

Women Marginalization and Political Corruption in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

Thamer Amer Jubouri Al-ogaili, Manimangai Mani, Hardev Kaur, Mohammad Ewan Awang¹

Abstract

This article examines the function of dystopia in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986). The study will mainly focus of the issues of women marginalization and political corruption by approaching the dystopia qualities in the novel. On the one hand, women marginalization is going to be identified by discussing the inferior position in society as depicted in the novel. This is because women are exploited for domestic drudgery. They lose their equality since there is no opportunity allowed for them to be as independent as men. On the other hand, the issue of political corruption will be explored to sustain the study's concern with novel's dystopian world. Accordingly, both women marginalization and political corruption will be elaborated as the dystopian peculiarities which contradict Atwood's style that seeks utopia society and a world that seems to be utterly corrupted. Therefore, postfeminism is going to be applied as the study's theoretical framework, where by women marginalization will be discussed in politically corrupted peripheries.

Keywords: Atwood, Dystopia, Political Corruption, Post feminism, Marginalization

1. Introduction

Dystopian fiction is a genre where, instead of paradise, everything goes wrong. In dystopian literature, there is a depiction of rare perfection of the human society and human relations (Grubisic 15). According to Abrams M. H, dystopia is applied to works of fiction including science fiction, that represent a very unpleasant imaginary world in which ominous (unpleasant) tendencies of our present social, political, and technological order are projected into a disastrous future culmination" (328). Dystopian fiction also represents frustrated desires, unhappiness, and apocalyptic visions of the future (Oulton 328). These apocalyptic visions predict some awful desires which might take place in the close or distant futures (Williams 73).

This essay studies, therefore, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) in the light of dystopia. This is because Atwood learned to read about dystopia "at a young age and was particularly fond of Grimms' Fairy Tales, whose influence, along with the wilderness survival themes of her childhood, are evident in her later writing. She advocated women rights and equality" (Bloom 5). Atwood also felt the necessary of feminist equality before she began writing (5). She considered the marginalization of women as a kind of anti- utopia (dystopian) social phenomena. The materials Atwood collected thus show "the breadth of her concerns with social issues, but they also pinpoint her particular obsessions with the environment, intolerance, fascism, and reproductive rights" (8). And because she takes pains to "mention what were, at the time, current events within the world of the novel," she clearly strives to present "a fictive future which bears an uncomfortable resemblance to our present society" (8). Accordingly, this essay will focus on two issues which are treated in dystopian literature. These issues are; women marginalization and political corruption. They represent the negative side of any society. The presence of such issues contradicts sharply with the notion of perfect or utopian society. Therefore, they lead to the formation of a dystopian society where, instead of perfection and good manner, vice and corruption prevails the socio- cultural scene.

¹ E-mails: thamera68@gmail.com, manimangai@upm.edu.my, jshardev@yahoo.com, ewan@upm.edu.my

Women Marginalization

The Handmaid's Tale (1984), features the story of a female prisoner in Gilead—a theocratic dictatorship that evolves, in the near future, within America's borders. This oppressive political system measures a woman's values only by her reproductive capabilities (adhering to a "biology as destiny" philosophy), and women are not allowed to read, write, hold property, or have a job. In this way, Atwood deliberately exposes and exacerbates the tradition-based ideology of social religious rights so as to scrutinize possible social consequences. The novel is told through the voice of Offred, a Handmaid whose function in the new political system is to bear children for a couple in the completely tough political system (Moylan 15). Consequently, the novel is told by memory episodes of remembered actions in which daily happenings are separated by sections of taking place at night. Offred fights to make herself through language, her internal, raging battle between self preservation and human dignity exemplifies itself in this jagged presentation, and re-creation, of her identity. The novel ends with some self-reflexive comments indicating the novel's events happened after a stage called "The Gilead Period." In general, the novel's end predicts a collapse in the theocratic Republic of Gilead.

