

Power and Resistance in Dystopian Literature: A Foucauldian Reading of *Brave New World* and *The Handmaid's Tale*

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Power and Resistance in Dystopian Literature: A Foucauldian Reading of *Brave New World* and *The Handmaid's Tale*** is a bona fide record of sincere work done by, Maiza K, Register Number: 220011028694, Bharata Mata College, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature under the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam during the year 2022- 2024.

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Declaration

I, hereby declare that the presented dissertation **Power and Resistance in Dystopian Literature: A Foucauldian Reading of *Brave New World* and *The Handmaid's Tale*** is based on the research that I did on under the supervision and guidance of Ms. Merin Jose, Assistant Professor, Research Centre and Postgraduate Department of English, Bharata Mata College, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. This is a report of my hands based on the research done on the selected topic and it is my original work and interpretations drawn therein are based on material collected by myself. It has not been previously formed basis for the award of any degree, diploma or fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Forms of Power and Resistance in Foucault	6
Chapter 3: <i>Brave New World</i> : Social Conditioning and Sexuality	11
Chapter 4: <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> : Knowledge and Female Subjugation	27
Chapter 5: Conclusion	39
Works Cited	42

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For many years, readers have been captivated and fascinated by dystopian literature, a genre that imagines societies characterized by oppression, control, and a frequently deceiving façade of perfection. These stories usually paint a terrifying picture of the future, frequently because of extreme interpretations of current environmental, technological, or sociopolitical trends. Dystopian literature raises questions about the direction mankind is heading by reflecting and critically examining current societal challenges through its gloomy and cautionary tales.

Fundamentally, dystopian literature was an attempt to address the uncertainties and concerns that people were experiencing at the time. Throughout history, dystopian literary works have surfaced amid moments of notable societal disruption and transformation. For example, the early 20th century saw the emergence of totalitarian regimes and the writing of influential dystopian novels like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*. In *1984*, George Orwell paints a terrifying picture of a society under continual observation, where an all-powerful government suppresses free thought. Huxley's *Brave New World*, on the other hand, depicts a world where materialism and technical developments have brought about peace, suppressing individualism and critical thought in favour of societal stability and fleeting satisfaction.

These famous works highlight the genre's key themes, including the loss of individual liberty, the widespread reach of monitoring, and the ethical implications of technical and scientific advances. They demonstrate how dystopian literature use speculative scenarios to

investigate the possible outcomes of real-world events. By presenting extreme versions of contemporary trends, these stories challenge the readers to critically analyse their own communities and ponder the possible futures they are fostering.

Dystopian literature is still relevant today, with recent works addressing contemporary issues. Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy, for example, explores issues of social inequity, political control, and the manipulative influence of the media. The series, which is set in a dystopian future where an oppressive government uses a cruel television competition to amuse and exploit its citizens, alludes to contemporary anxieties around economic inequality, reality TV, and the deterioration of democratic values. Similarly, themes of gender oppression, religious extremism, and the loss of personal autonomy are explored in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which has seen a resurgence in popularity due to its successful television series adaptation. These themes resonate with ongoing discussions about women's rights and bodily autonomy.

The ability to combine fascinating storytelling with significant societal critique is what makes dystopian writing so powerful. It challenges readers to think critically about the world around them while both entertaining and educating them. These stories tell a cautionary tale, highlighting the possible risks associated with unbridled authority, rapid technology innovation, and societal complacency. They urge readers to keep watching out for the deterioration of ethical norms, individual liberties, and democratic ideals. Moreover, resistance and resiliency are frequently emphasized in dystopian literature. Characters in these novels frequently fight for their humanity and autonomy even in the most hopeless situations, encouraging readers to reflect on their own roles in influencing the future.

Dystopian literature is more important than ever in this time of rapid technological advancement, polarization in politics, and environmental crises. It pushes us to examine our principles, challenge authority, and think through the long-term effects of the decisions we

make and the policies we implement. Dystopian stories offer a crucial forum for discussion and debate by imagining futuristic versions of current problems, which promotes a more deliberate and involved attitude to both the present and the future. By doing this, they highlight the classic value of literature as a vehicle for social criticism and transformation.

This project aims to investigate how different dystopian narratives portray surveillance and governance and analyse the implications of these portrayals for understanding real-world power dynamics. This study is confined to famous dystopian fictions such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Margeret Atwood's, *The Handmaid's Tale*. It further aims to illustrate how these works of fiction illustrate Foucault's theories of panopticons, biopolitics, and governmentality.

The analytical approach used here, will employ Michel Foucault's theories of power, surveillance, and governance to dissect the dystopian worlds depicted in *Brave New World*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*. The study will use a close reading method to identify and analyse elements that illustrate Foucault's concepts of panopticons, biopolitics, and governmentality. This involves examining how surveillance mechanisms operate within these narratives, the ways in which bodies and populations are controlled and regulated, and the overarching strategies of governance employed by the ruling authorities.

These texts were chosen for their diverse yet complementary representations of dystopian societies and their alignment with Foucault's theories. *Brave New World* provide perspectives on control driven by subversion of sexuality, while *The Handmaid's Tale* offers a view of theocratic and gender-based oppression. Each work offers distinct yet interconnected perspectives on surveillance, control, and governance, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how power operates in dystopian settings. By examining these varied narratives, my dissertation aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms of control and their implications for contemporary society.

Chapter two of the dissertation, titled, “Forms of power and resistance in Foucault,” establishes the theoretical foundation by exploring Michel Foucault's concepts of power, surveillance, and governance. It begins with an introduction to Foucault's philosophical framework, emphasizing the key ideas such as panopticons, biopolitics, and governmentality. The chapter illustrates how the concepts by Foucault as analytical tools to deconstruct dystopian societies in literature, focusing on novels under study, that is, *Brave New World*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Through a critical examination of Foucault's theories, the chapter sets the stage for analysing how power operates within these fictional worlds, elucidating their relevance to contemporary social and political structures.

The next chapter provides an in-depth analysis of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, focusing on the mechanisms of control and surveillance. It examines how the state employs technological advancements and psychological conditioning to maintain power and stability, reflecting Foucault's concepts of Panopticons and biopolitics. The chapter explores how societal norms and behaviours are regulated, discussing the implications of these mechanisms for individual autonomy and freedom. It also considers the role of governmentality in shaping and maintaining the societal order with a focus on social conditioning and sexuality.

The fourth chapter of the project examines Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, focusing on the theocratic regime's use of surveillance and governance to control women. It analyses the biopolitical regulation of women's bodies and reproductive rights, illustrating Foucault's concepts of power and control. The chapter also explores the internalized surveillance among the women, reflecting panopticons, and the use of religious doctrines and societal norms to justify and maintain governance, aligning with Foucault's idea of governmentality. It highlights the themes of resistance and resilience within this oppressive framework.

The dissertation ends with a final chapter which synthesizes the findings from the previous analyses, comparing the depiction of surveillance, governance, and power in the two selected texts. The chapter identifies these similarities and significant differences in how each society is controlled, discussing the broader implications of these findings for understanding Foucault's theories in the context of dystopian literature. The chapter concludes by summarizing the main insights gained from the research, addressing the limitations of the study, and suggesting directions for future research. It also reflects on the contemporary relevance of these dystopian narratives and the critical perspectives they offer on power and governance in today's world.

As the dissertation advances into the theoretical framework and subsequent chapters, it will build upon the insights provided in the introduction, applying Foucault's concepts to uncover various power dynamics at play in these dystopian worlds. This exploration aims not only to enrich the understanding of the selected texts but also to offer broader implications for the study of literature and Foucauldian theory in contemporary times.

