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Re/Valorisation of Feminist Transgressive Discourse in Margaret
Atwood's Dystopia The Handmaid's Tale

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my dear family: my parents, brothers, sisters, and to my best friend Imene. I do, equally, dedicate it to my teacher Professor Fewzia Bedjaoui who inspired me with her commitment and love to the Women's Question.

ABSTRACT

In her novel The Handmaid's Tale, the Canadian writer; Margaret Atwood intends to repudiate the patriarchal world system which had plagued women's history with stubborn stains of long-lasting effects of their suffering under the hegemonic control of their male counterparts. It, nonetheless, devotes considerable emphasis on other pertinent points as it rends the veil on, and highlights some latent threats to woman's waged war on her oppressors. It seeks to veer the lantern onto the reactive side of the matter while it reiterates its basic stimuli. And in jettisoning the high status, de facto, attributed to men, it calls attention to gauge women's reactionary move against the status quo, which is not obviously -though unintentionally- always working for women's sake. The primary objective of *Re/Valorization of Feminist Transgressive Discourse in Margaret Atwood's Dystopia The Handmaid's Tale* is to analyze Margaret Atwood's novel so as to attempt to unearth the most important ideas it broaches as far as the Woman Question is concerned. It, in four chapters, puts concern on exploring the concepts of Post-colonialism and Feminism; shedding light on the historical background of the novel; dissecting Atwood's work; and broaching its cinematic adaptation as well as positing its integration into the English Language curriculum, respectively. In its conclusion, however, an attempt is made to open some avenues for further research in favor of improving on women's issues and Studies.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

When Paulin Hountondji spoke of *Cultural Imperialism* and *Cultural Nationalism (1)* in his Tradition, 'Hindrance or Inspiration' (2000), he referred to the danger of what he labeled 'the temptation of overall justification' with which he explained the collective sense of identification of one's own tradition developed within the dominated peoples. As a result of the culture of contempt and superiority towards what Western Civilization perceives and deems inferior cultures, these latter tend to excessively protect and identify with what have been or are still prey to external criticism and attack.

Though Hountondji's study revolves around the two temptations, one must put in front of one's lens when examining a given tradition, referred to as 'the temptation of contempt' and 'the temptation of overall justification', and which one may simply formulate an equation with to sum up the relation that conjoins the cultures of the constituent groups of the world being; the dominant and the dominated respectively, a simple projection on other groups doomed to a similar relationship may, however, open some areas of query and discussion. Akin to the laws of dominance and domination the world abides with, this latter, one must not forget to point out, is basically Manichean; into two strata it is segmented and into dominant and dominated subgroups, humans are sectioned.

Subject to maligning and disparaging attacks on her nature, woman has for so long been resident in the inferior world; inferior to that of man; the superior caste. Nonetheless, even when she is victim to both cultural imperialism, like her male counterparts, and to cultural androcentrism (2), if one may call it so, woman has not, nor is awaited to react the way subjected peoples do against the dominant culture; that is to say she does not emanate that exaggerated sense of identification and justification of her feminine traits or rather what is socially-worded to be hers. She rather has revolted to regain her devoured rights and defend her space in that patriarchal world she is made to live in.

Often literature is the 'softest of all the bread'-as Ngugi's pen paints it in Moving the Centre (1993)- women's demands and protests are served with. Through literature, women are capable to effectively pass on and norm what's at odds with what for so long not even had, but still has been a norm. Through their pens, women could launch their hitherto-muffled and turned inward cry against their long-standing travail, and make it heard in every corner and lot

in the world. Through their writings their issues received the amount of heed they have for so long ages throughout history been missing from the available literature on humans and their concerns.

In one's own mind, the selected work; Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, constitutes a female voice which most closely addresses such points. In one's own mind, too, this novel is impeccable. Its beauty, its limitless candidness, its bold transcendence and rich complexity all come into play when conceiving the themes it resonates with and the variegated bunch of issues it broaches. Yet, one's being, history and also culture do inevitably come into play, as well. A female voice curious to read about what voices its experiences and defend its case; eager to know what its likes' hand-cuffed hands pen and devise; and above all filled with pleasure when having such an awesome dive into women's world, one cannot but quench with a work comprised of like interests.

Aside from the penchant one may have for certain pens, and beside the fact that there exist works that could impose their weight and value in the world of literature with their authenticity, their aesthetic, and their valiant transgression, my interest in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale can be framed in three main ideas. First, the fact that the work set in a ground which might be, for many reasons, not thought of as fertile for women's oppression, provides a valuable insight on women's protest marches against the status quo in a different context and culture. Yet, though the States' women are not viewed as post-colonial women suffering both the fallout of yesteryear and male authority reigning supreme in their society, it is worth noting that the American history tells of periods of colonization of the country before it has reached that peak of power which has cleansed her of the stains of colonialism and of post-colonialism. Furthermore, women of the States do, in like manner, share a long history fraught with suffering and struggle with their likes in the rest of the globe.

The second point concerns the way women's issues are being approached in Atwood's work. While female writers have for so long been interested in carving utopian spaces in which women live in harmony within sex-bias-free societies, Margaret Atwood chose a different road through a dystopian society designed to meet realization in the future, so as to draw attention to certain verities from the present.

Furthermore, one, in reading Atwood's novel, may not feel satisfied to know that Gilead -The Republic where the story takes place- has not yet seen the light of day. Rather, one may feel more curious to query whether or not, and to what extent our modern world still heralds the

possible construction of a Gilead or even a Gilead-like society in the U.S as well as in other parts of the world. And this is the third point which may draw one, more particularly, to The Handmaid's Tale.

Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale tells the story of a female protagonist within a Totalitarian society that has ironically met some feminist goals. Through a dystopian society set in the near future in the U.S Atwood's novel paints a tableau that stands not only as a warning against the well-known threat of male misogynic attitudes and the gender-base, patriarchal world order, but also as a serious urge to look where women's launched war in reaction to her dire plight and its long-lasting effect might take the women and their societies to. To what extent does the very impetus for change in favor of the always-oppressed sex suffice to await a better life with better conditions?

In the realm of literature women's pens have aesthetically carved woman's plight and travail, and imaginatively created a world in which feminine strength, liberty and power are neither impossible nor fantastic. Notwithstanding, in the wake of a long history fraught and stained with misogyny and gender discrimination, it's no easy to alleviate woman's hunger for freedom from the constraints of patriarchy, nor evident is it that her released self is to enjoy freedom within certain safe constraints.

Most often no surveillance is prescribed to mitigate any possible extremism or rancor against the dominant caste, as no warning is spared to police the limits of radicalism in that crusade woman has waged against every belief the world has imbibed under the aegis of phallogocentric mindset. This, thereby, draws one's attention to wonder whether or not woman's protest marches against gender hierarchies are safe enough of any inexorable greediness for rights and liberties that may veer her onto an illusion appearing to her in the guise of a legitimate claim in her favor or otherwise of an effective means leading up to improved conditions.

In the theocratic Republic, Atwood sets her protagonist's story in; women are made to live the future of certain feminist projects. Gilead rests on separation between men and women. Those possessing complete control of people's lives have banned every detail menacing woman's security and liberty to walk along the streets of her new society with no fear of even being disturbed with men's obscenities. Nonetheless, Gilead is, also, a society in which things have, unexpectedly, gone disastrously wrong. In spite of the realization of some feminist ideas, Gilead is a disaster area.

My research work: *Re/valorization of Feminist Transgressive Discourse in Margaret Atwood's Dystopia The Handmaid's Tale* comprises four chapters. The first chapter entitled *Literature and Resistance* is devoted to shed light on the two concepts of Post-colonialism and Feminism, with emphasis on related theories and issues such as culture, identity, postmodernism, etc.

The second chapter is descriptive. It is called *History and Context*. It deals with the historical background and context of the novel. As Margaret Atwood is Canadian, it, also, attempts to justify her choice of the U.S as a setting to her work. It aims to provide a better construction to put on The Handmaid's Tale, as it is to be analyzed in the ensuing chapter.

The third chapter *Futuristic Dystopia* serves to thoroughly analyze The Handmaid's Tale. It attempts to explore the writer's concerns and views on the Women's Question as conceived of from a different angle. While bringing forward disturbing issues of patriarchy, sexism and misogyny, Atwood reveals that woman can, likewise, fall victim of women's earnest efforts and try to improve on woman's case. In the futuristic society which nestles the narrative of her story, she brings to the fore serious threats to women and their battle against the status quo.

The fourth chapter labeled *Between Print and Screen* is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the cinematic adaptation of the novel focusing on its reception as compared to that of the print version, whereas the second includes suggestions on including The Handmaid's Tale into the Curriculum of English Literature to enable English Language students benefit from its richness. It, furthermore, places concern on proposing some rewarding methods which may help teachers of Literature make some apathetic students change their attitude in regard of Literature.

The conclusion of the work will try to open new scopes for further research, notably in other women literatures in the postcolonial world. It will, likewise, attempt to draw attention for intense interest in the feminist discourse, putting between one's lens the futuristic society Atwood did ape while extrapolating from the events of given epochs in the American history.

Yet, there is some difficulty to understand some terms the writer did use in her work. Hence, a glossary with the terms defined according to the context; notably religious, historical and cultural, is to be found in the appendix.

The research could have entailed interviews and questionnaires with certain key cultural agents notably the writer of the book, but unpublished materials are not read by her. Thus, readers, publisher and even fellow writers are requested not to send any unpublished manuscript.

By stressing the importance of taking cognizance of women's dire travail within androcentric systems governing the globe for ages, as well as the guerrilla war women have declared against sexist conventions, deeply rooted in people's minds, my research work will try to enhance thorough future revisions of the feminist discourse. In like manner, it will attach great importance to broaching women's issues through warnings and assessments about the risks and wrongs involved in women's combat against patriarchy and misogyny and their fallout. In regard to pedagogy, one hopes that the integration of dystopian literary works in the curriculum and also the focus on revising women's reactive strategies against the status quo could help offer another lens from which women's issues can be viewed and taught, and through which special attention and awareness amongst EFL students can be diffused.

Documentation was a major problem to face and confront during the research. While some works have been available at university level in Sidi Bel Abbes, Blida and Algiers, most of the documents were solely available abroad, and on the internet which was consulted with the intent to provide qualitative information. Purchasing books mainly the novel and some other related documents, would have been inevitable if they had not been provided on pdfs by some friends living abroad.

NOTES TO GENERAL INTRODUCTION

- (1) With cultural imperialism, Hountondji means 'the collective sense of superiority developed within the Western civilization by some of its ideologist'. Cultural nationalism, however, 'takes the form of an identification with one's own tradition, a result of self-defense and justification' (2000)
- (2) A sense of male supremacy over womankind, developed in relation to socio-culturally-designed stereotypes, and then diffused amongst the members of a given society as verities.

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter One

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Chapter One

LITERATURE AND RESISTANCE

I.1. Introduction

By most accounts, a new age has marked its debut, and a revolutionary era, leading intellectuals argue, is engulfing the world. Now the world is post-modern, Stephan Hicks (2004) puts it. It is an age of pursuit of liberation from the tyrannical and oppressive strictures of the past. It is the age; the hitherto-muzzled voices have taken turn in, to voice concerns on their case and objections to existing conventions. It is, albeit often with no neat demarcation line, a more audacious, blunt and challenging working out of the fall out of yesteryear. In the realm of literature, a bunch of avant-garde movements and *isms* have, henceforth, made their appearance and taken on the mission. Post-colonialism and Feminism are the avant-garde *isms* this chapter aims to shed light on.

Intricately linked with cultural, social, political and even historical aspects, these challenging concepts are both elusive and problematic, and most often not easily approached to. Thus, in this chapter, there is an attempt to define and explore Postcolonialism and Feminism, respectively in two sections, so that to trace any shared areas, and even chasms between them.

I.2. Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism can axiomatically be understood as referring to the era ensuing the colonial period. Yet the term per se has much ambiguity to hide. Notwithstanding its literal definition that gestures towards the period postdating a certain event; being the arrival of the western colonial power in this case, the prefix 'post' has much controversy to offer as it bears other dimensions apart from its very simplistic connotation. Even within this very simplistic implication one cannot halt some burgeoning queries; as whether the period referred to covers

the colonial era, or just marks its debut following the departure of the colonial power from its colonies. Then if so considered, whether or not, or rather to what extent post-colonialism can be synonymous with post independence.

I.2.1. Defining Post-colonialism

One plausible answer is offered by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, in which they define post-colonialism as a term that ‘cover(s) all the culture affected by the colonial process from the moment of colonization to the present day’ (1989). This definition, however, traces a certain ‘continuity’ of the colonial occupation. One can also trace, as Anne McClintock (1993) puts it a re-appearing of colonialism the very moment it is awaited to disappear.

The departure of the Other is never total. However valiantly they got to hoist the flags of independence, the once-colonized territories are still nestled and cradled –though differently- by the same arms. The residues of the ‘Other’ are still poisoning the same chalice they, during the colonial era, got fed from. In *Moving the Center* (1993), Ngugi Wathiong’o wages a war to reach cultural independence deeming that the previously-colonized lands are still pregnant; unconsciously or even voluntarily bearing embryos of the so-supposed departed colonizer in their still fertile wombs. This ipso facto gives birth to embryos of resistance or more properly of neo resistance -since the war is held this time against neo-colonialism- symbiotically burgeoning within the same wombs. Viewed in respect to such considerations, Post-colonialism is but another troop decidedly declaring war, of a different sort, as it gives right to hitherto-silenced voices to cry out against, and tackle issues that refer to the colonial remains. Such issues are history-gifts. They broach themes like racism, globalization, women’s emancipation, syncretism, hybridism, cultural clash, language and religion, identity and modernization, etc. This other plausible perception, Stephan Slemon finds ‘most useful’ (1991) as it captures that very crucial time in the history of hitherto-muzzled nations and makes the Calibans(1) of the world spell out their experiences ‘to search for alternatives to the discourse of the colonial era’ (Ibid)

I.2.2. State of In-Betweenness

The tyrannical existence of the imperial power in the colonized lands doomed the globe with two, more or less, fixed racial strata. In such Manichean world order, the dominant colonizer has always abode in the world of superiority, while the dominated and the colonized, as if God-designated lot has to reside the abyss of inferiority. Henceforth, a sea change was brought even to the way indigenous people perceive and define their selves once ‘the colonial succeeded to inscribe itself onto the body and space of its others’ (Ibid) .And throughout decades of outrageously oppressive colonial regime; they got to revise their view regarding the Other. They have created a third space and have resided there. Yet, one cannot deny that people couldn’t pretend otherwise. Their independence was gained at a crossroads. They were neither able to resurrect their yesteryears of the pre-colonial era lest they be trapped by the claws of backwardness, nor were they ready to enjoy the Western trappings of modernity and consign their past to mere oblivion.

This state of in-betweenness is, indeed, the very attribute of post-colonialism. One can say that post-colonialism is that state of in-betweenness people got to opt for as inevitably no other path was safer. Another attribute stemming from the congeniality of that bleak juncture and coming in the guise of independence is what Ahmad Aidjaz describes as ‘historical amnesia’ (Childs and Williams, 1997). This malady, one must not forget to point out, includes other symptoms next to those nature’s decision. However forgetful the previously-colonized nations tend to become towards colonialism and its effects, they do, as well, harbor feelings and ideas fraught with reproach and loathing towards colonialism, mostly apparent in their post-colonial literature.

I.2.3. Postcolonialism vs. Neocolonialism

Notwithstanding its connotation that refers to the era coming after decolonization, Neocolonialism is much closer to colonialism than postcolonialism. Indeed, Neocolonialism, is a new, as the prefix ‘neo’ implies, form of applying the principles of colonialism on the ex-colonized countries. It connotes ‘the use of economic or political pressure by powerful

countries to control or influence other countries', as explained in the Oxford Dictionary (2010)

Despite its circulation over the past 50 years, the term gained international attention, only with the publication of the Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah's book on neocolonialism (1965). Nkrumah explained the essence of neocolonialism as being of two façades. The first describes the status of the state subject as being officially independent and sovereign, whereas the second unveils its state as being still directed from outside.

A first official definition, however, was provided in 1961 by the All-African-People's Conference defining it as follows:

The survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries, which become victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical means.

(Martin, 1985)

Neocolonialism, in short, is the process of adapting the goals and principles of colonialism to officially independent states so that to assure political, economic and cultural benefits by maintaining the former colonies dependence to Western powers, the thing that allows economic exploitation.

I.2.4. Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory burgeoned from the colonial discourse theorist's work Edward Said, notably his landmark books Orientalism (1978) and Culture and Imperialism (1993). That image of the cultures Europe came into contact with through its imperial experience in the nineteenth century, Said argues, is a Western product. These cultures were presented as the Other. They were not only given the picture of different from the West but also as alien, barbaric, primitive, inferior and savage. Postcolonial theory, developing both from building on and reacting to Said's work, focuses on analyzing and theorizing the fallout and the impact of Western colonialism both on the colonized and colonial countries.

Postcolonial theory has rather been male-centered. It analyzed texts which picture the colonial context as being excessively masculine. Furthermore, those texts were primarily written by British males during the nineteenth century. They present the British colonial agents as full of masculinity and virility, so that to give them the image of imperial rulers, of colonial subjects ready and justified to colonize and rule. Such representation was built on the basis of discriminatory and racist opposition to the feminine Other.

Many feminist theorists, however, have exposed categorical disagreement both on considering postcolonial theory a masculine subject and on describing colonial subjectivity from male's lens. They devoted themselves to penetrate those masculine contours charted by postcolonial theory, and stress the gendered nature of the masculinity developed in favor of colonial males in the colonial context. Hence, there was the birth of postcolonial feminist theory.

I.2.5. Postcolonial literature

Inevitably, due to, and abiding by the colonial legacy of colonialism, the British colonial banner has had a great impact on the emergence and development of what's labeled New Literatures or Postcolonial Literature. Even though when reading postcolonial writings of the previous British colonies, one is capable to feel and trace that indigenous smell and print, still one knows that the former colonizer, in more ways than one, is present and inherent in. Contact with the colonizer and results of this contact have been the main focus attention in almost all postcolonial literature. Albeit, not necessarily all postcolonial works refer to the same issues, they, more or less, mirror series of disruptions the previously-colonized people witnessed at one moment or another. The colonial experience has decided areas of concern for postcolonial pens (2). But, noteworthy is that these pens are of different colors even if are to draw the same tableaux, as sometimes the same tableaux itself does not conform the usually utilized colors. While works by Athol Fugard and Ngugi Wathiong'o are rancorous protests against the colonizers' deeds, the colonial experience is totally ignored in R.F Naray's writings. Aye Kwe Armah, however, portrays the decaying standards in newly independent societies under corrupt officials' dictatorship. As to women's lenses, they reflect their plight as women and envision fair societies, free from sexism and misogyny.

I.2.6. The So-Called Inferior cultures

Culture is a ubiquitous concept and not easy to define. Even when simplistically looked up in the dictionary it is approached to through different angles. In the Oxford Dictionary (2010), culture refers to a particular group's –a group can be defined in terms of various characteristics like politics, geography, ethnicity, religion, age, etc.- or country's set of beliefs, customs, art and social organization that define and differentiate them from other groups or countries. It can mean art, music and literature specific and proper to a group of people. Also, it is the beliefs and attitudes that people in a particular group or organization share about something.

More deeply approached to, culture does not have a single definition. Antony Hooper (2000), for instance defines it as follows:

Culture comprises the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, intellectual and emotional features that characterize society or social groups. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also different modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, values, systems, traditions and beliefs.

Culture, thus, is shared by the members of the group whom it provides with a sense of specificity and belonging. It gives taste and shape to their life style and sets a body of rules and borders to ensure its continuity and order.

In Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism (2001), Sheila Greeve Davaney cites Delwin Brown's claim that culture is continually in motion, being constructed and reconstructed. According to Delwin cultures are 'constantly re-negotiated ensembles of diversity' (Ibid). Culture, then, is pluralistic and dynamic.

Sheila notes there has been a shift away from construing culture as being exclusively the province and the artifact of the elite. The members of a given cultural group are no longer seen as passive consumers of values, meanings and practices imposed upon them. Conversely, they are considered as active producers who participate in its creation, development and spread among its bearers.

Interpreted thus, all cultures of the world are equal, then, for each culture owns its own body of values, and values are relative and hence cannot be absolutized (Bedjaoui, 2005). Thus,

popular cultures are not to be disdained and belittled. Conversely, they are to be conceived of 'as the domain of creative cultural contestation and construction. (Davaney, 2001). Accordingly, one cannot impose one's values on other cultures' bearers, nor can one pretend the superiority of one culture over another. Instead one can present appreciation and recognition of the awesome number of the pathways leading to interpreting a single notion, and take them as part of all mankind's heritage.

Difference is culture's right and recognizing such right means and does a lot to humanity. When people are perceived as being part of a cultural circle, likewise when cultures are granted their incommensurability and weight, Man would not be unfairly judged upon their cultural belonging. In fact, 'one needs to know oneself culturally in order to be in a better position to understand the Other/Alien' (Milani, 1998) (3).

I.3. Feminism

The obvious implication of the term 'feminism' is that it embraces a set of beliefs and ideas that women should be granted an access to men's privileges, and that those men-prescribed privileges must rather be, naturally, universal rights to be enjoyed by both sexes. Yet, such a commonsense understanding has much to lop off Feminism as a concept and as an ensemble of ideas embodied in a welter of feminist theories. Because controversial, heterogeneous and multifaceted, its definition is generally, purposefully, left in abeyance, while an explication of some of its various convergent and sometimes divergent -though they all share the same opponent: patriarchal thinking- trends provides a better entrée to its understanding.

I.3.1. Different Voices, One Goal

Relational feminism, with its double-centered vision, calls for a non-hierarchical, egalitarian society. Its campaigners view women as women. Their rights are basically defined in respect to their biological and social roles. Individualist feminism, on the other hand, has other foci to stress on. Its advocates ask for personal liberty in all domains and aspects of life. They wave

aside every socially-defined role and move that women be equal to men and have like rights, whereas Relational feminists espouse the doctrine of equality in difference. That's to say they claim for equality between men and women with the caveat to respect the acknowledged biological and social differences between the two sexes.

Radical feminism, however, campaigns for eliminating patriarchy being the crux of oppressive, sexist societies. And to end women's oppression, its vanguard namely Shulamith Firestone (1970) believes women should not abandon themselves to such roles as reproduction that fetter them with more societal confines, and shepherd them to the abyss of subjection and dependence. Kate Millet (1970), on another ground, advocates that human beings should be androgynous, meaning that if both men and women have the traits of both sexes -with the suppression of some undesirable traits such as women's submission and men's contempt- women can add enough weight to their dish to keep the balance balanced, and then be able to reassert their hitherto-devoured rights.

In broaching the theme of sexuality, cultural feminists, though coming from the same trunk - Radical feminism- have other words to say. They do not second androgyny. They extol womanly traits and call for separation, in lieu. Women in their mindset should not jeopardize with their loots, and thus should sever any joint with men. Their onslaught on patriarchy takes them not only to transcend social constraints, but even those labeled natural. They propose separation between men and women and favor and support Lesbianism. Unlike the radicals, cultural feminists condemn pornography and see in heterosexuality as leading to sexual harassment, sexual coercion and rape.

As to other trends, one can trace a myriad of other voices each moving and celebrating an idea or ideas, yet all mingling together into a revolutionary chant against women's oppression. While Amazon feminism supports physical equality, Gender feminism tends to exclude men from women's issues and gift women special privileges. Eco-feminism centers on the belief that matriarchy antedates the recently devised system of patriarchy. Moderate feminism, however, consists of those who have not been beset by the blades of segregation, and Black feminism engulfs those whose color of skin has made them bleed twice.

Feminism as a concept is far from being homogeneous and singular. The emergence of a wide range of diversified forms and trends encompasses so many ideas and tenets that the term's use in singular may fail to do justice. Yet, Maggie Humm's words can best summarize its basic premises:

Feminism incorporates diverse ideas which share three major perceptions: that gender is a social construction which oppresses women more than men; that patriarchy shapes this construction; and that women's experiential knowledge is a basis for a future sexist society. These assumptions inform feminism's double agenda: the task of critique (attacking gender stereotypes) and the task of construction. Without this second task sometimes called feminist praxis feminism has no goal.

(Humm 1998)

I.3.2. Three waves of Feminism

The Feminist movement has evolved at a series of temporal phases commonly referred to as 'waves', each of which arose in a particular context and strove to help womankind grow freer and more equal to men.

First-wave feminism stretches from 1850 to 1920 (4). Famous feminists during this period are Elsie Claws Parson, Alice Fletcher and Phyllis Kayberry. They were much concerned with demanding equal rights for the oppressed sex especially the right of suffrage, thus called Suffrage Feminism. Women's combat for their right to have their voice considered in politics is rooted in 1848 with the Seneca Fall Conventions in New York, laying the groundwork for the Suffrage Movement with the Seneca Fall's Declaration. Outlined by Elizabeth Cady Staton, it cast light on women's natural equality with men and moved and seconded women's right to participate more widely in politics.