Offred and Rita, and Cora represent women marginalization in the novel: "Today, despite Rita's closed face and pressed lips, I would like to stay here, in the kitchen. Cora might come in, from somewhere else in the house, carrying her bottle of lemon oil and her duster, and Rita would make coffee—in the houses" (4). They do household work for the Commander; in the house "of the Commanders there is still real coffee—and we would sit at Rita's kitchen table, which is not Rita's any more than my table is mine, and we would talk, about aches and pains, illnesses, our feet, our backs, all the different kinds of mischief that our bodies, like unruly children, can get into. We would nod our heads as punctuation to each other's voices, signaling that yes, we know all about it" (4). They suffer from this marginalization in the Commander's house: "We would exchange remedies and try to outdo each other in the recital of our physical miseries; gently we would complain, our voices soft and minor key and mournful as pigeons in the eaves troughs" (4).

Here, Cora and Rita do domestic affairs. They are confined to the traditional family life. They spend their time in the kitchen. The kitchen is a symbol of women's traditional work. Atwood portrays these characters as being working in the kitchen to prepare food for the others. In addition, Atwood seems to be dissatisfied with the position of marginalized women in the American society. This is because women marginalization is a feature of dystopian societies.

In dystopia, fiction presents radical view of women; "Such radical views of one of the central political issues of late medieval and early modern Europe give rise to questions about women social role and identity" (Kinkley 87). This social role is reflected in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, especially in the characters of the narrator (Offred): "Sometimes I listen outside closed doors, a thing I never would have done in the time before. I don't listen long, because I don't want to be caught doing it. Once, though, I heard Rita say to Cora I hat she wouldn't debase herself like that" (4). In addition, Cora and Rita represent this female marginalization: "Looks big enough to me," says Cora. Is she standing up for me? I look at her, to see if I should smile; but no, it's only the food she's thinking of. She's younger than Rita; the sunlight, coming slant now through the west window, catches her hair, parted and drawn back. She must have been pretty, quite recently. There's a little mark, like a dimple, in each of her ears, where the punctures for earrings have grown over" (24).

In dystopian fiction, moreover, women are "ultimately subjects and not citizens. Humanism, for example, undermined this vision. It thus presented a potential threat to the social and political values that were derived from traditional thought. In other words, feminism could theoretically view men as free citizens taking equal part in fashioning the body politic and determining its course of marginalizing women" (Hoagland 56). Cora, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, is depicted in inferior position to men. She only does house work: "Cora has run the bath. It steams like a bowl of soup. I take off the rest of the clothes, the overdress, the white shift and petticoat, the red stockings, the loose cotton pantaloons. Pantyhose gives you crotch rot, Moira used to say. Aunt Lydia would never have used an expression likecrotch rot. Unhygienic was hers. She wanted everything to be very hygienic" (32). She is divided between; "modesty, prudence, diligence, self-control, and self-restraint issue, thus, from his general image of men and women in society" (72). In addition, Offred suffers from the same problem: "As for the subversive Waterford was accused of harboring, this could have been "Offred" herself, as her flight would have placed her in this category.

More likely it was "Nick," who, by the evidence of the very existence of the tapes, must have helped "Offred" to escape" (161).

Accordingly, in dystopian societies, women are “often conveyed in humanist educational writings by agricultural and nutritional metaphors. Human beings are easily taught virtues of women values” (Ferns 115). Such female human value is lost in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, especially the character of Offred. Nobody even recognizes her name: “My name isn’t Offred, I have another name, which nobody uses now because it’s forbidden. I tell myself it doesn’t matter, your name is like your telephone number, useful only to others; but what I tell myself is wrong, it does matter” (42). She wants to be known by the others: “I keep the knowledge of this name like something hidden, some treasure I’ll come back to dig up, one day. I think of this name as buried. This name has an aura around it, like an amulet, some charm that’s survived from an unimaginably distant past. I lie in my single bed at night, with my eyes closed, and the name floats there behind my eyes, not quite within reach, shining in the dark” (42). Offred is also desperate of her imprisonment and does not have any access to people: “But that’s where I am, there’s no escaping it. Time’s a trap, I’m caught in it. I must forget about my secret name and all ways back. My name is Offred now, and here is where I live” (72). Her imprisonment prevents her from living peacefully: “But a chair, sunlight, flowers: these are not to be dismissed. I am alive, I live, I breathe, I put my hand out, unfolded, into the sunlight. Where I am is not a prison but a privilege, as Aunt Lydia said, who was in love with either/or” (3).