The following chapter attempts to investigate the theoretical underpinnings of Foucault's ideas on power, surveillance, and governance, providing a comprehensive framework to guide the analysis of the selected dystopian novels. This will equip the study with the necessary tools to critically examine how these societies are constructed, controlled, and ultimately resisted.

Chapter 2

Forms of Power and Resistance in Foucault

In the popular imagination, power has been primarily conceived as a stable, repressive, and prohibitive unit/entity, articulated through legality, morality etc. and institutionalised in spaces of the Church, court, school and so on. Classically, power has been understood based on society's top-down, hierarchical structure. Power has been seen as a centralised authoritative force in the hands of a few, the monarchs, political leaders, elites etc. In the context of such an understanding, the power came to be characterised as a transferable entity, a thing to possess and exercise, that can be passed down/across from one person/group to another.

The basis of political /economic systems of power, like feudalism and monarchies, stems from this classical conceptualisation of power. Power to Foucault is instead an “all-embracing and reifying term” (Foucault 336). To him, power resides in every societal apparatus and is not centralised or solely in the possession of those in positions of authority. It is not repressive but rather productive, producing reality and knowledge. In speaking of structure/mechanisms of power, we often only suppose that certain people exercise power over others, inquiring about its origins and fundamental nature. Foucault examines it as “relations of power,” where the term “power” can designate the relation between two things. The power relations in question are not binary and are diffused throughout society, essentially embedded within societal relationships and institutions. It becomes not a force to be possessed but can only be translated (as its existence can be felt) as something one exercises. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault discusses the figure of the sovereign. He defines the sovereign as someone with the power of the “right to decide life and death,” which eventually

came to be the right to "take life or let live" (Foucault 136). When the study discusses the prescribed dystopian literatures in the coming chapters, the readers realize how these societies operate under a sovereign power who has the right to decide life and death. The few people who have the sovereign power, asserts their self-acclaimed right over their subjects through disciplinary methods. Foucault refers to the people on whom the power is asserted, as "docile bodies," that are "manipulated, shaped, trained," skilled and solid yet obedient. Through his works, Foucault has repeatedly worked with the differential mechanisms of subjectification and subjection, both working simultaneously, making it more complex to be discerned by the subjects it is acted upon. Foucault tries to disengage the political body from the economic body, depriving the body of power. Coercive disciplinary methods separate the force that exploits the body and the product of the labour of the exploited. The significance of docile bodies lies in the government's vision for their potential on a broader scale.

Another theory of Foucault, Biopower, refers to the different methods by which modern nation-states govern their people. To understand this more, suppose disciplinary methods are a "political anatomy of detail." In that case, biopower is a generalised form of such detailing: "Discipline was never more important or more valued than when the attempt was made to manage the population" (Foucault 107). However, it is not just detailing power over the social body. Biopower suggested an intricate and minute intrusion into the finest details of a collectivity. To look at the definition that Foucault provides in *Security, Territory, Population*, "By this [biopower] I mean several phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which basic biological features of the human species became the object of political strategy, of a genealogy of power." It was a power "produced, circulated, augmented, diffused and made efficacious ... field of relations that is established among institutions, disciplines and rationalities ... modes of knowing and rendering [subjects] into objects of knowledge, and calculus of maximisation of

governmentality with least of expenditure” (Foucault 262). Biopolitics engenders a corresponding apparatus of biopower, which Foucault in *The Confession of the Flesh: History of Sexuality*, describes as “[a] heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical ... [as well as] philanthropic propositions — in short, the said as much as the unsaid” (Foucault 194). Foucault urges his readers to look at sexuality, psychiatry, race, mortality, public health, vitality, productivity so on and so forth. The urgency of apparatus, its “dominant strategic function” (Foucault 195) comes to front the most when one study biopolitics (all kinds of population, floating, local, global); because it is an interaction of institutions that generate biopower, vitalising as well as pathologizing the population.

Furthermore, Foucault contends that one technique to exert authority over another is to constantly inspect and monitor their actions. “Foucault sees the methods of surveillance and assessment of individuals that were first developed in the state institutions such as prisons, as effective tools developed for the orderly regimentations of others” (Clegg 30). Thus, Foucault sees the surveillance and appraisal of people imprisoned into jails as successful means or tactics for establishing social order. Similarly, the novels under consideration here demonstrate how citizen surveillance and assessment contribute to the maintenance of an organized and disciplined society. These works will look at the panopticon procedure as a method of monitoring citizens, the physical and verbal barriers that citizens confront, and citizens' fear of punishment because of committing crimes or errors.

Panoptic was initially used in schools and barracks to maintain discipline before becoming more generalized (Foucault 71). It is primarily based on the concept of isolating and alienating a specific set of individuals from their surroundings. The panopticon is therefore: “An annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of

which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker, or a schoolboy.” (Foucault 200)

This means that the Panopticon is used to survey individuals such as prisoners, madmen, patients, workers, and even students. The panopticon's divisions in architecture provide the authorities control over the inmates' movements and activities. They may not always feel like they are being watched or spied on, but their conduct is regulated because, subconsciously, they think that people in positions of authority are always watching them. As a result, putting the Panopticon technique into practice in any utopian or dystopian society facilitates citizen behaviour control and manipulation, and facilitates the application of government implemented systems.

Furthermore, it is usual for any community to follow certain norms and systems established by its government. These laws aid in preserving social order and averting chaos. Like this, in dystopian societies the laws and regulations that the government imposes are designed to promote its own agenda and advantages. These laws aid in the government's efforts to manipulate people's thoughts and regulate their behaviour to compel compliance and obedience. In his article, “The Subject and Power,” Foucault, explains ““Government” did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick” (Foucault 790). This mean that, the term ‘government’ relates not only to political matters, but also to how individuals’ or groups’ conduct and behaviour can be regulated or managed. Furthermore, the term governmentality refers to: ‘the means by which that shaping of someone else’s activities

is achieved” (Mills, 47). Thus, governmentality is defined as the process by which an individual's behaviour is shaped or constructed. It also appears to define laws enforced by the government as laws created for the public good of the people. Accordingly, to maintain control over the population and prevent deviation, the government imposes laws that guarantee the obedience and conformity of every individual. The only way the government can achieve complete control over the society is through the implementation of certain strategies.

By establishing these theoretical foundations, this chapter has equipped the dissertation with the analytical tools necessary to dissect the power dynamics within the selected dystopian novels, *Brave New World* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. The subsequent chapters will apply these Foucauldian concepts to uncover how these fictional societies are meticulously constructed and controlled, and how the characters within them navigate and resist these oppressive regimes.

This theoretical framework not only enriches the analysis of the selected texts but also contributes to the broader discourse on the relevance of Foucault's ideas in contemporary literature and society. The insights gained from this chapter will guide the critical examination of the dystopian worlds presented by Huxley and Atwood, enhancing the understanding of power, control, and resistance in both fictional and real-world contexts.

Chapter 3

Brave New World: Social Conditioning and Sexuality

This chapter delves into the mechanisms of technological control and psychological conditioning in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, using the theoretical framework established in the previous chapter. *Brave New World* presents a meticulously engineered society where technology and conditioning are employed to maintain order, ensure conformity, and suppress dissent. This analysis will focus on how Huxley's dystopian vision reflects Foucault's concepts of panopticism, biopolitics, and governmentality. The society depicted in *Brave New World* is a prime example of how advanced technology can be harnessed to exert control over individuals and populations. From the use of hypnopaedic conditioning to the regulation of reproduction through technological means, Huxley's world illustrates the profound impact of technology on human behaviour and social structures. By examining key instances and scenes from the novel, this chapter will uncover the intricate power dynamics that underpin this dystopian society.