Women's disenfranchisement meant a server setback thwarting women's reformatory attempts. Therefore, their craving for equal opportunities and more participatory roles in society was only to be quenched with their gain of the right to vote. But, women had to contend with an inherently misogynic world. And that was not an easy task for, de facto, second-class humans. Not to mention Black women's double travail which was still more achingly serious, especially that first-wave feminism was largely composed of white, middle-class, well-educated women (Campbell, 1989). Notwithstanding and for the same token, the very same barricades did, likewise, mean an optimal impetus for women's struggle against women's ostracism in society and politics.

Spanning from the 1960s to the 1980s, second-wave feminism denotes mainly the radical feminism of the Women's liberation Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It, particularly, called for liberating women from the derogatory, oppressive physical culture. Women were victims of male's eyes looking at them as bodies. And while insisting on their beauty, no other side in them was given any interest, thereby belittling them to mere subjects.

Second-wave feminism, or more accurately feminisms, consists of many trends and movements. Major theories during this phase are radical Feminism, cultural Feminism, socialist Feminism and Liberal Feminism (Carolyn Zerbe Enns, Ada Sinacore, 2001). While the principal campaign resulted in an explosion on theories on women's issues, it, nevertheless, was not conducted the same as everywhere in the world. In the US, for instance,

Black feminists' concerns manifested in organizations that aimed to sensitize the world to the issues of gender and race. And in Europe, *Ecriture Féminine* cast aspersions on writing be it also dominated, in more ways than only one, by men, and called instead for a purely feminine writing. Second-wave feminism with the weight it gave women's issues did construct a concrete for another phase of feminism referred to as third-wave feminism.

This latter was introduced to the world with a silver spoon in the mouth. It sprang from first and second waves of feminisms and availed itself of their theories and achievements. More indulged and privileged with a congenial ground to veer onto other gains and rights for the convenience of women, third-wave feminists tend to flaunt their womanliness and determinedly claim for power. They will women to penetrate male-dominated and men-occupied spheres, and not to stick to the obsolete, clichéd conceptions of woman's revolution and evolution. They tend to embrace plurality, diversity and ambiguity. No longer do they fight for women's right for recognition nor do they devote much attention and disquiet on Self/Other dichotomy, or male/master dialectic in phallogentric societies. They, notwithstanding, in furtherance of such and other basic grounds contend that the world is still fraught –with a thin sense of the word, though- with bias and racism.

In a modern world in which technology and science are in perpetual boom, humans are still stripped of the right to decide and define one's identity without having to consider any cultural and societal factors. Queer groups, not only gays and lesbians, but also transsexuals and masculine women and feminine men, drag-queens and drag-kings are still aged with contempt and intolerance. Thus, third-wave feminists' primary concern is to ask for large scale recognition of oppressed groups.

Third-wave feminism shares with both first and second waves of feminism their hunger for women's liberation from the confines of patriarchy and their challenging onslaught on sexism and women's oppression and exploitation. However, proper to it, it comprises more challenge and much more transgressive demands, be it the child of globalization and its effects.

I.3.3. Black feminism

Despite the generic connotation that the term *Feminism* implies, it is overtly clear that the women embraced under its banner are not all and every female of the world. While preoccupied with women's plight between the claws of misogyny and patriarchy, the Black women were let to live their, though direr, pains. Hence, Black Feminism was inevitable and sine qua non as much as flagrant and unfair was feminism's neglect of Black women's issues.

Black feminism was born to voice concern about Black women who were still prey to racial and sexual oppressions in the Women's Movement and the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960s. Faced with intersecting offences, Black women had more to call for and much more to defend. Being part of an oppressed sex that a welter of trends speaks for did not offer them any relief. Nor did their color of skin do the task as black-skinned men campaigned for their rights. Conversely, more pain was gained as they were cast in the caste of the Other of the Other(5)

The Black Feminist Movement accused white feminism for generalizing white women's oppressions to all women. The fact that all women are oppressed simplistically connotes that white women's experiences encompass all those of womankind. While the oppressive forces scourging religious, racial, ethnic and sexual minorities are ignored, an important number of experiences and issues are left in the dark.

A lot of salient points, intrinsic to black people's history, are noteworthy. Unlike her white counterpart, the black woman was victim of colonialism, and citing colonialism opens the list to a shower of problems. If, for instance, work is a woman's right, for many women of color it is more a necessity than a claim. And if women in general are often reduced to second-class humans, Black women are ranked fourth after white women and black men. And then if patriarchy haunts all women; the black color of the skin gnaws every black woman. With

Black feminism, thus, a more, more or less, comprehensive, thorough and pluralistic study of women's issues was intended.

I.3.4. Womanism

Many authors have propounded definitions of Black Feminist Movement, and Alice Walker's is mainly notable for the term, 'Womanism', she coined, which, thereafter, rather than 'black feminism' was favored by many women of color.

'Womanist' comes from the word 'womanish'; a word Walker borrowed from her Black culture. 'Womanish' means, she states (1983),

[A] word our mothers used to describe, and attempt to inhibit strong, outrageous or outspoken behavior when we were children. "You are acting womanish!" A labeling that failed, for the most part for keeping us from acting "womanish" whenever we could, that is to say like our mothers themselves.

A womanist, then, is not 'girlish i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious' she explains. She is responsible enough and determined to vocalize her whole and 'outrageous[ly], audacious[ly], courageous[ly], or willing[ly]' (Ibid) act her role. She is, too, or more properly said most importantly Black. Walker's emphasis on 'womanism' as part of black cultural heritage highlights her intention to relate 'womanism', particularly, to Black women. A womanist, thus is a 'black feminist or a feminist of color' (Ibid)

With 'womanism' Walker did not only mean to eschew Feminism be it intrinsically a white movement. Nor did she, solely, will to endow every womanist with womanish traits. In every attempt she made to expound on it, there was much to enrich its meaning with. In an interview with her she states:

And I like the way it feels in my mouth. I like 'womanist'. I always felt that 'feminism' was sort of an elitist and ethereal and it sounded a little weak.

(1981) (6)

Here Walker implicitly reiterates the same basic thoughts but stresses on its difference from Feminism, which thereby implies its superiority to white feminism. A womanist is not just a brave, outspoken feminist. A womanist is a woman who

loves other women sexually and/ or nonsexually, appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility... and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/ or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female.

(Walker, 1983)

She 'loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the spirit. Loves love and food and roundedness. Loves struggle. Loves the folk. Loves herself. Regardless'(Ibid)

Walker's poetic definition of the term she chose to call the Black Women's Movement with, reflects how diverse and rich in interests and goals Black feminism, or rather the Womanist Movement, was directed to be since its inception in the 20th century.

Though ostensibly intended to condemn patriarchy and misogyny; Feminism, notwithstanding the sea of change it called for in favor of the oppressed sex, was primarily and inherently white in essence. The Black color remained sorrowfully shrouded in darkness and neglect. Badly in want to expunge the traits of inferiority and shame their history with colonialism has wrapped up for them, and stand proud of their Black color and committed to defend the Othered Other in them, women of color garnered every bit of will and strength and broke silence in the 1970s. Major contributors to the movement included Toni Cade Barbara, Angela Davis, Jane Jordon, Toni Morrison and others.

Crucial issues tackled by Black feminism range between those the woman of color shares with every other woman in the world, and those she only shares with her likes. Most specifically the Black Feminist Movement's agenda comprises nuclear disarmament, anti-imperialist and anti-racist organizing, decolonization, reproductive and abortion rights, sterilization abuse, health care, child care, the right of the disabled, violence against women, rape, battering, sexual harassment, welfare rights and equal rights and opportunities for all regardless of sex and race.

I.3.5. Towards a Definition of Femininity

Femininity refers to the ‘fact of being a woman’, as explained in the Oxford Dictionary (2010). In like manner, masculinity means ‘the quality of being masculine’ (Ibid). In other words, femininity and masculinity refer to one’s gender identity; one’s sense of one’s self as belonging to either worlds: man’s and/or woman’s. Nonetheless, it is possible for a male to see himself as feminine, or a female to see herself as masculine.

In most societies of the world, both men and women engage in behaviors which are commonly different and opposite and which their societies associate with masculinity or femininity. Generally, men are aggressive, dominant, assertive, virile, ego-centered, decisive and instrumentally-oriented, whereas women are expressive, submissive, altruistic, weak, emotional, cooperative and inherently delicate. Margaret Mead’s study on people’s temperaments in her *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935), however, shows that male and females of a given society can display traits and behaviors different from what other societies and cultures expect and they are still considered men and women.

Mead supported her theory by studying three societies in New Guinea. Among the Apathes, both men and women exhibited traits one would commonly consider feminine (passivity, expressiveness and cooperation). To the south of the Apathes were the Mundugumor. In this society men and women behaved in the same way, too. Yet, they displayed traits one would attribute with masculinity (inexpressiveness, assertiveness, virility). Finally, among the Thambuli, though men and women displayed opposite traits, their temperaments were opposite to what one would, most generally, expect to be feminine or masculine. Thambuli men were expressive, emotional and submissive, whereas their women were active, instrumental, dominant and managerial.

Mead’s study confirms that masculine and feminine traits are not innate. They are rather based on cultural and societal beliefs that people erroneously think inherent or biological. Thus, one can explain femininity as the degree to which females feel themselves as feminine, and masculinity as the degree to which males feel themselves they are men, all in accordance with their societies’ and cultures’ conception of the terms ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’.

I.3.6. Feminism on Femininity

Woman has always been depicted as being made from man's supernumerary bone. She, Simone de Beauvoir (1949) propounds, is 'an accidental being' and an 'imperfect man' as pronounced to be by St. Thomas, or a 'female by virtue of certain lack of qualities' as seen by Aristotle's eyes. In most cultures she is viewed not as an autonomous being, but as relative to man: the superior, the Subject and the Absolute, while she is the inferior, the Object and the Other. She is 'the angel in the house' (7), altruistic, weak, emotional, irrational, submissive, passive and dependent. That is what it is believed woman is. Is it what really her femininity prescribes, one may wonder? Does another, different, less negative and more positive and fair as it should be, femininity exist? If yes, what is it? And what should be done so that to inoculate humans against old convictions about woman, her femininity, and her world?

If femininity is a society-made construct, woman is then a social construct (8). She opens her eyes to a world in which she is supposed to act in accordance with what it, at random, has been decided it is her and her attributes. Indeed identity is forged in large measures from others' eyes and judgments. And it is here where the drama of womankind lies, De Beauvoir (1949) states; 'in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego) who always regards the self as the essential, and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential'

One of the pioneers of feminist literary criticism, Virginia Woolf (1990) urged every woman writer to 'kill the angel in the house'. True killing that society-made angel is of paramount importance to woman's liberation from patriarchal mindset, but neither patriarchy is the sole jump woman has to vault over, nor is 'killing the angel' of the house sufficient to revamp the existing order. And that is another barricade, per se in need to be sorted out.

Feminist daring cry against woman's devalued image does not suffice in repudiating phallocentrism. Woman needs being purged of her knowledge about herself. She needs to steer an internal war to cleanse her subconscious mind of every conviction she imbibed under the aegis of her patriarchal grounds. It is that Other in her she needs to dispute. It is that sort of happiness and stability she feels as she plays the role or the Other she needs to renounce. Woman has her dreams. It is time she stops dreaming 'through the dreams of men' (de

Beauvoir, 1949). The ‘angel’ of the house, thus, has to be killed by the ‘angel’ herself, lest her likes would not do much as intended it should be done.

Notwithstanding, some feminists, Rebecca F. Stern (2009) infers, sought to appropriate several of the female attributes to characterize a uniquely female power and creativity, so that to work towards various political ends in favor of woman and her issues. In the 1970s, French feminist theorists, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray worked on exploring the potential for a purely feminine style of writing which they called *écriture féminine*. The feminine language, they describe as being composed of what is specifically female i.e. repetition, rhythm and sounds and as being more open-ended than its masculine counterpart, they argued can offer a way to shake up the status quo.

Another camp of feminists, however, called for the elimination of some traits deemed undesirable -both in woman and man- and believed androgyny is the best substitution to the so-called femininity and masculinity. Whereas, many other feminists suggested woman needs to call for the valuation of feminine strengths as nurturing, healing powers and connectedness, instead of striving to access masculine power. (Ibid)

If humans are of two types: male and female; men and women, why is it precisely that woman has to be what ‘woman’ is commonly believed to be? Why not man? Was it ever possible that man was to be spoken about now instead of ‘woman’? Was it only randomly drawn, or it is the effect of nature? But what is ‘woman’? And what and who made her be what and who ‘woman’ is? Woman is different from man, one may respond, but so is man. Woman does not have a phallus. But, man does not have clitoris, a womb, breasts, and ovaries. If thus things are, then where does it lie that big defect that makes ‘woman’ a woman?

I.3.7. Female Identity

Ambiguous and slippery, the term ‘identity’ comes from the Latin word ‘idem’ which means the same. Notwithstanding, even difference is an inherent connotation of the term. Identity in the dictionary (Oxford, 2010) means ‘who or what somebody or something is’; a definition that stresses and implies the uniqueness and constancy of each individual’s identity. One’s name, for instance, or even sex and race, ancestors and origins are unchangeable attributes of

who they are. Thereby, one's self-consciousness of who they are, likewise other people's definition of them are, more or less, fixed data and not likely to change over time.

Yet, 'identity' is, too, 'the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others' (Ibid). Hence, Identity is not only something that distinguishes one individual from another, but also that segments people into groups according to what they have in common as religion, race, language, cultural belonging, etc. And when one speaks of national identity, cultural identity and gender identity, that means that 'identity' is one's feeling of which group one belongs to, and what one shares with what one assumes are one's likes. In short, identity can be constructed both in terms of sameness and in terms of difference. For feminism, however, Carolyn A. Nadeau (2009) argues, both terms are relevant for they both gesture to the aspired equality of women and the necessity to conceive of women as different.

During the 1960s and 1970s, feminist definition of woman's identity was articulated in terms of women's common experience as oppressed beings (Ibid). It was time when feminists believed in women's shared goal, which was to create fair societies free of sexism and male domination. In *Three Guineas* (1939), Virginia Woolf says: 'As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world'. Woolf's words speak of women all as one with universal experience and universal goals and destinies. It was, too, the period during which feminists were celebrating the uniqueness of the female body as a site of authority and power, debunking old views on its inadequacy and imperfection. (Ibid)

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, white feminism was criticized of its disregard of crucial points as race, class, ethnicity and nationality. *Identity*, hence, was re-examined with focus on its differences, instead. In Woman, Native, Other (1989), Trinh T. Minh-ha argues that the pattern of sameness in defining 'identity' neglects the deviations and differences that contribute in constructing the 'I'. Judith Butler (1990), also, posits that that 'we' feminists use in referring to women is but a 'phantasmagoric construction' (9). Identity, she maintains, should no longer be thought of as inert and unchanging. (Ibid)

Defining female identity entails examination and analysis of the way it is affected by social, political, and personal institutions. Humans are the products of their environments which surely differ from one group to another and from one individual to another. And that cannot have no or even minor effects to deserve being cut out in considering one's identity.

I.3.8. Women's studies

Our globe has historically been made up of male-dominated societies. Thus, men have always been the producers of knowledge, while women, from their lot in the margin, have never been exempt from oppression and injustice. Hence, what we count as objective knowledge is but biased reports; the handicraft of men and usually white heterosexual men. Aiming to work on a revamping of society that would grant women freedom from the shackles of patriarchal men-worded knowledge, and then to challenge and critique the existing knowledge and query on the absence of the female voice and meditations in the existing academic disciplines, Women Studies evolved. It emerged first in the US in the second half of the 1960s.

The American feminist Catherine MacKinnon, on the body of knowledge prior to feminism, states 'men create the world from their own point of view, which then becomes the truth to be described' (1982) (10). Not solely this point did she refer to. She went further and suggested that even when women are part of knowledge construction, still male influence is traced on deciding which aspect of the universe is worth for study and analysis. Before 1970s, for instance, Mary Maynard (1998) explains, much sociology in the US and Britain was wrapped up in what is of relevance to men, whereas women's issues and experiences had to wait for Women's Studies to be conferred legitimacy and to be, as proper as it has to be, brought into the picture by conducting practical research to redress the situation.

Prior to Women's Studies, too, women could not understand and act their part in the world. The social world, Dorothy Smith (1987) espousing McKinnon's stance, explains is of two halves; one is male while the second is male-dependent, still subordinate and never autonomous, though specifically female (11). Male's influence barred women not only of their right to enjoy their space within their own space, but even of their right to believe and know it is their right. Such uneven distribution of attention and influence however was the initial impetus to Women's Studies to challenge and strive to blow every conviction and belief the world had imbibed under the aegis of phallogentric, gender-blind belief systems.

Women's Studies have evolved at three interrelated phases (Maynard, 1998)). During the first; the recuperative phase, women's experiences, issues and lives were granted great attention and concern. Aims were centered to contest the stereotypical, marginalizing portrayal of women in historical, social sciences, literary and cultural studies. The second

phase, however, was reconstructive. Conversely, it poured more heed on new areas of interest such as sexuality, violence against women, the nature of patriarchy and the relationship between gender power and gender hierarchies.

While the second phase largely involved in raising certain substantial issues and generating new concepts and theories, the third; the reflexive, phase paid some, most often, un-trodden areas meditative visits. The idea was that Women's Studies had not casted its net as wide as it had to be. Whereas, The white women were prioritized with the lion's share in the sum of attention Women's Studies devoted for women's lives and experiences, other categories such as women of color, lesbians and Third World women were still abiding the margin.

That women had to get released from the muffling restraints de facto imposed on them by their sexist, misogynic societies is one of the core targets of Women's Studies. And that these restraints engender an uneven, partial, gender-blind, de facto labeled, 'equilibrium' of the world is a concrete Women's Studies is based upon. Yet, women are of every part of the globe and every part is a unique sphere. Hence, any woman is not every woman; a tenet that has made Women's Studies even more complex and multifaceted.

I.3.9. Ecriture Féminine

The concept of *écriture féminine* was propounded by Hélène Cixous in her seminal essay 'Le Rire de la Meduse' (1975), translated as 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1976). By *écriture féminine*, Cixous meant to propose an alternative path for women through which women can challenge and penetrate the constraining structures of androcentric discourse, and regain voices silenced throughout history.

Women throughout history have been victims of a male-chauvinistic world. Held with contempt and believed to be innately subordinate to men, they were consigned to the obscure periphery of the glob's interests, and unfairly had their voices amputated, all in the name of gender differences and hierarchies. Hélène Cixous was brought face to face with misogyny for the first time in Paris. About it she wrote: 'I abruptly learned that my unacceptable truth in this world was my being a woman. Right away it was war. I felt the explosion, the odour of misogyny.' (Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle Gruber, 1997). Cixous, hence and henceforth,

while delving into the relationship between gender and humans' pens, devised the concept of *écriture féminine*; a new form of writing by the way of which she sought to unlock the shackles of patriarchy and set women free from the restrictions of masculine language .

Écriture féminine is about the female body speaking about the woman inside every female as seen by her and worded by her. It is a journey into woman's self; the Other in her. It is a path leading towards reflection on the grounds of phallogentric thinking. Écriture feminine as a concept allows the latent womanly voice to speak against patriarchy and misogyny.

Hélène Cixous (1975) praises and admires woman's diffuse and superior sexuality. 'Woman' she says 'does not bring about the same regionalization' as men's sexuality that 'gravitates around the penis'. Cixous believes woman, in order to construct a new discourse that would voice out the pleasure of woman's repressed sexuality, can sustain power from her psychosexual specificity that differentiates her from men. She insists on woman's libidinal drives in her unconscious and links them to her female language:

Oral drive, anal drive, vocal drive—all these drives are our strengths... -just like the desire to write: a desire to live self from within, a desire for the swollen belly, for language, for blood.

(Ibid) (12)

Julia Kristeva_ the psychoanalyst, the university teacher of Linguistics, one of the founding members of *Tel Quel* (a semiotic-Marxist journal), and the author of many works on language, philosophy and avant-garde writers_ however, maintains that woman's role is to emanate a challenging and disapproving attitude towards the existing discourse in lieu of creating a new one. 'Such an attitude', she expounds, 'places women on the side of the explosion of social codes: with revolutionary movements' (1974) (13). Resistance to phallogentric oppression, she argues, happens in the form of re-experiencing the repressed physical drives and pleasures that overcome and survive masculine controls and societal pressures that women writers channel to see the light in what she labels 'semiotic discourse' (14) and that she considers as an incestuous defiance to the existing order. Women, for her for a couple of reasons, are noticed to write and speak as 'hysterics' and outsiders to men's discourse; first because of their marginality and second in response to the anal and childbirth drives still predominant in them.

Conversely, for Luce Irigaray -a psychoanalyst and, once, a member of l'Ecole Freudienne at Vincennes university in Paris- women have to assert their autoeroticism to dispute the order that stands, and subvert phallogentrism, since woman, she argues, 'to arrive at the point where she can enjoy her pleasure as a women, a long detour by the analysis of the various systems that oppress her is certainly necessary' (1977) (15). She insists on the difference between woman and men. Woman, in her words, 'experiences pleasure almost everywhere' because she 'has sex organs just about everywhere' (ibid). If woman, she argues, comes to express her sexuality in itself and for herself and speak about it -things, hitherto, she has had no access to- she can found a new basis for considering the standing phallogentric concepts and laws.

Ann Rosalind Jones (1985), however, sees things from different lenses, as she finds it worth considering some of the objections against *féminité* and *l'écriture féminine*. Resting, in expounding her view, on psychoanalytic theory, she argues that the female sexuality does not antedate nor does it exist in spite of social experience. She is, rather, for the view that the identity is sexed in accordance with social structures beginning with the nuclear family. Hence, sexuality is a social construct and never gets shaped in isolation. Rosalind does not seek to deny the fact that female physiology and sexuality do have their own importance that must be spoken about in lieu of surrendering to men's views on them. Yet, her words counter those said by Irigaray and Cixous who believe women have to start from their sexuality in order to bring to the fore what masculinity has done to them. The female body, for her, must not be viewed as the best site women can launch their onslaught on male and social controls on female sexuality from.

Besides to the psychoanalytic critique of the concept of *féminité*, as seen by Irigaray's and Cixous' eyes, other French women have shown a strong opposition to what is labeled *néo-féminité*. Materialist feminists such as Christine Delphy and Colette Guillaumin assert that through positing women in opposition to what *féminité* defines men with, and then celebrating what differ one pole from the other; men are still attributed the glory of a referent. In this regard, Monique Wittig, as suspicious she seems of the oppositional mindset that defines women, says: "woman' does not exist for us; it is only an imaginary formation while 'women' is the product of social relationship' (1979) (16)

L'écriture feminine and *féminité*, Rosalind carries on noting, are so vital though problematic concepts. Admittedly, women are in need to dispute all the maligning and contemptuous attitudes towards female sexuality as they are in want, too, for a more polemical and

energizing *féminité*. Yet, Rosalind argues, it would be more beneficial if one recognizes women's writings 'as a conscious response to socio-literary realities, rather than accept it as an overflow of woman's unmediated communication with the body' (1985), so that it becomes consumable by both writers and readers as woman does not only write for herself to meet *jouissance* through writing.

I.3.10. Feminist Theory

The globe has historically been made up of men-centred societies. Men were always the producers of knowledge while women were often only spoken about or referred to when men's pens and minds decided to. Feminist theory entails challenging all what have been framed by men and seeks to generate a new knowledge about women as perceived by women. It aims to analyze the conditions and concepts which shape women's world so that to explore and question cultural assumptions of what it means to be female.

Feminism has always been far from homogeneity, thereby there exist not just one angle to contemplate feminist theories from. In considering feminists' political/ideological commitment the feminist trends i.e. feminisms can be equated with what is labeled feminist theories, whereas, when only focusing on their theoretical orientation, assuming that it comes prior to political/ideological presupposition, feminist theory, one notes, has been the arena of a dense and intense theoretical speculation. And a myriad of theories such as Queer theory, Standpoint theory, Object relations theory, Performative theory... etc, is worth being considered.

Noteworthy too, however, is that the core concern of all these theories regardless of which ground they stand on and the diagnosis they posit for the case under study (the case of women and their devalued status), is one and the same. It is to revolt against the oppressive status quo, and work on changing bitter realities in favor of the historically oppressed group of humans (i.e. women).

I.3.11. Post-colonial Feminist Theory

Post-colonial feminist theory has emerged in reaction to the neglect of gender issues in the body of post-colonial theory, and also to the universalizing mainstream of western feminism. It has shed light on women's concerns and experiences in different cultural and national contexts away from the usually common concern with white, middle-class, English speaking women. It has also urged post-colonial theorists to carry out analysis on the issues of gender. As Ann McClintock explains:

Imperialism cannot be understood without a theory of gender power. Gender power was not the superficial patina of empire, an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive mechanics of class or race. Rather gender dynamics, were from the outset fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise.

