



## Lost In Conformity: Exploring The Erosion Of Identity And Individuality In The Face Of Oppression In Authoritarian Dystopias

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### Abstract

Dystopia is a place where everything is disastrously wrong. Dystopian literature embodies recurring elements that construct a vivid and often unsettling description of oppressive societies. Dystopian literature explores fictitious societies or worlds characterised by oppressive governance and dehumanisation. Several works of dystopian literature centre around the concept of totalitarianism, offering readers an opportunity to critique this system and emphasise the significance of individuality and freedom that is suppressed under the rule of totalitarianism. This research paper delves into the convoluted realms of dystopian literature, focusing on the pervasive composition of the loss of identity and individuality in the face of oppressive regimes. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study centres its analysis on Margaret Atwood's seminal work, *The Handmaid's Tale*, to unravel the profound impacts of authoritarian control on the characters' sense of self.

The investigation extends by examining the plight of women in dystopian settings, illuminating the multifaceted practices in which they grapple with the erasure of their individual identities. Through a careful examination of the characters' experiences, the paper aims to shed light on the nuanced nature of gender-based oppression, presenting how women become symbolic of a broader societal scuffle against totalitarian rule. By investigating the inimical consequences of technological advancements, the study emphasises the erosion of personal freedoms and the subjugation of autonomy that often accompanies the omnipresence of advanced surveillance and control mechanisms.

**keywords:** *Dystopia, individuality, identity, surveillance, inequality, totalitarianism*

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## INTRODUCTION

Dystopian worlds frequently explore the deterioration of individuality and identity. Dystopian cultures can amplify preexisting socioeconomic inequalities, highlighting the striking disparity between the wealthy ruling class and the subjugated populace. Dystopian literature serves as both a reflection and a cautionary tale, vividly portraying disquieting visions of a future marred by adversity and simultaneously shedding light on the grim realities of our present society. Literary masterpieces adeptly integrate elements of everyday reality, including politics, religion, technology, society, and the environment, to form speculative fiction. The dystopian novel emphasises the repercussions of adopting a negative perspective on life, societal disparities, the misapplication of cutting-edge technology, and the erosion of free will and individuality. Examining inequality raises concerns about an equitable society and the consequences of inequalities.

Nevertheless, the word “dystopia” emerged throughout the nineteenth century. John Stuart Mill employed the term dystopia in a parliament debate. Nevertheless, a comprehensive understanding of the concept of Dystopia necessitates an awareness of its opposite: a utopia. The phrase utopia refers to idealised fictional cultures that are characterised by perfection. Utopian and dystopian fiction are specific categories within the science fiction genre. *Utopian fiction* is a conceptualised perfect society that envisions a future without social, political or economic problems. Utopias strive to eliminate turmoil, bloodshed, and war. Their vision entails civilisations in which conflicts are handled by communication, comprehension, and an equal commitment to peace. The Utopian society has ideal perfection. Martin G. Plattel, in his writing titled *Utopian and Critical Thinking* (1972), comments that “the dream of utopia with paradise-like conditions is always unconsciously present in our psyche since the original paradise of the Garden of Eden where man lives in perfect harmony with nature and himself.” (Plattel 47). Utopian literature delves into idealistic depictions of civilisation that incorporate concepts of utmost harmony and perfection.

### Background and Significance of Dystopian Literature

The idea of a utopian society became popular when Thomas Moore, in 1516, his work *Utopia*, portrayed an imaginary community where everyone was free and happy. Thomas More coined the term ‘utopia’ in his work *Utopia*. According to M.H. Abrams, “utopian fiction” is a “class of fictional writing that represents an idea, non-existent political and social way of life.” (Abrams 320). In *Utopian Fiction*, citizens are free to think independently. Utopian literature frequently centres on creating an optimal societal framework in which governance, laws, and social institutions have been meticulously designed to promote harmony and prosperity. Martin G. Plattel, in his work *Utopia and Critical Thinking* (1972), proposes that “the utopian searches of happiness dream of new earthly paradise, in which an authentic freedom reigns, and happiness is sought in unbridled sensuous delight.” (Plattel 47).

