

	in an act as simple as telling each other their names.
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- This spare introduction sets up powerful motifs that permeate the novel. Floating through the grim, Byzantine setting are afterimages of the past, when teams played basketball on the court. Gilead's hierarchy, for all its repression of the past, fails to eradicate normal human activities of the pre-war period.
- Atwood infuses the scene with sights and smells and sexuality of teenagers of the past era by emphasizing sense imagery.
- Harking further into the past to medieval times, when women were immured in convents, the reference to palimpsest recalls the copyists' method of erasing old manuscripts and refilling them with inscriptions. The method failed to delete the original text, which cropped up in words and letters that recalled fragments of a former message.
- A second significant motif is the juxtaposition of innocence and brutality. A cadre of female supervisors bearing the comforting title of "Aunt" patrols like sadistic Amazons.
- Sleeping inmates lie under fuzzy flannellette and military blankets, a blend of images suggesting the dystopian fusion of gentleness with militarism.
- The illusion of protection, symbolized by barbed wire atop the chain-link fence, leaves the unsettling question of the inmates' status: are they being nurtured or imprisoned?
- Their names imply an answer — Alma, which is Latin for *nurturing*, or *kindly*; Delores, which comes from the Latin word for *grief*, and June, reflecting the Roman Juno, goddess of marriage and the family. Likewise, Janine and Moira are romantic versions of John and Mary, two names so enduring that they conjure images of stability and normalcy. Likewise, the aunts, Sara and Elizabeth, bear Old Testament names reflecting motherhood — Sarah, Hebrew for *princess*, the elderly woman who became the mother of the Hebrew nation; and Elizabeth, the aged parent of John the Baptist, forerunner of Christ.
- Geometric absolutes, a third motif introduced in these opening paragraphs, prefigure Aunt Lydia's insistence on an either/or philosophy through which she guides future Handmaids in making

	colour". It seems that she uses pleonasm here to lay emphasis on the colour symbolism of blue which according to Christianity alludes to virgin Mary. The idea of sacrifice through the imagery of the blue flower seems to be depicted here. Furthermore, considering that she mentions "water", the source of life as well as a flower, a source of growth, there is an allusion to reproduction. Atwood seems to correlates sacrifice with reproduction; stating that reproducing in this state has become a sacrifice and not a pleasure which further the theme of repressiveness.
"the same print, the same chair, the same white curtains"	The use of gradation which involves repetition of syntax here shows conformity in Gilead. Offred questions if this is a "government issue". This is ironical as conformity-social order- seems to be related to governmental failure here as the dominant rules and regulations to Offred seems to be a political oppression.
" I try not to think too much. Like other things now, though must be rationed. There's a lot that doesn't bear thinking about. Thinking can hurt your chances and I intend to last."	The use of polyptoton by varying words such as "think", "thought", "thinking". It shows how Gilead tries to suppress the handmaids in various ways even by entrapping their thoughts. In fact, the word "rationed" which translates to control of distributions and stockings shows that the state wishes not only to control one's actions but also the distinct and stocked thoughts of one's mind. The fricative alliteration of "t" brings an

"I refuse to say my"	hers. She does not even recognise the shoes given to her as hers. This is because if she accepts what Gilead gives to her, it alludes to her lost spirit and total indoctrination and acceptance to this society. In fact, the negation of "I refuse to say my" epitomized by the italisation of the personal pronoun show her denial to accept to totally conform. She may not be able to decide much else about her life but she can control her possessive pronouns. Red not being her "colour" show that she will never accept to belong to such a fertility cult defined by colour. We see that she asserts her individuality in such small ways. Atwood goes on to disallow Offred to call her room 'hers', because it means her admitting that living there with the Commander and being a Handmaid are lifelong tasks. It also links back to the idea that if she called her room 'hers', she would be in possession of something, which would make her a felon in Gilead.
"flat-heeled to save the spine"	This actually make us think of a plant who grows from its root. The allusion to fertility is prominent here. More importantly a healthy spine is important for a healthy baby. The lack of self-expression is seen here as her metaphorical language show a lack of emotion.
" some fairytale figure in a red cloak" + "like a path through the forest"	Atwood was a fan of fairytale and here she equates Offred to Little Red Riding Hood who is a fictional