(McClintock 1995) (17)

More importantly, however, is the fact that post-colonial theory has started to develop a position of its own, from which it can speak and decide the issues it aims to address, instead of simply being perceived as just critiquing mainstream western feminism or post-colonial theory.

I.3.12. Postcolonial Literature and Feminist Literature

When the curtains went down on the European colonial campaign during the 20th century, the previously-colonized countries were the scene of far-reaching upheavals. They sank into a turbulent age of confusion and disillusionment. The sole glimmer -they got out with from their war against colonialism- still shining in the wake of their independence, and accompanying their sense of freedom was people's prise de conscience. Woman's freed voice, however, is her loot of a war she declared against, and is still in, with her tormentors. Postcolonial and feminist literatures are the embodiment of people's awakening and challenging stand on issues of gender, class and race hierarchies and sexuality.

Both postcolonial writings and feminist texts are literatures of resistance, as both did underpin their emergence with people's longstanding suffering under the aegis of their oppressors.

They call every oppressed being, even after turning the swords into ploughshares, to carry on fighting tyranny and discrimination

Postcolonial woman is not solely victim to colonization as her male counterpart is. She is, also, entrapped in sexist societies which continuously assign her to the margin. Postcolonial feminist literature, therefore, focuses on issues of women's quest for liberation from sexism and male hegemony. It sheds light, likewise, on women's experiences away from their homelands, women's struggle to cope with and adapt to new cultures, while striving to preserve their identity and cultural heritage. It devotes itself to

explore women's sexualized and realized otherness by locating their marginality and oppression with a three-tiered structure of discrimination maintained by colonial and neocolonial indigenous patriarchies,

(Code, 2003) (18)

added to the claimed superiority of Western Feminism.

In Culture and Imperialism Said (1993) confirms:

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination.

Western civilization strove hard to make its imperial mission durable. It sustained power and commitment from making subordinates who served to nurse its Prospero Complex (19), all along its mission in the primordial world; the Orient, the Other. This latter, indeed, was regarded as feminine body which just like any woman is to be penetrated, possessed and controlled.

Being part of this effeminized Orient and those cultures deemed savage and inferior by the colonial legacy, Third world woman became the subaltern who was denied a voice. Postcolonial women writings represent the emblem of woman's battle for the sake of liberating her free-born, but for-so-long-subjected, twice-colonized and perhaps not yet doubly-decolonized, being.

I.3.13. Postmodernism vs. Postcolonialism and Feminism

Postmodernism is not easier, nor simpler to define than feminism and post-colonialism. It is a reaction against modernism, with new avant-garde. In identifying its essential targets, Michel Foucault writes; ‘All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities in human existence’ (1988). ‘It is meaningless to speak in the name of or against Reason, Truth, or Knowledge’, he adds (May 1993). Reason to Foucault is ‘the ultimate language of madness’ (1965). Its vanguard deconstruct reality, truth and reason because for them ‘Reason and Power’, Jean François Lyotard says ‘are one and the same’. Both are euphemistically synonymous with ‘prison, prohibition, selection process’ (1999). Being where reason and power have prevailed, Western civilization has wrought damage and deconstruction in the name of reality, truth and reason. Postmodernist writings, thus, display a thematic focus on those who have tasted the “horrors” of those whose hands are on the whip of power. Women and racial minorities are the intended groups who better know how bitter males’ and whites’ oppression is. Yet, postmodernism, though the value it gives to the margin, it is described as ‘that thought which refuses to turn the Other into the same’ (During 1987)

In drawing connections between postcolonialism and postmodernism, Jillian Anne Furness (2011) debates range between whether postcolonialism is a ‘child’ (20), as worded by Arif Dirlik, of postmodernism, or it is its very antithesis. Apart from their contemporaneous emergence in the second half of the twentieth century, both postmodernist and postcolonial texts call special attention to the notion of Otherness and marginalization. Yet, it’s worth noting that postmodernism, though it contests centralism and hegemony, it does acknowledge the power of the center over the margin, as it acknowledges the backwardness of some cultures. Geertz (1973) posits ‘understanding a culture is tantamount to reading an alien, faded, incomplete manuscript full of contradictions, questionable amendments and tendentious commentaries’

Other views on postcolonialism, however, make of the Western Academy the putative designer of both movements. Arif Dirlik’s view on postcoloniality as ‘the condition of the intelligentsia of global capitalism’ (21) implies that postcolonialism is a First World Academy’s invention. Postcolonial writers for Kwame Anthony Appiah are but ‘a relatively small Western-trained, Western-style group’ (1997) (22). Such views, indeed, make of both movements Eurocentric models.

Another aspect of postmodernism is the emergence of Marxist, Psychologist and feminist criticism. As to feminism much can be said if possible links with postcolonialism are to be investigated. Both feminism and postcolonialism encode within their literatures the notion of resistance. Both literatures broach issues of subjugation and Otherness. Being the victims of both indigenous masculinity and the colonial experience, postcolonial woman's aspiration to realize her space is postcolonial feminism's core issue. Noteworthy too, is that feminism and postmodernism converge since they both question the status quo. Yet, postmodernism is, some feminist critics claim, apolitical and ahistorical, unlike feminism that propounds and seconds socio-cultural changes.

The literature that depicts the colonized man as primitive, backward and ignorant, and carries disparaging images on his world, and that which speaks of women as self-effacing subordinates and subject creatures is that which, Ngugi Wathiong'o in Moving the Center states, has 'more poisonous' effects 'than the poison in the most academic works of learned men... and all other heroes of the imperialist intellectual establishment' (1993). 'The writing of literature, the criticism of literature, the teaching of literature' he in concluding his article writes 'ought to be part and parcel of a total and relentless struggle against the material base of racism which in today's world means capitalism and imperialism' (Ibid). Admittedly, both feminist and postcolonial texts are part and parcel of subjected people's struggle against oppression and racism. Postmodernism, on the other hand, is attentive and sympathetic to those who quest to full membership in the human race. Notwithstanding, in acknowledging the marginality of the margin, it exhibits, however covertly it does, an imperialist strategy towards the margin as it is comprised of the 'material base' that may result in maintaining the status quo.

I.4. Conclusion

However explicit it may appear, explaining Post-colonialism does not solely rely on simply looking the term *post* up in any dictionary. Nonetheless, though slippery and difficult to pin down, 'the term *post-colonialism* shapes history as a set of stages along a time from the *pre* to the *post*.' (Bedjaoui, 2005). It is a concept that grew out of a myriad of elements in the world history, to reflect the experiences and aspirations coming from a hitherto muted part of the

world, reaping the benefits of new conditions to look for an altogether new vantage point from which to reassess the past and the future.

In, more or less, the same way, Feminism was the child of circumstances and changes; a configuration of experiences and insights, of hopes and dreams arising from the part of so-long-silenced and oppressed beings (i.e. women). Likewise, taking advantages from new conditions in the world history, its aim is to search for new alternatives to the misogynistic discourses of phallogentrism. It is not homogenous and not easy to define, too. That is why most often an exploration of its various trends is necessary to attain a better explanation of it.

In the realm of literature, *postcolonialism* and *feminism* address preoccupations with the consequential marks of colonization and oppression on the oppressed people, and with issues of race and gender that stress women and the previously colonized countries. Both are literatures of resistance. And both repudiate de facto inequalities, and challenge commonly acknowledged conventions implanted in people's minds for ages.

In practice, women seem to have been more fortunate than their male counterparts, with a bigger share of colonization and oppression. Despite the wide convergence of their ideas and goals, the previously colonized man was victim to only one oppressor –however the many times they have been colonized- whereas the once-colonized woman was prey to indigenous colonization before, hence doubly-colonized. Woman's voice had more to fight against and many demands to call for. Therefore, so laden with thorns and barricades, her way has been. In particular, her role in challenging her oppressors, and too, the obstacles that have been thwarting her way towards a fairer world will be explored, to some extent, in the ensuing chapters concerned.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

- (1) Caliban, in Shakespeare's The Tempest, is the native inhabitant of the island visited by Prospero. He is portrayed as an imperfect man, ignorant, inferior, and wicked. In Aimé Césaire's Une Tempête (1969), however, he is pictured as a colonized who struggles for the independence of his land.
- (2) In The Emergence of African Fiction (1978), Charles R. Larson explains the different areas of concern focused on by African writers after the coming of the White man to Africa. Except those few novels written prior to colonization, the initial stage was to refer to the initial stages of colonial rule, and the Africans confrontation with Western religion, such as in Achebe's Things Fall Apart. Second, there were novels that dealt with the problems of adaptation to the Western education. Cheikh Hamidou Kane's Ambiguous Adventure is an example. A further stage focused on the effects of urbanization on the African and the African mode of life; best typified by Cyprian Ekwensi's Lagos. Next, were novels concerned with issues of nation-building before and after independence; as Achebe's A Man of the People, and Peter Abraham's A Wreath for Udomo, while the last subject area was directed to tackle a more individualized life style of the African individual, as in Armah's Fragments.
- (3) Cited in Bedjaoui, F. (2005) 'Femininity between Illusion and Social Construction: The Case of Indian Prose Writing'. Doctorate Thesis. Sidi Bel Abes University.
- (4) In The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory (2011), the first wave of feminism is mentioned to have began from the end of the twentieth century up to the beginning of the twentieth century. It, however, in Encyclopedia of Women and Gender (2002), is said to have spanned the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.
- (5) If woman is regarded as the Other, the black woman, deemed inferior to the white white woman, is this latter's Other. Hence, she is the Other to who is perceived of as the Other.
- (6) Cited in Brum, U.G. master thesis on Sexual Blinding of Women: Alice Walker's

- African Character Tashi and the Issue of Female Genital Cutting. (2005: 19)
- (7) 'In Professions for Women' (1990), Virginia Woolf suggests every woman writer to take on two important missions: first, to kill that society-devised 'angel in the house'; and second, to 'tell the truth about her experience as a body'
- (8) "'Woman" the myth... does not exist for us; it is only an imaginary formation, while "women" is the product of a social relationship', Monique Wittig (1979) explains. Not to deny the biological features that make woman a different being from man, but 'woman' she has come to be regarded as constructed by culture and society, by attributing to her socially-decided attributes that affirm her subordination and set stage to her oppression.
- (9) the term 'phantasmagoria' in the dictionary (Oxford, 2010) means 'a changing scene of real or imagined figures... as seen in a dream or created as an effect in a film'. Judith Butler posits that 'we' used to refer to all women as one body sharing the same experiences, destiny, is *phantasmagoric*, for women are not different and do not all have the same lives, however their history with patriarchy may help embrace them all under one banner of the oppressed sex.
- (10) Cited in Stevi Jackson's Contemporary Feminist Theories (1998: 141)
- (11) Ibid: 249
- (12) Cited in Anne Rosalind Jones's 'Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of L' Ecriture Féminine'. (1981: 366)
- (13) Ibid: 363
- (14) Ibid
- (15) Ibid:364
- (16) Ibid: 370
- (17) Cited in Stevi Jackson's Contemporary Feminist Theories (1998: 100)
- (18) Cited in Bedjaoui, F. (2005) 'Femininity between Illusion and Social Construction: The Case of Indian Prose Writing'. Doctorate Thesis. Sidi Bel Abes University.
- (19) Octave Mnnoni, in his Prospero and Caliban: the Psychology of Colonialism (1964),

explains 'Prospero Complex' as those unconscious neurotic tendencies that describe the Portrait of the paternalistic, racist colonial who believes his daughter was victim of an attempt of rape by the inferior native slave.

(20) Jillian Anne Furness in her Master thesis on *Where the Postmodern Meets the Post-Colonial: I. Allan Sealy's Fiction after Trotter-nama* (2001) refers to Afif Dirlik's view as being quoted in *Loomba* (2005)

(21) Ibid

(22) So is the case with Kwame Appriah's view.

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter Two

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Chapter Two

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

II.1. Introduction

The Canadian writer, Margaret Atwood, drew the story of her novel; *The Handmaid's Tale*, on certain historical verities, she found deserving of attention. Woven to meet the light in the near future Gilead, the synthesis of the events of the period, is a seventeenth-century-like society which the writer used to envision a Utopia; the 1980s New Religious Fundamentalists craved to realize in America in reaction to the transcendent growth of the Women's Movement then, which, likewise, she intentionally shepherded towards the realization of some of their projects.

Between the one and the other different landscapes in the American history need being presented so as to know how each was given birth and for which ends, and how that while standing counter to the other, one was either giving birth or stimulating a re-birth of the other. In two different and opposing agendas, the Women's Movement in its second wave, and the New Religious Right echoed their divergent demands in favor of what each saw good for America and the American society. Therefore, in two sections each stand will be talked about and explored. Yet, it is first important to go back to seventeenth-century-America to trace the beginnings of Puritanism in one section, and women's quest to gain liberty from oppression in religion in another.

II.2. The New World's Faith

In *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Nathaniel Hawthorne does not only tell about Hester Prynne, and her affair with Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale. He, also, takes the reader's mind on a journey to the American History in its early part. Pious and careful about following God's path, it was the land of those zealots who fled their homelands and sought more religious zeal and commitment. Puritanism formed a typical feature of the American landscape, as it shaped a whole society in accordance with its very zealous theological principles and laws. It, nevertheless, has its roots away from the ground it abode, just as its agents did have them outside its borders.

II.2.1 Roots of Puritanism

Calvinism or The Reformed Faith, as it is also labeled, is one of many other Protestant branches that comprises of the teachings of the French Protestant theologian John Calvin. The roots of Calvinism lie with the sixteenth-century religious reform in Europe. It burgeoned as a reaction against, and with the principal intent to purge the medieval Roman Catholic Church of doctrinal errors. Calvinism stresses the glory and sovereignty of God and seeks to think and apply God's thoughts and words. It, likewise, strives to revive the church's New Testament origins.

Even though the Reformation seems to have flown out of Martin Luther's theses through which he came to understand the definitive doctrine of the Reformation, Europe was ground for past attempts for renewal. Forerunners of the Reform Faith all stood against the violations and abuses of Roman Catholicism and all had the same intents and watchwords. (Joel R. Beek, 2008)

Protestantism branched into Lutheranism and Calvinism when Luther and Ulrich Zwingli couldn't argue on the nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper during Marburg Colloquy in 1529 (ibid). Thereby, with Ulrich Zwingli and later Heinrich Bullinger and John Calvin, Calvinism launched its first cry in Switzerland. Due to his influential leadership and seminal works in the systemization of the Reformed Faith and because of Zwingli's early

death, the Reformation was attributed to John Calvin (1509_1564). A second generation reformer and its most influential proponent, Calvin could steal the limelight that his colleagues willingly conferred leadership upon him. Henceforth, the term Calvinism became synonymous and most of the time a surrogate name to the Reformed Faith.

II.2.2. The Journey of Calvinism in the World

Calvinism made substantial inroads into various parts of Europe: Germany, Poland, Netherland, Hungary, Scotland and England, with attempts sometimes to staunch its profuse flowering that stood the test of time, and sometimes to promote its pervasive and exponential spread. In England, Henry viii (1491-1547), blinded by his hope to divorce and produce an heir, allowed religious reformation. It was mild, though. During the reign of his children, the New Faith witnessed sequels of upheavals, the bleakest of which was when Bloody Mary (1553-1558) was on the throne. Mary reversed every gain and every try of reformation during her brother's reign - Edward VI (1547-1553). Her half sister Elizabeth (1553-1603), however, strove to maintain Britain's moderate climate of Protestantism. She disappointed every ardent hope to reinstate the reforms that began under Edward VI, and persecuted those stalwart and fervent reform adherents and worked to suppress their resident reform zeal. Elizabeth's moderate and mild type of reform was disappointing to many. Hence, a more vigorous and thorough Calvinism, disparagingly named Puritanism, was given birth.

By the way of New England Puritans who escaped religious persecution and strove to be faithful to the Scripture in their worship and government, in order to construct a biblical nation, Puritanism, eventually, took hold of the British colonies in North America. Calvinism prevailed mostly in North America; the fact that made it one of the sturdiest and most extensive strongholds of the Reformation movement next to Germany, Hungary, The Netherlands and Great Britain.

II.2.3. Defining Puritanism

Puritanism is a kind of a robust Calvinism, ‘an evangelical holiness movement’ (J. I. Packer, 1996) (1), that believed the Church of England had not done enough, nor did it go as far as it had to do in its reformation. The term ‘Puritan’ does not only connote purification of the Church of humans-made corruptions of the faith. Historically, it was variously employed. When it came to usage for the first time in 1564 (Erroll Hulse, 1996), it was derisively applied to notorious groups of separatists. But, it was used to described ‘rebellious members of the Church of England who desired some modifications in church government and worship, but not ... those who deliberately removed themselves from that Church’, as well (Randal C. Gleason and Kelly M. Kapio, 2004). ‘Puritan’ also meant those who were scrupulous about conforming to God’s words, and in the Oxford dictionary a ‘Puritan’ is pictured as someone ‘who has very strict moral attitudes and who thinks that pleasure is bad’ (2010).

Spirituality and piety constitute the anvil upon which Puritanism was developed. It, John Spurr (n.d)explains:

Grows out of the individual’s conviction that they have been personally saved by God, elected to salvation by merciful God for no merit of their own; and that, as a consequence of this election, they must lead a life of visible piety must be a member of a church modeled on the pattern of the New Testament.(2)

Puritanism, at heart, lays stress on making the community an example of zealous Christian society, thus entails great focus, first and most importantly, on godly conduct within the family so that it assures the wellbeing of the whole society.

II.2.4. Puritan family

Puritans were exhorted to show zealous adherence to godly family duties. Fuelled by the conviction of female vulnerability and sinfulness, the husband was a quasi-priest within his household whereas the wife was instructed to courtesy in subjection to male authority. An ideal wife’s life was likened to that of a snail. Her foremost duty was to entirely confine

herself to care for and about her family. An ideal wife's conduct meant continuity and discipline within the basic frame of the Puritan nation. It ensured Divine order in regards to gender roles and duties.

Puritan divinity encouraged a harsh segregationist social discipline and promoted patriarchal authority. Samuel Clarke (1677) describes the way his wife conducted in his presence; she 'never rose from the table even when they were alone, but she made courtesy. She never drank to him without bowing. His word was a law unto her.' (3)

Noteworthy, however, is that Puritanism did similarly strive to promote loving and cooperative marital partnerships. True women had to 'submit [themselves] unto [their] husbands, as unto the Lord', but husbands were bound to 'love [their] wives even as Christ also loved the Church' (5:23-5) (4).

II.2.5. Puritans and women

'[The] founding fathers blinded by the prevailing myths of male privilege' Cynthia Grant Tucker (2006) explains, 'failed to see ... the concepts that all persons are equal with the right to express themselves freely ... also applied to their mothers, wives and daughters'. Such a quotation is likely to laconically word woman's experience and status in the Puritan tradition. Even though the Puritan reformers upheld a radical theology that recognized the equality of souls before the Creator; woman was never granted a status equal to that of man. All their views pertaining to woman, and her conduct in social life were conformable to the rampant assumption of man's superiority

Subsumed with male superior identity, she was a subordinate and a second-rank being. She had no space, life and ideas nor property for her own; away from men's supreme authority. Her submissive and docile comportment was the essence of a well-ordered Puritan family. Woman's voice was, in full measure, muzzled in obedience and homage to the divinely-ordained womanly attributes. She could not exercise authority over men, and was not allowed to speak in church, because she was thought to be intellectually weaker. Hence, she was exempt from male-related skills such as writing and preaching.

Yet, history tells of Ann Hutchinson (1591-1643) who challenged the Puritan theology and gender hierarchies by assuming religious authority. But, history tells, likewise, of her, brought to trial because she has, in a clergy man's words, (Rosemary, 2006) 'stept out of [her] place, [she has] rather bine [been] a husband than a wife, and a preacher than a hearer'

The only power, it was acknowledged she enjoyed over man, was her capacity to seduce and tempt him. This is not to admit man's vulnerability to woman, however, but rather to insist hers to Satan. Woman's presence for man was also of great necessity. About women John Cotton (1699) said:

Women are creatures without which there is no comfortable living for man: it is true of them that what is wont to be said of governments, that bad ones are better than none: they are sort of blasphemers then who dispose and decry them and call them a necessary evil, for they are a necessary good. (5)

Such acknowledgement of women's essential role in man's life, however, is even more disparaging. Women got sufficient dose on their status as low orders. Seen by the Puritan Fathers, woman was not a different being. Man stepped not an inch away from his top rank, and woman gained no severance of her dependent connections with men. Only the androcentric models of humanity were fleshed out to people in religious apparel.

II.2.6. The Puritans and Sex

Sex in the Puritan mindset is part of human nature. It is a necessity that only marriage can provide. The Puritans insisted its importance for both men and women that any withdrawal from or denial of conjugal rights, on the part of husband or wife, was condemned as an offense. Even the most puritanical of the Puritans considered sex as a healthy pleasure just like food and drink. The only limitation to sexual intercourse in marriage is that it must not take away from God's path, or hinder Man's foremost pre-occupation which is to glorify God and act His Words; not to mean an ascetic life for humans but rather to place religion on top of earthly matters and pleasures.

Sex out of wedlock was condemned, as much as it was favored in wedlock. Adultery and fornication were punishable by death, whipping and even jail. But, human nature states that Man is fallible. So many men drawn by their sexual drives, especially those who came alone to the New World, or the servants who had to get their masters' consent to their marriage, sought to quench their sexual appetites outside the bounds of marriage. The Puritan government did not ignore human nature, nor did the spread of sexual offences blind it. True rape, adultery and fornication were sometimes merely hushed-up and deemed pardonable, but sodomy, for instance, was occasion for death.(Morgan, 1942)

The Puritans were careful how to police sex law's violations, and most often prevention sounded more efficient. Marriage was to solve much of the problem. But, marriage had to be successful to solve it fully. Hence, the Puritans thought to ensnare people and even children in conjugal life, as they insisted on the right choice of partners to assure success to such a holy bond. The Puritans fathomed the importance of sexual intercourse in marriage, thus they considered every possible means and measure to insist upon the husband and the wife living together in peace and respect. Another prevention measure was to, as much as possible, avoid and even forbid any two persons about whom there was suspicion of an illicit relation to come together. Notwithstanding, such preventive measures were not flawless. Though devised out of pure intentions that took cognizance of human nature, they were most of the time a sort of violation to humans' liberties.

In sum, in the Puritan government any sexual offence was frowned upon. Though leniently sometimes, taking into consideration human nature as Devine Will worded it, the Puritans showed zealous endeavor to contend with cases of people flouting the laws.(ibid)

II.3. The Women's Movement: New Perspectives on Women

With no definitive origin the history of Feminism, nonetheless, reflects women's growing awareness of human history's longstanding violations of their rights. It describes the activities, texts, movements and campaigns devoted to disputing and subverting and transforming the way most societies of the world look at woman

The history of Feminism can be conceptualized in terms of three eras referred to as waves. Each wave has its specific foci to stress on and each describes a brick put next to others to complete the construction of new fair societies. The first wave began from the end of the eighteenth century through to the beginning of the twentieth century. It is the era during which collective women political action was given birth in the form of Suffragette, and new women's movement in Britain and the U.S. The second wave dates from the 1960s to the 1980s. Women campaigned on a wide range of points including gender discrimination at work, domestic violence, origins of women's oppression (at home and in the workplace), pornography and sexual health and contraception. Third-wave feminism which has overlapped with the second wave, was more global and pluralistic in its views mainly due to the progress the era witnessed in the fields of postcolonial theory, gender studies, postmodernism and queer theory.

Not surprisingly, women's outgrowing challenging voices were not received with open arms. To many people –male and female- it was repugnant, in part because it was thought it would completely erode every basic convention most world societies are built and founded upon.

II.3.1. Religions and Feminism

An oft-repeated claim is that feminism is anathema to religion. Yet, historically, Ann Braude (2006) argues, religion and feminism have undergone moments of reconciliation, sometimes even a confluence of interests and goals, though most often a wide divergence of opinions and paths. The incorporation of egalitarianism and of women's rights was a daring challenge to the Word of God on gender roles and ranks. But seen otherwise, Feminism did cause a shake-up in many religious communities.

Coming to understand the assertion that power and role discrepancies between men and women have damaged human relationships, and that religious interpretations and knowledge are male-dominated, the thing that serves the maintenance of male supremacy, some religious bodies began to re-think theology and its stands on women. To other groups feminism was a blasphemy. It came to distort the Divine Order and thus drive the world to mere anarchy. Other stance, however, did owe its birth to feminism itself (Ibid), though not wholeheartedly

welcomed by religions nor easily and readily accepted. Feminism could not have been ignored. Right from the outset, it was a verity waiting to be contended with.