Utopian tales exalt the autonomy of individuals while emphasising the importance of the common welfare. Individuals possess the freedom to follow their own desires and interests actively, therefore making valuable contributions to the collective welfare of the community. Utopias commonly aim to provide an equitable allocation of resources, opportunities, and rights for all members of society. Martin Parker, in his work “*Utopia and the Organisational Imagination: Eutopia*”, states that Utopia is a “systematic investigation of alternative principles of organisation” that “relies on reformation of the principles of social order” (Parker 217). Numerous utopian ideas promote a harmonious relationship and cooperation between humanity and the natural surroundings. The consistent topic concerns the endeavour to achieve sustainability, maintain ecological equilibrium, and exercise responsible management of natural resources. Utopias frequently adopt technical advancements, prioritising their beneficial effects. Cutting-edge technology is utilised to improve life quality, tackle societal issues, and foster well-being.

### Historical Context of Dystopian Literature

Dystopia is a fictional world in which life has become a nightmare. Dystopia can be described as a utopia gone wrong (Gordin et al. 1). Dystopia is also called anti-utopia as it delivers a strenuous objection to the utopian vision. The Greek word Dystopia means “bad place” (Abrams 321). Pivotal historical events in the twentieth century catalysed the emergence of dystopian fiction. According to Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash, Dystopia is not always the antithesis of Utopia: “Despite the name, Dystopia is not simply the opposite of Utopia. A true opposite of Utopia would be a society that is either completely unplanned or is planned to be deliberately terrifying and awful. Dystopia, typically invoked, is neither of these things; rather, it is a utopia that has gone wrong or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society.” (Gordin et al. 1). Most dystopian

novels were written in the twentieth century. Adams Stock examines the roots of the genre of dystopian literature, asserting that “dystopian fiction developed from a (post-) Enlightenment tradition that ran through the Victorian era and into the work of writers like H. G. Wells.” (Stock 10).

Events that shattered the notion of a utopian paradise, such as Nazi Germany, the Second World War from 1939 to 1945, and the development of the atomic bomb, pushed humanity to the precipice of catastrophic destruction. The popularity of Dystopia in the twentieth century can be attributed to the surrounding social and political circumstances. Amidst the post-war tensions, glimpsing gloomy possibilities for the future was not formidable. Yevgeny Zamyatin (*We*), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*), and George Orwell (1984) are prominent and well-known works in the genre. Gregory Claeys asserts that the word “Dystopia” gained popularity throughout the twentieth century, notwithstanding “it appears intermittently beforehand (dys-topia or ‘cacotopia’, bad place, having been used by John Stuart Mill in an 1868 parliamentary debate).” (Claeys 107).

### **Evolution of Themes in Authoritarian Dystopias**

Dystopian civilisations frequently use scapegoating to shift responsibility and uphold authority. There are the ramifications of societal fragmentation, prejudice, and the use of fear for political motives. Dystopian settings often delve into the gradual decline of individual autonomy and a sense of self. Maria Varsam communicates that “whereas...utopia is a manifestation of desire and hope for a better world and an ‘unalienated order’ that upsets the status quo, . . . dystopian delineates the crashing of hope and the displacement of desire for the purpose of upholding that status quo” (Varsam 209). The characters in the story struggle with losing their ability to make their own choices, being compelled to conform to societal norms, and having their uniqueness suppressed. This raises profound concerns about what it means to be human when faced with repressive regimes. Dystopian narratives are the composition of oppressive regimes and totalitarian rule. Propaganda is the process of manipulating public opinion. The Totalitarian regime employs propaganda as a tactic to control individuals. A Totalitarian regime uses diverse tactics to repress and dominate its subjects. This can be analysed using Edward Bernays’ and Walter Lipmann’s notions of “propaganda” and “public opinion.” Bernays, in his work *Propaganda* (1928), asserts, “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in a democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute the invisible government, which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested largely by men who have never heard of. . . Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a soothingly functioning society.” (Bernays 9). Michel Foucault’s notions of “panopticon” and “discipline” illustrate how individuals are subjected to the surveillance mechanism and how free will is controlled.