Offred’s marginalization is a form of anti-utopian society, because in dystopian societies “there was no war at the stage of primitive humanity, when men and women wandered alone in the society. Man became a political animal when he began to war or marginalize woman” (Datlow 122). She is treated badly at the hands of the emperor: “Now a close shot of a prisoner, with a stubbled and dirty face, flanked by two Angels in their neat black uniforms. The prisoner accepts a cigarette from one of the Angels, puts it awkwardly to his lips with his bound hands. He gives a lopsided little grin” (41).

Postfeminism, according to Lidia Puigvert, is a homogenizing force on both sides of the equation among female and male interlocution. But it also becomes apparent that this binary permits a certain kind of useful, feminist, self-definition to emerge, particularly in social and cultural studies where there is an interest in the intersections of society with everyday life. This happens through solid conceptualizations of the feminist audience. In this case, the audience is understood to comprise house-held life which would be accentuated empathetically by feminists. The concept of the “house life in effect facilitates a certain mode of feminist inquiry, but we were at the time inattentive to the partial and exclusive nature of this couplet” (30). Such feminist audience is typical to *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986); whereby the narrator tells us how they are treated in a marginal way: “There was old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation, of something without a shape or name. I remember that yearning, for something that was always about to happen and was never the same as the hands that were on us there and then, in the small of the back, or out back, in the parking lot, or in the television room with the sound turned down and only the pictures flickering over lifting flesh” (1).

Features of postfeminist contexts, gender-based relations and the minority of women authorship are among the conditions which describe the dialogic feminism (Puigvert 29). Henceforth, the wider circulations of postfeminist values lie across the landscape of popular culture, in particular patriarchal societies. It goes along with quite suddenly and intentionally provoked issues which had been central to the formation of the “women’s movement and its consequent concepts like domestic violence, equal pay, workplace harassment, were now addressed to a vast readership” (38). Feminists – such as Puigvert – comment on these movements describing them as the essence of dialogic feminism that reflects the feminist voices which ask for equality and rejecting the differences between males and females (55). This is quite true to Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986) when people, including women, are treated in inferior positions: “We learned to whisper almost without sound. In the semi-darkness we could stretch out our arms, when the Aunts weren’t looking, and touch each other’s hands across space. We learned to lip-read, our heads flat on the beds, turned sideways, watching each other’s mouths. In this way we exchanged names, from bed to bed: Alma. Janine. Dolores. Moira. June” (2).

I tend to choose the exclusive peculiarity of postfeminist ethics in this discussion is due to a need to a psychic relief in order to escape social constraints imposed directly on women. They strictly enjoy limited liberty which has been disapproved of. Being so, social inherited rules do not comply with feminist development; or as Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy puts it “individualism the regulations of tribal morals are actual and some of their modifications are fixed in laws” (27).

Postfeminism, during early phases, was anti-oppression and this can now be shown to be a great defect. However, feminism is invoked in order to sustain feminist ethics, not to support radical feminism (28).

This radical position against females is obvious in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) when the narrator seems to be deprived of proper life: "The door of the room—not my room, I refuse to say my—is not locked. In fact it doesn't shut properly. I go out into the polished hallway, which has a runner down the center, dusty pink. Like a path through the forest, like a carpet for royalty, it shows me the way" (3).

In this regard, care– focused postfeminist ethics, pragmatic ethical issues, and moral ethics are the ethical principles. We would ascribe this transformation to the essential need to reclaim ethical femininity, without stating exactly why women have been taken away from their normal life, but the indoctrination of such stereotyping can degrade the dignity of one group (women) and thus impede the advancement of this group in education, politics, and society (43). And these principles make women enjoy complete liberty, they have personal relations with others, without always being prepared with the best privilege and continuing the objectification of woman as idol, made silent and limited. Such liberty allows no possibility for female agency or subjectivity, but equality with men (44). Similarly, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) celebrates such kind of ethics: "A sitting room in which I never sit, but stand or kneel only. At the end of the hallway, above the front door, is a fanlight of colored glass: flowers, red and blue" (3).