Having arisen in opposition to gender-based systems governing the world for ages, and in response to irredeemably sexist conventions deeply ingrained in people's thinking, Feminism, in a sense, has waged a guerrilla war against patriarchy; rather neologism for commonly acknowledged and justified regime. The beleaguered Women's Movement, notwithstanding, could inspire and stimulate a sea of change in favor of woman and her status in religion.

II.3.2. Women and the Word of God

Attributing the generic masculine approach to research and knowledge-construction to several, rather bigoted and ad hominem, rationales; women's lives and issues had never been given their share of importance as part of Earth's inhabitant's concerns. The very fact that the world is basically bisexual brought not an iota of change to that vital organ in the glob body, named womankind. In the realm of religion, women are only sometimes, unjustly, referred to so as to reach complete intelligibility of men's issues. The threat that suggests itself here and that shares the same severity with women's dire suffering throughout history, is that such male-centered meditations on humankind, more specifically here theological issue and experiences, had not been, for so long a period, quaked. Even those challenging yesteryear moves that, next to their sparseness were received with hostile claims of unforgiveable transcends, could not disturb the chain of androcentric –made universal- conventions. Nor could they roll back the frontiers of men.

Yet, with women's committed protest marches afoot, the intention to rend the veil, hitherto drawn on women's theological issues, experiences and contributions, too, could not be repressed. Namely that phase referred to as second-wave feminism henceforward, literature on women and religion has exponentially proliferated. Monumental works such as *Unspoken Words: Women's Religious Lives* (1980), and *Woman Spirit Rising* (1979), have intensely enriched the field, broadly called 'Women and Religion'. (Rita M.Gross, 2006)

At the core of 'Women and Religion' is to shed light on women's religious lives and roles. Humans are not only men, hence understanding a religion or culture entails studying both its

men and women historically and cross-culturally. Noteworthy is that the subject matter 'Women and Religion' is fact and data oriented. Its main concern is to give descriptive accounts on women and their part in religion. How that had to be or sound like in a fair world does not have to come into play when doing this research. But, in order that these accounts can be fully comprehensible, veering the lantern onto what religions say about women has its role to play in the research. Such subject matter, however, is called Feminist Theology.(ibid)

II.3.3. Feminist Theology

Autonomy was such a forlorn hope that never sounded likely to be pieced together with other attributes uttered woman's de facto and de jure. Not even a hope –as diffuse it was for a long time amongst most people- one may accurately call it. Rather a muffled or latent meditation within only few minds, it was. Utterly dependent to men, woman, when occasionally spoken about, was defined by male tongues. And her world, alas, was unveiled, now and then, only to complete the jigsaw puzzle on men.

Owing its historical genius, Feminist Theology aims at founding a bottom to the abyss of male-centeredness and male domination, and then making it as shallower as properly it should be. Woman can voice her world. Fundamentally and initially, she needs to do it herself, and thus purge the very knowledge of androcentrism and its fallout. It studies woman in the eyes of religion and analyses her rights, status, experiences and role as worded by different religions and cultures.

Feminist theology is value-, but also controversy-laden, Rita M. Gross (2006) argues. However inclusive the term 'woman' may sound, in more cases than one, only certain groups of women mainly western, middle-class, white and Christian women falsely claim speaking for all women. Other categories as Black women, indigenous, Buddhist and Muslim women, for instance, do not generally get a hearing in feminist theological circles. Another setback Feminist Theology has encountered, involved dispute over the grounds on which it can be assumed that feminist values are more valid and just than patriarchal values, which reigned supreme for an astonishingly length of time.

To study and reflect on women of a given religion, though anathema and sometimes not applicable to all humans, is crucial to a complete understanding of the religion under study. It is, furthermore, required as a warrant for further enhancement in women's studies.

II.4. The 1960s and 1980s Women's Movement: Second-wave feminisms and Theories

The 1960s marked the beginning of a new face in the women's struggle against the patriarchal world order. Signaling the commencement of the second wave of feminism, those years up to the 1980s produced a wide range of theories and ideas on the roots of women's oppression, and the effective ways which may lead up to dig them up, so that to improve on the Women's Question. Working on a more advanced ground, major goals centered on deciding the home of women's denigrated status, and working on its obliteration through a variety of thoughts posited by the different trends that characterized the era.

II.4.1. Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism emerged in reaction to the liberal philosophy developed in opposition to feudal values. Early famous liberal philosophers like Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Locke asked for equality of all humans, and insisted on their right to reason and enjoy equal rights and opportunities. Yet, they, Zillah Eisenstein argues, 'did not apply the same principles to the patriarchal family and the position of women within it' (6). Primarily based on liberal understanding, Liberal feminism meant to recognize women as men's equals.

In 1791, Mary Wollstone wrote 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' in response to the feudal patriarchal conceptions about women's natural readiness to depend on men. Women were seen created only to meet men's pleasure and that they are not made to be independent. Wollstone argued women should be encouraged to use and believe in their rational thinking and urged to lead independent lives. Women, for her, if provided with equal and un-segregated education and opportunities much can be done in favor of the progress of all humanity.

Liberal feminists conducted a campaign against certain social convictions limiting women's rights and opportunities on the basis of gender roles and gender identities. Harriet Taylor in 'On the Enfranchisement of Women' (1850) claimed 'We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual'. Liberal feminists dedicated themselves to eliminating the traits of sexism and oppression in society. Therefore, they called for amending the laws that deny women their rightful status as men's equals, and substituted them by corrective and gender-neutral policies, that promote rational thinking, individual autonomy and equality.

In 1966, Betty Friedan et al founded the National Organization for Women (NOW). The organization brought crucial issues into sharp focus. At its national conference in 1967, it adopted 'A Bill of Rights for Women in 1968'. The document reflected Liberal feminism's values and listed its main demands, most importantly stressing the banning of sex discrimination and stereotyping, and the legislation for more rights and protection for women.

Liberal feminism has its roots within the womb of non-egalitarian, biased Western societies as women, like in the other trends, decided to oppose phallogocentric values. Liberalism as a philosophy originated in reaction to feudal thoughts which devoured individuals' right for equality and sectioned the populace into strata. It emerged to stand up for people's rights, of which women's were exempt. Liberal feminism, thus, meant to speak for whom the Liberal philosophy left still prey to feudal patriarchal values.

II.4.2. Social Feminism

Like Marxist feminism, social feminism gestures towards women's exploitation within the confines of family life and deems it the corner stone of women's lower social status. But, unlike Marxist feminists, socialist feminists did not support the demand for wages for housework. Socialist feminists hope for equal rights and fair collaborative duties, through which both men and women help each other, perform their roles. Thus, starting from family and education systems that pave the way for broader oppressions, and coming to the economic structure that reinforces them, they seek for reformation and reconstruction as a vehicle for achieving women's emancipation and independence.

Socialist feminist theory examines the way oppression is formed by class, race, economics, history and even family, state and religion. In their eyes, man's supremacy is learned and acquired. In like way, woman's reduced image is imbibed through the sphere she occupies or more accurately she is made to occupy. In this regard, Iris Young -socialist feminist- is referred to in *Philosophical Trends in the Feminist Movement* (2006). She argues that the role of the male has been reinforced through the way men relate to nature. They invented destructive tools with which they implanted their superiority and control over women, nature and even other men, while women invested in reproductive and care-giving activities. Furthermore, she explains, men learned male monopoly on life and nature in impregnation. And that is how labor division came to exist. Young concludes that,

We can attribute the asymmetric division of labor between men and women to this predatory mode of production, or rather appropriation which is based on male monopoly over means of coercion i.e. arms and direct violence by means of which permanent relations of exploitation and domination between the sexes was created and maintained.

(Ibid)

Therefore, most of socialist feminists' proposals like those of radical feminists, stress on the transformation of men-women relations and the responsibility of breeding children. However, they do not share radical feminists' view that women should give up natural reproduction. In lieu, they second reproductive freedom. That means that women should have free choice and control over whether or not, and when to have children. This includes other rights like the right to safe abortion, day care centers, medical care and housing, and also a decent wage to help women look after the children. Women should, likewise enjoy freedom for sexual choice, that is to say having the right to have children outside those socio-cultural arrangements that state women can only have children in marriage. Notwithstanding, they are aware that such social revamping cannot be realized unless the capitalist mode of production is transformed. It is under capitalism, they believe, that women became housewives, deprived and void of productive and creative qualities.

Basically, social feminism makes use of, and combines radical feminist theory and Marxist feminist theory. But, socialist feminists view that Marxist feminists mistakenly treat women's question only in connection to the economic system, and simplistically claim that women's oppression would end if women stepped the world of production. Women for them are workers. About this, socialist feminists have their opinion. Consistent with Radical feminists,

they believe a revision of men-women relations and the roles designed for each sex is necessary. Yet, in a way different from the one prescribed by the Radicals, they suggest women should gain more independence from what is labeled compulsory and normative. Also men should be introduced to women's sphere. In other words, sexual freedom as well as reproductive freedom is women's rights, and child-rearing should not be exclusively women's domain. Both men and women should develop a collaborative, gender-blind, un-segregated relations; both inside and outside the house confines.

II.4.3. Radical Feminism

Radical-second-wave feminism flew out of the social movements in post-war Western societies –the Civil Rights Movement, Anti-Vietnam War Movement and The New Left Movement- whose focal concern was to cry out against the oppressed groups; those groups victim of both sexism and racism. Radical feminists centered their campaign on the origins of women's oppression so that to help its eradication from society. A key contributor to this feminist trend is Kate Millet with her influential book, *Sexual Politics* (1970) which is still considered a classic for modern Radical feminist thinking. Kate maintains that the relationship between men and women rests on power. Arguing that individual women's feelings are mostly due to a gender-based social system, she believes a revolutionary change of society is, inevitably, essential for male-bias-free societies' construction.

According to her, patriarchy is inherent and deeply implanted in people's minds, thereby not easy to eliminate. Being the nub of the matter, patriarchy can fade only if societies are purged of sex-gender systems and purified from negative traits (7) among people, such as submission and obeisance among women, and the sense of superiority among men.

Another influential figure is Shulamith Firestone, who in her *Dialectics of Sex* (1970) insists on attributing the wrongs of women's oppression to natural reproduction; being the crux of women's subordination. Women do have the right to be free from the onerous burden of marriage and reproduction. Like Millet, Firestone is for androgyny. Yet, further than her, she posits that unless artificial reproduction replaces natural reproduction, it is firmly impossible to reach complete liberty of women.

According to Radical feminists, the ideological basis of womankind's subservient role in society is the sex/gender system which Gayle Rubin defines as 'a set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity' (8). This explains the way patriarchal society operates. Relying on facts about male and female physiology, certain biological differences are exaggerated to decide then each sex's role and identity; who women and men are and how they ought, accordingly, to behave. Later, society in its entirety takes these socially and culturally-constructed roles and identities as nature-constructs. Instead people should adopt some of each other's characteristics. This is called *Androgyny* which means having both sexes' traits.

Late in the 1970s, however, one branch of Radical Feminism, later called Cultural Feminism, stood against androgyny. They believed womankind should be proud of womanly traits. Therefore, women should preserve their femininity and confirm it by building women's culture and separate institutions.

II.4.4. Cultural Feminism

In broaching the theme of sexuality, Cultural feminists, unlike the Radicals, have other words to say. For the Radical feminists patriarchal thinking is rampant that even in sexual relations one can trace its reflect. Patriarchal societies urge people to be heterosexual, and force them to conform to what is labeled normal and healthy sexual practice, and which can be attained only in wedlock. Whereas, Radical feminists call it sexual repression and offer free sexual relations as a solution, Cultural feminists name it sexual objectification and attributed its harm to heterosexualism itself. Sara Lucia Hoagland explains, as her view is referred to in *Philosophical Trends in the Women's Movement* (2006):

Heterosexualism has certain similarities to colonialism particularly in its maintenance through force when parentalism is rejected and in the portrayal of domination as natural and in the de-skilling of women.

Heterosexuality, for them, reflects and intensifies male/female; master/slave dichotomies. It sets the stage, as well, for further wrongs -sexual harassment, woman-battering, prostitution and pornography- of which woman is a victim. That is why Cultural feminists believe women

should reject heterosexual relations in favor of Lesbian relations that serve to provide women with their rightful status.

Both Radical feminism and Cultural feminism believe reproduction is the reason behind women's subordination, and both have offered remedies to end women's suffering in patriarchal societies. The former have concluded women should give up natural reproduction. Pornography does not have any obnoxious or offending effect on women's status nor on the way do men view women. On the contrary, as adherents of permissiveness, they argue it can help people overcome sexual repression. And to drive out the sex/gender system underpinning androcentric societies, and scourging women to death, androgyny, they suggest, is the quintessence of egalitarian thinking. Cultural feminists on their ground, however, do not espouse the very idea of androgyny. Nor do they think replacing natural reproduction with artificial reproduction would suffice to heal the wounds of patriarchy. Though they severely oppose pornography and that right of free sexual relations the Radicals propound, they call women to seek freedom to their sexuality, instead. They propose separatism and see it as the best surrogate to heterosexualism.

II.4.5. Lesbian feminism

Lesbian feminism has its roots in second-wave radical feminism. In response to their marginalization and in opposition to the claim that broaching lesbian issues overtly would contribute to discredit and demean the Women's Movement, lesbians founded their unique lesbian feminist approach to women's issues.

Lesbian feminists view most heterosexual feminisms have failed to go beyond male-female relationships, and limited their concern on points that may help perpetuate male domination. In contrast, they highlight the impact of heterosexual norms and traditions on women's issues. They stand for women's liberty from compulsory heterosexuality and center their interest on themes that propagate and confirm lesbian life experiences and lesbian issues.

II.4.6. The Strategy of Separatism

While feminism is built around a core group of concerns and objectives, all revolving round women's interests and issues; there exist, however, more paths than only one to lead women up to a fairer world. Yet, most essential, too, is to diagnose the germs causing women's oppression and also what ground is most congenial for their reproduction and insidious diffuseness.

To some, the more woman is hemmed in by her house walls while man is outside them, the greater she is devalued. Therefore, woman's entry into male-dominated public sphere means reconsideration of woman's participatory roles outside the domestic confines and eventually a higher status. Anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo in her *Theoretical Overview on Women's Status* (1974), posits that an egalitarian future can see the light if both men and women are welcomed into the sphere dominated by the opposite sex. (9)

Another alternative strategy for constructing just societies stems from the conviction that the foundation of women's public sphere sounds more efficient to grant women more power and a better position in society. As explicated in the work of Blanche Cook and Nancy Sahli, Estelle Freedman gives reference to in her *Feminism, Sexuality and Politics* (2006), intimate friendships between women could provide effective support systems for women's political activity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In like vein, Nancy Cott posited that private 'sisterhoods' may have laid groundwork for the rise of feminist awareness (Ibid). Such alternative, referred to as 'Separate strategy' or 'female institution building', burgeoned from the middle-class women's culture of the nineteenth century, believing that the more woman is linked to man, the more she is his subordinate.

II.4.7. Roots of Separatist Strategy in America

The industrial and commercial growth that America of the 19th century witnessed, deputed both men and women to watch their responsibilities, each in their specific, separate sphere. While men were engaged in the outside world of business and politics, women were entrapped by the inside world of domestic life. Thus, separation between male's and female's

spheres was intensified, mainly as the idea of 'true woman' found its way to people's minds as necessary and beneficial to social stability (Ibid). Nonetheless, this did also prove good fuel for women's manifest cry for equal opportunities with men. But, men could neither shrug off women's demands nor did they wholeheartedly welcome and consent to women's entry into the public spheres. Even women were not readily to approve of their rejection of their, deeply-ingrained in their minds, female identities.

Radical feminists as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton acknowledged the necessity and importance of preserving the womanly essence of women's world while working to put a stop to women's discrimination in public (Ibid). Added to this, their bitterness and growing sense of disenchantment with most male abolitionists who refused to back and second women's rights in the 1860s, reinforces the conception that woman had to stand alone to gain her independence from the prevailing androcentric and oppressive rules and beliefs. The fruit of both urges manifested in an era of separate female institution building that spanned the 1870s to the 1920s in America. (Ibid)

Examples of female Institution Building reflect women's determinism and commitment to elevating women's status. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) had its origins in late nineteenth century. A committed pro-suffrage organization, especially under Frances Willard, it took on the task to right, through all means, every wrong and abuse against women. (Ibid)

In 1868 women reporters' exclusion from the New York Press Club resulted in the foundation of the first Women's Club which reproduced itself in many other localities till 1890 with the creation of a General Federation of Women's Clubs. Focus on traditional women's politicization and their right to enjoy citizenship was at the core of the Club's policies, though it only interested traditional women at first who simply contented with meetings with friends and neighbors. On the other side, Black women established the National Association of Colored Women in 1896, through which they expressed their disapproval and rejection of the racism against both Black men and women. (Ibid)

Another example of Separate Women's Institution Building is the women's colleges which owe their construction to elite male institutions when they refused to tutor women, who in return shouldered the task themselves. These colleges opened new gates and scopes for women's progress as the number of professional degrees conferred on women increased to 226% between 1890 and 1920 (Ibid). They proved a fertile ground for women to promote

awareness of women's issues among students. They did, as well, prepare the ground for further rights and demands for women to campaign for.

The Separate Institution Building espoused women's release from old commonly-acknowledged conventions hindering women's evolution since ages. Eventually, revolution found its way among women who stood their ground and opted out of the separation of men's and women's spheres. And the aforementioned institutions are but examples mentioned to cite some.

Explanations of the devaluation of women and women's share in society are many. It is evidential, therefore, that measures and strategies to battle for women's emancipation are many, too. The Separate female cult within American feminism that spread during the nineteenth century made of women active participants, independently determined to expand their sphere and penetrate the hedge around their socially-prescribed lot.

Yet, such strategy cannot be reducible to one of flawless efficiency to women's problem. On the one hand, Estelle Freedman (2006) maintains, separation between men's and women's spheres may fail to reconcile women's hunger for their rights with societies, inevitably born to androcentric forbears, as it may mistakenly encourage misogyny and tension between men and women, instead. On the other hand, it can reduce women's chances to gain more space as certain rights necessitate not only more overlap between public and domestic domains, but also some, if not much of it, between men's and women's spheres. Furthermore, though fully intended for the good of womankind, it, unintentionally, may intensify sexual segregation and women alienation. Described thus, the integrationist approach has been favored by many feminist activists. (Ibid)

II.5. 1970s and 1980s America; Back to God's Words Campaign

The second wave of feminism which marked its start in the 1960s resulted in causing change in the American society, not solely in favor of women; the concerned case, but also, against their interests. In response to the considerably advanced stage the Women's Movement was standing on to defend their stand and crave for more, other sides of the American society - already anti-women's emancipation- saw great urge to put things into reverse and work in

favor of the American society using their own perceptions based primarily on God's Word. Aiming at crying out against what was an act of transcendence, for them, and that characterized the second-wave feminisms' ideas, the New Religious Right Movement started out its mission to resume Devine Order. Most particularly pertinent to the Movement was its interest to stem women's eager pace towards independence from male hegemony.

II.5.1. New Religious Right

The New Religious Right is a political movement that emerged in the 1970s. It was comprised of evangelical Protestants who decided to give up their longstanding tradition that favored keeping away from political involvement.

The movement was given birth because many evangelicals were worried about the social changes of the 1960s. The U.S Supreme Court, then, declared school prayers unconstitutional and abortion constitutional (Thistlewaite, 2006). Another gnawing example was the increasing power and liberty granted to women which, in their mind, would pose grave societal problems in the future. The American government, for them, was growing more and more secular and was ignoring all their political views. Hence, the evangelical leaders saw there was a pressing necessity for political participation. They attained substantial attention from the national press, for the first time when they, in large numbers in 1980, voted for Ronald Reagan. (Ibid)

The central plank of the New Right's social and political agenda was to resume the biblical model of family rules and principles. A heterosexual family within which gender roles and hierarchies _as divinely-ordained_ are respected, was their main target. Evangelical women were encouraged to cherish their roles as mothers and housewives. They were expected to stay home and, most importantly, to depend to male authority. The holy Bible was their reference to obliterate the secularism of the American society.

II.5.2. Women in the New Religious Right

Hundreds of thousands of women within the New Religious Right Movement played crucial roles, which sometimes have galvanized masses of male evangelicals. Not surprisingly, however, only two – Phyllis Schlafly and Beverly La Haye- reached national prominence. (Ibid)

In the 1970s Schlafly emerged as the prominent leader of the ‘Stop ERA (Equal Rights Amendments) movement’. Schlafly was the first spokeswoman to appear on the national stage for the Religious Right. She, categorically, opposed ERA’s assumptions on women’s liberty, and capability to be independent and live away from men’s headship and protection. She believed women are in need of men’s protection and that it is men’s responsibility to support women financially. Schlafly maintained that passage of ERA would lead to serious cracks in the social framework.

Unlike Schlafly, La Haye matched more to the common model of women Religious Right leaders, in that her prominence arose alongside with that of her husband, Tim La Haye. Yet, unlike other New Religious Right wives, Beverly’s massive popularity and effective importance to the movement could eclipse that of her husband. La Haye wrote influential books primarily about the family issues. And that is what extended her popularity. In all her writings, she maintains her commitment both to her religion and to political conservatism, for both are inextricably linked. She believes that evangelical women can and should participate in politics, but not at the expense of their principle mission as housekeepers. Most their lobbying, she argues, can be done at home. Women’s place, for her, is the home. And In I Am God’s Design she stresses that women should defer to men in everything. By 1985, La Haye arose to a great prominence that Ronald Reagan appointed her to his Family Policy Advisor Board.

Women had an important effectiveness and very big participatory roles in giving the New Religious Right Movement its positive direction, that if men alone were not to take it to as far a point as it did reach. Both behind the scene and at the grassroots level, they did all out to preserve the nuclear, heterosexual model of family, they found mentioned in the Bible. They severely rejected the Equal Rights Amendments and saw it fraught with menace to the

American society. Ironically, however, very few of them could attain prominence and popularity. Women they were.

II.5.3. Gender Roles in New Right's Lenses

The New Right perceives the world through the lens of Judeo-Christian ethic. They believe in gender division and in separate gender roles as divinely ordained. It is man's right to 'rule supreme at home' (Faludi, 1991) (10) as the spiritual leader of the family, whereas woman's ennobling role is to meet the needs of her family, and through altruism and self-sacrifice, she supports man's higher authority.

The New Right thinking rests on a firm belief in gender hierarchies. Men come first followed by women whose 'nature is simply, other-oriented', as Connie Marshner put it in the Moral Majority conference in Washington D.C. 'To a traditional woman', she went further, 'self-centeredness remains as ugly and sinful as ever... women are ordained by their nature to spend themselves in meeting the needs of others' (11)

The family is the core of the society. Therefore, the maintenance of separate roles of men and women can assure stability and order in moral societies. People have to respect that line dividing the two sexes and placing each in their appropriate –divinely-decided- position. Otherwise, serious threats and disorders would eventuate. And homosexuality is one.

Separate roles and gender hierarchies do not mean inequality, in the eyes of the New Right. Eventually, there are no grounds to fight against discrimination for it does not exist. It is rather of feminists own making who view things from a completely different lens.

II.5.4. New Right's Views on Feminism

The New Right sentences feminism responsible for destroying the family and then the whole society. While feminism calls women's liberation from the bounds of family life so as to broaden their horizons, New Right conservatives detect a note of serious danger ahead in that

very idea of women's liberation. Their backlash on feminism resides in their fear of a total masculinization of the world. That is why Connie Marshner called it 'Macho feminism'. In describing feminism, Rebecca Klatch in *Coalition and Conflict among Women of the New Right* (1988) uses her words:

Macho feminism despises anything which seeks to interfere with the desires of Number One. A relationship which proves burdensome? Drop it! A husband whose needs cannot be conveniently met? Forget him! Children who may wake in the middle of the night? No way! To this breed of thought, family interferes with self-fulfillment, and given the choice between family and self, the self is going to come on top in their world.

New Right conservatives were inimical to feminism. Whereas the latter has diagnosed most world's societies with misogyny and patriarchy, and prescribed women should repudiate old phallogocentric conventions, the former see in that very prescription a herald of a precarious future for both women and society. Feminism was blamed for moral decay in America and accused of inciting women to rebellion and transgression.

II.6. Conclusion

Puritanism made its way to America via European waves fleeing religious persecution. It came and put rules to life in accordance to God's Word so as to assure homogeneity and continuity to the American society. Women had to stay home and care about their husbands and children. It was their space. And within the walls of this space, they had to defer to men's authority and leading position in the family.

Women were deprived of their basic rights; freedom and autonomy. They were denied their voice and word. Any literature about any subject was purely male-designed and male-dominated. But, history tells of some daring voices that decided to refute the existing order and work to set the stage for a new discourse, determined to grant women their devoured rights. A war waged against women's oppression and men's domination culminated in the awakening of women on a large scale.