James Scott’s idea of “resistance” explores the methods oppressed individuals employ to challenge and counteract the control mechanisms imposed by the government. The term totalitarianism was initially coined by Benito Mussolini in his publication “La Dottrina del Fascismo” in 1932. He comments against the fascist philosophy and asserts that “The higher personality is only a nation in so far as it is a state. The nation does not exist to generate the state . . . the nation is created by the state, which gives a people an effective existence.” (Mussolini 388). In his work “Abundance of What? And Other Essays” (1964), David Riesman claims, “When Governments have the power to exterminate the globe, it is not surprising that novels, like 1984, are popular, while utopian critical thought about a more hopeful future nearly disappears.” (Riesman 95). Franz Neumann defines totalitarianism as a kind of governance, “where it may be necessary to control education, the means of communication and economic institutions to gear up the whole of society and the private life of citizens to the system of political domination.” (Neumann 236). Hannah Arendt’s work “Origins of Totalitarianism” describes totalitarianism precisely, stating that it is a “form of government whose essence is terror and whose principle of action is the logicity of ideological thinking.” (Arendt 474). Several dystopian works, such as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), Ayn Rand’s *Anthem* (1937), and George Orwell’s *1984* (1949), portray the government as an overpowering force that oppresses and controls every facet of human existence.

Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977) illustrates the illustration of the concept of “discipline” as “a power exercised over one or more individuals to provide them with particular skills and attributes, to develop their capacity for self-control, to promote their ability to act in concert, to render them amenable to instruction, or to mould their characters in other ways. . . . Discipline is a productive power par excellence: it aims not only to constrain those over whom it is exercised but also to enhance and make use of their capacities.” (Foucault 113). Joe Dubs proclaims, “Propaganda is an act of deliberately spreading false or deceptive information, ideas, doctrines or principles promulgated by an organisation or movement to help or harm a target person, group of people, movement, institution, nation, etc. It is a distortion of information to suit a particular agenda.” (Dubs 1)

### **Impacts of Surveillance and Advanced Technologies on Individual Freedoms**

Dystopian fiction portrays a future where the natural environment is pessimistic, and there is no peace, harmony or comfort among its inhabitants. In a totalitarian regime, such as the one depicted in George Orwell's novel "1984," the government exercises complete control over every aspect of people's lives, including their interactions, social connections, and even their choice of clothing. The populace is widely believed to be under constant surveillance, resulting in a condition of dehumanisation. Autonomous thinking and liberty are limited. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian novel. The novel contains several distinguished dystopian features. The female protagonist, Offred, narrates her experiences as a Handmaid in the Republic of Gilead. The book shows an imaginary place where everything is highly unpleasant. There is an oppressive regime that hints at the downfall of America in the future. In novels of the dystopian genre, there is a social hierarchical structure of a society that becomes the harbinger of misery, pain and suffering. The social hierarchical structure makes the appearance of the society doom, dark and gloomy. The hierarchical nature of a dystopian society There is a group of individuals at the highest level who exert dominance over the rest of society by several methods, such as indoctrination, offering punishments, or perpetuating a perpetual state of terror among the populace. Gottlieb elucidates the ramifications of terror on the populace in diverse dystopian communities, "In the dystopic societies of *Fahrenheit 451*, *Player Piano*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*, the ruling elite no longer desire to evoke in citizens a belief in party's immortality, or in a quasi-eschatological system of a particular ideology; they confine their activities to evoking fear in the population that anyone could be pushed into the circle of the outsiders." (Gottlieb 40).