Brave New World is a dystopian novel written by Aldous Huxley, first published in 1932. Set in a futuristic world state, the novel explores themes of technological control, societal stability, and the loss of individuality through a satirical and critical lens. In *Brave New World*, society is governed by the principles of mass production and consumerism. Human beings are no longer born naturally but are engineered and conditioned in Hatching and Conditioning Centres to fit into predetermined roles within the caste system, ranging from the intelligent Alphas to the menial Epsilons. The government employs advanced

reproductive technologies and psychological manipulation to maintain social order and ensure compliance.

The story follows several characters, including Bernard Marx, an Alpha who feels out of place due to his unorthodox views and physical differences, and Lenina Crowne, a conventional Beta who embodies the values of the World State. They visit a Savage Reservation, where they encounter John, "the Savage," who was born naturally and raised outside the World State's influence. John becomes a central figure when he is brought back to London, where his reactions to the controlled and superficial society provide a stark contrast to its values. John's presence and his growing disillusionment with the World State's norms culminate in a tragic end, highlighting the costs of sacrificing individuality, freedom, and authentic human experiences for societal stability and control.

Brave New World was written during the interwar period, a time of great social, political, and technological change. The novel reflects Huxley's concerns about the potential dehumanizing effects of scientific and technological advancements, particularly those related to reproductive technology and psychological manipulation. The rise of totalitarian regimes and the increasing influence of mass production and consumer culture also informed Huxley's dystopian vision. The novel's title is derived from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, alluding to themes of discovery and the confrontation of new worlds and ideas. Huxley's work is often compared to George Orwell's *1984*, though while Orwell's vision focuses on overt political repression, Huxley's dystopia is characterized by a more insidious form of control through pleasure, conditioning, and the eradication of personal identity. The sovereign power in the World State in *Brave New World* is held by the controller of the World, Mustapha Mond.

The concept of panopticon by Michael Foucault is subtly yet effectively implemented in the novel, which involves the use of surveillance to ensure that individuals internalize the feeling of being watched, leading them to regulate their own behaviour. The world state believes that using physical punishment for mass regulation is counterproductive and can lead to instability, as seen in earlier civilizations. Foucault advocates for disciplinary power based on monitoring, rather than using coercive methods like military force. This approach prioritizes minimizing expense and maximizing efficiency. Foucault outlines the “new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus.” (Foucault 89)

The world state uses non-violent methods such as ectogenesis, neo-Pavlovian conditioning, and hypnopaedia to dehumanize its population and turn them into machine slaves for the sake of stability. Mond, one of the controllers of the World State, argues that "government is an affair of sitting, not hitting; you rule with the brains and buttocks, never with the fists" (Huxley 42). Since social stability is essential to any civilization, the goal of the global state is to maintain individual stability. “Without personal stability, there can be no social stability” (Huxley 36). Thus, the World State's production-consumption system is founded on individual stability, which is accomplished by eliminating individuality. The novel thus portrays a dystopian society where the state exercises control over its citizens through pervasive surveillance and the regulation of biological and psychological processes like social conditioning, social pressure, and ostracism.

From birth, citizens are conditioned through hypnopaedia (sleep-teaching) to internalize societal norms. This conditioning process ensures that individuals regulate their behaviour according to the state's expectations. To ensure power over its citizens, the state uses human conditioning, which is internalized among the citizens while they are under

constant surveillance. This human conditioning from an early age can be analysed with reference to Foucault's concept of the panopticon and Ivan Pavlov's classical conditioning theory. The classical conditioning theory was put forth by Ivan Pavlov, who claimed that a suitable stimulus could readily teach and condition an individual's behaviour. The foundation of the classical conditioning theory is the idea that learning occurs because of interactions with the environment. The interior mental state, including ideas and feelings, as well as behaviour, is shaped by the environment. This theory has four key components: unconditioned stimulus (US), unconditioned response (UR), conditioned stimulus (CS), and conditioned response (CR). *Brave New World's* conditioning is based on the classical conditioning theory, which is essential to upholding the caste structure and, as a result, social harmony.

Neo-Pavlovian conditioning in *Brave New World* is based on Ivan Pavlov's classical conditioning theory, which describes how human newborns are conditioned. Certain methods, such as hypnopaedia, also referred to as sleep conditioning, are used in the conditioning process. In infant nurseries, that is, neo-Pavlovian conditioning rooms, newborns from the Delta caste are trained to dislike nature and reading. Initially, the infants are shown coloured, entertaining picture books and a bowl of roses as part of the conditioning. As the babies crawl closer to the books and roses, a piercing alarm bell sounds, scaring them. The babies soon experience a little electric shock when they approach the books or flowers after this. This conditioning lesson was repeated 200 times to instil fear and hatred of books and flowers in the infants. "There was an explosion. Shriller and ever shriller, a siren shrieked. Alarm bells maddeningly sounded. The children started screaming; their faces were distorted with terror....." "And now," the Director shouted (for the noise was deafening), "now we proceed to rub in the lesson with a mild electric shock." (Huxley 19).

As delta children are conditioned to factory work, they undergo brutal conditioning that eliminates choice and increases economic and social stability but limits individual growth. The brutality of conditioning extends to the Elementary Class Consciousness lesson, which educates children from one caste system to be proud of their own sect and loathe the others. Hypnopaedia, is a simple method for teaching this lesson to infants. The infants are left to sleep while a gentle voice whispers the lesson in their ears. The lesson says: "... and Delta Children wear khaki. Oh no, I do not want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They are too stupid to be able to read or write. Besides they wear black, which is such a beastly colour. I'm so glad I'm a Beta." (Huxley 21)

The instruction is repeated one hundred and twenty times, three times a week, for thirty months for them to take pride in who they are and never wish to belong to another sect of society. The Elementary Class Consciousness lecture is regarded as the greatest moralising and socialising force of all time in the novel. The instruction in class consciousness provides every kid with a social identity while preventing them from developing acquaintances outside of their caste or even having their own opinions. As a result, people who have been conditioned lack uniqueness. Society is full of people who exhibit dominant, thoughtless compliance.

There is also a manipulation of language by the controllers of the world state to assert power through hypnopaedia. Hypnopaedia's ability to manipulate language creates social reality in accordance with the rules of the global state, "But every one belongs to everyone else," he concluded, citing the hypnopaedic proverb. The students nodded, emphatically agreeing with a statement which upwards of sixty-two thousand repetitions in the dark had made them accept, not merely as true, but as axiomatic, self-evident, utterly indisputable" (Huxley 34). Thus, hypnopaedia manipulates language by continuously repeating mantras, leading the state's citizens to feel that these slogans are self-evident, axiomatic, and

completely unquestionable. Because of conditioning, the citizens can carry out their social roles effectively as adults.

This system promotes social stability, economic production within certain restrictions, and a society characterized by thoughtless obedience and infantile behaviour. Soma has also been a popular method of regulating the population of *Brave New World*. In the hypnopaedia lessons, the euphoric, narcotic, and hallucinogenic drug soma is used. The highest classes may be free to decide how often they need to take soma to enter the realm of happiness, while the lower sections, such as epsilons, deltas, and gammas, take it every day. It is impossible to envisage a world without soma, as it is widely used by all members of society. The medication induces mental numbness for the individual to obtain pleasure, and it prevents humans from thinking independently.

Huxley's portrayal of human conditioning cannot serve to reinforce the existing social structure because the fundamental goal of these controlled societies is to rob people of their individuality. Even the seemingly calm social structure in the book is distorted by certain characters, such as Bernard Marx and John the Barbarian. The existence of individual free will is a prerequisite for society's stability. The only person who serves as a reminder of humanity in this harsh environment is John, the character from the Savage Reservation. The issue of identity in the conditioned society of *Brave New World* is brought to light by Bernard Marx's inquiries and his inability to adapt to it. Human beings should never be denied the right to freely discuss their thoughts, attitudes, and feelings and simply be human. Humanity's survival depends only on individualism, not on a regulated societal order.