Alaimo Stacy claims that typography 'postfeminist' is less common than postfeminism or post– feminism because "nature, environment, and environmentalism all seem especially odd given that the primary reason why postfeminism has been branded as 'essentialist' is because nature itself has been understood as the ground of essentialism" (302). Additionally, because of "the charge of essentialism, it would be beneficial to address how essentialism depends upon particular philosophical notions of nature and how different, more dynamic and robust notions of nature are emerging within feminist theory" (302). Another reason is that postfeminism writings "reconceptualize nature in such a way that it can no longer serve as the ground of essentialism, because it is no longer the repository of unchanging truths or determining substances but is itself an active, transforming, signifying, material force" (302). This environmental postfeminist stance is similar to natural elements, like the garden in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986): "I go out by the back door, into the garden, which is large and tidy: a lawn in the middle, a willow, weeping catkins; around the edges, the flower borders, in which the daffodils are now fading and the tulips are opening their cups, spilling out color. The tulips are red, a darker crimson towards the stem, as if they have been cut and are beginning to heal there" (5).

Moreover, the typography 'postfeminist' is less common than postfeminism or post– feminism because it is considered "as part of a crucial sort of utopian political imagining, all environmental movements" which "would be forged in such a way as to repel racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, colonialism, as well as anthropocentrism. Whether 'postfeminism' is a vast enough term to encompass these divergent aims and constituencies will only be answered as the expectedly unexpected futures unfold" (303). So, some previous critical approaches, like feminism, do not consider feminism as interdisciplinary criticism with other critical stances in order to "cast nature as a hospitable habitat for feminism, in that its evolutions and transfigurations contested the rigid notions of womanhood forwarded by culture (as opposed to nature)" as well as "contemporary 'material feminists' who insist upon the meaning, significance, agency, and transfigurations of the very substance of human corporeality and the more than– human world provide a radical challenge to the foundations of [feminist] essentialism" (303). This natural component is found in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986): This garden is the domain of the Commander's Wife. Looking out through my shatterproof window I've often seen her in it, her knees on a cushion, a light blue veil thrown over her wide gardening hat, a basket at her side with shears in it and pieces of string for lying the flowers into place. A Guardian detailed to the Commander does the heavy digging; the Commander's Wife directs, pointing with her stick. Many of the Wives have such gardens, it's something for them to order and maintain and care for. (5)

Sexism and, racism and class exploitation are similar in their "fighting for the liberation of ethnic and minority groups" which "have moved very far in any kind of parallel understanding of sexism" (Medjuck 1– 2). For example, there are "so many ethnic organizations [which] have little or no understanding of the nature of sexism, whether within their own communities or within the larger community, means that ethnic women continue to live under a system of dual or triple oppression" (1– 2). Furthermore, there "needs to be a clearly articulated position that racism and ethnocentrism and sexism are not simply individualistic problems," (2) with similar racism and class exploitation. But they "share common experiences with the state.

The systemic nature of women's oppression and the institutional racism against minority groups are similar" is an example of such similarities among sexism and, racism and class exploitation (2). In like fashion, these sexual insights against women are typical to *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986):

“The women teeter on their spiked feet as if on stilts, but off balance; their backs arch at the waist, thrusting the buttocks out. Their heads are uncovered and their hair too is exposed, in all its darkness and sexuality. They wear lipstick, red, outlining the damp cavities of their mouths, like scrawls on a washroom wall, of the time before” (15).

However, sexism, racism and class exploitation are interdependent in “examining the diversity of experiences and incorporating them into a system of analysis,” where “we can begin to reveal the magnitude, complexity and interdependence of systems of oppression. Whether we speak of patriarchal domination, racial domination or other forms of group oppression, we must recognize that these systems share an ideological foundation” (8). Thus, the “recognition” of “sexism, racism and class exploitation constitute interlocking systems of domination is a necessary first step in this process” (8). This process brings about positive changes in the status of sexism, racism and class exploitation in “socio– economic and cultural contexts” (8). Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986) focuses on similar anti– feminist practices; when women are merely exploited for marginal work. Furthermore, they are not given freedom to be equal to men in their society:

What’s going on in this room, under Serena Joy’s silvery canopy, is not exciting. It has nothing to do with passion or love or romance or any of those other notions we used to titillate ourselves with. It has nothing to do with sexual desire, at least for me, and certainly not for Serena. Arousal and orgasm are no longer thought necessary; they would be a symptom of frivolity merely, like jazz garters or beauty spots: superfluous distractions for the light– minded. Outdated. It seems odd that women once spent such time and energy reading about such things, thinking about them, worrying about them, writing about them. They are so obviously recreational” (48).