	The irony is that blue which is a colour associated with Virgin Mary is associated with the commander's wife. This suggest that she is someone pure. Considering how Serena's intention was to protect women when she was a televangelist, we can consider her to be pure in such regards. The colours, red and blue, suggest patriotic bunting as well as the free-floating hostility between the Commander's Wife in blue and the intrusive Handmaid in red fanlight a half-circle of coloured glass meant to add filtered overhead sunlight as a further adornment of the foyer.
"usual Martha dress" "nobody much cares who sees the face of a Martha"	One of the many biblical references used by Atwood. The new regime which Atwood imagines to have taken over the United States of America appears to be a <u>theocracy</u> (a society governed by religious leaders). The rulers of this new state, Gilead, draw on (often twisted) views of the Bible for their ideas. In <u>Luke 10:38-41</u> is an account of <u>Jesus</u> visiting his friends <u>Martha</u> and <u>Mary of Bethany</u>. Mary sat and listened to Jesus' words while Martha continued to be concerned with domestic duties. The lack of caring towards the Martha show that the Handmaid are above them in status and importance.

"It has rained during the night...the air humid"	The use of pathetic fallacy here mimics Offred gloomy mood and even characteristic.
"Worms, evidence of the fertility of the soil, caught by the sun, half dead; flexible and pink, like the lips"	The worms here is a metaphor referring to the handmaids who are the "evidence of fertility of life" that have been "caught" by Gilead and trained as livestock for bearing. Moreover, the indication of natural fertility being "half dead" serve to highlight the probability of death or a soon to be ending. Considering this is a metaphor to the handmaids, this could suggest the end of the handmaids who will not give "evidence of fertility" and thus become Unwoman. The irony here is flagrant as this imagery suggest growth and development of life and is an epic image of a romanticised array of flora which is in total contrast with the allegory that Atwood tries to make us understand here. The simile referring to the "lips" added with the lexical choice of "pink" and "flexible" all links to the semantic field of sensuality. The idea that they are sex objects being dehumanized due to their biology can be seen here. The idea of the "lips" also suggest speech but since this also is "half dead", the restrictive notion of Gilead in terms of physicality and vocality can be detected here.
"One of the Guardian assigned to our household is washing the car. This must mean the commander is in the house"	The quick recollection of event that Offred demonstrate shows her adaptation to Gilead lifestyles. While she was clearly forced to

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	things most on her mind. Offred is clearly well trained in Gilead's laws, since she even knows a Guardian's uniform rules. Yet the more aware one is of Gilead's rules, the more one notices how many people break them.
He looks at me, and sees me looking.' (p.28).	Offred continues to talk of Nick, and her speech almost becomes the <u> cliché </u> of "a crushing schoolgirl" through <u> declarative sentences </u> such as: 'He looks at me, and sees me looking.' (p.28).
"Low status: he hasn't been issued a woman"	The lexical choice issues suggest a process of selection where the handmaids can be seen as pure commodity selected and then issues as trophies to the men who have high statuses.
"he doesn't rate" + "too casual" + "not servile enough" + "stupidity"	These lexical choices all link to the semantics of
"Smells fishy, they used to say...despite myself I think of how he might smell...tanned skin, moist in the sun, filled with smoke. I sign, exhaling".	The use of sensory details through olfactory depiction serve to highlight Offred frustration to have sexual interactions. Gilead flaws can be seen here as the regime cannot forcibly remove her consciousness but they can only try to repress her thoughts. It seems that the indoctrination Offred received is more effective on the outside through her actions but her mental shields against supremacy can be seen through her longing for sex.

"which one of us is it worse, for her or me?" = one point of commonality is suffering

Chapter 19

Paradoxical linguist as in chapter 19 when she uses oxymoronic phrases such as "im dreaming that i am awake", "walk across the room, not this room and go out the door, not this door" = the fact that Offred has to consistently tell herself that this place is not the real room with the real door show that her past, her memories and thus her conscience is better than her reality; a form of psychological self-entrapment. In fact she uses polyphonic phrasing to increase her awareness that happiness can only be dreams with "im not awake" switching directly when she wake up to " i do awake" and "i know im really awake"

The repetition of the "wreath on the ceiling" reminds us of death- death looms over her

The constant interchangeability between past and present actually introduces to us a mentally disturb person or what modern readers would call a melancholic lunatic. Offred says "i feel drugged...maybe theyre drugging me. Maybe the life i think im living is a paranoid delusion"