Characters like Bernard Marx experience the subtle surveillance of social pressure. Bernard, who feels different due to his smaller stature and unorthodox thoughts, faces social ostracism. This ostracism serves as a form of social surveillance, compelling Bernard to

conform to societal norms to avoid being marginalized. When he tries to express his individuality, he is met with resistance from his peers, who act as agents of the state's surveillance.

Bernard Marx, an Alpha Plus, is physically smaller and less robust than his peers, which leads to his alienation. His physical inadequacies make him feel inferior and lead others to view him with suspicion and disdain. This is evident in the scene where Bernard feels uncomfortable during a solidarity service, an event meant to promote unity. His inability to fully participate and feel the same ecstasy as others marks him as different, making him a target of social ostracism.

Chapter six of the novel highlights how physical differences can lead to social isolation and pressure to conform to societal standards. Bernard's uneasiness with governmental rules further isolates him. He enjoys isolation and reflection, both of which are deemed aberrant in the highly sociable World State. His refusal to participate in events such as Obstacle Golf and soma-induced orgies sparks rumours and suspicion among his peers. Bernard's passion for authenticity and uniqueness causes concern for his colleagues and superiors, leading to a crucial sequence in which he confronts the Director's threat of exile to Iceland. "You're going to be sent to Iceland. [...] Bernard had heard the words—they had been spoken quite plainly, quite distinctly; but he could make no response to them" (Huxley 67). This underscores how nonconformist behaviour is met with severe social and administrative consequences, reinforcing the pressure to conform.

Helmholtz Watson, another Alpha Plus, faces social pressure due to his intellectual creativity. As a lecturer at the College of Emotional Engineering, Helmholtz feels constrained by the superficial nature of his work. His desire to write something more meaningful leads to friction with his superiors and peers. This tension is exemplified in the scene where

Helmholtz reads his subversive poetry to his students, resulting in a backlash from the authorities. “It was poetry, he felt, that was really about something—what he was reading out now.” (Huxley 12). This demonstrates how intellectual deviation is not tolerated, and the social pressure to conform to state-sanctioned norms of creativity and expression.

Apart from Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson, Lenina Crowne experiences social pressure when her interest in John the Savage becomes public. Lenina, who represents the state's goals of conformity and promiscuity, feels bewildered and upset by John's inability to adapt to society's standards. Lenina is humiliated and confused by John's rejection of her approaches, especially in the incident where he pushes her away violently. “He dashed to the bathroom, what a fool! —shut the door and turned the shower on.” (Huxley 130). This reaction highlights the social expectation for relationships and sexual behaviour, and how deviation from these norms leads to emotional distress and social confusion.

Similarly, the Solidarity Service is a ritual designed to reinforce social cohesion and eliminate individualistic thoughts. Bernard's inability to fully engage in the communal ecstasy of the service marks him as an outsider. The pressure to conform is palpable as Bernard struggles to fit in with the group's expectations. The service, with its chants and soma-induced unity, exemplifies how social rituals are used to enforce conformity and ostracise those who cannot or will not participate fully.

Foucault's theory of biopolitics explores how states exercise power over populations by regulating biological processes, including reproduction, health, and life itself. In *Brave New World*, the state's control over reproduction is evident through various scenes that showcase the systematic manipulation of human biology to maintain societal stability.

One of the novel's most striking representations of biopolitical control is the Bokanovsky Process, which involves artificially producing multiple embryos from a single

egg. This process is introduced in the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, where human reproduction is entirely mechanized and standardized. The Director explains, “One egg, one embryo, one adult—normality. But a “Bokanovskified” egg will bud, will proliferate, and will divide. From eight to ninety-six buds, and every bud will grow into a perfectly formed embryo, and every embryo into a full-sized adult. Making ninety-six human beings grow where only one grew before. Progress” (Huxley 7). It highlights the extent of biopolitical control, as the state manipulates the natural process of reproduction to create a uniform and predictable population. By controlling the quantity and quality of human beings, the World State maintains a stable social order.

The Hatchery’s function goes beyond mere reproduction; it also involves conditioning of individuals for specific societal roles. Embryos are categorised into different castes—Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons—each predetermined for a particular level of intelligence and job function. There are several scenes in the novel that underscores Foucault's concept of biopolitics, where the state exercises power over life by determining individuals' roles and status even before birth like when the Director says, “We also predestine and condition. We decant our babies as socialised human beings, as Alphas or Epsilons, as future sewage workers or future... Directors of Hatcheries.” (Huxley 11). This systematic control ensures that every person is perfectly suited for their societal function, reducing the potential for unrest or dissatisfaction.

The term 'predestination' can also refer to the belief that individuals are predestined to either hell or heaven before birth. This highlights the world state's belief in conditioning and predestination, implying that “nature cannot undo what man has created” (Huxley 17). The concept of conditioning and predestination stems from John Locke's concept of the *tabula rasa*, which holds that a person's mind is a blank slate at birth that is shaped by their experiences. Locke, in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, says that the idea of

original sin, which holds that humans are fundamentally defective, should no longer be applied to mankind, nor should it be seen as the bearers of some heavenly image. Huxley attacks Locke's belief in man's potential to construct his own paradise through biological engineering, citing *Brave New World*, which depicts a fear of dogma and minority groups that oppress and crush humankind. The world state eliminates cultural, aesthetic, and religious meditative experiences, which hinder materialist welfare. Instead of religion, people around the world worship Henry Ford, seeing him as the head of their civilization. Following Ford's release of the Model T, the world state's year calendar starts in A.F. 632, "the year of stability" (Huxley 2). As a result, the former calendar A.D. beginning with Christ's birth is removed from the world state, and Ford becomes the king of stability.

The abolition of religion stems from the belief that spiritual ideals, which encompass all intellectual and emotional terrain and provide uplifting rituals to their believers, are antithetical to machinery, happiness, and scientific advancement. In the novel, the World State uses Soma, a euphoric drug, in place of religion as a safeguard against any disruptive ideas. Soma allows the world state "to give their subjects the direct experience of mysteries and Miracles—to transform faith into ecstatic knowledge" (Huxley 163-64). Huxley believes that religion is the opium of the people, as Karl Marx remarked. In *Brave New World*, the circumstances were the opposite. "Soma, or opium, was the people's religion" (Huxley 100) in the World State. The World State controllers perceive religion as a source of comfort for oppressed individuals seeking God's blessings. But since the "individuals" in the World State do not go through the stages of life, they do not need to adopt a religion or rely on God. The citizens are eternal, blissful youths in and of themselves. Mond, in his speech to John, states,

You can only be independent of God while you've got youth and prosperity; independence won't take you safely to the end. Well. We have now got youth and prosperity right up to the end. What follows? Evidently, that we can be independent of

God. The religious sentiment will compensate us for all our losses. But there are not any losses for us to compensate (Huxley 206).

It implies that the global state embraces nihilism, believing that God is incompatible with technology, science, and happiness. Religion exists only in the conscious brains of individuals, not in the communal mind.

The World State legalizes sexual freedom to prevent damaging emotional stress and maintain societal harmony. *Brave New World* is, in Foucault's words, a "wholly secular culture, dominated by economics, supported by technology, and dedicated to the—within carefully set limits—Freudian pleasure principle with its emphasis on libidinal appetite" (Baker, 97). Mond argues that suppressing passions undermines governmental stability; "chastity means passion, chastity means neurasthenia. And passion and neurasthenia mean instability. And instability means the end of civilization. You can't have a lasting civilization without plenty of pleasant vices" (Huxley 209).