An exemplification of dehumanisation in the novel is the portrayal of a society that categorises and evaluates women only based on their reproductive capabilities. They are esteemed based on their ability to procreate. The story categorises women into several factions, such as handmaids. These women lack freedom. Indeed, their names are confiscated, underscoring their individuality's deprivation. In his study, David Coad notes, "Atwood's interest in *The Handmaid's Tale* is overtly political. The author imagines a dystopian fable in which gender politics occupies the centre of attention. In response to the 1980s backlash against women's rights in the United States, Atwood speculates on the nature and consequences of a masculinist, totalitarian and puritanical takeover. In this ultra-conservative neo-Christian régime, all women are slaves of the system." (Coad 54). The Handmaids are the females who have undergone partial indoctrination and have been coerced into a state of sexual slavery. The Handmaids are stripped of their privacy, individuality, and sovereignty. Malak writes, "In order to erase the former identity of the handmaids, the state, moreover, cancels their original names and labels them according to the names of their Commanders, hence the names Offred, Ofglen, Ofwayne, Ofwarren." (Malak 11). Upon becoming Handmaids, women are deprived of even their names. Görkem Neşe Şenel in her study mentions that, "*The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is a feminist dystopia that portrays the late twentieth century state system of a patriarchal, totalitarian and theocratic regime, the Republic of Gilead, via the later disclosed tape recordings of a Handmaid, Offred. It is the most credited feminist dystopian novel of Atwood that also bears immense ecofeminist themes and concerns. The dystopic, or the anti-utopic fiction is created through the memory and re-memory construction of Offred." (Şenel, n.d.)

According to Allan Weiss, "dystopian regimes are (...) kept in place by the acquiescence of a complacent citizenry that accepts and may even enjoy its comforting oppression." (Weiss 12). This novel depicts the central character being assigned the role of a handmaid and then coerced into assuming the name and title of Offred. Offred is compelled to abandon her family as a handmaid and becomes the possession of the state. She is no longer considered a human but with a body serving as a political tool. Henceforth, her sole preoccupation must be her fertility and the act of procreating for the benefit of an authoritarian state. Those in power are called the Republic of Gilead, and they exercise dominion over the remaining portion of society, which includes the subservient individuals referred to as the "Guardians" and the "Gileadan official army". Offred reports, "The Guardians aren't real soldiers. They're used for routine policing and other menial functions, digging up the Commander's Wife's garden, for instance, and they're either stupid or older or disabled or very young." (Atwood 20). The citizens cannot even wear clothes of their choice and have to wear a uniform as dictated by the Republic of Gilead. The description evidence is that the "dress is much like mine in shape, long and concealing, but with a bib apron over it and without the white wings and the veil. She puts the veil to go outside, but nobody much cares who sees the face of a Martha." (Atwood 9).

### **Exploration of Women's Struggles for Identity and Autonomy**

The Republic of Gilead subjugates women by making them mindlessly follow Gileadan's ideology and coerce them into engaging in sexual slavery. She says, "My red skirt is hitched up to my waits, though no higher. Below it, the commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I do not say making love,



because this is not what he is doing, copulating too would be inaccurate because it would imply two people and only one is involved” (Margaret 121). There is the loss of freedom and the complicated mechanics of fear among the population. As Malak proposes, “dystopias essentially deal with power: power as the prohibition or perversion of human potential; power in its absolute form.” (Malak 10). In Atwood’s novel, extremists of religion advocate for the delegation of traditional responsibilities to women, specifically as child bearers. The women who cannot bear children are deemed less deserving and are refused the opportunity to marry due to their infertility. In this fictitious environment, Gilead classifies males into two distinct groups: commanders and guardians. As to the legislation of Gilead, the term “Sterile” is deemed prohibited by the authoritarian government. Gilead subjects both women and men to oppression, as both genders have disoriented lives. The author writes, “There is no such thing as a sterile man any more, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that’s the law” (Margaret 57). Ebru Tokum, in her article, expresses that, “In *The Handmaid's Tale*, there is controlled language like Newspeak in 1984 - which is another poignant dystopia expressed by a unitary language - and there are forbidden words to use. Some certain expressions became a taboo since they contradict the ideology of the regime.” (Tokum 6). The text delves into the Gileadan social hierarchy, highlighting the disparity among various socioeconomic systems within the Republic of Gilead. The totalitarian regime compels the inhabitants of Gilead to maintain a depressed and disoriented lifestyle characterised by “frugality, conformity, censorship, corruption, fear, and terror.” (Malak 10).