In the 1970s, however, there was a growing sense of revival amongst the New Religious fundamentalists, who took action in response to the reforms marking the culmination of a long

feminist campaign. During that epoch, second-wave feminists fostered women to leave the confines of the home and have access to the larger world of emancipation and freedom. Their rage on women's oppression was on the increase. Each trend had its words which differed from those uttered by the others. While socialist feminists saw in reviewing man-woman relationship a necessity and called for more collaboration between the two sexes in performing their duties, the liberals urged women to lead independent lives away from old restrictions. Radical feminists from their ground posited androgyny and women's liberation from reproduction duties, whereas cultural feminists seconded separatism and aspired to found a women-only culture.

That feminism aims to defend women's issues does not set it exempt of error. While feminist activists had no doubt of the legitimacy of their campaign against woman's devalued image and state, other stands did not lack doubt about the viability of the strategy feminisms would posit to pursue their goals. To a considerable extent the following chapter will be devoted to put second-wave feminist projects under surveillance as the Canadian Margaret Atwood suggested (12) while analyzing her novel The Handmaid's Tale.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

- (1) See Living For God's Glory: An Introduction To Calvinism (Beeke, 2008)
- (2) Cited in Randal C. Gleason and Kelly M. Kapio's 'Who Were The Puritans?' (2004:18)
- (3) See Ann Hughes' Puritanism and Gender (2008)
- (4) Ibid
- (5) Cited in Edmund Morgan's 'The Puritans and Sex' (1942: 592)
- (6) Cited in 'Philosophical Trends of the Feminist Movement' (2006: 21)
- (7) Also referred to as 'undesirable traits' meaning those either female or male attributes which contribute in maintaining woman's subordination and man's superiority
- (8) Cited in 'Philosophical Trends of the Feminist Movement' (2006: 28)
- (9) Cited in Feminism, Sexuality and Politics (Feedman, B.Estelle, 2006: 22)
- (10) Cited in Brutal Chronologies (Bouston, J.Brooks,1993: 135)
- (11) See Rebecca Klatch's 'Coalition and Conflict among Women of the New Right' (1988)
- (12) See Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson's The Cambridge Introduction to Margaret Atwood (2010)

CHAPTER THREE

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Chapter Three

FUTURISTIC DYSTOPIA

III.1. Introduction

Female pens have always been keener to produce utopian societies for many reasons, indeed. Daphne Patai's words (1983) assert, 'Feminism, today, is the most utopian project around. That is it demands the most radical and truly revolutionary transformation of society.'(1) Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, however, 'is being greeted as the long awaited feminist dystopia' (Bloom, 2004), which Atwood meant her readers to construe as a serious warning about feminism which, she reveals, requires surveillance, itself. (Macpherson, 2010)

Atwood (1976) claims, she utilizes her pen the way many other women writers do, to 'defy other women's as well men's ideas of what was proper, and it is not finally all that comforting to have a phalanx of women'(2) . This was said to explain her position as a writer who refuses to align herself with feminism, and as a writer whose characters, sometimes, spout anti-feminism attitudes while they are so entrapped in a patriarchal atmosphere that calls for a feminist construction.

But, Margaret Atwood chose to locate her story within the boundaries of a land other than her own country. So often critics refer to her setting choice and wonder why most precisely America. In interviews, Atwood gives reasons and plainly explains her choice. In one, for instance, she said:

It is not a Canadian sort of thing to do. Canadians might do it after the States did it, in some sort of watered-down version. Our television evangelists are more paltry than yours. The States are more extreme in everything.

(Bloom, 2004)

Atwood lived in Boston/Cambridge a period of four years. And that is another reason. Besides, the States is the site of everyone's interests, she states (Ibid). Everyone watches what

it is like now and everyone wants to know what America might be like in the future. And then ‘they are my ancestors’, she adds, ‘those nagging Puritans really are my ancestors. So I had a considerable interest in them when I was studying them’ (Ibid).

Atwood designed the mindset of Gilead close to that of the seventeenth century Puritans. The thing that helped her prepare a congenial ground for patriarchy and women’s oppression, which the New Religious Movement that developed in 1970s and 1980s America sought to restore, while she, at the same time, extrapolating from certain realities of the period preceding the publication of her novel, which in feminist history is referred to as second-wave feminism, aims her novel to be read as a critical comment on the strategy proposed by second-wave feminists to fight against de facto inequalities.

Within the dystopia she entitled The Handmaid’s Tale, and within the atmosphere that smells of patriarchy and of misogyny she calls the Republic of Gilead, the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, purposefully, devises a utopian society that has, ironically, met some feminist goals. This chapter aims to analyze the feminist projects the writer aped in her novel so that to test their viability and effects on the women’s question. Yet, it is necessary, first to refer to the Puritan-like environment, Atwood, likewise, intended to realize, as the New Religious Right of the 1980s aimed to.

III.2. Gilead as a Fortress of Patriarchy

In the newly founded Republic of Gilead, men come on top of list of humans ranks. It is, indeed, intentionally, constructed to preserve the so-called men’s right to dominate and control the societies they live in. Inside its walls, men have the first and last words in every point even when it comes beyond their lot. It is men-made and men-dominated, in its essence; a fortress of patriarchal mindset and an appropriate ground for Right-wing fundamentalists’ projects. It is the utopian society, they dreamed for and worked to realize. Yet, it is a dystopia, too, for women most particularly -though some categories of men can likewise- be seen as preys to its claws.

III.2.1. Misogynist attitudes in The Handmaid's Tale

During the 1970s and 1980s feminist women became, Susan Faludi (1991) posits, 'a prime enemy' (3) for the New Religious Right. They were made a scapegoat for every wrong in and threat to the American society. Jerry Falwell, a New Right spokesman, for example, claimed that feminists had waged a 'satanic attack on the home' (Bouston, 1993). Under the banner of 'women's rights', they worked on rolling back men's authority and headship, as they were behind 'the conscious policy of government to liberate the wife from the leadership of the husband', Howard Phillis accused them. (Ibid)

New Right activists countered women's autonomy. They called for man's right 'to rule supreme at home and exercise what Falwell called the "husband's God-given responsibility to lead his family"' (Ibid). Women, they posited and firmly lobbied had to come back to their natural lot which is the home.

The Handmaid's Tale is a probing reflection on the anti-feminist onslaught of the 1970s America. In Gilead women are forced back to the home. They are deprived of every advantage and bit of liberty and autonomy they enjoyed in the times before. Their roles became restricted to doing the house chores, knitting scarves for the Angels, shopping, waiting forward to an event to be tolerated a certain space to go to Birth Days, attend Salvagings (4), or change their ways home, and wait to be impregnated in order to proceed their holy mission of bearing a child inside their valuable, still-under-service wombs.

'This way they are protected, they can fulfill their biological destinies in peace with full support and encouragement'! (HT, chapter, 34)

Perhaps what matters more than the way all this had been set and imposed on people is what would come after; what ensues implanting such radical ideas and principles. Atwood (1986) says:

A lot of what writers do is they play with hypotheses... It is a kind of if this, then that type of thing. The original hypothesis would some of the statements that are being made by the Evangelical Fundamentalist Right. "If a woman's place is the home, then what? If you actually decide to enforce that, what follows?" (5)

In chilling details, Atwood's story delineates what might eventuate. Women are reduced to replaceable mutes, to 'two-legged wombs, sacred vessels, ambulating chalice' (HT, chapter 23), or invalid wombs desperately becoming Marthas, Aunts, or Wives envying the handmaids –not even allowed a name- their viable ovaries; to walking shapes identified with the color they have to wear so that their function, thereby identity is known and distinguished. In living with Offred's reported details of her life whether at the Commander's house or on the streets of Gilead, one can distinguish the bitter flavor of misogynist patriarchy haunting people and their conducts.

The Handmaid's Tale ignites Atwood's fear and anxieties about male misogynist domination, the New Right Movement was seeking to resume, and that has historically characterized the world. Atwood notes 'I did not invent a lot. I transposed to a different time and place, but the motifs are all historical' (1986) (6). It is 'not as futuristic nor fantasmatic as we might wish', comments one critic. (Bouston, 1993) 'The future presaged by The Handmaid's Tale', another writes explains, 'is already our history...' (Ibid)

Atwood did not pursue her project of writing The Handmaid's Tale when she got the first sparks for it in 1981, because she thought it would be 'zany' (Ibid). But, when she started working on it she understood it was a story she 'had to write' (Atwood, 1986) (7). It is 'a compelling story' (Ibid) that compels her readers, through a compendious description of Gilead, to seriously take cognizance of male domination and sexual exploitation that have historically plagued womankind. Even that aura of religious zeal and piety which envelops Gilead, and is said to have sparked its construction is in real sense just an outer patina covering hostile attitudes and plans against women, and which is, in essence, fueling the whole campaign from the outset.

III.2.2. Women in Gilead

Women are the heart of Gilead and the Gileadian regime. Apart from the fact that the whole society relies on the fertility of their wombs, the whole regime, likewise, depends on their effort to spread its principles and entrench them in the minds of people. Examples of the important roles they play are many, in The Handmaid's Tale.

Serena Joy, the Commander's wife, was one of the early anti-feminism activists who were in the news in the pre-Gilead era. She appeared on the Growing Souls Gospel Hour; a TV program on which she and others told Bible stories to children and sang hymns. She was an advocate of the women's re-installation in the home project. Serena's activism is reminiscent of the icons of the American Religious Right Movement, such as Phyllis Schlafly and Tammy Faye (Bloom, 2004) (8), who spearheaded the drive to curb the Women's Movement at the time Atwood was writing her novel.

The Aunts are another example. Their crucial role is fundamental in the Republic of Gilead. In the Rachel and Lea Center, known, too, as the Red Center, they function as teachers and preachers of the new regime's doctrines. Whether with the handmaids or the Jezebels, the Aunts' voice is effective enough and sufficient that the males' presence is only a reminder of their influential weight, and the pivotal authority they exert in Gilead, however minimal and minor it is.

Notwithstanding, none of the female influential voices could go beyond its designed, subordinate space. But, this is not surprising. Things still bear the same flavor of the times before, during the anti-feminist Religious Movement of the 1970s and 1980s America. Add to this, Gilead is the realization of its ideas and projects. It is no longer calling for, or crying out against. Now everyone knows where to put one's legs the way things were planned to be, with some bending and modification of the rules, though.

III.2.3. The Female Body in The Handmaid's Tale

In the Handmaid's Tale women are degraded to mere bodies, and if not legally attributed to the new regime's male activists, they are defined, classified, and also dressed according to what their bodies can perform. There are different groups of them. The Wives are dressed in blue. They are married to high-ranking men, hence at the top social level. The Marthas are dressed in 'dull green, like a surgeon's gown of the time before' (HT, chapter 2). They are post-menopausal women who function as servants. The Aunts are, likewise, older women who possess off-duty ovaries. They dress in khaki and their job is to train the new handmaids for their roles as surrogate mothers. These latter, however, are younger women, still able to bear children. They have red dresses. They are given a chance to avoid being sent to the

Colonies, if they succeed to give birth to a Baby – for an un-baby sends them to the Colonies, too. '[S]ome in striped dresses, red and blue and green and cheap and skimpy that mark the women of the poorer men' (Ibid, chapter 5) are named the Econowives. 'These women are not divided into functions. They have to do everything; if they can' (Ibid). The widows are all in black, whereas the young virgin girls wear white dresses. At the bottom of the list there are the women who are not ready to integrate to the new social rules, and also the handmaids who failed in their three two-year assignments. They are deprived even of the right to belong to womankind and are called the Un-women. They live in the Colonies and are in grey overalls.

There exists another category, not officially sanctioned, though. It comprises all the women who 'could not be assimilated', the Commander tells Offred (Ibid, chapter 37). They are either 'real pros... Working girls from the time before' (Ibid) or new ones: educated and attractive. They could not adjust to the status of a handmaid and they have been forced to be entertainers. They are available 'only for officers... and senior officials. And trade delegations of course' (Ibid). 'Nature demands variety for men', the Commander explains to Offred (Ibid). They are called the Jezebels. They are sexual entertainers for the Commanders and their guests. They are, also, ones they 'can have quite good conversation with' if that is what they prefer doing. They are allowed make-up and clothes 'supposed to be attractive to men' (Ibid).

In Atwood's story women are not permitted the slightest contact with what may stimulate their mental abilities like writing and reading. In chapter 23 Offred describes the Commander's office as 'the oasis of the forbidden'. It is full of books. No wonder women cannot come in there. It is men's space 'where women do not go. Not even Serena Joy... and the cleaning is done by the guardians'. '[T]hinking can hurt your chances' she explains. (Ibid, chapter 2). Thinking does not fall within their orbit. It is men's activity.

The sole option that can intercede for women's existence is their viable ovaries. Those who have run out of ova are only authorized either because they are legally married, or used to do the house chores at the Commanders' houses, or to help the regime diffuse its new principles and rules amongst women. As to the rebellious bodies, they are shipped to the Colonies to starve to death or catch an unknown disease or kept to 'Nature's plan' that 'demands variety for men' (Ibid, chapter 37)

Even the body that has a passport to existence is not allowed its rights. The Marthas and the handmaids avoid falling ill. Offred explains:

The Marthas do not want to be forced to retire, because who knows where they go? You do not see that many old women around anymore. And as for us any real illness, anything lingering, weakening, a loss of flesh or appetite, a fall of hair, a failure of glands, would be terminal (Ibid, chapter 25)

The Ceremony is another example of the low value given to the female body. 'I do not say making love because this is not what he is doing', Offred recalls in her narrations (Ibid, chapter 16) 'Copulating too would be inaccurate, because it would imply two people and only one is involved. Nor does rape cover it' (Ibid). Offred admits 'we are certain; it is only the inside of our bodies that are important' (Ibid, chapter 17). And once they give birth to a household they are redistributed to another. 'Arousal and orgasm', she adds, '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' (Ibid, chapter 16)

'[M]en are sex machines' (Ibid, chapter 24), says Aunt Lydia; or rather says the regime for what is Aunt Lydia to it if not to re-say its words. And that is what the Jezebels are for. And that is why they can wear what is supposed to have been burnt and got rid of. The Jezebels have to watch their weight, too, for their bodies are only for sex. 'Ten pounds put you in Solitary', the Commander tells Offred. (Ibid, chapter 37)

In The Handmaid's Tale, the female body is under male authority; individual or national. The Guardians are not 'permitted to touch women' (Ibid, chapter 4). They only commit the act of touching with their eyes. Instead, they 'think... of doing their duty and promotion to the Angels, and of being allowed possibly to marry' (Ibid). Those with enough power, however, have the right for blue bodies, green ones for the housework, and another fertile red one to bear them a baby, and a bouquet of bodies of a variety of colors to serve their whims and entertain their customers.

Notwithstanding, Offred confirms 'We still have our bodies' (Ibid, chapter 1). She knows the rules can be infringed and their bodies were a token left for something to be exchanged with, for some deal to make, 'some trade-off' (Ibid). Though forlorn it was sometimes, mainly at the Red Center where no male was allowed inside, she comes to confirm its usability with the Commander in return for some prohibitions, and with Nick to have a viable sperm to save herself from going to the Colonies. In the Jezebel's, likewise, women utilize their bodies in

exchange of an exempt from the rules outside, while some Un-women refuse to trade with their bodies, and willingly opt for the Colonies.

But, the question that imposes itself when reflecting on the point, is whether or not such daring transgressions and refusal to abide with the laws are worth being called forms of rebellion or resistance, or are only simply embedded laws deliberately unstated and intentionally left in the dark to be used when necessary. Is Offred's red body rebellious? Can its docility connote what the term 'docile' does not imply; something heroic, perhaps-with a relative sense of the word- that Offred, herself, is not aware of?

III.3. An Eye on Feminism in The Handmaid's Tale

The Handmaid's Tale is not only a serious launched warning about what may eventuate if Right-wing fundamentalists succeed to bring their plan to fruition. It is, also, and perhaps most equally if not more precisely, intended to fix one's sight and focus on what might America be like, if certain feminist projects are realized. In her story, Atwood aims to direct people's attention on the very fact of some feminist thoughts designed to cleanse women's lives of the stubborn stains of misogyny and patriarchy, thereby ending their plight definitively. Unknowingly, however, such thoughts are sometimes pregnant with undesired and often unintended wrongs which may do lot of harm to both sexes and eventually to a society as a whole.

III.3.1. Separatist Strategy in The Handmaid's Tale

In response to the belligerent misogynistic environment women have been suffering from throughout history; feminist activists have devoted themselves to the creation of utopian spaces where women, Marten Barr (1987) thinks can breathe freedom from further male violations and abuses. She posits that: 'the characters in speculative fiction's female communities would share the following reaction: ... Is this world unsafe for women? If so, then declare a curfew and keep men indoors' (Ibid). Keeping men indoors or in other words

keeping them away from female spheres, or rather more accurately to found women communities was one alternative feminism, namely cultural feminism, called for to improve on current societies.

About positing women's culture and promoting separatism as effective healers to men's assault on women Margaret Atwood (Macpherson, 2010), however, believes it is questionable. It does not necessarily mean a better culture than the one before, she maintains. In her The Handmaid's Tale and within the dystopia she devised, she, ironically, created a utopian society where women live away from men's hideous abuse.

In Gilead women are offered *freedom from* (HT, chapter 5), most importantly, that *freedom to* of the time before. Within the fences surrounding it, there are no men shouting obscenities at women, no male speaks or touches a female. 'No one whistles' (Ibid). And there are no cosmetics that may distort or insult women's form. Women are freed from;

The rules that were never spelled out but that every woman knew: Don't open your door to a stranger, even if he says he is the police. Make him slide his ID under the door. Don't stop at the road to help a motorist pretending to be in trouble. Keeps the locks on and keep going. If anyone whistles don't turn to look. Don't go into a Laundromat, by yourself, at night.

(Ibid)

Pornography is forbidden and rapists are torn into bits by a mob of women in a collective ceremony referred to as Particicution.

In the Red Center where the new handmaid's are being indoctrinated into the new regime's beliefs, the AuntS, ironically use proto-feminist principles which obliquely extol the feminist project of separatism; in the past women were victims of men's nasty violations, but now they live away from all that. They have formed their own community. Offred explains the strict rules that insist upon assuring single-sexes environments:

The guards were not allowed inside the building except when called, and we weren't allowed out except for our walks... two by two around the football field, which was enclosed now by a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. The Angels stood outside it with their backs to us.

(HT, chapter 1)

And to Aunt Lydia a promising future is one in which ‘the women will live in harmony, all in one family... Women united for a common end’ (Ibid, chapter 26).

In The Handmaid’s Tale Atwood apes the cultural feminist project of separatism and a women’s culture. The dystopian world she drew exposes a feminist utopia coming to fruition via unexpected ways and with unintended ends. Having tasted the bitterness of such ends, Offred imagines herself telling her mother: ‘Mother, wherever you may be. Can you hear me? You wanted a women’s culture. Well, now there is one, It isn’t what you meant, but it exists. Be thankful for small mercies’ (Ibid, chapter 21)

Through the character of Moira, Atwood makes her plausible predictions, on purpose, witnessed by an advocate of separatism, so that to add a sense of bitterness to the disillusionment within the, more or less, achieved goals. At the Red Center from which she, ironically, attempts to escape for a couple of times, Moira the lesbian feminist activist lives the realization of her utopia. Once again, in the state-sanctioned brothels, she is housed in an all-women environment. There she abjectly resigns to her fate. Sucked of hope, she tells Offred ‘It is not so bad, there is lots of women around. Butch paradise you may call it’ (Ibid, chapter 38).

In this ‘Butch paradise’ women are forced to work under the supervision of the Aunts. In the Red Center, likewise, the handmaids are tempted of a future in which ‘women live in harmony together... Helping one another in their daily chores as they walk the path of life together, each performing her appointed task’ (Ibid, chapter 26) In this point, however, Atwood seems referring to another feminist project, the one propagated by Marxist feminists who campaigned for shared labor and communal living.(Tolan, 2007)

The Handmaid’s Tale is fraught with images reflecting the realization not only of the cultural feminist project, but, too, of that of the Marxists. It, furthermore, includes some flashes promising their further enhancement, ironically, using Aunt Lydia’s words which echo some of the early feminist slogans:

For the generations that come after... it will be so much better... Your daughters will have greater freedom. We are working towards the goal of a little garden for each one, each one of you.

(HT, chapter 26)

III.3.2. Anti-racist racism

In an attempt to eradicate sexist oppression, the feminist movement called cultural feminists, focused almost exclusively on how to privilege women over men. Unfortunately, their eagerness and anger were so intense, that they made it impossible to veer attention away from how to squash male domination both in ideology and praxis. The thing that made the movement appear as a war declared or rather resumed between the two sexes rather than an earnest try to highlight women's plight because of sexist injustice. Bell hook argues in Feminist Theory from Margin to Center (2000):

Fundamentally, they argue that all men are the enemies of all women and proposed as solutions of this problem a utopian woman nation, separatist communities, and even the subjugation or extermination of all men. Their anger may have been a catalyst for individual libratory resistance and change. It may have encouraged bonding with other women to raise consciousness .It did not strengthen public understanding of the significance of authentic feminist movement. (9)

Woman was invited to work the utopian garden by leaving the home; the traditional battleground of her war with man, and the lot which usually confirms her subjugation. She was fostered to enjoy her right to own control of her sexuality; to choose whether to have children or not, and whether to marry or not. Later, marriage and reproduction were seen great burden on women precluding her advance and emancipation. Thus, she was urged to abandon such roles. To cultural feminists a women's nation away from men's disturbing presence was of an ultimate effectiveness. Narcissistically unconscious, however, they were reigniting hostility within opposing groups. The feminist campaign provided the fuel for the backlash scenario headed by the New Right Movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

In The Handmaid's Tale, Atwood again projects a foreseeable future of real events and verities. If woman is to leave the home and give up natural reproduction, or live away from men, what but a handmaid is to be prescribed, by the religious-political usurpers, to compensate for the viable eggs willingly thrown to the lavatory lest they stick her to her socio-culturally designed role?

True in The Handmaid's Tale birth rate, as it is explained in the Historical Notes by Professor Pieixoto, is due to some diseases such as the R-strain syphilis and AIDS which caused the

elimination of an important number of sexually active young people ‘from the reproductive pool’ (Historical Notes). Also,

Stillbirth, miscarriages, and genetic deformities were widespread and on the increase, and this trend has been linked to the various nuclear-plant accidents, shutdowns, that characterized the period, as well as to the leakages from chemical and biological-warefare stockpiles and toxic-waste disposal sites if which there were many thousands, both legal... and illegal... and to the uncontrolled use of chemical insecticides, herbicides, and other sprays.

(HT, Historical Notes)

Many of the Commanders had been affected by the sterility-causing virus, which was developed in the pre-Gilead era. Nonetheless, some fertility was willed. True, too, the pre-Gilead government had taken some measures to react to the effects of the problems of reproduction, but, some like ‘artificial insemination and fertility clinics’ were deemed irreligious, hence outlawed by the new government who opted for the use of handmaids in order to replace the serial polygamy, which was on the increase, with the simultaneous polygamy which has its precedents in the Old Testament. In part, part of all this was an inevitable result of the feminist attack on the home and on men, especially that history tells that the Religious Right Movement was against political involvement, and that the sweeping social changes of the 1960s were the core impetus for them to change their opinion on political participation.(Thistlewaite, 2006)

Atwood mirrors the images of female grudge against men, most specifically, in Aunt Lydia’s language in chapter 26 which resonates with hope of better future away from men: ‘women united’, living together ‘the goal of a little garden’. Also in chapter 20 when she responds to the Un-women who appear in the film shown to the handmaids -once a week as usual-holding banners, among which one says TAKE BACK THE NIGHT. Here, Aunt Lydia grudgingly concedes: ‘We would have condoned some of their ideas, even today’.

Particularly in Canada, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the prominence of The Take Back Movement. In commemoration of the tenth anniversary of their first publication; ‘*Women Unite!*’ the Women’s Press in 1982 published ‘*Still Ain’t satisfied!*’ in which some of the movement’s actions are described:

In Toronto Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) demonstrated at Metro and City executive meetings ... And all over North America similar groups have demonstrated to 'take back the night' From the merchants of sexual ghoulishness, repeatedly making the connections between porn and all other violence done in the time before

(Kotash, 1982) (10)

In recalling the past Offred tells the reader 'women were not protected' (HT, chapter 5). She, likewise, admits the Republic of Gilead had provided protection to women. The night has been taken back, and men are not allowed contact with women, as in the time before. Women live safe from sexual abuse, however minor it might be. This, indeed, has gifted women with a certain kind of freedom –for 'there is more than one kind of freedom' (Ibid), to borrow from Aunt Lydia's words- and power, too, of a certain sort; 'power of dog bone, passive but there' (Ibid, chapter 6), though. But 'men were not just going to go away... you couldn't just ignore them' (Ibid, chapter 28), Offred infers. Besides, although men were swept away from female spaces so as to heal the wounds of the past, as Offred's schadenfreude-laden words reveal:

I hope they get hard at the sight of us... they will suffer later at night, in thin regimented Beds. They have no outlets now except themselves, and that is a sacrilege. There are no More magazines, no more films, no more substitutes, only me and my red shadow Walking away from the two men, who stand at attention, stiffly, by a roadblock, watching Our retreating shapes;

(HT. chapter 4)

the ruling Commanders still enjoy some outlets and substitutes to meet 'Nature's plan' (Ibid, chapter 37). They have the Jezebels and handmaids to bend the rules with. 'Everyone is human after all'! And '[b]etter never means better for everyone... It always means worse for some' (Ibid, chapter 32), the Command justifies to Offred.