She has an excessive enthusiasm for reading = Monomania

Persecution complex;

" i know where i am and who i am...i am sane. Sanity is a valuable possession; i hoard it the way people hoarded money. I save it, so i will have enough when the time comes" = Offred reminds herself that she cannot lose track of her real identity; that she is + we note that sanity is more important than money; the extent to which she is suffering psychologically

Serena joy- hates throwing things that are not worn out

"I dress not looking down" = hates what defines her; flashback

Offred varies the meaning of the word "chair" which is an object used to sit, "the leader of a meeting", a "mode of execution", the "first syllable in charity", the "French word for flesh"- we see here that she indulges in the etymology of words because as she said "these are the litanies I use, to compose myself"- while her verbal power has been taken away, stolen,

Aunt Lydia calls the women who refused to be babymaking machines "lazy" and "sluts"= derogatory

Offred successfully indoctrinated? = the habits of former times...regimes"- Atwood shows us not to take things granted

"I would like to strangle her"- this appears as rebellious but she soon says "I shove this thought away almost as soon as I think it"

"a thing is valued...only if it's rare and hard to get. We want you to be valued girls...think yourselves as pearls"= she almost romanticized her words + uses flowery language to deceive/ manipulate

"we are hers to define, we must suffer her adjectives"= cliché

"All of us here will lick you into shape"= creepy imagery

"pregnant woman, wired up to a machine, electrodes coming out of her...like a broken robot...man with a searchlight looking up between her legs...beardless girl...sterilized knives...cooperative patient...drugged women...cut them open, sewed them up...No anaesthetic even"= they even sustain such torture-like delivery with biblical justification

"little whores, all of them...they aren't even clean...won't give you a smile, moan in their room...have to bribe her...threaten her...stern measures"=

By denigrating the handmaid as "little whores", the wives vituperate them. Such opprobrium is a form of vilification. They demonize them even though it is the handmaid that have to be raped, give birth then give away her child to another woman.

The wives even persist in ongoing embarrassing stories about their handmaids by saying they "aren't even clean...they smell...have to bribe her...threaten her...to take a bath" Such pure frenzied treatment shows that they engage in a rampaging of vicious verbal bullying. Clearly, the obloquy of Janine craves pathos. We can therefore see that the wives belong to what scholar... calls a "humbug subculture"= one of pretense and falsehood. The illiberality of their words and actions introduces the wives as gender puritanist

"bitch Janine"- Offred rudimentary, if not ghetto type of language shows her inconsideration towards Janine's situation. What if it was her that was

(231) or is simply unconcerned with women's suffering. Certainly, he regularly fails to consider women as real people, treating them more as objects to be owned, used, and "protected" by men.

When the Commander is "fucking [...] the lower part of [Offred's] body" (104), he is engaging in a perfunctory act that "has nothing to do with sexual desire" (105) and is, again, marked by indifference and unawareness. This shifts slightly after he forms a secret relationship with Offred during her visits to his study and she becomes "no longer merely a usable body" (172). His attitude changes from one of indifference to one of patronizing, patriarchal fondness, as though Offred changes from an object to a pet or a precocious child to be humored and entertained but never treated as anything approaching an equal.

He even complains that he finds it "[i]mpersonal" (171) like he has only just noticed this, seemingly still utterly unaware of how abusive and traumatizing it is for Offred. Such delusion, denial, and unawareness are also present when he takes Offred to Jezebel's, a brothel for high-ranking men, and appears to think that she will genuinely enjoy having sex with him, as though he does not see that the power structures that fundamentally shape his relationship with Offred mean there can never be anything truly mutual or consensual between them.

According to the "Historic Notes," the Commander most likely "met his end [...] in one of the earliest purges" (321-22), charged with having "liberal tendencies," possessing "heretical pictorial and literary materials, and of harbouring a subversive" (322).

Textual analysis of chapter 19 (FULLY-WRITTEN ESSAY)

Discuss the effects of the writing in the following passage, considering in what ways Atwood presents the Wives, here and elsewhere in the novel.

In this chapter of the Handmaids tale known as birthday, Atwood weaves a thematic web of women against women. As Christopher Jones highlights, "she delegates a 'what if scenario' where instead of the *déjà vu* scene of men abusing women, the readers witness the pejorative criticism subjected to the handmaids by the wives. Indeed, through the effects conveyed via the linguistic versatility of her lexical fields, Atwood presents a battlefield; one where hypocritical women known as Wives engage in vicious bullying of fertile women known as Handmaids. Clearly, the purpose of this scene is to enhance the characterization of the wives. Therefore, this essay will attempt to illustrate Atwood's portrayal of the Wives.