The situation of the Commanders’ wives in society is lamentable - they passively see their husbands engaging in sexual intercourse with the Handmaids and fervently hope for the Handmaid’s conception. Due to their infertility, they are incapable of procreating naturally. Consequently, the government occupies their time with trivial responsibilities, such as crafting a scarf for the army. They are granted a deceptive perception of authority through the Scriptural precedent that permits them to inflict corporal punishment on the Handmaids. Malak states that “true to the precedent set in Genesis, the Commander’s Wife arranges and supervises (...) sex sessions, in which the handmaid, desexed and dehumanised, is obliged to participate.” (Malak 9). Commanders are shown as brutal and aggressive individuals; more importantly, their conduct is the epitome of a mild and placid demeanour. As a result of the low fertility rate, their primary responsibility is to rape and impregnate the Handmaids. The Commanders’ action clearly exemplifies the dishonesty of Gileadan culture. They say that the sole purpose of sexual activity should be reproduction. However, they frequently have sexual encounters with women who serve as prostitutes, known as Jezebels.

Huxley’s *Brave New World* classifies its residents into five distinct castes: Beta, Delta, Alpha, Epsilon, and Gamma. Women in this civilisation no longer engage in childbirth. Children are artificially manufactured within the Incubator and nurtured at the Conditioning Centre. Lisa Jadwin asserts, “In a civilization of this nature, women have few freedoms, but their fertility is respected, and they are free from the threat of sexual violence in the streets.” (Jadwin 31). A similar concept is shown in Atwood’s *The Handmaid's Tale*. The same methods of psychological manipulation appear at the Rachel and Leah Reeducation Centre. In the Rachel and Leah Reeducation Center, the Aunts manipulate the young women to perceive their bodies as instruments for a greater purpose. The Aunts epitomise the ideal manifestation of the totalitarian theocracy. The Aunts are the few female characters in this tale who hold a discernible degree of authority, and their primary responsibility is to train the Handmaids for their reproductive roles. They unquestioningly support the regime and wholeheartedly embrace the Gileadan system comprising various oppressive principles. Atwood describes the misogynistic rules that Gileadan wants Aunts to follow: “The first is to delete the women from history. (...) The second goal is to teach women how to betray other women. (...) The Aunt’s final goal is to teach the handmaids that rape is acceptable.” (Atwood 72).

### **Symbolic Representations of Inequality in *The Handmaid's Tale***

The majority of dystopian books portray totalitarian regimes characterised by severe restrictions on freedom or its complete absence. Citizens in these worlds often face severe restrictions on their freedom. The authoritative entity frequently manipulates the minds of its subjects, leading them to falsely believe in what they are free to make. In reality, these individuals are subject to severe limitations, both in terms of their physical actions and their mental faculties. Dystopian societies often manipulate information to maintain control. Ferris states that “the repression of one’s emotional and intellectual freedom creates passive citizens: The repression of the “free radicals” of the human mind and heart, such as love, spiritual awakening and discovery, creativity and invention, keeps a person focused on their tasks, allowing no time or space to think, consider, reflect or ponder. One’s motivation is not for themselves but only for the State, they are conditioned to love.” (Ferris 12). The reader comprehends the absence of freedom in the Republic of Gilead. The Handmaids are nothing more than enslaved sexual slaves who are used for sex once a month and are totally cut off from the outside world. Offred expresses, Given our wings, our blinkers, it “’s hard to look up, hard to get