When there is no "interval between the consciousness of a desire and its fulfilment," the use of "zippers" embodies immediate gratification of desires. Women all over the World State are encouraged to be promiscuous, using 'Pregnancy Substitutes' and 'Surrogate Cartridge Belts' to maintain their fitness. For example, Lenina says, 'Everyone says I'm incredibly pneumatic.' 'Perfect,' Bernard murmured. And she believes that about herself on the inside. She is fine with becoming meat (Huxley 127). While another context uses the word "pneumatic" as an adjective to describe a chair, the phrase "pneumatic chair" implies that women are treated like commodities by the global state to be eaten and drunk.

Similarly, Soma, the state-provided drug, is another tool of biopolitical control, used to maintain social order and individual compliance. By regulating emotions and preventing negative feelings, soma ensures that citizens remain content and docile. For instance, Lenina

uses soma to cope with any discomfort or dissatisfaction: “A gramme is better than a damn,” she says, as she takes soma to alleviate her distress. (Huxley 34) This reliance on soma exemplifies how the state exerts control over both the biological and psychological aspects of life, ensuring a harmonious and stable society. Soma is distributed to citizens to prevent negative emotions and maintain social harmony. Characters like Lenina use Soma in times of distress, which shows how it is used to regulate emotions, ensuring that citizens remain docile and content, free from the disturbances of anxiety or unhappiness.

The characters' inability to convey their thoughts and emotions causes complications in their romantic relationships. Lenina uses phrases from Community Songs to seduce John the Savage: “Orgy-porgy, Ford, and fun, Kiss the girls and make them One. Boys at one with girls at peace; Orgy-porgy gives release” (Huxley 73). Lenina becomes confused as John reads her a beautiful passage from Shakespeare and says, “For Ford's sake, John, talk sense. I can't understand a word you say” (Huxley 168). John holds onto Shakespearean, Elizabethan ideas of romantic love, whereas Lenina says, “Hug me till you drug me, honey,” sensually, as though she were a piece of “meat.” According to Huxley, love is the result of two opposing forces—a social resistance acting on the individual through ethical imperatives justified by philosophical or religious myths and an instinctive impulsion. John's love is aborted due to a lack of foundations, chastity, and social resistance created by 'philosophical or theological beliefs'. This represents the disconnect between science fiction and pre-modern artworks, which lack historical context. Abortion of such a marriage represents the twisted form of life that science produces.

The World State employs advanced medical interventions to maintain the physical health and youth of its citizens. Regular treatments are provided to prevent aging and diseases, ensuring that everyone remains productive and efficient. For instance, Lenina's routine check-ups and treatments are part of the state's biopolitical control over physical

health. These treatments exemplify the state's control over the biological aspects of life, ensuring that citizens remain healthy and functional, reducing the risk of disease and the burden of aging.

The World State suppresses literature, which offers valuable insights into people, in addition to religion and passions. For instance, the controller says, “There were some things called the pyramids, for example [...] And a man called Shakespeare. You’ve never heard of them of course [...]. Such are the advantages of a scientific education” (Huxley 44). The title of the novel, which is derived from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, implies that Huxley dramatises a conflict between the virtues embodied by Shakespeare's traditional past and those portrayed by this dystopian future. In this sense, *Brave New World's* combination of past and current storylines depicts a void-filled future civilization. John asks Mustapha Mond: “Why don’t you let them see Othello instead [of the feelies]?” (Huxley 193).

According to Mond, Othello's concepts of stability and “human progress” render him incompatible with contemporary society. Since the world is now stable, it is not the same as Othello's. Shakespeare is also prohibited by the world state due to its age and beauty. According to Mond, “beauty is attractive, and we don't want people to be drawn to old things.” Our goal is for them to enjoy the new ones (Huxley 193). The controllers' attempt to remove Shakespeare and other literary works from the World State's landscape is revealed by John the Savage's acquaintance with Shakespeare, which allows John to articulate potentially disruptive thoughts and feelings.

The World State uses propaganda against the past by closing museums, destroying historical landmarks, and suppressing texts published before A. F. 150. Teaching history is no longer relevant since it encourages independent thought, which leads people to consider their own shortcomings and lessens their sense of enjoyment. Mond justifies his insertion of the

sleep-teaching phrase, “History is a bunk,” (Huxley 29) to the mass conditioning process by stating, “most historical facts are unpleasant” (Huxley 19). Mond's list of civilizations (Jerusalem, Rome, and Thebes) and mythical people (Odysseus, King Lear, Jesus, and Pascal) is a rationalisation of their inadequacy, comparing them to “a whole collection of pornographic books” (Huxley 204), and outdated tales of humanism lodged in Mond's safe left to be eaten by dust. According to Foucault, this is “a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject that is either runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history or is transcendental in relation to the field of events” (Huxley 117). The destruction of the past and future implies that people on earth exist in an endless present, rendering interest in the past pointless. Since history may be manipulated to maintain the status quo and achieve stability, Huxley argues that access to historical documents is essential to any society's mental well-being. Our historical context, including our hopes and concerns, is essential for understanding our human predicament and seeking an authentic way of living in the world. The World State's loss of historical consciousness stems from the disappearance of the 'I', which is lost in the 'social river' created by defeating individuality.

Brave New World exemplifies Foucault's paradigm of resistance, subversion, and containment, ultimately suppressing opposing voices and imposing the authority of dominant ideology. Foucault asserts:

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Should it be said that one is always ‘inside’ power, there is no escaping it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned, because one is subject to the law in any case? Or that, history being the ruse of reason, power is the ruse of history, always emerging the winner (Huxley 95).

Non-conformists are deported to Iceland to preserve the world state from individualism. Mond aimed to control the minds of the higher castes by suppressing these new and ingenious ideas that contradicted the global state's philosophy. Bernard, a physically disfigured but highly intelligent psychologist, is exiled to Iceland due to his knowledge of his indoctrination, longing for passion, and criticism of the world state. The Director views Bernard as a threat to society due to his controversial views on sport and soma, as well as his unconventional sexual behaviour and refusal to follow Lord Ford's teachings outside of office hours. The Director claims that as a result, he has established himself as an enemy of society and is viewed as a conspirator against civilisation itself. Likewise, Helmholtz, who wishes to make use of his creativity to invent words and literature, is often silenced with warnings. Bernard and Helmholtz's excessive senses indicate that they are suspicious of the world state, just as the world state is suspicious of them. Every member of the disciplinary world state is affected by power to the extent that each person will exercise this surveillance over and against himself.

The struggle in the narrative stems from the world state's failure to eradicate all "savage" reservations and fully safeguard its civilization. John's rebellious presence holds out hope for a possible utopia in this dystopia. John's exclamation, "O brave new world that has such people in it" (Huxley, 121), raises the prospect of turning the frightening real world into a utopia. But because of his understanding of Shakespeare, John is worse off as he lives in the made-up world of Shakespeare's heroes that transcends reality. John, as the rebellious hero, creates a utopia through literature. He uses a quote from *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare to address the ignorant masses living in the global state: "Listen, I beg of you," Savage shouted sincerely. "Lend me your ears," John said, but he was having trouble expressing himself because he had never spoken in front of an audience before" (Huxley 185). The citizens are, however unable to understand John's teachings due to their lack of linguistic proficiency from

the conditioning. In the end, after being forced to choose between conformity and death, John decides to commit suicide to preserve his identity and ideals. He passes away without providing any catharsis or chance for the citizens to break free from the bonds of conditioning. Thus, *Brave New World* ends by restricting opposing voices and consolidating the World State's ideologies.

