Linguistic Manipulation of Political Myth in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

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Abstract

This paper investigates the linguistic manipulation of political myth in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale. More specifically, this paper discusses the myth of the good-of-the nation, which is linguistically manipulated verbally and nonverbally throughout the novel. Atwood's novel is one of the distinguished dystopian narratives in the twentieth century. This type of fiction has always been a reflection of the irrationalities committed against people by those in power. Drawing on two approaches of political discourse analysis (Chilton, 2004; Wodak, 2009), this paper tries to answer one research question: How are political discourse strategies employed linguistically to propagate the good-of-the-nation myth? By making a connection between the data extracted from the selected novel and the way present regimes use language, this paper aims to explore the extent to which the good-of-the-nation myth is linguistically manipulated to dominate the public. As such, this paper attempts to provide the public with some sort of linguistic knowledge so as for them to be aware of the manipulative use of language in shaping and/or misshaping public attitudes. Lexical choices, didactic indoctrination, religionisation and dehumanisation are among the strategies used in the analysis of the selected data. There are two main findings in this paper. First, different linguistic levels of analysis are incorporated to propagate the discourse of political myth in the selected novel: the lexical, the pragmatic, the grammatical and the morphological. Second, political myths are linguistically manipulated to normalise their initiators' erroneous practices and legitimate their irrationalities.

Keywords: linguistic manipulation, political discourse analysis, political myth, dystopian fiction, The Handmaid's Tale

1. Introduction

Today's world is dominated by politics and power, which enforce a specific type of language that serves to shape people's responses and change their attitudes. Within such an atmosphere, language appears to be an effective tool that determines the way we think and behave since it can be employed to expose facts or falsify them. The Arab world today witnesses huge discursive campaigns under different names, be they political, social or religious. These campaigns aim to change and redirect the public's attitudes. They manipulate language in a way that serves their initiators' goals and guarantees political loyalty to their regimes. This paper tends to expose some political strategies that are manipulated to produce and maintain the *good-of-the-nation* myth. It also tries to offer the public a linguistic immunity against different types of linguistic manipulation so that they may be aware of the use and misuse of language. This will be conducted by shedding light on some selected strategies that are used in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale to propagate the *good-of-the-nation* myth. Regardless of the fact that the novel is a work of fiction, it abounds in political strategies that are typically utilised by politicians in the present time. The paper, therefore, tries to explore the connection between the data extracted from the selected novel and the way present regimes use language to manipulate their public.

This paper draws on two main approaches that have influential contributions to political discourse analysis: Chilton's (2004) and Wodak's (2009). It also addresses one research question: How are political discourse strategies employed linguistically to propagate the *good-of-the-nation* myth in the selected novel? By answering this question, this paper attempts to clarify how political myths are linguistically employed to manipulate the masses. The significance of this paper lies in its attempt to provide the public with some sort of linguistic knowledge of the use and abuse of language so as to stimulate their potential to fight all forms of linguistic manipulation.

This paper tries to achieve three objectives. The first is to expose prejudices committed against people in the name of the good of the nation, by drawing a link between the novel's incidents and present politics. The second is to provide expedient insights into a comprehensive awareness of both the implicit and the explicit strategies politicians use to manipulate their people into submission to their own goals. The third is to direct public attention to rethink the discursive practices of those in power so as to determine whether these practices are meant to illuminate or to manipulate.

This paper is structured around seven sections. Section 1 is the current introduction that presents the objectives of this paper, the research question it tackles, and its significance. Section 2 offers some theoretical preliminaries that shed light on political discourse analysis and political myth. Section 3 presents the related literature on political myth and linguistic manipulation by tracing some studies relevant to the topic under investigation. Section 4 clarifies the methodology and the framework of data analysis. Section 5 is dedicated to the analysis of the selected data. Section 6 discusses the results of this paper. Section 7 provides the conclusion and some recommendations for future research.