the full view of the sky, of anything. (...) We have learned to see the world in gasps" (Atwood 30). Dystopian regimes systematically repress any expression of disagreement, frequently resorting to tactics of fear, intimidation, or physical force. The populace is actively discouraged from challenging or expressing opinions that oppose norms and predetermined notions of the established authority, so further constraining their freedom of expression. Handmaids have no real freedom, and they lack individuality, as Atwood mentions, "There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now, you are being given freedom. Don't underrate it." (Atwood 24). Offred possesses a thorough understanding of the severe constraints imposed on her freedom as a Handmaid. She is aware that she has no freedom and says, "The night is mine, my own time, to do with as I will, as long as I am quiet. As long as I don't move. As long as I lie still." (Atwood 37).

The authors offer a critical analysis of authoritarian regimes, surveillance and the perils of relinquishing private freedoms in exchange for the deceptive illusion of safety. The inhabitants of Gilead possess the privilege of accessing news broadcasts. The news functions as a medium for disseminating the government's propaganda. Propaganda assumes a prominent function in dystopian literature, acting as a potent instrument for the governing elites to regulate information, shape public opinion, and uphold their authority. There is a vivid description of news spreading propaganda of Gilead in the novel, "The Appalachian Highlands, says the voice-over, where the Angels of the Apocalypse, Fourth Division, are smoking out a pocket of Baptist guerillas, with air support from the Twenty-first Battalion of the Angels of Light. We are shown two helicopters, black ones with silver wings painted on the sides. Below them, a clump of trees explodes. Now, a close shot of a prisoner, with a stubbled and dirty face, flanked by two Angels in their neat black uniforms." (Atwood 82). One tactic for managing the dissemination of information is propaganda. Dystopian regimes utilise propaganda as a tool to manipulate and regulate the narrative, frequently misrepresenting or inventing facts. Citizens are compelled to adhere to a certain set of ideas, values, and doctrines that are in accordance with the agenda of the governing regime. In George Orwell's novel 1984, the inhabitants are subjected to a similar kind of repression. Michael Yeo contends that in Orwell's novel, "the persuasive power of every medium, technique and genre of communication is exploited to its maximum potential and single mindedly put to work." (Yeo 51).

### **The Dystopian Paradox: Liberation and Subjugation through Technology**

Dystopian books frequently delve into the subject of subjugation of women being an important element in several dystopian storylines. Dystopian societies may exercise dominion over women's reproductive rights, prescribing the timing and manner in which they are permitted to conceive offspring. The state has the potential to govern fertility, enforce birth limits, or even compel women to have involuntary pregnancies. Enforcing dressing guidelines can serve as a mechanism to regulate women's independence and self-expression. Dystopian cultures often enforce certain clothing requirements to uphold cultural standards, limit personal freedom, and commodify women. Orwell's 1984 also depicts a dystopian alternate universe where sexual intercourse is viewed solely as a method of reproduction. The Inner Party promotes its youthful members in the Junior Anti-Sex League, an organization that advocates for sexual abstinence. Similarly, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, at the Red Center, the Aunts employ several techniques, such as inciting terror through corporal punishment, in order to train the Handmaids. The Handmaid reveals that she was the victim of a gang rape when she was fourteen years old. Rather than providing solace to her, The Aunts subject her to humiliation. The Aunts are fundamentally opposed to feminism. However, the work features two characters advocating for women's rights: Moira, Offred's closest friend, and Offred's mother. Offred reminisces about her mother and her companions returning after a feminist protest. She articulates, "They'd been in a march that day; it was during the time of the porn riots, or was it the abortion riots, they were close together." (Atwood 180).