To sum up, this chapter has elucidated the intricate ways in which Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* uses sexuality and social conditioning to maintain a dystopian society marked by conformity and compliance. By applying Foucault's theories of panopticism, biopolitics, and governmentality, we have dissected the mechanisms through which power operates in this fictional world. The pervasive use of hypnopaedic conditioning, the regulation and manipulation of reproduction, and the rigid caste system all serve as testament to the novel's portrayal of a society where individual freedoms are subjugated to the needs of the state. These elements not only underscore the novel's warning about the potential perils of technological and biopolitical control but also highlight the continuing relevance of Foucault's ideas in analyzing contemporary societal structures. Through this analysis, we gain a deeper understanding of the novel's implications for the real world, emphasizing the critical need for vigilance in the face of technologies and policies that seek to regulate and condition human behavior.

Chapter 4

The Handmaid's Tale: Knowledge and Female Subjugation

This chapter explores the interplay of knowledge and female subjugation in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, focusing on how the regime of Gilead uses knowledge as a tool of control. By applying Michel Foucault's theories of biopolitics, panopticism, and governmentality, this analysis will reveal how the state manipulates information and institutional knowledge to enforce its authoritarian rule and maintain its patriarchal structure. Through a detailed examination of key scenes and the experiences of female characters, the chapter will demonstrate how the dissemination and suppression of knowledge contribute to the systematic subjugation of women in Gilead, highlighting the broader implications of these mechanisms for understanding power and control in dystopian contexts.

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood begins with Offred, the protagonist, recounting her current life as a handmaid. Handmaids are women forced into reproductive servitude to bear children for the ruling elite, known as Commanders and their Wives. Offred lives in the home of her Commander and his Wife, Serena Joy, where she must follow strict rules and rituals designed to ensure her submission and fertility. As Offred navigates this oppressive environment, she reflects on her past life, when she had a husband named Luke and a daughter. These memories are bittersweet and painful, as they serve as a stark contrast to her current existence. Offred's narrative also reveals the horrors of Gilead's rise to power, including the purges of political dissidents and the brutal enforcement of its draconian laws.

Offred forms a complex relationship with the Commander, who begins to break Gilead's strict rules by engaging her in illicit activities, such as playing Scrabble and taking her to a secret brothel. These encounters provide Offred with small yet dangerous forms of resistance. Additionally, Offred develops a clandestine relationship with Nick, the Commander's chauffeur, which further complicates her situation and offers her a fleeting

sense of intimacy and rebellion. The tension in Offred's life escalates as she becomes increasingly involved with the underground resistance movement known as Mayday. Serena Joy, desperate for a child, arranges for Offred to sleep with Nick in the hopes of achieving pregnancy, further blurring the lines of Offred's loyalties and emotional entanglements.

The novel's climax occurs when Offred's secret activities are discovered. In a sudden and ambiguous turn of events, she is taken away by men claiming to be part of the Eyes, Gilead's secret police. However, Nick assures her that they are members of the resistance, leaving her fate uncertain. The book concludes with an epilogue set in the distant future, presented as a lecture at an academic symposium. This section reveals that Gilead eventually fell, and historians are studying its remnants. The epilogue provides a retrospective analysis of Offred's account, offering a glimpse of hope and emphasizing the resilience of the human spirit and the importance of remembering oppressive histories to prevent their recurrence.

In contrast to the dystopian society depicted in *Brave New World*, Atwood's story concentrates on the ongoing process of creating a dystopian society. It explores how power and knowledge are used to subjugate men and women, and Offred's efforts for resistance. The first wave of feminism uses Foucauldian concepts such as discipline, docility, normalization, and bio-power, while the second wave emphasizes intervention, contestation, and subversion to challenge disciplinary control. The authoritarian Gileadean Truth is a male-dominated rationale for exploiting women. According to Foucault, truth and knowledge are not inherent, but rather the result of several constraints. Additionally, it produces consistent power. Each community has its own regime of truth, or "general politics" of truth. *The Handmaid's Tale*, a resistance novel about the subversion of language and genre as well as history, patriarchy, and theocracy, is an attempt to combat logocentrism and gender essentialism.

The Handmaid's Tale argues that controlling knowledge justifies political and theological authoritarianism, including theocracy and patriarchy, in order to create an 'ethical' society. In other words, returning to ethics merely means going back to a perverted form of religion. This includes going back to a reconstruction of the relationship between the individual and the Divine/State (cosmic determinism, or the denial of human freedom), redefining the interpersonal relationship (universal love, or the control of emotions), mastering the Self (mind over matter, or tolerance to a hostile environment), and ultimately submitting the Self to discursive authority (belief over science, or the supremacy of discourses). Through the manipulation of pastoral power and disciplinary power, theocracy, and patriarchy, in turn, contribute to the consolidation of a hierarchical distribution of bodies and sex.

While John Savage's journey to the past implies an effort for re-acculturation, the return to tradition in *The Handmaid's Tale* results in the absence of a decrease in knowledge. Consequently, when women are officially denied access to knowledge, information, and expression, there is an internal diminishing and growing scarcity of knowledge among them. Offred is aware that it is against the law for her to be in the Commander's office, because, "Books and books and books, right out in plain view, no locks, no boxes. No wonder we cannot come in here. It is an oasis of the forbidden." (Atwood 137). Additionally, the Bible, regarded as the forbidden tree of knowledge and the root of authority, "is kept locked up" because the government is required to defend its power. Thus, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, only men are allowed to read the Bible, while the aunts can only play recorded tapes to 'the girls' to avoid the "sin of reading" (Atwood 89). In this sense, the ability to distinguish between different sexes and the benefits that follow turns knowledge into a protected trait. Furthermore, these advantages are utilized as justification for men's moral and mental superiority when the Commander merely states, "Women can't add" (Atwood 186). Men can

discuss knowledge at clubs, whereas women are limited to watching TV at home, and the news televised might be fake or outdated. Despite having access to television, wives are ultimately forced to either engage in active gossiping from sources hidden from view or accept the dubious authenticity of the media. Under these circumstances, women are unable to express themselves (verbal and written) due to limited access to knowledge and space. Furthermore, the state promotes constructed orthodoxy above personal communication, limiting freedom of expression. Thus, knowledge is a representation of power and authority in *The Handmaid's Tale* which is only enjoyed by the men of Gilead.

Foucault argues that the development of contemporary systems such as liberalism and neoliberalism, which prioritize population management over individual repression, is linked to the rise of biopower and biopolitics. Biopower and biopolitics encompass several aspects of power, such as punishment and discipline, as well as the regulation of life. Foucault's notion of biopolitics focuses on how power is applied on bodies and is used to control people and societies. In Gilead, where chemical leaks have caused a drop in birth rates, the regime uses biopolitical control over the handmaids' bodies to facilitate reproduction. These lines indicate the catastrophe of devastation:

Stillbirths, miscarriages, and genetic deformities were widespread and, on the increase, and this trend has been linked to the various nuclear-plant accidents, shut down and incidents of sabotage that characterized the period, as well as to leakages from chemical and biological-warfare stockpiles and toxic-waste disposal sites....
(Atwood 316-317).

Sex is simply a tool for creating a healthy generation for the Gilead regime's benefit. The book shows how the regulation of bodies and the control of reproduction may be used to apply power, which can result in the oppression and subjection of people and certain groups.

The government is promoting the idea that having sex is a duty or mission that women must accomplish. Trained to believe that having sex is a duty or mission to fulfil rather than a matter of personal preference or fulfilment, the government continuously enforces its control over women. The regime limits women's autonomy and agency by depicting sex as essentially reproductive, reducing them to mere reproductive vessels. This instrumentalization of sex underscores the oppressive nature of the government and serves to reinforce the concept that women's bodies are subject to control and exploitation by the ruling powers. Only married couples are allowed to have sex in Gilead; everyone else who tries to have sex faces execution, and the government regulates this activity. Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality*, argues that marriage, as a social institution, has appropriated the sexual discourse as its sole province. He believes that sexuality exercises complete control over what is and is not said about sexuality. Foucault's argument suggests that those in positions of authority view sex for pleasure as a waste of energy and time, which can be seen as the basis of laws in the Gilead society.