2. Political Discourse and Political Myth: Theoretical Preliminaries

There are many definitions of political discourse analysis (henceforth PDA); some focus on argumentation practices, and others deal with it from a critical perspective. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), on the one hand, view political discourse primarily as a type of argumentation. They state that this linguistic field deals with the argumentative strategies used by politicians to convey certain discursive practices. van Dijk (1997a), on the other hand, focuses on the reproduction of power in discourse, stating that PDA aims to analyse political discourse critically, that is, by showing how power is produced and

reproduced in discourse. van Dijk (2004) also maintains that understanding of the different discursive practices in

discourse depends entirely on the understanding of the contextual environment in which such practices are produced and received. He argues that when political discourse analysis deals with the inherent characteristics of discourse, it manages to offer solutions for many political issues. Thus, the analyst's ability to realise the argumentative and the critical nature of political texts makes it easy for him/her to uncover the hidden political strategies pertaining to them. This can be achieved by focusing on the different analytical perspectives within this field. For Chilton and Schaffner (2002, p. 25), PDA has two analytical dimensions: "cognitive" and "pragmatic." The cognitive dimension, on the one hand, is concerned with the linguistic structures and their discursive representations in the mind. The pragmatic dimension, on the other hand, concentrates on the status of the speaker when he produces the discursive act, and studies the use of indexical expressions in the analysis of texts (ibid., p. 25).

Chilton's (2004) approach to PDA is a significant model that is extensively used in political discourse studies. This approach conceives PDA as mainly concerned with one main notion: how to obtain, legitimise and maintain power through political discourses. It is related to both cognitive science and cognitive linguistics, and offers interesting insights on the relationship between language and politics from a cognitive perspective. Chilton summarises his view of political discourse in terms of a list of some propositions (Chilton, 2004). These include some interesting claims that can be taken up in PDA, particularly if one pursues questions of representation (e.g., metaphors and binary distinctions are frequent in politics, political discourse draws on spatial cognition, political representations are sets of role-players and relations, etc.) (ibid., pp. 198−205). PDA's concern on the relationship between language and politics makes it relevant to the study of political myth because it helps uncover the manipulative strategies used to produce and strengthen the *good-of-the-nation* myth.

Ruth Wodak's (2009) discourse historical approach establishes a close relationship between politics and public attitudes, political administration, and political control. Her approach can be seen to be classificatory because it gives a persuasive picture of the absolute variety of political discourse. She sees politics to be about imposing representations and about the way through which these representations serve power. Wodak (2009, p. 24) identifies six dimensions of politics: "(i) the staging of politics; (ii) the everyday life of politics and politicians; (iii) the impact of politicians' personality on performance; (iv) the mass-production of politics; (v) the recontextualisation of politics in the media; and (vi) participation in politics." Wodak's dimensions of politics constitute notions of "power, ideology, gate-keeping, legitimacy and representation" (ibid., p. 24). Her approach, therefore, conceives politics to be a site where language, power and ideology are incorporated to produce political discourse.

Obviously, Chilton's and Wodak's approaches to PDA focus, as is stated above, on political issues of discourse, such as power, ideology, representations, legitimization, participation and staging. These concepts can be traced, revealed and represented by means of different linguistic devices through which political discourse is staged. These two approaches, therefore, can be applied to the study of political myth in Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale. This is conducted by exploring how discourse representations can be linguistically loaded with notions of power and ideology. Significantly, representations of discourse, in the light of this paper, means how the manipulation of political myth in general, and of the *good-of-the-nation* myth in particular, is linguistically represented through the dexterous employment of some PDA strategies that are relevant to the current paper.

Within the framework of manipulation, discourse representations often have an ideological basis and usually attempt to produce unequal power relations between participants. As such, these representations target specific manipulative purposes that serve the speaker's/writer's goals. In this regard, Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse analysts and text producers tend, in their attempts to show the dialectical relationship between texts, processes and their social conditions, to use different strands of linguistic analysis, including the lexical, the semantic, the syntactic and the pragmatic levels. This, in turn, enables them to select the appropriate discursive strategies that facilitate the representation of their ideological agenda. In the case of this study, the discourse of political myth in the selected novel is represented by the employment of some PDA strategies that constitute the representations through which linguistic manipulation of political myth is discursively reflected.

Myths created by politicians are "ways of communicating ideology" (Charteris-Black, 2005, p. 22). A myth can be understood to be a story which intentionally offers some sort of explanation of and justification for things and actions in a way that makes them acceptable to their receivers. Focusing on the intention beyond political myths, Barthes (1972) defines the term to be a discursive practice that requires an intentionally-based message beyond its surface meaning. Menz (1989) also discusses the function of myths arguing that they have the ability to connect together the different social groups in a given society. For him, myths enable the different groups to set a base upon which they can "represent their interests and create a common basis of identification among them" (ibid., p. 233).