Similarly, Moira disseminates, "books on birth control and rape and things like that, though there wasn't as much demand for those things as there used to be." (Atwood 178). These female characters engage in their quest for gender equality. Dr Chung Chin-Yi in her article "Feminist dystopia in *The Handmaid's Tale*" comments that, "In Atwood's dystopia, the trend of viewing women solely in terms of their functions in society is taken to its extreme conclusion in the setting up of women in roles such as handmaids, Aunts, Wives, Marthas, Econowives and so on. Women in an extreme patriarchal society are reduced to mere functions such as Offred's status as a walking womb in her role solely to breed in a society where environmental disasters have destroyed the fertility of most women and there is a limited number of women to breed for the purpose of perpetuating society." (Chin-Yi 110). Katherine Sugg in her work proclaims that, "From the opening lines of Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, we are put into the mind and immersed in the voice of the main character and narrator, the titular "Handmaid" known as Offred. But Offred starts off speaking as "we" not "I" ("We slept in what had once been the gymnasium"), and this collective identity and experience is

the novel's first indication of its larger project, a project of revealing who "we" are through one character's voice." (Sugg 43).

Within the wider framework of dystopian literature, "The Handmaid's Tale" contributes a noteworthy perspective to the discourse on the vulnerability of human identity and the dangers of unregulated power. This text stimulates readers to contemplate the consequences of losing their uniqueness in order to maintain social harmony and urges readers to be watchful in protecting our liberties. Ferns, Chris argues that, "Unlike the dystopias of Zamyatin, Huxley, and Orwell, whose terror lies partly in the threat of their being eternal, Gilead is ephemeral, deprived of an eternal future by its inability to sever itself from the past. Unlike the previous dystopias, which contrive to cut themselves off from history, Gilead illustrates one of the principal limitations of all revolutions, whether for good or ill: the fact that they are made by those who are themselves products of the society which the revolution seeks to overthrow." (Ferns 380). On exploring the complex connections between identity, oppression, and authoritarianism in this dystopian story, readers are prompted to ponder the unremitting importance of these themes in our own reality, facilitating readers to sketch discourses from the warning messages entrenched in dystopian literature. Furthermore, the portrayal of a repressive and authoritarian regime in the dystopian realm of Gilead functions as a warning about the perils of unrestrained authority.

Karen F. Stein describes in her essay "Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale: Scheherazade in Dystopia": "Feminists are particularly interested in stories, because as a marginal group of society, women have often been the objects rather than the creators of narrative: their stories have often been untold. People on the margins of societies often find they are denied access to the discourses that confer power and status" (Stein 269). The work offers as a clear and striking warning of the potential repercussions of a society that willingly gives up personal liberties in exchange for the false perception of safety. The portrayal of the totalitarian regime in "The Handmaid's Tale" serves as a disturbing reminder of the repercussions that arise when oppressive beliefs are let to flourish, resulting in the domination of whole communities and the stifling of opposition. Barbé Hammer in his essay "The World as It Will Be? Female Satire and the Technology of Power in The Handmaid's Tale" comments that, "Significantly, the rebellious females of Offred's world are all defeated: Ofglen commits suicide in order to protect the May Day under- 42 ground; Moira's escape attempt is thwarted and she is imprisoned in the city's brothel; Offred's own mother is glimpsed in a film-documentary about the dreaded toxic-waste colonies. To survive, Offred seems to suggest, one must surrender." (Hammer 6).

## CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, the investigation of dystopian literature, specifically "The Handmaid's Tale," probes into the fundamental aspects of human existence and the complex workings of society, particularly in relation to themes of identity, individuality, oppression, and authoritarian governance. The work of Margaret Atwood delivers an assertive perspective to examine the vulnerability of individual identity under authoritarian governments. The study concentrates to uncovers profound insights into the human condition and societal dynamics. The Handmaid's Tale emphasises the significance of safeguarding one's individuality when encountered with totalitarian authority. The individuals in the narrative navigate a world where their unique identity is gradually obliterated, demonstrating the strength and endurance of the human spirit. Atwood's portrayal of the heroine, Offred, and her battle to preserve her sense of self against a totalitarian system that aims to eradicate her uniqueness, drives readers to contemplate the implied essence of individual identity in defining humanity.

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