In the Gileadian society certain facts seem to have taken different forms while they are still the same. Women's bodies are still victims to rape, only with their consent -one they have been forced to give for lack of choice. If not the body as it is the case with the Jezebels, then the ovaries as is the situation with the handmaids. However the way is, rape entails force, and women are forced to accept either in order to survive, or to avoid bitter alternatives.

In Waltzing Again (2006), Atwood comments: 'I have always wondered... do so many women think of themselves as menaced on all sides, and of their husbands as potential

murders?’ Atwood seems believe this state of paranoia would lead to other complications in the women’s question. In The Handmaid’s Tale, she, not only, takes women’s antagonism towards men to a further extent so as to envision its fallout, but she takes into consideration the most possible reactions of the anti-feminist groups that took action partly because of the radicalism of the feminist movement, as well.

III.3.3. Matriarchy of Gilead: One Destiny, Different Voices

Only on the surface is the Gileadian society patriarchal, and only on the surface are men the sole enemy to women. In its heart Gilead is a matriarchy, and women like men are misogynistic, though a definition of the term entails a man to evoke that hatred directed towards womankind.

In Gilead, women enjoy the power to control and police the bodies of the subjects they are in charge of -power to control women only. In the Red Center, the new handmaids are under the authority and responsibility of the Aunts. The new regime relies on them to brainwash the new fertile wombs into thinking that they are offered a chance to live a better life, and to indoctrinate them into its new laws and principles. Once in service, the red-robed handmaids, once again, are subject to either the Marthas’ or the Wives’ authority. At one of the nights Offred is summoned to the Commander’s office. The Commander appeared unaware and indifferent, too, to the conditions under which the women of his household live. All is female design: ‘It was not the first time he gave evidence of being truly ignorant of the real conditions under which we lived’ (HT, chapter 25). And, in the Jezebel’s, likewise, women live under the headship of the Aunts. Atwood notes, through Professor Pieixoto’s tongue, ‘no empire imposed by force or otherwise has ever been without this feature: control the indigenous by members of their own group’. Hence, ‘the best and most cost-effective way to control women... was through women themselves’ (Historical Notes)

The ironic confusion that arises here, however, is that though women are in constant contact with women only, the sentiment that reigns supreme amongst them is hostility and mistrust. The red-dresses come on top of the list of the women most despised by other women in Gilead. Offred narrates the many instants she felt their antagonism grappling their words, or read it in their eyes and conducts: ‘beneath her veil the first one scowls at us. One of the

others turns aside, spits on the sidewalk. The econowives do not like us' (HT, chapter 8). The Marthas, too do not like them. Though, the scarlet-still-fertile-wombs are their sole hope for having a child to care about, Cora thinks she 'wouldn't debase herself like that' (Ibid, chapter 2). Even Rita who believes better a handmaid than a Martha, always frowns at her. Offred knows 'the frown isn't personal; it is the red dress and what it stands for' (Ibid). The Wives call them 'little whores' (Ibid, chapter 19) and regard them as subjects to them: 'I had to take stern measures with mine' one Wife comments (Ibid). At the Salvaging, Offred confirms, 'they can do almost anything to us, but they aren't allowed to kill us, not legally' (Ibid, chapter 42). In the Red Center and the state brothels, the Aunts are too severe and strict with the handmaids and the Jezebels. When Moira was caught after she had failed in her first attempt to escape 'she couldn't walk for a week', Offred describes her state 'her feet would not fit into her shoes... they used steel cables, frayed at the ends... they didn't care what they did to your feet or your hand even if it was permanent' (Ibid, chapter 15). And if one Jezebel gains some weight she is to be put in Solitary.

Another sentiment so strong and rampant, as well, is envy. In Gilead every woman envies every other woman for what she has. The Marthas and the Aunts envy the handmaids their viable ovaries and the handmaids envy the Marthas 'the act of touch': 'I hunger to touch something, other than cloth or wood. I hunger to commit the act of touch', Offred says (Ibid, chapter 2), and the Wives the rules they can bend to have some cigarettes, for example. The Wives envy each other their pregnant handmaids, and the handmaids their wombs that welcome their husbands' sperm every month instead of them. The scarlet shapes envy each other a successful insemination. The Marthas envy other Marthas lucky enough to have a pregnant handmaid at home. Perhaps even some un-women do envy the handmaids for the extra alternative they had, and maybe some handmaids do envy some un-women for not having to choose.

In The Handmaid's Tale, Atwood describes Gilead as a matriarchal society, though seemingly a fortress of patriarchal regime. In the utopian women-only nation she has aped from the Cultural feminist project, women live together away from men's nasty presence. Yet, they lack harmony and solidarity. There is hatred and jealousy pervading their female world, instead. The regime has used women to spread order and hold control of other women. It has also made up of their one group other smaller, hence weaker groups and sewn clash and tension between them. Atwood's message, here, ranges between warning women that a misogynist is not always only a man -women themselves can contribute and perpetuate

women's oppression- on the one hand, and on the other, to explain that a women's culture does not forcibly mean better conditions and opportunities for womankind.

III.3.4. Freedom to Vs. Freedom from

'In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it.' (HT, chapter 5), the handmaids are told in the Red Center. The new regime came and freed women from men's rage and sexual appetites. In the time before women had no protection; they could not go out alone at night, and they did not walk except in well-frequented roads. They were victims to sexual abuse and degradation, of rape and pornography. Gilead, however, has offered women protection. It is safe now for them to walk along the streets of Gilead and no man dares even whistle or shout obscenities at them. Rape is punished with death and pornography is banned. In her description of the Gileadian society, Atwood does not hide the good change that has occurred after the coup. When asked whether or not there is any good brought by the new government, she admits:

Yes. Women are not whistled at on the street, men don't come climbing in the window in the middle of the night. Women are 'protected'. Sardonicly speaking, in totalitarian countries the streets are much safer for the most part.

(Tolan, 2007)

In an essay entitled 'Two Concepts of Liberty' (1958), Isaiah Berlin notes there is 'positive' freedom, as there is 'negative' freedom. A positive notion of liberty comes from one's wish to be one's 'own master'. 'I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind'. A negative understanding, however, states: 'I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no human being interferes with my activity', and if otherwise one is prevented from doing what one wishes to do, one 'is to that degree un-free'. Though seemingly no clear difference appears, Berlin insists, the distinction lies at the difference between the 'desire to be governed by myself, or at any rate to participate in the process by which my life is to be controlled' and the desire for an 'area for free action'. These two desires are basically different:

So different is it, indeed, as to have led in the end to the great clash of ideologies that dominates our world. For it is this –the ‘positive’ concept of liberty not freedom from but freedom to- which the adherents of the ‘negative’ notion represent as being, at times, no better than a specious disguise for brutal tyranny.

(Ibid)

Fiona Tolan (2007) argues, confusion is noticeable when one realizes that Berlin’s understanding of ‘positive’ freedom that he calls ‘freedom to’ accords with totalitarian regimes. Once again, confusion appears when applying his words on The Handmaid’s Tale. Aunt Lydia seems to have another conception of the idea of ‘freedom from’ which contradicts with that of Berlin. To her, though limited and prescribed, still, it is a safe road to run away the uncontrolled hedonism which shepherds people to purposeless, immoral liberties, which according to her view was ‘freedom to’. This latter, however, to Berlin implies a refuge to governmental authority and interference; ‘the ideology from which Utopianism is more likely to spring’ (Berlin, 1958)

Notwithstanding, both Berlin and Aunt Lydia expound ‘positive’ freedom in like manner. What makes the difference; however, is the individual’s –the advocate of either sort- wish to seek refuge to what? Or from what? In The Handmaid’s Tale, Serena Joy and Offred’s mother, though with different political convictions, both can be read as advocates of ‘positive’ freedom (Tolan, 2007). In the two societies they envision governmental authority is a necessity to assure a just prescription of liberties. Conversely, Moira upholds a philosophy of total freedom of action, ‘negative’ in both Berlin’s and Aunt Lydia’s eyes, indeed.

The question that rises supreme, in essence, is that supposing that everything in Gilead is meant ‘to do better’ (HT, chapter 32), as the Commander’s words confirm, and that Gilead, as another Commander claims has ‘given... more than ... taken away’ from them (Ibid, chapter 34), what power of temptation or else of threat, one may wonder, does the right for a name to a handmaid bear between its folds? Furthermore, if the end does justify the means, what is to justify hypocrisy, then –for what but hypocrisy one may name Gilead’s non-official brothels? Why is that a category of women directed to negative freedom while the essence of the regime is to offer women a positive one?

In her novel, Atwood presents two types of freedom: positive and negative; freedom from and freedom to, as respectively referred to by Aunt Lydia and the political architects of Gilead for whom she works. She, also, objectively pictures the effects of both on women as well as on

society. Whilst, she acknowledges the bad of the freedom that existed prior to the foundation of the new government, she sprinkles doubt on the one proposed by it. She chooses two proponents of the positive notion of freedom; Serena Joy and Offred's mother, purposefully, with opposing political stance, in order to question the validity of the political or philosophical system which limits people's basic freedoms in pursuit of its convictions. Both Serena Joy and Offred's mother, in a way or another, come to taste the bitter flavor of disillusionment once certain verities come out of their disguise.

III.3.5. Freedom Vs Confinement

Offred's recollection of her past days when the American citizen was given a *freedom to* –as it is called according to Aunt Lydia's understanding of the words- suggests that, though people were invited to explore their sexuality, this kind of freedom was rather exploited out of necessity and not of desire. (Tolan, 2007). The 'underwhore party' Moira organized is, Moira explains, 'big in the suburbs, once they start getting age spots they figure they have got to beat the competition. The pornomarts and what have you.' (HT, chapter 10). Such an event that would be unthinkable in the Republic of Gilead, nonetheless, implies lots of restriction to what is supposed to be unlimited freedom, as if there was no freedom at all. Though, there is free access to everything, 'a commodified sexual environment' (Tolan, 2007) that invites people to pursue a liberty they do not desire is created. While on the other side, rights to experience things as mundane as going to the Laundromat or walking alone on the street are being curtailed by unspoken rules, yet, made known to every woman: 'Don't go to the Laundromat, by yourself, at night' (HT, chapter 5).

In this point, Atwood is referring to a shortcoming in the Liberal ideology which fails to enforce woman's safety, while it defends her right to go to the Laundromat and walk on the street alone. And so then, in practical terms, woman remains bound to certain rules, though theoretically, she is sentenced free. (Tolan, 2007)

The Jezebel's is another scene in The Handmaid's Tale, which questions the Liberal notion of liberty which lacks purpose and moral value. At first sight of the excessively hedonistic world, Offred is filled with a sense of release:

I can stare, here, look around me. There are no white wings to keep me from it. My head shorn of them, feels curiously light; as if a weight has been removed from it, or substance.

(HT, chapter 37)

‘It is like walking into the past’ (Ibid), says the Commander. But, very quickly that sense is changed; their make-up and clothes seem to distress her: ‘their eyes look too big to me, too dark and shimmering, their mouths too red, too wet, blood-dipped and glistening; or, on the other hand, too clownish’ (Ibid). She dubiously wonders: ‘Is there joy in this? There could be, but have they chosen it? You can’t tell by looking’ (Ibid)

In the Jezebel’s there is clear defiance of the restrictions of Gilead. Women do what they desire: ‘It doesn’t matter what sort of vice we get up to’ (HT, chapter 38). Yet, ‘nobody gets out of here except in a black van’ (Ibid). In fact, the Jezebels did accept that freedom because of the absence of positive alternatives. In addition, that freedom was conferred upon them by the government for the interest of its heads. The fact that renders their freedom –if proper it is to call it so- more akin to that of Aimé Césaire’s Ariel (11), which he was exchanging his services to Prospero for. Though, indeed, Ariel was at least bargaining for complete freedom from Prospero’s authority, whereas the Jezebels are enjoying it while they are still under the Aunts’ and their cattle prods’ control.

In that world so reminiscent of the time before, Offred, at first glance, associates the scene with a sense of liberation, mainly when juxtaposed with the white wings and the red dress that mark her as if a defect, yet, still their absence means men can ‘review [her] breasts, [her] legs, as if there is no reason why they shouldn’t’ (HT, chapter 37). ‘It is a striking feature of advanced societies’, Eagleton (1996) comments ‘that they are both libertarian and authoritarian, hedonistic and repressive’ (12)

In her story of a handmaid, Atwood, juxtaposes life in the Jezebel’s represented by their make-up and apparel which lacks goal, and smells of capital consumerism, and life outside its walls represented by the handmaids’ white wings which serve to decide and remind them of the hedges they are hemmed in, and the blood-color of their dress which stands, in like manner, as a constant reminder of the government’s verdict on their role and status, so as to cast aspersions on both forms of freedom offered to women; the one posited by Liberal feminists, and the one imposed by the Gileadian government.

The fort of Gilead has gifted women freedom from the lack of protection and security of the time before. And that was at the expense of their autonomy and self-consciousness. Coming to this point, the Jezebel's turns to be 'another alternative reading of the situation of women under liberal capitalism', Fiona Tolan (2007) explains. There, women taste freedom from the restrictions of Gilead; the Puritan-like society. Their freedom, however, is one they might not have desired. It is, rather a way of life, they name freedom because they are not free in reality; a freedom which confuses the symbols of liberty with those of consumerism: drugs, prostitution and clothes. And so both worlds try to present a mode of life through which they offer women freedom from what is missing in either worlds, yet, both, too, in excessive manners.

III.3.6. The Women's Question between Rebellion and Docility

That Gilead is founded on rigid, coercive structures is one dystopian feature, Atwood's novel reveals. Nonetheless, this does not cloak the fact that there were alternatives other than the one Offred opted for: 'there was not a lot of choice, but there was some' (HT, chapter 16) Offred could have preferred life in the Colonies. She could have attempted to escape the Red Center as Moira did. On the contrary, once she fell into the hands of the regime it was bold, Offred lacked boldness, and docility very quickly was etched on her body. She consents to wear 'the color of blood which defines [her]' (Ibid, chapter 2). She accepts to be the Commander's sex marionette, and did not say no to Serena when she arranged for her liaison with Nick. Offred did not try any way out of her degrading state. When she met Moira at the Jezebel's she was worried Moira has become like her:

She is frightening me now because what I hear in her voice now is indifference, a lack of volition... And how can I expect to go on, with my idea of her courage, live it through, act it out, when I myself do not?

(Ibid, chapter 38)

'I do not want her to be like me', she desperately adds, 'Give in, go along, save her skin... I want gallantry from her, swashbuckling, heroism, single-handed combat. Something I lack' (Ibid)

That Offred herself admits she lacked heroism and volition reflects her conviction she could have at least attempted to make of herself who and what she is not now. Yet, this does not imply her docility was malignant, and that she has been diagnosed of fatalistic inertia. Offred started her course of rebellion when a handmaid, and perhaps her name and the red overall, she eroded her body with, comprised big part of the fees. Also, her affair with Nick, notwithstanding an act of docility as it may seemingly connote –so it was at the outset, though- bears within it connotations of revolt and rebellion. In her narration she reveals:

I went back to Nick time after time, on my own, without Serena knowing. I was not called for, there was no excuse. I did not do it for him, but for myself entirely. I did not even think of it as giving myself to him.

(Ibid, chapter 41)

That is one of the sparse moments, Offred does something for herself. It is not pretending to go to the bathroom so that to exchange some words with Moira. It is not hiding some butter or margarine to use instead of hand lotion or face cream (Ibid, chapter 17), nor attempting to steal ‘something that will not be missed’ (Ibid). With Nick she is full of seriousness and determinism. It is a property she intends to preserve: ‘the fact is that I no longer want to leave, escape, cross the borders to freedom. I want to be here, with Nick, where I can get at him’ (Ibid).

Offred, furthermore, claims her body as being hers; her own territory with which she contends men’s invasion: ‘I sink down into my body as into swamp, fenland where only I know the footing’ (Ibid, chapter 13) although she admits she could not cross the borders of her red-robed shape. Inside her own space, Madeleine Davies (2006) argues, there deep inside the walls of her womb, Atwood makes Offred’s body speak, thereby writing her own version of Cixous’s *écriture féminine*: ‘Write yourself. Your body must be heard’ (1976)

I become the earth I set my ear against, for rumors of the future. Each twinge, each murmur of slight pain, ripples of sloughed-off matter, swellings and diminishing of tissue, the drooling of the flesh...

(HT, chapter 17)

‘I intend to last’ (Ibid, chapter 2). That is her ultimate goal she was giving in for. To last means to continue to exist; to adjust the self to the realities of the context. ‘Truly amazing what people can get used to, as long as there are few compensations’ (Ibid, chapter 41), she

infers. Nick is Offred's compensation. Nevertheless, when she knows Ofglen is dead and that she is safe she is ready to give up such a priceless compensation:

Dear God... I'll do everything you like. Now that you have let me off, I will obliterate myself, if that is what you really want; I'll empty myself... I will give up Nick... I'll accept my lot... I don't want pain... I don't want to be a dancer, my feet in the air, my head a faceless oblong with white cloth... I want to keep on living, in any form. I resign my body freely to the uses of others. They can do what they like with me.

(Ibid)

The very idea of death frightens Offred: 'I am abject' (Ibid), she admits. She clings on to life; to any form of life, indeed. Even her life as a handmaid, a sex doll for Fred and his likes, a walking womb and an unnamed, invalid red shape; anything as long as she is breathing life, is better than death.

Between its docility and resistance, Offred's body is not inert; morphing from one into the other in search of life. Whether life implies surrender or a waiting game, Atwood prescribed – through Offred's desire to last- in preference to hopeless attempts, entails analysis of the alternatives and a dissection of the threats Offred might have been supposed to confront. Noteworthy, however, is that dystopian tradition 'seems to preclude advancing positive', in spite of the 'assertive characters that might provide the reader with consoling hope' (Bloom, 2004). Such dilemma betwixt hope and despair, life and death emanates an aura of loss and confusion, on the one hand, and of seriousness about women's question, on the other. In this, Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale asks more clearly to be accounted for as a commentary about certain realities that might be truly latent but active and effective, too, however at which pace all is being done.

Perhaps it is not just what if it happens here? is crucial to expound on. What might lead up to it, and what wrongs are still in disguise should be paid considerable attention so that to avoid going straight on towards such a stage. What is behind women's freedom, one may wonder? And what is its reality? Is it really a desire to set the self free, or only an adaptation of the self to a certain state of freedom?

III.3.7. The Dystopia of The Handmaid's Tale

In The Handmaid's Tale, Offred is trapped inside the familiar dystopian quandary of being denied any possibility for agency while being aware of a world beyond the space and narrative one is imprisoned in (Howells, 2006). Offred has no right for a name, nor an identity for her own. She is deprived of her rights as a human being. In lieu, she has been reduced to her role as a child-breeder; to a scarlet ghost and to a two-legged womb as she has been called up into sexual service to the new regime.

Ironically as much as purposefully, the Gileadian society is a Religious Right utopia, which paradoxically as well as ironically rather than coincidentally, has applied the cultural feminist dream of separate women's nation. Yet, within its borders women are interned in a domestic disaster situation. With the novel, Fiona Tolan (2007) argues, Atwood has deliberately inscribed her name into a twentieth century dystopian tradition. 'A cognate of *A Clockwork Orange*, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*', Atwood (1986), describes her work.

In locating the novel within the pertinent dystopian context, however, Amin Malak (2004) suggests, The Handmaid's Tale reveals the salient features, Zamyatin's *We*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Orwell's *1984* include (13). Yet, he adds two other features can be distinctly found in the novel: 'feminism and irony'. In the story feminism condemns the misogynous aura the Religious Right emanates in its agenda, notwithstanding, upholds and seconds 'man-woman praxis'. Evidence of this can be noticed in tracing the amount of doubt and disillusionment, Atwood casts upon the cultural feminist project of separatism. 'Here', he comments 'feminism functions inclusively rather exclusively, poignantly rather than stridently, humanely rather than cynically'. The traceable and heavy ironic tone, on the other hand, skillfully encroaches on the reader's interest as well as sympathy, betokening 'a confident narrative strategy that aims at treating a depressing material gently and gradually, yet firmly, openly and conclusively' (Ibid)

On the other hand, if considered from a different angle, The Handmaid's Tale, Fiona Tolan (2007) maintains, can be read as a critical dystopia. Referring to Raffaella Braccolini's claim that critical dystopias "reject the more conservative dystopian tendency to settle for the anti-utopian closure by setting up 'open endings' that resist that closure and maintain 'the utopian impulse within the work'" (Moylan, 1986), she suggests that Atwood's novel whilst critical of

both the socio-political situation of the society and the utopian projects that propose to improve it, provides a pinch of hope for the future with Offred's last words –ambiguous, though- 'whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing' (HT, chapter 46), thereby insists that 'utopian impulse' within it.

III.4. Conclusion

In waging their crusade to end women's suffering, second-wave feminist activists either, unknowingly, opted for extreme resolutions, thereby resulted in new dilemmas and complications, or, unintentionally, missed the way towards them, therefore, mistakenly, one ingredient was absent while some other was prolific. Alana A. Callaway in her *Women Disunited: Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale as a Critique of Feminism* (2008) suggests, for Atwood, second-wave feminists lacked solidarity. Though they all aimed, she writes 'to end de facto inequalities, and therefore, often pursued complementary purposes, they were most frequently at odds with one another' (Ibid). This, however, had the result of spreading 'resentment and distrust as well as self-segregation' (Ibid). Second-wave feminists, she continues, were growing more and more belligerent towards men. Such traceable attitude, though stemming from a misogynistic history to stem it, has fostered some ad hominem opinions which aggravated the situation, and stimulated anti-feminism backlash, instead.

Margaret Atwood asserts she does not seek to posit solutions to the 'problems of the living', nor 'deal out the answers' (2006). Notwithstanding, in The Handmaid's Tale she appears interested in posing questions and exploring the suggestions of the feminist movements, through her characters. And that is why the tale of the handmaid from the futuristic society, she devised in her novel, is laden with instances of realized second-wave-feminist projects and ideas. In this, The Handmaid's Tale tells about a dystopian society which has, ironically, attained cultural feminist utopia, the thing that helped Atwood consider some crucial ideas such as 'It cannot happen here', and 'America is not there' (Bloom, 2004) as Gilead is a Right-wing autocracy. It helped her, as well, to study some feminist ideas, while brought to fruition, and foresee their possible fallout. True images of sexual oppression and repression in the name of religion are, by and large, thought they can only happen in Iran for example or Czechoslovakia may be (Ibid).

While true it is that feminism is a women's movement which, in essence, seeks womankind's interests, Margaret Atwood's main focus in her novel has been directed upon the flaws a feminist agenda is very likely to bear between its folds. Hence, what if America is unconsciously bearing germs stealthily stimulating and paving the way for such dystopia, is, to Atwood, worth be considered with heed equal to that devoted to dispute women's subjugation and oppression. And hence, what if Gilead crosses the fences of people's fears and worries and becomes a reality does, in like manner, grip one's attention -mainly that Atwood has woven her story relying on historical facts, and existing realities.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

- (1) Cited in Fiona Tolan's *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (2007: 157)
- (2) Cited in *The Cambridge Introduction to Margaret Atwood*. (Macpherson, 2010: 23)
- (3) Cited in Bouston's *Brutal Chronologies* (1993: 135)
- (4) Birthdays and Salvagings are occasions on which women in Gilead are tolerated a certain portion of liberty from the confines of the home. For Salvagings see the glossary
- (5) Cited in Bouston's *Brutal Chronologies* (1993: 136)
- (6) Ibid
- (7) Ibid
- (8) Schlafly was the first female Right-wing activist to appear on the national stage as a spokesperson for the Movement. Tammy Faye Baker, however, was another activist whose husband; Jim Baker was imprisoned for an affair with his former secretary
- (9) Cited in Allana Callaway's master thesis on *Women Disunited: Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale A Critique Of Feminism*. Master These. San José State University (2008: 20)
- (10) Cited in Fiona Tolan's *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (2007: 153)
- (11) Ariel is the spirit who Prospero freed from a tree Caliban's mother; Sycorax put into, thereby becoming his slave. Ariel in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is different from the in Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempete*, in that it is used in the latter to stress the colonized man's struggle and sacrifice for the sake of independence as Caliban is portrayed, contrary to Ariel who kept waiting for freedom to come from his enslaver.
- (12) Cited in Fiona Tolan's *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (2007: 163)
- (13) On Margaret Atwood and the dystopian tradition, Amin Malak states the major features which *The Handmaid's Tale* along with Orwell's 1984, Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Zamyatin's *We*, reveal. Dystopias, he explains, most essentially deal with power, functioning mercilessly yet with efficiency in extreme terms, towards its most

intended totalitarian limits. Very often, war and external threats make part of the setting. Dystopias may, also, be horror-laden. Yet, emphasis is directed on the forewarning, rather than on terror for its own sake. The characters are, most often, thwarted by the nightmarish atmosphere they live within, and also the eternal conflict between their own convictions and choice and theirs societies which are controlled by regressive beliefs, and coercive structures.(Bloom, 2004)

CHAPTER FOUR

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BETWEEN PRINT AND SCREEN

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Chapter Four

BETWEEN PRINT AND SCREEN

VI.1. Introduction

In her The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood is eager to explore women's dire experience under the sexist laws the world throughout history has proved to abide with. In the feminist dystopia she thought up in her work, women are imprisoned inside the fences of The Republic of Gilead; a theocracy willed and seconded by the New Right fundamentalists of the 1970s and 1980s. It, nevertheless, is a dream brought to reality to many feminist activists, as well. Through its narrative, Atwood meant to say a lot; not only to merely broach female issues and problems, but also and mainly to stand on a different ground so as to broach them.