2. Political Corruption

Political corruption is dominating the scene of *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The Commander’s life embodies such political corruption: “the sitting room is subdued, symmetrical; it’s one of the shapes money takes when it freezes. Money has trickled through this room for years and years, as if through an underground cavern, crustling and hardening like stalactites into these found, Mutely the varied, surfaces present themselves: the dusk– rose velvet of the drawn drapes” (39). In addition, the Commander has wealthy belongings: “the gloss of the matching chairs, eighteenth century, the cow’s– tongue hush of the tufted Chinese rug on the floor, with its peach– pink peonies, the suave leather of the Commander’s chair, the glint of brass on the box beside it” (39). The wealth contradicts with his duty as an officer. This corruption is treated in dystopian literature in the terms of “the essence of the political world which is connected to its immanent corruption. Indeed, the corruption of the political world is a corollary of its wealth nature. Most humanists celebrated the possibility of purposeful human activity in a human– made world” (146).

Politics should be taken seriously. The political security is important for every nation (Claeys 89). But, in Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, politics is corrupted. The Commander embodies this political corruption. He is careless about his job as a Commander. He also does not keep his work to secure people. Instead, he threatens the lives of other people, such as his wife whom he treats harshly. He also breaks the laws and sets Offred free in order to rape her. He is, furthermore, interested in earning money and living in luxurious houses. This action contradicts his work responsibility as a Commander. Such behavior is considered against the inherent characteristics of utopian society.

Political corruption is “simply a disguise of reality which denies the symbolic dimension of social reality” (Ben 88), and thus “contradicts the presuppositions of humanist discourse” (Booker 146). For example, the Commander does not attend to social security. He lets crimes take place in the society: The crimes of others are a secret language among us. Through them we show ourselves what we might be capable of, after all. This is not a popular announcement. But you would never know it from Aunt Lydia, who smiles and blinks as if washed in applause. Now we are left to our own devices, our own speculations. The first one, the one they’re now raising from her chair, black– gloved hands on her upper arms: Reading? No, that’s only a hand cut off, on the third conviction. Unchastity, or an attempt on the life of her Commander? Or the Commander’s Wife, more likely. That’s what we’re thinking. As for the Wife, there’s mostly just one thing they get salvaged for. They can do almost anything to us, but they aren’t allowed to kill us, not legally. Not with knitting needles or garden shears, or knives purloined from the kitchen, and especially not when we are pregnant. It could be– adultery, of course. (145) In dystopian literature, a political corruption opposes “social order and its contradictions (Aldridge 57). The political corrupted disciplines cannot exist in Utopia, and not only because their public functions have no place in a social order devoid of fair politics” (Baker– Smith 13). The Commander even does bad actions and harasses Offred by trying to rape her in the prison. She is told by Moira that she might be raped by the Commander, and she must agree on a date to meet him: “Now, said Moira.

You don't need to paint your face, it's only me. What's your paper on? I just did one on date rape. Date rape, I said. You're so trendy. It sounds like some kind of dessert. Date rape" (19). The Commander's attempts to rape Offred is an example of dystopian society because dystopian societies "abound of bawdy and immoral" behaviors (Ackley 18).

Ethel Crowley argues that the inadequacies of postfeminism seen/addressed and rocentric hegemony are different kinds of repudiation and different investments in such a stance. The more gentle denunciations of feminism co-exist with the shrill championing of young women as a metaphor for "social change" (47). Individuals, in feminist "visions of delirium," must now choose the kind of life they want to lead. Girls must have a life-plan. They must become more reflexive in regard to every aspect of their lives, from making the right choice in marriage, to taking responsibility for their own working lives. Women must not be dependent on a job for life or on the stable and reliable operations of a large scale bureaucracy, which in the past would have allocated its employees specific, and possibly unchanging, roles (48). This perspective is conspicuous on *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986): "I pick the egg out of the cup and finger' for a moment. It's warm. Women used to carry such eggs between their breasts, to incubate them. That would have felt good" (54).