According to Foucault, biopower has been an essential component of governments because the human body's physical strength is transformed into labour power through the endless production process and can be used to produce goods for the benefit of the nation's future. The concept of bio-power also characterizes the ways in which modern societies employ population management.

Gilead's government has the authority to allow or forbid sexual relations, and the laws regulate, forbid, or restrict the behaviour of two lovers. This demonstrates how sexuality has been used as a discourse to control society. According to Foucault, the powerful can control the sermon, and in a totalitarian regime, women who refuse to accept the new norm may face punishment. Additionally, because women are inherently imposed upon, they are subjected to a variety of insults, degrading treatment, and humiliation that the other sex has long ignored.

One of the main government strategies of Gilead is to use women as objects to create an obedient mass. Women's social and political standing in society has been severely undermined by the exploitation of religious precedents as justifications for manipulating sexuality to build authoritarian regimes. The system prioritizes oppressing women and exploiting them, treating them as just things to be used by males before discarding them. For instance, a woman's disloyalty will have dire repercussions if she rebels or resists the state. These women referred to as "Unwomen," are employed in colonies where hazardous and radioactive air is a constant concern. In Gilead culture, there is a constant fear of being transported to these hazardous places, referred to as "The Colonies." The "Unwomen" who are sent to the colonies are starved to death. The regime's power over women in Gilead, from conception to death, is an example of biopolitics. The state determines who can reproduce, how many children one can have, and what happens to those who resist. Individuals are categorized and controlled in society based on their functional abilities.

The totalitarian regime relies on passivity and obedience from the residents of Gilead. The government's objective in the Republic of Gilead is total control over society, with a focus on women, and internalization of that control. They attempt to establish unending authority by brainwashing and strict surveillance. Security forces like the Angels, who represent the army, the Eyes, who represent the invisible police forces in the area and the Guardians oversee these operations. These operators imply that the people of the state are under constant surveillance, which makes it harder for the people to resist. However, the terms that represent these operators may lead people to believe that their ultimate goal is not to maintain power and control over the nation as if it is something opposite to evil and the nation's motive to do good by its people. But in reality, power elites use these instances to create a dystopic, chaotic, and distorted environment that keeps people on edge and under their control. In the state, every street, road, amusement park, and open area is dotted with

surveillance cameras, and inspection agents swarm every corner. Citizens become distrustful of their surroundings. When Offred encounters a man who is smoking, winks, and whistles at her in a seemingly innocent setting, she begins to wonder about his mental state and status. She believes that the man is an Eye or that she has been the subject of a test. This shows how institutional oppression has led to distrust and cynicism among society members.

Women play important roles in Gilead, including wives, aunts, Marthas, and handmaids. They serve Gilead and its commanders through these jobs, which are symbolized by various colours of clothing; yet, these constructed titles conceal their enslavement.

Atwood mentions in the introductory part of *The Handmaid's Tale*:

The modesty costumes worn by the women of Gilead are derived from Western religious iconography — the Wives wear the blue of purity, from the Virgin Mary; the Handmaids wear red, from the blood of parturition, but also from Mary Magdalene.... The wives of men lower in the social scale are called Econowives, and wear stripes.... Many totalitarianisms have used clothing, both forbidden and enforced, to identify and control people — think of yellow stars and Roman purple — and many have ruled behind a religious front. (Atwood 8).

The author envisions a society where women's clothing reflects their allotted roles and status. Women in different social ranks are required to wear specific colours, except for the Handmaids, who may be easily identified by their crimson clothes. The women in charge of childcare and education, known as Marthas, wear dull green clothing, whereas the highest-ranking women, the Wives, wear blue. This color-coded system not only clearly divides the numerous roles performed by women but also reinforces the social order. Men, on the other hand, are not subject to such overt classification and always wear black, a colour

that symbolizes authority, respect, and power. Rather than going by unique names, women are referred to by the titles of their positions or the commanders they serve.

Biopolitics includes laws and policies that are used to manage population growth, the health of society, and biological norms; nevertheless, *The Handmaid's Tale* also demolishes and distorts the structure of the family. Offred's 'sole purpose' requires her to undergo the monthly Ceremony, which involves Fred, the commander, raping her in front of his wife. Serena Joy grabs her hands as her husband, the commander, and Offred have sex. Serena Joy views her husband's rape of a woman in front of her as a ceremony, requiring her to actively participate despite her emotions of femininity. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," (Atwood 173) the Commander says during the Ceremony.

This Ceremony exemplifies how religious rituals are used to exert control over women's bodies. By framing this act within a religious context, Gilead masks its brutality and coerces compliance through the guise of fulfilling a divine commandment. In this way, as the study revealed in *Brave New World*, Margaret Atwood in *The Handmaid's Tale*, presents a dystopian society where religion is manipulated as a tool of power to control and subjugate women. Foucault's concept of pastoral power provides a framework for understanding how Gilead's regime uses religious ideology to maintain its authority and perpetuate its hierarchical structure.

The entire social hierarchy of Gilead is rooted in a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible. The Commanders, Wives, Marthas, and Handmaids all have their roles justified by religious texts. Aunt Lydia often quotes scripture, saying, "Blessed are the meek," to encourage submission among the handmaids. Foucault's idea of pastoral power involves guiding and controlling individuals under the guise of spiritual care. In Gilead, religious justification of social roles serves as a means of legitimizing the regime's oppressive

practices. By embedding power structures within a religious framework, the state ensures that individuals internalize and comply with these hierarchies as divinely ordained.

The Handmaid's Tale has one aspect of religion that is very much related to the version of *Brave New World* as the former society's rituals like Prayvaganzas, Salvagings and Particutions are closely related to the latter's "Solidarity Service". Particutions serve as a conduit for the public's resentment and aggression toward the regime's adversaries. This is a cunning political strategy because, despite the public's propensity to despise and harbour animosity against the government, the regime controls the one avenue through which they may express their resentment and dissatisfaction. This causes the people to loathe the state's enemy even when that opponent has the key to releasing them from the state's oppression. As described in the book, Ofglen, Offred's resistance companion, pushes ahead of the other Handmaids and repeatedly kicks the victim in the skull. When Offred questions her about it, Ofglen responds that the victim was actually a political prisoner and a member of the resistance, and she had rendered him unconscious to remove him from his sufferings. While Huxley labels religion, liberalism, and democracy as "things of the past," Atwood's fiction adopts the motto "God is a national resource." *The Handmaid's Tale* does not distinguish between the state and the church.

The handmaids recite Bible verses three times, expressing their devotion to their Commander by saying "according to her ability, to each according to his needs." (Atwood 127) Since religion is the foundation of the government, all its policies are based on the teachings of the Bible. In a sense, the government prides itself on possessing the holy Bible, and it deliberately imprints that belief in the Handmaids' subconscious. Political leaders use religious beliefs and carefully crafted language to influence public opinion. This strategy helps the governing regime maintain control over the populace by encouraging a sense of loyalty and cooperation. In this way, the ruling class uses religion as a tool of control to

tighten its hold on power and guarantee the continuation of its repressive system. The language used in Gilead is infused with religious terminology, from greetings like “Blessed be the fruit” to farewells like “Under His eye.”