In 1990, however, such way devised by Atwood to approach to the Woman's Question was extended and hence, brought to the screen by the German film director Volker Schlöndorff, who seems to have fiddled about the original source of the story, thereby propounding new version which differs to some extent from the way Atwood prescribed to things to happen and come to.

The present chapter, therefore, aims to follow The Handmaid's Tale's move to the screen, and deal with Schlöndorff's own devised version and compare it to that of Atwood. It, likewise, attempts, in a second section, to posit another move for the novel through which University students of Literature can benefit from its richness and contribution to women's issues and concerns. This section, furthermore, will be devoted to reflect on the way literature needs to be taught to University students of English Literature, as The Handmaid's Tale is to be proposed into the curriculum.

VI.2. Schlöndorff's The Handmaid's Tale

In the film the story opens with Kate (Natasha Richardson), her husband and their small daughter attempting to cross the borders of their homeland, after right-wing fundamentalists had seized power in a military coup. The family is intercepted by border guards who kill the husband and separate the mother from her daughter. Along with other women, Kate is subjected to a fertility test. Having been proved still fertile, she becomes a national fortune who would along with other still-viable women assure the continuity of the New Regime's elites, especially that pollution has rendered the majority of women sterile. Kate is taken to the Red Center with other handmaids where they would be brainwashed, under the Aunts' control, before they are adopted by individual families.

Later, Kate is placed with Commander Fred (Robert Duvall), who directs the war against the rebels in the mountains, and Serena Joy (Faye Dunaway); a pre-Gilead right-wing activist. In the Commander's household women wear the same color and uniform which define their role and status, all day long, as it is the case with every individual in Gilead. Within that mosaic-like society, Kate who henceforth would be called Offred, takes the color Red to mark her role as a surrogate mother.

According to the new rules, the Wife has to be present whenever the Commander attempts to inseminate the handmaid. When no sign came along, after repeated intercours, Serena suspects the sterility of her husband, and asks Kate to rendezvous Nick (Aidan Quinn); the Commander's chauffeur. The Commander, in like vein, bends Gilead ultraconservative rules and seeks from Kate more than it is allowed to him. One night, he secretly takes her out to a night club; the thing that has upset Nick who seems to have fallen in love with Kate. There in the unofficial brothel, Kate meets one of her co-handmaids; Moira who attempted to flee from the Red Center but was caught and forced along with other prostitutes and ex-career women to meet men's –diplomats and foreign traders- sexual needs and repressed appetites.

Serena discovers the dress and her cloak; her husband gave to Kate to wear to the night club. The same day, Ofglen, a secret underground member, asks Kate to kill the Commander who coldly refuses to help her and save her from what Serena might do to her. Their sentimental parting embrace is, too, the last thing the Commander does, for Kate slashes his aorta with a knife and kills him. Soldiers including Nick, who in reality are members of underground

rebels, arrest Kate and takes her somewhere safe in a mountain where she appears, in an epilogue, waiting for Nick and their child to come to life.

VI.2.1. The Handmaid's Tale between Paper and Screen

At first glance, any viewer who has read the book can feel the absence of some of the novel's great riches. In this one may blame their throwing away on the film's screenwriter: Harold Pinter. Yet, there is certainly evidence that Schlöndorff did support Pinter's script. When he started out on the *Handmaid's Tale*, he went to Toronto to see Atwood and they 'then sent notes to Pinter on the script, who incorporated some of them in the draft' (3). Schlöndorff explained 'we felt we had to expand the script, explain how the Republic of Gilead came to happen, things like that... but during rehearsal, we eliminated everything we had incorporated because we felt that our job was to tell the story, not explain the premise. Now the script is as straight and lean as Pinter's original draft'. Also on the complete omission of all the flashbacks -apart from Kate's separate nightmares about her separation from her daughter, and her memories on the death of her husband- which has the effect of the relative one-dimensionality of the character of Kate, Schlöndorff, besides his comment on his dislike of flashbacks, suggested 'if you were to identify more with the main figure Kate... that would in my view become unbearable for the audience and border kitsch... Crying is cheap. Understanding is more difficult, yet also more important' (4)

Whereas Atwood surrounds the events of the story with details on how things came to exist, Schlöndorff's film leaves the viewers to surmise on their part. In the screen version, for instance, one who has not read the book does not know that the usurpers are right-wing fundamentalists. Likewise, an uninitiated viewer is left to figure out by themselves - only on a later news broadcast on a rebel group names Mayday terrorists- that the words 'Mayday', which Nick whispers to Kate as he pushes her out of the Commander's house, are in reality the password of the resistance group. Also the point that the Republic of Gilead has banned reading and writing is left to acute observers' understanding. Equally remarkable, is the deletion of reference to Kate's relation with her mother when the book puts considerable attention and importance on it. Similarly, there are the modifications brought to Kate's story. First, Kate in Atwood's novel is only referred to as Offred. Her name remains unknown. And

that has its effects and message to convey in the work. Another example is the character of Moira, who in print version is Offred's best friend not someone Kate has just come to know as in the film. The novel, too, tells the reader about Offred's affair with Luke while he was still married to his first wife, but the screen gives no clue on the point.

Yet, the most noticeable difference might be the ending of the story. Unlike in the novel, Schlöndorff's Kate kills the Commander, and not like Atwood's book, she is rescued by Nick and taken to a remote snowy mountain reminiscent of the one the story started from. There she is helped by the Mayday team to live and wait for her child's birth and Nick's return. In fact the ending of the film has gained harsh criticism claiming that Schlöndorff has forfeited the prominent ambiguity of the book for his own sake by rendering the film more conventional. (Catellier, 1999)

While such modifications might be seen they have contributed to the failure of the film or characterized as 'sloppy screen writing' (Moeller and Lellis, 2002) by some critics, a lot of questions are to be raised and thought about when watching Schlöndorff's screen adaptation of The Handmaid's Tale. Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis posit:

Pinter's refusal to explain everything is perhaps maddening to a literalist of adaptation theory, but it raises provocative questions. Is the film *The Handmaid's Tale* really less rich because it does not spell everything out? Is it necessarily and inferior film because the details become more meaningful to the spectator who has read the book? Or are not Pinter and Schlöndorff respecting the audience's intelligence by assuming that its members can fill in ellipses and understand connections that are only implied?

Any viewer who had read the book is positioned to ask *why* and *what for*, on every modification, even when aware of Schlöndorff's explication on certain points. In considering the very differences between the two versions, is Offred, one may wonder, Kate? Are they the same body and mind, only developed in different manners? Does Kate solely lack deeper dive into her character, to be Atwood's Offred? Or is she her despite all this? Has Schlöndorff's film created a new character other than the novel's main figure? Or is it only his own, different way to explore the same person appointed by the novelist as protagonist.

In fact, many reviews –from the one available- have placed much attention on the comparison between the film and the novelist's work in their criticism, neglecting any other critical

possibility worthy of exploration. Like Larry McMurtry, in *Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996) Brian McFarlane comments

The film-makers themselves have been drawing on literary sources, and especially novels of varying degrees of cultural prestige, since the film first established itself as pre-eminently a narrative medium. In view of this fact, and given that there has been a long-running discourse on the nature on the connections between film and literature, it is surprising how little systematic, sustained attention has been given to the process of adaptation. This is the more surprising since the issue of adaptation has attracted critical attention for more than sixty years in a way that few other film-related issues have. (5)

In his film adaptations, Schlöndorff, in fact, places interest on telling the story on the screen; not necessarily the one told by the novelist. (Catellier, 1999) And that is what happened with The Handmaid's Tale. That point, indeed, has instigated much criticism on the question of its fidelity to the print version than on the film's own story telling.

VI.2.2. Reference to the Nazi Germany

The film director of The Handmaid's Tale, Volker Schlöndorff is said to be one who brought the German cinema to the United States television:

Perhaps the New German cinema truly came to age in America in spring 1980. Schlöndorff's *The Tin Drum* received an Oscar as the Outstanding Foreign Language Film of 1979, the first German film East or West, pre or post Nazi to receive the award. Even those who denigrated the value of the Academy Awards, finding them representative of lowbrow taste and Hollywood hype, would have to acknowledge at least the symbolic significance of Schlöndorff's victorious appearance in Hollywood and on American Television.

(Franklin, 1983)

What becomes obvious very quickly in watching his adaptation of The Handmaid's Tale Film is the special relevance to the German history. In conception, the film is laden with historical references to the Nazi totalitarian regimes, especially in its early. In reception, too, *The Handmaid's Tale* was favorably responded by the Germans indicating readiness for cultural and political dialogue on the issues broached in the work. (Moeller and Lellis, 2002)

The scenes of the processing of women and minority prisoners, their selection in huge halls, their march in column, and their deportation in cattle cars make the viewer's mind recall images of the Holocaust.(Ibid) The search light circling about the Commander's house all night long, evoke a prison camp. And the ubiquitous military uniforms and insignias, and uniformed guards sprinkled everywhere watching dully-dressed workers condemned to menial tasks, are images that can be conceived of as a 'description of conditions of [German]time' (1)

Gilead, Hans and Lellis (2002) argue, like in the neo-fascist social system bears ideals of authoritarian religion, biological determinism, racial purity, order and ultra-traditional sex-role divided family. Even that breeding program intended to assure the continuation of Gilead's elite calls to mind the Nazi Lebensborn project, according to which unwed young women and SS elite studs were conscripted into breeding-*pure*-Nazi-generations service (ibid). Dismantling already existing families to place their children with fit families is, likewise, reminiscent of the time the Aryan-looking foreign children were separated from their families to be raised as German by fit parents. The Gileadian families are cultivated so that to guarantee an ideal white, middle-class society. For the same token, every concept deemed threatening such idealized family structure such as feminism, women's emancipation, abortion, sexual liberty, birth control, lesbianism and religious celibacy, is eventually forbidden and banned by the new government.

Not unlike neo-fascist German society, women are forced back to domestic sphere, through a strong campaign of propaganda and indoctrination which has its parallel in Third Reich which countered women's liberation.(Ibid) In words much akin to Aunt Lydia's about the freedom from the freedom of the pre- Gilead era, the chief ideologue of the Nazi movement Alfred Rosenberg maintained: 'Emancipation of women from the women's emancipation movement is the first demand which would like to serve the Volk and the race'(2)

Fascist Germany was a radical, militaristic, patriarchal society and so is Gilead. Men spend considerable length of time in policing pursuits while women are belittled and made victims to an ideology that cloaks their denigration by pretending to idealize their roles and sacrifices, and so is the case of women in Gilead. Only the Gilead is worse in that it does not honor the handmaids nor does it accord them the right to rear their own children. (Ibid)

In the film of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Schlöndorff seems to endorse and confirm Atwood's original hypothesis that America, though is not Iran nor Czechoslovakia,(6) can very possibly prove fertile and congenial to the events of the novel. By referring to the Third Reich, the film's director does, likewise, refer to the idea that Nazi ideals can be implanted in else lands. Hence, the very assumption 'It cannot happen here' face denial and turns to become 'Not just there it can happen'

VI.2.3. Feminist Discussion of the Film

In Schlöndorff's film there is great emphasis directed onto women rather than men, with the exception of the Commander and Nick, whose appearance, though less frequent, serves to represent patriarchy. In Volker Schlöndorff's *Cinema* (2002), Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis argue the film in this can be construed as post-feminist, though if, they add, positively conceived of it can connote female importance. Yet, importance for what, one may wonder?

During the early 1980s, the term 'post-feminism' took on popularity apparels through the media. Not unlike other *posts* of the late 20th century, it has more than a single angle to be thought of from. While one version promotes the view that feminism is obsolete for society and has left issues of sexism behind and advanced beyond its subsequent problems, another one claims that feminism is no longer necessary because women have resumed their rational reflection and realized that they no longer want all what feminism has been clamoring for. Notwithstanding, no version has authentically reflected the situation of women in the late part of the 20th century. (Bilger, 2009)

One striking facet of the so-called post-feminist movement is that it disfavors the necessity for social change. In so doing, critics who have espoused the concept did inevitably renounce the social agenda that is the cornerstone of feminism. In post-feminist discourse, women are urged to halt seeking to rival men in their pursuit of liberty, for an over-dose of liberty would make them unhappy and possibly unmarriageable. Instead they should accept their subordination, and all is for their good.

The concept of post-feminism is closely linked to anti-feminist backlash, but the ambiguity surrounding it has helped obfuscate its anti-feminist usage. Its advocates, for instance, can subvert the historically denigrating status of women while foster them not to act in their own interests. Similarly, women are encouraged to favor family life over career, as though are no other alternatives; to enjoy their femininity as though it counters with political rights. 'From the postfeminist perspective', Audrey Bilger (2009) argues, 'women are equal enough in theory that they can let down their guard and enjoy their actual subordination'

Post-feminist discourse in Schlöndorff's film can be traced in the way women are urged to accept their subordination and exercise their right to be feminine: to be children-breeders and subordinate house keepers. Women no longer carve for equality with men and feminism has become a cliché from yesteryear. And every achievement of it has been denigrated derogatorily called 'freedom to'. Shedding light on the character of Offred, however, Kate is portrayed as weak, passive and only preoccupied with sexual contentment. But, Offred, Mrianne Barnett claims, does kill the Commander and help Moira flee from the Center. Hans-Berhard Moeller and George Lellis posit Offred in Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale is positioned as a post-feminist woman. Although, she is not a proponent of women extolling their femininity, nor is she a woman who would think to choose between her family and her job, she is not a feminist activist who cries out against sexism and patriarchy. In the screen medium, however, Kate is observed from outside. The omission from the film of her reflection on her 1960s feminist mother has rendered her less important than Serena and Moira. And that is what made so many reviewers react 'cooly' to the film.(Catellier, 1999)

In the film Gilead is a society whose members do not reflect on gender discrimination nor fight against patriarchy. In Audrey Bilger's words:

By referring to a period as postfeminist, opponents of feminist goals capitalize on the optimism of women's movement. Women's rights activists have always hoped that there would be a time when patriarchy became obsolete and feminist politics would thus be unnecessary. Post feminism is this would a feminist utopia.

(2009)

Yet, within that supposedly feminist utopia 'patriarchy is obsolete' not because it has been contended with and eradicated, but rather because it has been acknowledged and legitimized.

In Schlöndorff's cinematic adaptation of The Handmaid's Tale, Gilead is a women society in which women very rarely get into contact with men. In this it is clear that the cultural feminist plan of separatism has been realized as in the book. Yet, Kate does not, reproachfully, tell her mother: 'You wanted a women's culture. Well there is one. It isn't what you meant, but it exists. Be thankful for small mercies' (HT, chapter 21). Nor does Aunt Lydia tempt the new handmaids of a promising future for all women living 'in harmony together... united for a common end' (Ibid, chapter 26). Only a reader of the novel can understand the aspersion Atwood casts on the idea of founding a women-only culture. In the screen version, the viewers are left to realize by themselves there was a radical change in the American society after the coup. They, likewise, left to understand it is not cultural feminists meant, yet it exists.

Though, not spelled out the way Margaret Atwood did in her print version, still the screen has its tools and means through which the message is transmitted. The scene of the women dressed like in the time before in the state-brothel, for instance, is speaking for Offred's recollection about the past and about Moira's 'underwhore party'. The female characters in the Commander's household, along with the scene of the handmaids going to bed in the Red Center are, too other examples of the separatist strategy the cultural feminists intended to follow in their agenda. True, viewers who did not read the novel may find difficulty understand what is being meant by aping such a society as Gilead, but some good background on feminism and the Religious Right of the 1980s can help to a considerable extent.

VI.3. Women Literature into the English Literature Curriculum

In 1990, in her 'Professions for Women' Virginia Woolf urged every female writer to work on killing 'the angel in the house and telling 'the truth about her experience as a body'. Donna Gerstenberger, too, in 1976 had claimed that feminist writers were exhorted to 'speak honestly about the lives of women and of men as seen by women' so as to 'make clear the inadequacy of past conceptions about reality, to alter what women (and men) have been taught to believe are given facts of existence' and then 'call out the conspiratorial lies'. In this, Margaret Atwood seems to have responded well to these enterprises every female pen is in need to undertake, hence Elaine Showalter's claim in 1971 -though uttered earlier- that her

work fitted into a feminist literary curriculum. It, she argued, might provide great help to female students, in that it offers them a new way of reflecting on literature and on themselves, too.

Solely with the aim to fix the lantern on The Handmaid's Tale, primarily, because it is the case of study of the present research work; this 1980s novel calls to be read as an account of some prevailing realities of the world's history, embodied in a minute description of women and their lives between the thorns of that barbed-wire impeding their release; set most precisely in the United States to penetrate that patina, mistakenly, etched with an aura of confidence that the U.S. is exempt of such threats. It, furthermore, serves to veer people's focus on what might be a real threat to woman and her combat against sexism, as it calls their attention to consider the Women's Movement and the remedies its advocates prescribe to cure woman of her maladies. Considering its richness, The Handmaid's Tale, then, might prove appropriate choice for University students of English Literature (Algerian University Licence/Master), in that it awakens them to women's issues and to the Women's Movement's agenda has to be met with critiquing eyes, and not taken it for granted, that it would always lead up to better conditions.

VI.3.1. Teaching Literature vs. Teaching about Literature

It seems that there are hey days for some literatures and writings over others, as it is the case with postcolonial literature and women writings in the modern epoch, and was in an erstwhile era with English and American writings. Nevertheless, in the realm of literature its active participants must not keep their eyes closed on the urgent need to switch over into a more efficacious method in the way literature is being transmitted and taught to its learners. Thus, heeding the very salient necessity to a heyday for a new methodology in the didactics of literature; modern and different both in core and façade.

Heretofore, teaching literature had been victim to traditional methods. These latter; however reigned the bygone era, mark the reader absent from any active participation except in the reading of the text in hand. A literary classroom is only one in Mr. Gradgrind's (7) school and learners are but empty vessels falsely reading about literature, and unknowingly deprived of the pleasure to learn how to read literature (Munazza Ykoob, 2011). Laconically and in other

words ‘the student does think’; a ground for a reality Rosslyn (2005) insisted to accept and work on its basis to draw the traditional approaches of teaching literature to a close and make literature learning life relevant to learners.

Traditional approaches are teacher-centered, and learners are bared the right to respond to the text in their own way. Teachers, being, to a considerable degree, the sole active side in the classroom, impart knowledge and information in regard to literary genres, the historical background, the socio-cultural context of the text, and carry on even further to interpretations and critiques of some known critics. In this way students do not exceed the threshold of the world inside the classroom, nor do they make use of their own real world in the process of learning literature; that unintentionally and erroneously becomes learning about literature. These approaches are, as Guerin et al named them (Munnazza, Ykoob, 2011); historical, moral and biological. They give the literary text along with the opinions and explications of famous critics a sacred dimension. Ipso facto, students do but passively receive as storehouses what teachers inject their minds with, as they, likewise, only understand what authors have discussed in their books paying not even a single iota of heed to what they think the text gets them up to.

The methodology of these approaches serves to develop aesthetic and linguistic understanding of learners, but fail not only to help them unearth the pleasure reading literature gifts them, and makes of them active participants able and confident to respond and defend their response, but does as well prove its incapacity to cope with and meet the aims of 21st century education. (Ibid)As it does help, alas, reproduce more philistines in the world.

Emphasis must be laid on provoking the students to take decisions, to critique and critically evaluate the given information in and about the text in lieu of only considering the linguistic and aesthetic understanding, students evolve throughout the learning process, or the historical background they are helped to develop. (Ibid) In this regard, methodologies and pedagogies; the outcome of various schools of post structuralist literary theory such as feminist pedagogy, the critical pedagogy, task-based learning, social cognitive learning, etc. are recommended to train students to see the world from multiple perspectives and read the text in connection with social and cultural realities they find existing around them in the world they live in. These schools, like feminism, Marxism, new historicism and post-colonialism are student-centered. They encourage readers’ active role as they instill an attitude of re-flexibility which enables the reader to call into question some notions such as gender, class history, race identity, etc.

Eventually, the learner becomes engaged in the learning process; a stage the least to be said about is that it challenges the power the teacher wields over students by creating a collaborative atmosphere in which both teacher and students are prompted and welcomed to participate in both the teaching and learning processes.

VI.3.2. Teaching The Handmaid's Tale

In a text like Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale teachers, applying old methods, set about designing courses including every possible lot falling within the text's orbit. Initially, the teacher diffuses some two or three lectures about the writer, the political and historical contexts of the novel, added to some details about the literary movement, the characters and the themes the novel resonates with. To some extent this step is inevitably sine qua non. Notwithstanding, it can, applying modern approaches, be to a large extent fiddled about in a way that makes of learners active diffusers of information, they enjoy, instead of passive minds awaiting it.

In his *Teaching Literature in a Foreign Language: New or Old Methods* (n.d), Mohamed Amine Boulouar illustrates with a table he adapted from *Teaching Literature in a Second Language* (2004) by Prkinson & Thomas. The table sums up the most effective activities used in teaching Literature in a foreign language classroom.

	Kinds of Activities Involving Literature in a Foreign Classroom	Explanations
1.	Reading for Pleasure	Learners who read in quantity improve more rapidly than those who do not. This improvement includes all areas of language.
2.	Reading for Content	Cannot only help students to widen cultural horizons, but also reduce the locking up of

3.	Reading solely as Foreign Language Practice	<p>learners into the worldview and values of their own place and time</p> <p>Learners study a literary text, or often an extract, look up difficult words, answer questions about it, do exercises on vocabulary and grammar relating to it.</p>
4.	Linguistic Analysis	<p>Considered as one of the major activity types which are appropriate in many Literature courses for foreign language learners. It involves looking very closely at the language of literary texts, including features like deviance, regularity, polysemy and mimesis, and also features of discourse organization or narrative structure which operates over long stretches of text</p>
5.	Personal Response	<p>Refers to the great number of categories of classroom proceedings</p>
6.	Games and 'fun' Activities	<p>Games depend largely on learners' culture, previous experience and perhaps gender. They can help to gain or regain the interest of apathetic students, and can bring life and real learning to otherwise 'dead' sessions at the end of a day or week. They tend to stress factual knowledge of the text, with only limited interpretations. Besides, most can be used only after a text, or quite a lot of it, has already been read and understood.</p>

7.	Predictions and Related Activities	Prediction helps readers to activate their prior knowledge about a topic, beginning the process of combining what they know with new material in the text. Predictions are not simply wild guesses. They are based on clues within the text such as pictures, illustrations, subtitles and plot. Students can be encouraged to make predictions ‘before’ and ‘during’ reading. During reading, effective readers adjust and refine their earlier predictions as new information is gathered and new connections are made. They tend to rehearse what they have learnt and move on with some expectations of what comes next. (Graves & Graves, 2003; Slater & Hortsman, 2000)
8.	Creating One’s Own Text	One can write a thoroughly altered imaginative text because there are practically countless possibilities for adaptation, reproduction, précis, and translation to a new genre i.e. novel to play, for example, follow-up and so on.

In dealing with The Handmaid’s Tale, students can be introduced to a variety of activities and tasks that help them not only develop the faculty of understanding a literary text, in them, but also stimulate other potentialities as they approach to the novel and the issues it broaches. They, taking from the table above, can be given a chance to predict the main theme the work revolves around from its title, as they can be asked to relate it to their own culture and society. Prediction, however, proves more and more rewarding during their reading of the book, in that it attracts their attention and gets them involved in the learning process. Not only games are prescribed here. Drawing some pictures about the society of Gilead in miniature, is also helpful for a better understanding of the life style posited by the New Right in colors, mainly that the new regime already makes use of them in identifying its populace. The scene at the Salvaging is very appropriate.