Immediately, the readers come face to face with a leitmotif structure with the repetition of the word "Guardian". Their presence is emphasized to show Gilead's strict surveillance. In fact, the delineation of them possessing "snubby machine guns" is symbolical. The adjective 'snubby' is interesting as it denotes that the gun is short but long. This suggests that Gilead is a society bound on becoming an agency that institutionalizes social control by passing on the ideology of repressiveness through visual realities like a Guardian casually holding a gun. Atwood plunges into a semi-pastiche here as she reproduces Orwell's idea in *Animal Farm* about how violence is a mean of effective control. Undoubtedly, Offred's obsessiveness with detail shows her Gilead success in creating a populace bound by fear which ultimately shuns out acts of rebellion. The physical power of the guardian is however juxtaposed with the verbal power of the Wives in this extract who uses words such as "well behaved" to make Janine a discipline vessel.

Furthermore, Offred highlights that men such as doctors are outside the birthing hall engaging in "some masculine pursuit" because "they aren't needed at all" whereas all the women including wives and handmaids are inside engaging with the birthing ceremony; a supposedly feminine role. Atwood here creates a distancing effect by showing this archaic mentality that roles are governed by biological determinism. This puritan ideology is exactly what Serena Joy had preached in "the time before" when she was a televangelist. In fact, Aunt Lydia also emphasizes her disapproval that doctors or more precisely males were previously the one to deliver babies.

How does Atwood present the Commander in the tale? /How does Atwood presents the relationship between Offred and the commander in the tale? / How does Atwood presents the commander in relation to the theme of power?

In the Handmaid tale, men are seen as the 'Absolutes' compared to women who are simply the 'Other'. In the novel, the Commander reflects such stereotype: he is seen as powerful and dominant. Represented as a figure that uses his power to manipulate, oppress and dictate, the Commander is used by Atwood to lay her concerns about the many fallacies of the society of her époque. This begs the question: how does Atwood presets the commander in the Handmaid tale?

When Offred first describe the commander, she uses harmless adjectives like "a semi-retired man" with "silver hair". It makes us think of an old benign man incapable of causing harm. This is intentionally done to make him appear as a sympathetic character. Through pathos the readers objectively come to see him as also being a victim of Gilead. As a matter of fact, Offred constant infantilisation of the commander by using child-like references such as "silly", "juvenile", "child" portrays the latter as an innocent, vulnerable, unthreatening person easily influenced by the external stimuli around him. The readers wonder to what extent should we condemn him- no matter how much power he possesses, a single man cannot challenge, much less overturn a whole regime. However, it also seems unreasonable to not condemn a man that has helped in designing and establishing such authoritarian, militaristic regime. This makes the commander appears incredibly hypocritical. No matter how much he tries to distance himself from the oppressive environment he has created, he is complicit of fanaticism and obscurantism. To forgive him would be both unjust and a fallacy since others, especially women are suffering extremely due to his selfishness. This juxtaposition between the Commander's duplicitous identities shows how appearances are deceptive: the evil oppressors are often deceptively benevolent. This façade is acknowledged by Offred who irritably question "Is there no end to his disguise of benevolence?" Her Atwood seems to be comparing the Commander to the President Ronald Reagan who always appeared as a polite representative but used fundamentalism and conservatisms movements to obstruct women liberation.

Atwood presents the commander as a symbol of power. When Offred hyperbolically says "The house is what he holds", it gives the fictional

imagery of a strong, powerful man with hero-like strength capable of lifting a house. The effect emphasizes a double entendre: his power within the house as the head is meant to also represent the power he also has in the society around him. In other words, the power dynamics in the house are a microcosm of the power dynamics in Gilead. With such structural power, the commander can easily break the rules without a set of repercussions. He uses his power to get forbidden items like lingerie, scrabble, magazines, starts an affair with Offred, had an affair with the last handmaid and even goes to a brothel to "play" with "quite a collection" of "working grills". Here, Atwood present the power dynamic between men and women. While high-ranking men are allowed to ignore the rules to fulfill their desires with a diversity of women, those women in the brother who used to give successful careers are forced to stick as a sex slaves to prevent being tortured or executed. Similarly, unlike the commander, Offred needs t be cautious when rebelling alongside him to prevent being sent to the colonies to die to intoxication or worst be hanged on the wall.