In post feminist and rocentric societies, this feminist manifestation is incontrovertible when the most barefaced token of individual sisterhood, gets resentful of academic life owing to "worst teachers" and discipline forfeiture and the feminist individual sisterhood is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices. By these means, new lines and demarcations are drawn between those subjects who are judged responsive to the regime of personal responsibility, and those who fail miserably. They have no grasp that these are "products of new realms of injury and injustice" (50). Here, the frenetic development of nonwestern subjective personality charges the individuals with a disharmonious perception of the world and contiguous surroundings. Psychological disenchantment, on the other hand, soon sets in. These are the core conceptual notions of the inadequacies of western feminism seen/addressed in nonwestern societies. They are summarized by Crowley as radical feminism, Marxist feminism, the role of culture, culture as a patriarchal weapon and cultural resistance as the inadequacies of western feminism seen/addressed in nonwestern societies. By the same token, in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986), and rocentric political corrupt hegemony is obvious in the following quotation: "She [Ofglen] pretends to brush me off, my arm and shoulder, bringing her face close to my ear. "Don't be stupid. He wasn't a rapist at all, he was a political. He was one of ours. I knocked him out" (148).

The normal reality of post feminists and their human qualities split by new encounters because human values can be viewed as a neutral discourse shared among humanity (Okin 32). A true change, consequently, occurs inwards. There is also the risk that, without complimentary encouragement she will be isolated when compliments are triggered by speakers upon positively valuing or admiring a certain 'object or quality' in the addressee (32). Marginalized individuality, thus, forms the world of family match couples in "feminism vision of individual sisterhood (32). According to this argument, the women's rights are different from the human rights in terms of positions. To illustrate, women's positions in politically corrupted societies are relative and they should be taken into account. There should be a comprehensive outlook at patriarchal societies in order to classify women's rights as sub-categories within the broader sense of human rights. The exemplification of these politically corrupted scenes are similar to *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986): "Salvaging may have been his too, although by the time of Gilead's inception it had spread from its origin in the Philippines to become a general term for the elimination of one's political enemies. As I have said elsewhere, there was little that was truly original with or indigenous to Gilead: its genius was synthesis" (160).

Okin contends that political postfeminine identities and adopts a masculine style of leadership (33). The feminism souvenir here has been intervened to constrain these kinds of conventional desires (33). Postfeminists tend to define women's rights on the ground of equality and subjectivity. More specifically, there should be no discrimination or bias in putting forth any kind of women's rights in corrupted political atmospheres. There must be a comprehensive as well as integral classification of women's rights as those of men (33). In the long run, there would be no discrimination or gender-oriented judgment of women; and these rights should not consider socio-cultural traditions (Abu Jweid and Sasa 62).

Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) similarly carries out this notion; especially the Commander's disposition: "The Commander does the talking for me, to this man and to the others who follow him. He doesn't say much about me, he doesn't need to. He says I'm new, and they look at me and dismiss me and confer together about other things. My disguise performs its function" (126).

The postfeminist experiences – in politically corrupted milieus – have a deep-seated social phenomenon. It does not relate directly to the cultural world except through a mediating system of classifications and categorizations (Hannam 92). These classifications differ from culture to culture, society to society, ideology to ideology. Analysis of the classifications of gender relations is therefore analysis of conflicting desires for female identity (Abu Jweid 531). postfeminist critiques and their intrinsic nuances have not, for the most part, been concerned with such things because they have been concerned with idealized male– dominated society, not only ‘abstract’ worlds of feminist discourse (Fisanick 26). In *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986), Atwood depicts the same panoramic postfeminist stances when Offred, the protagonist narrator, describes her experience with the corrupt Commander: “Our old signal. I have five minutes to get to the women’s wash room, which must be somewhere to her right. I look around: no sign of it. Nor can I risk getting up and walking anywhere, without the Commander. I don’t know enough, I don’t know the ropes, I might be challenged” (128).

The solution is to re–orient postfeminist needs in order to recognize that female identity is multi– leveled, multi– layered, open to several interpretations; that these meanings are not the sole property of the females in society, but are constructed and produced in ideological textual interaction (Charvet 58). The female identity needs to appreciate the importance of cultural propriety with its messiness and fuzzy edges; to be concerned with feminist experiences concept of individual female as showing and executing, and not just with communicative cultural discourse (Bradley 114). Individual female is similarly portrayed in Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986). The narrator does not feel at ease when she is treated in an inferior way by the corrupt Commander and the other men: “I get up, wobble across the room. I lurch a little, near the fountain, almost fall. It’s the heels. Without the Commander’s arm to steady me I’m off balance. Several of the men look at me, with surprise I think rather than lust. I feel like a fool. I hold my left arm conspicuously in front of me, bent at the elbow, with the tag turned outward. Nobody says anything” (129).