Students can, likewise, be aided with some scenes from the film –scenes that match with the print version- in order to have clearer pictures on the setting and narrative of the story. They might, too, be offered the opportunity to design the ending before they reach it. Through writing or even acting, they are to give their own view on how things would develop and where they would come to. Apart from its relevant contribution to gifting students new ways

of thinking about the issue of women's suffering throughout history, and about modern life conditions and also thoughts menacing her case, following such ways –and other ones most particularly devised for the sake of making the process of teaching learner-centered- of proceeding the task of teaching such an important text invites students to enjoy learning literature, in lieu of conceiving of it as a boring matter.

VI.4. Conclusion

In adapting Margaret Atwood's words on the screen many viewers stated Schlöndorff has failed in his mission. 'The heavy-handed direction by Volker Schlöndorff does not help to make the movie convincing or dramatically convincing' was the criticism in *Newsweek* (1990), while the *Toronto Life* Knelman suggested 'The enigmatic, menacing tone of Harold Pinter's script sets up dramatic tension, but Schlöndorff has the deadly, humorless touch of a Teutonic professor' (K.J 1990). And Marke Andrews from the *Vancouver Sun* states 'Schlöndorff appears to be the wrong person for the job' (1990) conversely, little criticism was accorded to the film director during the film's premiere. Johnson reported that a scene from the film 'conjures up Atwood's vision of terrifying clarity' (1990), while only Myra Forsberg's view casted little hope reporting in *The New York Times* that Schlöndorff insisted that 'the novel and the script share a remarkable sense of humor that some people overlook' (1989)

In fact much attention and criticism have been directed onto the question of the screen's fidelity to the print version, especially that the latter has been regarded as being the writer's most compelling and popular novel. The thing that rendered its adaptation into a film, already, under the watchful eyes of critics eagerly awaiting its echo so that to compare it to that of its source. The fact that made of the idea of producing a version of the story which differs to a considerable extent from that told in the book, a great risk to the reception of the film.

If Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale was written to account for woman's issues and experiences in a world reigned by sexism and misogyny, and if its screen adaptation partly meant to diffuse the salient points it tackles by seeking wider audience; the suggestion of its move into the curriculum of English Language has the intent to raise students' awareness of in regard of their world being in a way or another addressed and /or referred to by its languages and

events. It, however, remains in want of appropriate teaching methods to assure lots of sides next to those and other than those the traditional approaches could afford.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

- (1) See Volker Schlöndorff's Cinema: Adaptation, Politics, and the 'Movie-Appropriate'
(Moeller and Lellis, 2002)
- (2) Ibid
- (3) Cited in Maram Krey Catellier's Master thesis on A Study of Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale: From Novel to its Film Reading (1999: 52)
- (4) Ibid
- (5) Ibid
- (6) See Bloom's Guides: The Handmaid's Tale (2004)
- (7) Mr. Thomas Gradgrind is the notorious harsh headmaster in Dicken's Hard Times (1854), who is portrayed as someone who is only interested in 'facts' and figures. In his class, the students are mere vessels who are not allowed to 'fancy'.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The Canadian writer Margaret Atwood is a daring female voice devoted to voice women's issues which, not unlike her likes', seeks to subvert patriarchal society through the exploration of abject cases of women's oppression. Notwithstanding, she, through her work The Handmaid's Tale, directs more attention onto the reactive side of the matter while reiterating its basic stimuli. In jettisoning the high status, de facto, attributed to men, she calls attention to gauge women's reactionary move against the status quo, which is not obviously -though unintentionally- always working for women's sake.

Chapter one *Literature and Resistance* deals with the definitions of theories and issues connected to the concepts of Post-Colonialism and Feminism, which are, most often, controversial and far from being satisfactory. In shedding light on Post-Colonialism one, in one's own mind, is directly oriented to think of the era coming after the departure of the colonial power from the colonized land; left to taste, once again, that sense of freedom its people struggled to regain. Yet, resistance is always that part that counts more. In its essence, Post-colonialism reflects on people's experience with those rapists who were manipulated by the sense of their superiority over other peoples deemed by history to await civilization and light to come to them on white ships. It addresses most specifically, the effects of such traumatic experience on its aftermath, at different levels; political, economic, social, cultural and psychological; in which both concerned parts are referred to.

Most often certain things are not to occur the way one may put them during one's moment of musing. They go beyond one's simplistic reflection on them. True, any war for independence is meant for the sake of freedom, independence from the tyrannies of the colonizer, to resume one's sense of one's self-consciousness and existence away from any other supplemental weight. Conversely, it turns to be axiomatically evident that other details become overt once everything is regained to normalcy. To a culture sentenced of inferiority, a mere period at the end of a certain phase of history becomes a hard task. Most often a third space situated in between *pre* and *post* trauma eventuates. That space characterized of an aura of uncertainty and confusion -notably in regard to the people's sense of one's identity's freedom- and sometimes of forgetfulness of the deeds of the villain colonizer, is a residue the newly colonized society has to contend with.

In the world of literature, post-colonial writings constitute a literature of resistance. They, most notably, address crucial issues of race, hybridity, language, identity and the impact the colonial experience had on the colonized country as a whole. The question of power is, too, regarded with eyes of great interest. Power is the concrete; most junctions between the countries of the world are founded upon. At such juncture, a certain portion of the post-colonial world comes to cleanse itself of its stains, only for the fact that the keys of power are under a firm grip of it, as it is the case with the United States of America, who is often looked at as a colonizing power, in lieu.

In veering the flash-light onto the concept of *Feminism*, woman seems to get her hitherto-devoured share of attention. That revolt of the self against its tormentors, that has taken the form of a challenging, bold and very defiant movement, seeks to grant the oppressed sex its rights, and rightful status. Yet, this sounds too generic, the very moment one fathoms out how ‘woman’ does not connote every female of the globe. Though women were made to taste the same flavors of the misogynic spices of their phallogentric societies, there has been some disparities in the dose and, too, in the components. And here one finds oneself drawn back to the very idea of power. Hence, another cry was launched in response not solely to men’s nasty abuses, but, too, to that allegedly putative defender of womankind’s issues, labeled *Feminism*. With the myriad of trends this later is comprised of, it was white in its essence. Assuming the universality of the Woman Question, it was primarily concerned with what concerned white, middle-class, English-speaking woman, while Black, colored or post-colonial woman was left to face marginality and neglect.

Post-colonial Feminism is the accumulation of abuses from more than only one side. The colonial experience and its aftermath, the indigenous patriarchal society which was the first to exploit post-colonial woman’s liberties and the sense of inferiority her society has been injected with by its colonizers and which devalued her status in front of her white woman counterpart, were the thorns stabbing her and urging her to pursue her own rights. In response to such urges post-colonial women writings are devoted to speak about and for the margin and its concerns. Once again, those women whose societies could get rid of that label of a post-colonial society, did, in like manner, escape to be seated in the margin. But, if some details in one country’s history are a bygone past, history per se remains a verity which resists erosion.

Chapter two; *Context and History* is concerned with the historical context which formed the spark for the writing of the selected novel; Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale. In spite

of the fact that the writer is Canadian, she chose to design the narrative of her story in the United States. Equally, important to note is her choice to set it in the future. Apart from her personal interest in the history of her ancestors, i.e. the Puritans, Atwood transcends, through her choice some commonly acknowledged assumptions on the U.S, that this later is exempt of the threats women in else parts of the world do suffer from.

In the novel the American woman is taken back to live her forbears' epoch, and made colonized by their totalitarian and patriarchal laws. The novel seeks to prove that America, in spite of that shining patina cloaking certain realities, is not unlike Iran or Czechoslovakia. Why cannot it happen here, while history tells of the Puritans and of the Women's Movement which combated for women's rights and defended their stand; and of the Religious Right, too, which burgeoned to halt women's progress marches, and resume the laws of the Puritan Fathers who believed woman's place is the home?

In chapter three; *Futuristic Dystopia*, Atwood's fears are tackled. In the society her female protagonist lives in, women are trapped in critical circumstances. The theocratic right-wing fundamentalists forced women back to the confines of the home. They denuded them of every right their likes in bygone eras struggled for. Ironically as well as on purpose, Atwood gives her female characters a chance to live the realization of some feminist projects. And that's what has aggravated their situation into a dire dystopia. An intended good does not necessarily always lead to a realized good. The Women's Movement of the 1960s, referred to as second-wave feminism, posited some further enhancements in favor of the Woman's Question. Yet, Atwood believes surveillance is a necessary ingredient, which may save women and societies lots of unintended and unexpected disaster.

The fourth chapter *Between Print and Screen* examines the cinematic adaptation of Atwood's novel into a film by the German film director Volker Schlöndorff. Despite the harsh criticism accorded to his adaptation, Schlöndorff brought the Nazi Germany to the setting of the story; the thing that serves to confirm that certain ideals from different cultures can be utilized for the sake of reaching certain ends. The point that assures that even the societies thought of in possession of an exempt, are, as likely as not, bearing some wrongs which may unknowingly shepherd them to such deteriorations. In this chapter, too, a suggestion on offering students of English Literature to avail themselves of approaching to women's issues through a dystopian work which may open their thinking to existing realities in their own societies.

Noteworthy, however, is that the teaching of Literature has, too, waged a war of a certain kind against old methods which make the learner resident of the margin, and put them away from any participation that helps them enjoy the learning process and get involved in the text they deal with. In contrast, modern methods place much attention on drawing learners to dig up the pleasure they can be gifted with in studying any literary text, along with their sense that they are active participants and no longer passive learners who dully receive information as if holly Devine Words.

On the other hand, students of Literature are, most often, not introduced to such kind of writings which tells of woman's suffering with her tormentors who have been holding the whip hand over her, for ages, under the name of their presumed supremacy. Women Literature which serves to voice concerns about woman's silenced voice does, likewise, help raise awareness amongst a category of people conceived of as a concrete for better life conditions and systems. And apart from any other detail in regards to the importance of teaching Women Writings to students of Literature, the female pen, per se, is a lesson on how to explore the inner depths of the self; and how to boldly dispute, challenge and transcend the confines of certain socially-designed dos and don'ts which confirm some social ills such as patriarchy and misogyny.

One, in reading what female hands pen into stories about womankind, feels is in one of the most ancient caves of the world which protect those paintings on the bygone yesteryear. One is, also, to fathom the depths of their plight and cries, and taste the bitterness of the life of a subaltern. Then, one in teaching women's battle for freedom and recognition, is to teach a gripping blend of all this. Not unlike the Woman's Question, teaching Women Literature permits learners to listen to what so long-muted voices tell, and read what hand-shackled hands write. It permits one's mind to perceive beauty in bleakness, and sense power in weakness.

In The Handmaid's Tale, Atwood makes of the near future a present for her female protagonist, and a bygone past for further queries on the Gileadian era. She leaves the reader to contend the open ending of the story through, the Historical Notes at the end of the novel, which take one to another epoch different from the one during the Gileadian Government's reign, but which is set in a very far future that does not suffice to alleviate one's worry about how long Gilead, or more precisely people's plight did last. Furthermore, in reading Atwood's novel, one may not feel satisfied to know that Gilead has not yet seen the light. Rather, one

may feel more curious to query whether, and to what extent the modern world does still herald the possible construction of a Gilead or even a Gilead-like society in the U.S as well as in the rest of the globe, mainly that in some societies women have been undergoing the direst experiences ever, with the misogynic attitudes of their patriarchal societies –such is the case of Indian and African woman- while others in else parts still hold the arms against women’s oppression and devaluation, and are perpetually in pursuit of more rights and gains. Coming to this point, one may wonder whether such circumstances do not constitute a threat -to women first, and then to their societies- coming either in the form of a furious rebellion against their oppressors which may lead to unstudied ends, or in the guise of an efficacious medication prescribed to cure women’s wounds, which again may, unexpectedly, cause some complications like what happened in Gilead.

In The Handmaid’s Tale, the world order seems to have gone into reverse. Pre-Gilead is not a society whose female members suffered from male-persecution. Conversely, women enjoyed an advanced stage of liberty, yet come to such a devastating phase; true brought to it by right-wing fundamentalists, but other factors, notably the Women’s Movement, did have a hand in what things did come to. In comparing Atwood’s female characters, one knows they do not resemble the Algerian/Maghrebian or African woman. Yet, the very idea of the characterizes that group responsible of the coup in Gilead –the place of woman is the home- is far from being typical to only one culture. Besides, ‘it cannot happen here’ (Bloom, 2004) is no more reassuring. And then, why cannot it happen here or elsewhere?

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BIOGRAPHY

Margaret Eleanor Atwood, the second of three children of Carl Edmund, an entomologist and Margaret Dorthory, a former dietitian and nutrition, was born on November 18th, 1939 in Ottawa, Ontario. As her father pursued his scientific explorations in forest entomology, the family spent several months of every year backwoods of Northwestern Quebec. From an early age Margaret Atwood had to adapt to an unusual lifestyle, alternating winters in Toronto where the father joined the University of Toronto, with the rest of the year in the Canadian bush. The bookish atmosphere she grew up in along with her life in the wilderness has had an evident influence on her writings. She stepped into the world of literature at a very early age. Though not considered professional till she was sixteen, her first attempts in writing she had at age six.

In 1957 she enrolled at Victoria College University of Toronto to study English Literature. In 1961 she gained her bachelor's degree and later her Master's degree from Radcliffe College

in the USA. She started her doctoral research on 'Nature and Power in the English Metaphysical Romance of the 19th Century and 20th Century' at Harvard. Though never completed, she was conferred with many honorary doctoral degrees from several universities of the world, including Oxford University in 1998, Cambridge University in 2001, Harvard in 2004, Université de la Sorbone Nouvelle Paris in 2005, instances mentioned to cite just some. She has also been the recipient of a number of prestigious literary prizes including amongst others, The Booker Prize, The Giller Prize, Arther C. Clarke Award for best Science Fiction and The Governor General's Award.

Margaret Atwood has travelled so widely; France, Italy, Germany, USA, Scotland, Australia, England, and besides writing she has held a number of other jobs_ editing, teaching, market research, and waitressing. Her creative output, too, includes a wide range of literary genres. While she is famous for her status as a novelist, she is also known as a poet, a literary critic, an essayist a cultural commentator, children's author, mentor to numerous Canadian writers and an environmental activist.

In 1967, she married James Polk, and in 1973 they divorced. The same year she began living with the writer Graeme Gibson _with whom she would later establish the Canadian Writer Union. Three years later Eleanor Jess Atwood Gibson -their daughter- was born.

Besides her interest on women's issues, the twentieth century's most celebrated, multitalented and prolific Canadian writer, Margaret Atwood, has taken on many social and political issues in her oeuvre including Totalitarianism, freedom of speech, religious fundamentalism, environmentalism, consumerism, authors' rights, Amnesty International, and many more.

Atwood has authored an important number of novels, short stories, more than thirty volumes of poetry, children's books and books of literary criticism.

SYNOPSIS

Margaret Atwood's most compelling and popular novel; The Handmaid's Tale, was first published in 1985. Through a dystopian futuristic society set in the Republic of Gilead; a totalitarian theocracy founded within the borders of what once was the United States, it issues warning signs of travail ahead. Atwood's 'speculative fiction', as Atwood in its regard stated, is an extension of certain verities of the days the novel was only a thought. The story revolves around a handmaid's life _ as the novel's title implies_ who, under the new regulations, has possessively been named Offred, as she and her likes were indoctrinated with the new regime's beliefs and rules.

With a military coup launched by Christian extremists calling themselves 'The Sons of Jacob', the usurpers coated the United States with mere confusion and extreme views reminiscent of the days of their forbears. The cabal in control robbed women of their rights, bared them of their individual identities and segmented them into castes: handmaids, eco-wives, aunts, Marthas, wives and the un-women all according to their roles and reproduction capabilities. Offred was apprehended and separated from her husband and daughter as they were trying to flee the regime to Canada. The story is told through her dive into past times in pre-Gilead era and ruminations about her present life under the new regime's laws and order.

Left to live within the claws of an alien environment that handcuffs and hems her physical and psychological space in; Offred; the still-working womb combats to survive. She, through her sacred₁ mission in Gilead, dissects the regime in the tapes she bequeathed for further studies and constructions, leaving a welter of plausible queries on the closing scene in Atwood's story.

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GLOSSARY 1: LITERARY CONCEPTS

Androcentrism: The praxis of the beliefs and theories which are based on, and elevate males along with their defining attributes and experiences, and view them as the norm for human perception and behavior.

Androgyny: A combination of both male and female sex-differentiated characteristics in one being (not limited to humans) that renders sex identification ambiguous and impossible.

Anti-feminism: can be explained as opposition to feminism. It promotes a complex political, social as well as cultural agenda in regards of the role of the female presence in society, at home, at work and in the culture, just like feminism. Anti-feminists foster subordinate models of womanhood, notwithstanding, they can be clearly distinguished from a misogynist. While the latter involves hatred and distrust of all women, anti-feminism abhors only women who repudiate the models it believes they accord with women's nature.

Asexuality: Its definition depends on what is referred to by the term 'sex'. Thus, asexual individuals are people who lack either male or female sexual organs, or people who lack interest and desire for sex.

Civilization: A term that has more meanings than one to refer to. It can denote a highly developed and organized human society; the culture and mode of life of a particular society in a particular part of the world during a particular period of time; all societies of the globe considered as a whole.

Culture: refers to a particular group's or country's way of life; their repertoire of socially and intra-generationally generated and transmitted beliefs about their way of thinking and behaving, that characterizes them and distinguishes them from other groups. It might also refer to a given group of people's art, music and literature, as it can mean a particular country or society with their own beliefs, customs, art, skills, ideas..., etc.

Dystopia: An imaginary state or place that describes the doom awaiting humanity.

Feminine: in its most traditional sense, the term 'feminine' evokes certain qualities: nice, altruistic, soft, narcissistic, fragile, powerless, healing, emotional..., etc. In more recent years, however, arguments on whether or not feminine attributes are biological constructs stimulated heated debates between essentialists who believe femininity is biologically determined, and constructionists who argue that femininity does not reside in the female body, but is rather a social product.

Feminism: refers to the challenging campaign launched against patriarchy. Its primary goal was to grant women equal political and social rights, opportunities and status as those of men. Angry at the derogatory image of women, Feminist theory devotes itself to posit new ways for women to cause change and gain more rights and power.

Feminist theories: conceptual frameworks within which ideas about the nature and causes of women's oppression are contended with so that to posit methods to establish gender equality.

Fundamentalism: A conservative movement that emerged in early 20th century American Protestantism, in reaction to modernism and secularism. It asserts the infallibility of the Bible and favors strict observance and literal interpretation of its teachings. The term per se denotes strict adherence to fundamental religious beliefs and principles.

Gay: Homosexual person, especially men.

Gender: Though, the term 'gender' marked its current utilization amongst feminists in the early 1970s, the belief that the differences between men and women are not wholly nor solely biological dates back to more distant years. It is used to refer to the effect of society and

culture to decide one's maleness and femaleness. Whereas some theorists see the distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' of no avail, such is the case of the psychoanalytic theorists who perceive a close bond between sex, gender and sexuality, distinguishing 'gender' from 'sex' leads up to a clear understanding of the concepts of femininity and masculinity as it helps avoid ambiguity and inconsistency in using the term 'sex'.

Gender identity: Refers to one's self-definition as masculine or feminine in accordance to shared societal conventions on what masculinity and femininity mean.

Gender roles: A set of shared societal expectations about the behavior and personality traits that a culture assigns to, prescribes as more suitable for a sex than the other. It refers to the image that an individual projects, in accordance with social conventions and expectations on who males and females are, and that identifies their maleness or femaleness.

Heterosexuality: Sexual behavior and attraction between people of opposite sexes.

Homosexuality: Erotic attraction to people of one's own sex.

Hybridity: refers to the interaction and mingling of cultural traits and practices from two different cultures: the colonizing and colonized cultures.

Identity: refers to the characteristics that distinguish one individual from another or one group from another, and result in who they are. It implies both what an individual has in particular that marks their individuality and what they share with their likes in the group they belong to (cultural/ national/ gender/ group identity).

Ideology: was originally coined in late eighteenth century France. Later Karl Marx defined it in his Preface to A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy as 'the definite forms of social consciousness to justify the ruling class. However, it is most commonly construed as a set of ideas that determine the way we conceive ourselves and culture. In feminist theory, the term is used, by many theorists, to refer to a system of ideas that devises sexist, oppressive and false conceptions about femininity and the female experience.

Imperialism: due to their close connection, colonialism is often not easily distinguished from imperialism, though it is known and clear enough one is not the other. While imperialism can

be explained as that concept that reflects the relationship of dominance and subordination, colonialism is its historical form. In defining the two concepts, Said in Culture and Imperialism (1993) says:

'Imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism', which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory... In our time direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism... lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic and social practices.

Lesbian: A woman whose sexual orientation is to other women.

Literature: A term denoting pieces of writing or works of superior qualities that belong though some such as Descartes' Discourse on Method, Berkley's Platonic Dialogues, and Sir Steven Runciman's A History of the Crusades do not to either major literary genres: drama, novel, short story, epic, lyric, and ode.

Matriarchy: A social system which confers women rather than men with authority and power.

Orientalism: Basically, Orientalism refers to the Western study of the Orient; the Middle East and Asia. The Orient is a term used to designate those cultures other to the West, inferior and alien, as looked at by Western eyes. Yet, since Edward Said's influential book Orientalism (1978), it has come to be defined as that discourse that not only enabled the West to approach to the Orient but also to exercise its hegemony over it. The basic features of this discourse comprise the dichotomization of humans into Europe and East: 'us and them'; silencing of the Other; and making categorical statements about the Orient (Terence Bowers, 2009). Said argues, Orientalism is deeply implicated in Western colonialism and imperialism. It justifies it and set the stage for it. (Ibid)

Other: the Other is anyone different from the self. In fact in order to define and identify the Other, the self is essential. While the latter is perceived as 'the stable, normative point of reference', Shuchi Kapila in Encyclopedia of Feminist Theory (2009) explains it, the former constitutes 'the exclusions of this self' (ibid). Similarly, the existence of the Other is crucial in defining the Self for the 'subject can be posed only in being opposed –he sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the Other, the inessential, the Object' (Simone de Beauvoir, 1949)). Hence, man depends on othering women in setting himself as the 'One'. So does the

colonizer with the colonized as well as any part of the dichotomized oppositions in claiming their *Oneness*

Patriarchy: A country, society or system that asserts and ensures men's dominance and women's subordination.

Phallocentrism: A doctrine, belief or system related and centered on the phallus as the principal signifier of male power.

Post-Colonial: a slippery and ambiguous term most appreciated and favored to the derogatory term *Third World*. With the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Bill Ashcroft's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (1989), Post-Colonial Studies could gain fame. In its wider sense it refers to the study of the interactions between the colonizing countries and the nations they did colonize, in the modern era. Broader areas of concern of Post-Colonial Studies, however, embrace other issues such as post-colonialism and feminism, the impact of colonization on post-colonial nations' history, economy and culture, cultural productions of hitherto-colonized societies... etc.

Separate spheres: an ideology that burgeoned with the industrialization of the West in the nineteenth century, installing women in a domestic sphere, and men in the wider world of business and commerce

Sex: A term used to denote structural and physiological differentiation between men and women, and/or to refer to the erotic activity between two people. 'Sex' is generally conceived of as the biological characteristics and differences which signify femaleness or maleness, whereas 'gender' as a socio-culturally-constructed image on femininity and masculinity. To Judith Butler, however, 'sex' is not a biological category, 'sex is a norm' (Osborne and Segal, an interview with Butler, 1993). Though she doesn't intend to deny certain biological differences between men and women, she maintains that due to certain institutional conditions, certain arbitrary biological differences are conceived as fixed characteristics of sex

Sexism: Attitudes and beliefs based on the belief that one sex is superior to the other. Stereotypical, discriminatory behaviors that extol men as the superior cast.

Sexual identity: Refers to the extent to which people perceive and define themselves as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual.

Sexual orientation: A person's predisposition to experience and form sexual and emotional attraction and bond -though one's behavior is not always reflective of one's sexual orientation- with people of the same sex, the opposite sex, or both.

Third-world: was first used by the French demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952. It is rather used pejoratively to imply the postcolonial world.

Totalitarianism: A political system of highly centralized government in which authority is held by a single party that exercises absolute control over people, while other parties are granted neither tolerance nor recognition.

Transgression: The act of challenging and transcending the morally and legally acknowledged limits hemming people in.

Utopia: An imaginary state or place that describes a sort of an earthly paradise where everything is well and perfect.

Womanist: coined by Alice Walker to refer to the specificity of black women's experience and struggles.

Women's emancipation: means women's autonomy, independence and freedom from oppressive constraints set by society.