The Commander boosts his ego by making, sexist, cliché comments about the idea that men are superior to women because of gender. He uses strategic and mathematic language when he tells Offred proudly that "women can't add" because they are "the problem". His smug attitude can also be seen when he unhesitatingly dehumanize and even cannibalize women: "you can't make a omelet without breaking eggs". Here women are metaphorised as eggs which are broken and consumed to create a better life for the patriarchal ruling class. Feminist readers would interpret his character as a result of the phallogentric culture of the époque that emphasized a toxic hegemonic masculinity. On the other hand, readers taking a Marxist perspective would interpret such marginalisation of women by the ruling-class as a form of ideological control to ensure that men like the commander who are the capitalists always remain in power. As a coping mechanism to respond to the Commander's subjugation, Offred voyeuristically penetrates the Commander with her gaze before the ceremony. Not only does she anthropomorphize the commander's as a monster possessing a lustrous body but she also dismembered his private part (penis) with the "tentacle, his delicate stalked slug's eye, which extrudes, expands, winces and shrivels back". Within her own mind, Offred trap the Commander in her bondage to relive some of her frustration and anger at being so powerless. Atwood therefore uses the commander as a

Messages, stories, and storytelling appear throughout the novel. Why are they considered important, and how is this significance highlighted in the text/ What is the importance of storytelling in the tale?

Storytelling appears to be a recurrent motif in the novel. In fact, with more stories and memories than current-time actions, the text is profoundly repetitive. With such tautological structure, the readers, like Offred are always trapped within the echo-chamber of her mind. Atwood uses such cyclical structure to make Offred and her readers realize the importance of memories. It should be noted that the success of Gilead depends on the government's ability to erase, control and in time re-create women's memories. Once women no longer remember their past lives, they will no longer rebel because Gilead inhumane doctrine will be seen as normal. This is depicted when Offred recounts Aunt Lydia's words "you are a transitional generation....for the one who come after you it will be easier...she did not say: Because they will have no memories". So, Offred constant replaying of the preambulatory events in her life despite as she explains "it hurts me to tell it over, over again", she continues her "sad and hungry and sordid" story in an attempt to keep some agency and assert her personhood. Atwood even personifies her stories as being "limping and mutilated". This imagery makes us think of a battered person on the verge of death. So, the readers here take on a psychoanalytical perspective, noting that Offred prefer getting healed up mentally through the recounting of the painful memories rather than passively letting herself be brainwashed into becoming part of a homogenous cult of fertility- the Handmaids.

Moreover, Offred also uses storytelling as a catalyst of hope. Indeed, Offred induces her mind to relapse into creative imaginings whenever she is on the verge of giving hope. For example, Offred fictionalizes the interaction between Aunt Lydia and Janine in chapter 22 when they talk about Moira's escape. She pictures Moira as a real heroine having "dismantle the inside of a toilet" and uses the "lever" to threaten Aunt Elizabeth and escape. Atwood uses Moira to bring justice to the dehumanized handmaids. Here, Offred seems to lose herself in this story because Moira's successful escape gives her hope that even individuals seen as mere "womb" can jeopardize the power dynamic of Gilead. As a matter of fact, Moira is the first person Offred wants to think when she wants to escape the harsh reality: "where should I go? Somewhere good. Moira".

5. From the Aunts and Serena Joy through to Offred herself, many of the women in the novel either do not challenge or actively support the Gileadean state. To what extent can they be said to be complicit in their own oppression, and the oppression of other women?

To what extent does the women rebel

1. The H tells each other their names + Offred memories and storytelling and recounting are rebellious v/s The Aunts with cattle prods

6. How does Gilead use language to further its control over the population and justify its oppressive activities?

Use of Language

- 1.

7. After Offred begins visiting the Commander in his study, she observes that "in him I'm no longer merely a usable body" (172). To what extent is this reflected in his behavior and attitudes toward Offred and women more generally?

Commander and Offred

- 1.

8. In Gilead, Handmaids are valued solely for their reproductive capabilities. In what ways does this affect Offred's perception of herself and her body?

Reproduction

- 1.
-