3. Conclusion

This essay has focused on the issue of women marginalization and political corruption in Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986). These issues characterize the dystopian peculiarity of the novel. Hence, the analysis of the issue of women marginalization depends on the interpretation of the main character, Offred, and her imprisonment. During such imprisonment, she is exposed to different attempts to rape her. The Commander is studied as one of those characters who try to rape her because he is her jailor. Cora and Rita are also studied as being suffering from women marginalization. This is because they are forced to do only domestic affairs and are not allowed to do other things outside the house.

The issue of political corruption is also studied. The Commander is the main character that has been a subject of this issue analysis. The Commander is in charge of imprisonment, and he is assigned to keep people security. However, he violates his role and tries to rape Offred. This contradicts with human ethical manners. The Commander’s responsibility is subverted because he does not abide by his work ethics. Thus, his unethical behavior has been emphasized as an action of dystopian society by applying a post feminist interpretation of *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986).

Works Cited

- Abrams, M H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1993. Print.
- Abu Jweid, Abdalhadi, and Ghada Sasa. “John Barth’s “Dunyazadiad””: The Parody of *The Arabian Nights’* Frame Tale. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures* 6.1 (2014): 60-77. Print.
- Abu Jweid, Abdalhadi Nimer Abdalqader. “The Fall of National Identity in Chinua Achebe’s ‘Things Fall Apart.’” *PERTANIKA* 23.5 (2015): 529 - 540. Print.
- Ackley, Katherine A. *Misogyny in Literature: An Essay Collection*. New York: Garland, 1992. Print.
- Alaimo, Stacy. “Questioning the Relation between Feminism and Environmentalism.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 10.3 (2008): 299– 304. Print.
- Aldridge, Alexandra. *The Scientific World View in Dystopia*. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1984. Print.
- Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986. Print.
- Baker– Smith, Dominic, and C C. Barfoot. *Between Dream and Nature: Essays on Utopia and Dystopia*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987. Print.

- Ben, Zvi E. *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature*. Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2006. Print.
- Bloom, Harold. *Margaret Atwood's the Handmaid's Tale*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004. Print.
- Booker, M K. *Dystopia*. Ipswich, Mass: Salem Press, 2013. Print.
- Bradley, Harriet. *Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007. Print.
- Charvet, John. *Feminism*. London: Dent, 1982. Print.
- Claeys, Gregory. *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Print.
- Crowley, Ethel. "Third World Women and the Inadequacies of Western Feminism." *Trócaire Development Review* (1991): 43– 56. Print.
- Datlow, Ellen, and Terri Windling. *After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia*. New York: Hyperion Books, 2012. Print.
- Ferns, C. S. *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999. Print.
- Fisanick, Christina. *Feminism*. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, an imprint of Thomson Gale, a part of the Thomson Corporation, 2008. Print.
- Grubisic, Brett J, Gisele M. Baxter, and Tara Lee. *Blast, Corrupt, Dismantle, Erase: Contemporary North American Dystopian Literature*. Waterloo, Ontario : Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014. Print.
- Hannam, June. *Feminism*. Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2007. Print.
- Hoagland, Ericka, and Reema Sarwal. *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film*. Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2010. Print.
- Kinkley, Jeffrey C. *Visions of Dystopia in China's New Historical Novels*. New York : Columbia University Press, 2014. Print.
- Medjuck, Sheva. "Ethnicity and Feminism: Two solitudes?" *Atlantis* 15.2 (1990): 1– 23. Print.
- Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2000. Print.
- Okin, Susan. "Feminism, Women's Human Rights, and Cultural Differences." *Hypatia* 13.2 (1998): 32– 33. Print.
- Oulton, Mike, and Ed Griffin. *Dystopia*. Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2007. Print.
- Puigvert, Lidia. "Dialogic Feminism: 'Other Women's' Contributions to the Social Transformation of Gender Relations." *From Women & Social Transformation* by Elisabeth Beck– Gernsheim, Judith Butler, and Lidia Puigvert (2003): 29– 60. Print.
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. "Feminist Ethics." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 12.4 (2009): 20-46. Print.
- Williams, Raymond, and Andrew Milner. *Tenses of Imagination: Raymond Williams on Science Fiction, Utopia and Dystopia*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. Print.