Though these are the cases in the Gilead society in *The Handmaid's Tale*, there are instances of resistance by various characters, especially, the protagonist, Offred. She resists mentally by clinging to memories of her past and engaging in small acts of rebellion like stealing butter. She also forms a forbidden relationship with Nick and secretly aligns with the resistance group Mayday. Other characters, such as Moira, demonstrate physical resistance through her daring escape from the Red Center, symbolizing active rebellion. Serena Joy subtly undermines the regime by orchestrating Offred's affair with Nick to secure a pregnancy. These acts of resistance, though varied in form, collectively highlight the characters' struggle to retain their identities and autonomy within a brutally repressive society.

Offred shows how concrete ideas like sex and moral consciousness are imposed on citizens by the totalizing state to form knowledge and subjectivity, with femininity being a social construct and heterosexuality a political imposition. As the study investigated earlier, religion itself is merely a political pawn used by the state. Without a unifying ‘I,’ Offred's story lacks a transcendental or unified self, as well as any underlying notions that could explain historical change. Without substantial resistance, her resistant tale can only be described as one of localized resistance, micro-political 'events', or chance-induced reversals.

When Offred passes through the guards, she lifts her head to let him see her face plainly (although she should conceal her face with her wings). This, in her opinion, is “a small defiance of rules,” as it violates the gender segregation norm. Despite its tiny size, she recognizes this as a “micro-political event” (Atwood 21), challenging gender norms. She also

defies sex puritanism by purposefully moving her hip slightly to arouse the guards' sexual desire when she knows they are observing her. This is another example of her weak, confined resistance.

Gradually, anti-scientific, divergent, and discontinuous events became her chance for reversal. Serena Joy's request for Offred to have sex with Nick for “procreative finalization” causes the Gilead-style instrumental sex to finally turn into a natural connection. Offred is aware that she doesn't have to see Nick again following her initial try-out. She prefers to have sex “solely for pleasure, rather than for love or reproduction” (Atwood 268). “Neither of us says the word love, for once,” she remarks, acknowledging that her visit to him is based on chance and events (Atwood 270). After a while, it turns into a free relationship in which she is happy to give herself away without hesitation. Offred and Nick's noncommittal and strategic bonding poses a threat to the institutionalized family/monogamy, as well as the totalizing laws of human communication and disciplinary bodies. Furthermore, Offred is now the one who visits Nick, reversing the traditional male-female dynamic.

Moreover, the act of storytelling itself shows the narrator's hope, which is one of the key forms of resistance in a dystopian society that seeks to eliminate all forms of aspiration. By choosing to share the details of her life, the narrator shows that she can envision a day when society has evolved, and people are interested in what she can contribute. Much of her tale consists of explanations of Gilead's customs and norms, implying that the narrator considers her audience to be far distant from the present. She speaks with the hope that they will not remember Gilead or the world before it. It is perilous to hold the conviction that there is potential for change in the world, as she does. Hence, the narrator has demonstrated that she is more than just a victim. After making the first decision to share her experience, the narrator rejects Gilead by recounting it in her own distinct style, thereby reclaiming her identity. The Handmaids of Gilead are all meant to be identical copies of one another.

However, she defies this expectation and chooses to retain aspects of her previous identity through language manipulation. She demonstrates her intelligence in her story by using unique wording, creative puns, and vivid descriptions. For example, before the Ceremony begins, she reflects that “The Commander is the head of the household. The house is what he holds. To have and to hold, till death do us part. The hold of a ship. Hollow” (Atwood 81). In this brief contemplation, she manages to clarify the Commander's function in Gilead, play with the word “household,” mentions wedding vows (a thing of the past for women in her current position), and criticize the system as “hollow.” She is ultimately able to preserve her uniqueness through this inventive use of language, which also serves as a demonstration of her limited authority despite her command of language.

Although the narrator is successful in her resistance to Gilead's government, Atwood maintains realism in her story by concluding with a warning about the patriarchy's survival. The significance of the narrator's experience is shown in the chapter which lays down the historical context of the novel, but it also makes clear that a group of men is now judging the worth of her voice. These males continuously minimize the narrator's character and her story, especially Peixoto. By giving her work a name of their own, they exercise authority over it in a manner like the Gilead's regime. Thus, it serves as a warning to women about the patriarchy's tendency to silence their voices and tell their stories for them. She instructs women to remain vigilant so they can continue to be in charge of their own narratives.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This paper set out to analyse the complex dynamics of power and resistance in dystopian literature, specifically through a Foucauldian lens, using Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* as primary texts. By examining these novels, the project aimed to uncover how mechanisms of control are employed in these dystopian societies and how individuals within these frameworks navigate, resist, and subvert such oppressive systems.

Both *Brave New World* and *The Handmaid's Tale* exemplify the use of various forms of control, aligning with Michel Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and panopticons. In *Brave New World*, the World State exercises control through technological conditioning, controlled reproduction, and health and hygiene regulation. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Gilead enforces its power through religious ideology, strict surveillance, and linguistic manipulation. While Huxley's use of technological surveillance and conditioning reflects Foucault's panopticons, where the constant possibility of being watched leads to self-regulation, Atwood's depiction of Gilead employs both visible and invisible forms of surveillance, instilling fear, and compliance among its citizens. Despite the pervasive control, characters in both novels exhibit various forms of resistance. In *Brave New World*, characters like John the Savage resist by rejecting societal norms and values. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred's internal defiance, her secret relationships, and alliances with resistance groups highlight the multifaceted nature of resistance. These acts of defiance, whether subtle or overt, demonstrate the enduring human spirit's capacity for autonomy and freedom.

The analysis of dystopian literature through Michel Foucault's theories of power, surveillance, and governance is highly relevant to contemporary times for several reasons. In

today's digital age, surveillance has become pervasive using technology. Governments and corporations collect vast amounts of data of its citizens, often without their explicit consent. This mirrors the surveillance mechanisms depicted in *Brave New World* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, highlighting concerns about privacy and the potential for abuse of power. Foucault's concept of panopticons is particularly pertinent, as individuals are aware of being watched and how they modify their behaviour accordingly. Similarly, the recent global health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have brought biopolitics to the forefront. Governments have implemented measures to control the spread of the virus, including lockdowns, vaccination mandates, and health monitoring. These measures reflect Foucault's idea of the state's control over the biological aspects of life. The novels' depiction of biopolitics provides a lens to understand the balance between public health and individuality in contemporary society. Issues of gender inequality and reproductive rights are still highly relevant. *The Handmaid's Tale* resonates with contemporary debates about women's rights, bodily autonomy, and reproductive justice. Foucault's analysis of power dynamics offers insights into how these issues are controlled and contested in society, emphasizing the ongoing struggle for gender equality. Modern governance involves shaping citizens' behaviour through policies, education, and media. The concept of governmentality, as seen in the novels, helps to understand how contemporary states manage populations and maintain order. This includes the use of propaganda, ideological indoctrination, and the regulation of social norms, which are increasingly visible in political and social discourse today. In sum, this study is highly relevant to contemporary times as it addresses enduring and evolving concerns about surveillance, biopolitics, gender rights, governance, and resistance. The relevance of this study can be thus proved by the fact that more dystopian films are still being made from *The Truman Show*, *The Social Dilemma*, the "Arkangel" episode of the series

Black Mirror, *Snowden* etc., bringing attention to the matters like data sovereignty, power, and surveillance.

This analytical study, aimed to establish that power and resistance are forever intertwined. As this project is limited to the dystopian literatures, particularly Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Margeret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, it exposes how the fire of resistance ignites in the most subjugated society especially among the suppressed people of the society. Power cannot always rest in the same set of few people and even though both societies in these novels still are not fully freed, an opposition surely but slowly begins to emerge. There is a shift from power of the state to power of the people, thus proving that resistance comes in various forms and is inevitable where power is controlled by a sovereign figure.

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