means of assessing the severity of society's deprivations. Controlled by Identipasses, Compudoc, Computalk, Compuccount, and Compuchek, she must rely on the most primitive measures of gaining information and securing hope, even the translation of scrawled Latin doggerel on her closet wall. Interestingly, Atwood does not resort to farfetched wizardry. Her astute use of televangelism, cattle prods, credit cards, roadblocks, border passes, computer printouts, barbed wire, public executions, and color-coded uniforms reflects the possibilities of subversion of current technology and social control devices (Farrugia, 2019). Margaret Atwood in her novels, short stories and even poetry uses a similar style of writing. It is a style that is not only distinctive but also effective. Her sense of description is one of her best talents. It allows her to create pieces of work that constantly reinforce her themes of political chaos and the effect that a patriarchal society has on women. As a feminist writer, much of her work deals with how men not only empower women but how they manage to hurt each other. Using parallelism and symbolism as springboards, Margaret Atwood writes to inform and perhaps warn her reader of the exploitation of women and sometimes even helpless men who exist within a society. In bodily harm, Atwood develops her thematic concerns



in even more global dimensions, in both figurative and geographical senses.

This piece of work at times tends to be a very political feminist novel, immediately concerned with such issues as body image, female sexuality, male-female relationships, and male brutality in a patriarchal society.

Through her writing of this novel, Atwood seems to project her anger towards a patriarchal establishment and value system that continues to enforce it with excessive privileges and powers, both personal and political. The life of the main character, Rennie Wilcox, is illustrated in the book to demonstrate the victimization of woman. One type of victimization that Atwood explores is sexual. Rennie returns one afternoon to her apartment to find a broken door through which an intruder has crashed.

As she walks into the bedroom she sees, there was a length of rope coiled neatly on the quilt. The rope is also tied in with Rennie's past as her ex-lover, Jake, preferred sex that includes bondage and sadism. Jake would sometimes arrive at Rennie's apartment by surprise and enjoy overpowering Rennie sexually with such perceptions as "pretend you're being raped.

### Result

Margaret Atwood was born in 1939 in Ottawa, and grew up in northern Ontario and Quebec, and in Toronto. She received her undergraduate degree from Victoria College at the University of Toronto and her master's degree from Radcliffe College. Born: 18 November, 1939. Ottawa, Ontario. Margaret Atwood has had a very interesting childhood where she grew up in two different places and learnt a lot from both of her parents (about.com, Margaret Atwood). Margaret Atwood lived within the wilderness of Ontario, Canada until she was 11 (about.com, Margaret Atwood). She then moved to Toronto where she did her university education at Radcliffe College and the University of Toronto (Bio. True Story Margaret Atwood). After this education, she did her post graduate degree in Harvard USA. However, her writing career had taken off long before her collage education (Farrugia, 2019).

Margaret Atwood took up writing at the age of just 6 years old and decided to pursue her writing career when she was 16 (about.com Margaret Atwood). As a result she grew up into being a very successful writer. She won the 'Governor General' award for her poem collection 'The Circle Game' and the 'Book Prize' in 2000 (Bio. True Story Margaret Atwood). However winning these awards was not an easy task. She has a unique vision within her poems that ties in greatly with her childhood and parents.



Margaret Atwood won two Governor General's Literary Awards, for Poetry or Drama for *The Circle Game* (1966) and for fiction for *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). In 2000 she won the Booker Prize for *The Blind Assassin*. She won the PEN Pinter Prize in 2016 for the spirit of political activism threading her life and works.

### **Purpose in *The Handmaid's Tale***

In *The Handmaid's Tale* there are many different reasons as to why Atwood could have written the book, but the one that jumped out to me the most is that she wanted to show us that there are many different varieties of freedom and confinement. Freedom and confinement is defined differently depending on who you ask.

### **Conclusion**

Atwood's novels are imaginative, entertaining, and filled with interesting plot lines and characters. And they also manage to deliver pretty loaded messages. Take a look at Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was published in 1985 but was also the most-read book of 2017 according to Amazon's charts.

Creative writing is a form of writing that encompasses a number of different genres and styles outside the more formal scope of technical writing or academic writing. Creative writing focuses on elements such as character development, narrative, and plot, infusing its structure with imagination and story.

The lack of quotation marks is for depicting personal thoughts and feelings, as well as dialog as it appears in her memory. This would fit well with one of the book's underlying themes of gas lighting. Memory is unreliable, and is in the eye of the beholder.

One of the most important themes of *The Handmaid's Tale* is the presence and manipulation of power. On the one hand, Gilead is a theocratic dictatorship, so power is imposed entirely from the top.

The author explains that Gilead tries to embody the "utopian idealism" present in 20th-century regimes, as well as earlier New England Puritanism. Both Atwood and Miller stated that the people running Gilead are "not genuinely Christian". The *Handmaid's Tale* explores the ways in which ordinary people become complicit in the appalling acts of a totalitarian regime.

Although the novel's women are all to some extent victims of the Gileadean state, many of them choose complicity rather than rebellion.

### **Implications of this study**

This study may have some benefits for scholars. There are four main types of writing: expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative. Each





of these writing styles is used for a specific purpose. A single text may include more than one writing style.

### What are different writing skills?

While there are many reasons why you might be putting pen to paper or tapping away on the keyboard, there are really only four main types of writing: expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative. Each of these four writing genres has a distinct aim, and they all require different types of writing skills.

### What are techniques in literature?

Literary techniques are specific, deliberate constructions of language which an author uses to convey meaning. An author's use of a literary technique usually occurs with a single word or phrase, or a particular group of words or phrases, at one single point in a text.

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