Flood (2002) points out that political myths have been linked to the discourse of domination and inequality, where one group practices a particular type of control over another. He maintains that, within the framework of politics, political myths carry ideological assumptions that tend to find excuses for any political practice so as to be accepted as valid by one specific group. For him, the classification of myth to be political or not lies not only in the political content of the story that it tells, but also in the fact that the story that it tells comes to "make significance" (Flood, 2002, p. 45) of the specifically political conditions for a certain social group or society. Political conditions, here, mean "the conditions concerning the struggle for the distribution of power and resources which can, as a last resort, have recourse to physical force" (ibid, p. 45). Political myths can shorten things into representations, linguistically and non-linguistically, that carry their ideologically-laden messages. They are launched, therefore, to achieve a political goal that always serves the privileges of those in power.

3. Related Literature on Political Myth and Linguistic Manipulation

A thorough discussion for a theory of political myth can be found in Spinoza (1951) in which he offers a fully developed theory of political imagination. Spinoza discusses the modern political theory focusing on the notion of power and its relationship with the theory of democracy. He states that all kinds of state laws must be instituted in such a way that human beings are bound not by fear but by hope of something that they desire in a particular way. Spinoza's theory of political imagination can be considered as a reflection on the problem of how such a hope can be socially and/or politically created by manipulating myths for ideological purposes. Spinoza, then, relates the notion of creating myths to the need of people to create hope, and thus addressing the social dimension of political myth that tends to gather people around one common goal.

Commenting on the role that political myths play in the state, Cassirer (1973) discusses the myth of the Aryan race arguing

that this myth makes a connection between narrative and scientific findings, such as the biological superiority of the Aryan race. He perceives political myths to be forms of life that characterise traditional societies and, thus, he analyses "the struggle against myth in the history of political philosophy" (ibid., p. 279). It is only here that Cassirer faces the problem of the presence of myth in modern politics. Consequently, he argues that political myths are desperate means. The return of myth, he asserts, "is only reasonable as the last resort for facing a situation of deep crisis when rational means are not available" (ibid., p. 279). Further, Sorel (1975) develops another theory of political myth to emphasise its influential role in modern politics. He argues that political myth cannot be considered to be religion, and that is why it has an effective role in contemporary politics. Sorel's political myth stems from a practical engagement with one of the typically modern phenomena: the proletarian struggle. In Sorel's view, such a struggle has provided modern history with many changes that come as a result of using political myths.

According to Bennett (1980), it is because of the absence of formalised political ideologies in political systems that political myths secretly tend to guide the whole process of forming public opinions and making policies. Bennett explains the systematic effect of political myth on the way the public think. In Bennett's view, myths show a number of characteristics of politics, including public debates, political conflict, and political order. Flood (2002) has also pointed out that political myths can offer essential cognitive framework that is concerned with shaping and reshaping the social world. This can be implemented, as argued by Flood (2002), by relating the difficulties of social life to the relative simplicity of the myth's narrative plot. This function of myth highlights its practical side, which has been previously referred to by Sorel (1975), who points out that the people involved in social action need to represent their upcoming action in the form of a narrative or sequence of events that assures the triumph of their cause. In such cases, political myths tend to be a basis upon which people relate their arguments and advocate their social practices. Further, Edelman (qtd. in Charteris-Black, 2005, p. 25) identifies three particular political myths that are extensively manipulated in modern politics: first, the *Conspiratorial Enemy* myth, which propagates the idea that an aggressive out-group enemy is conspired against an in-group; second, the *Valiant Leader* myth in which information about the courage, benevolence, heroism, and wisdom of a leader is circulated among the public; and third, the *United We Stand* myth, which conveys that a country's victory can only be achieved by a complete compliance to and sacrifice for the leader of such a country.

Concerning linguistic manipulation, many studies have been presented to discuss the concept in discourse. One of the most interesting studies in this regard is Hafez's (1995) *A critical discourse analysis of linguistic manipulation in Animal Farm*. This study offered a critical discourse analysis of Orwell's *Animal Farm* by concentrating on strategies of manipulation, such as generic statements, modality, forms of reference and address, and rewording. It concluded that a study of linguistic manipulation in discourse offers readers some sort of linguistic illumination towards the use and abuse of language in contemporary societies. Hafez's study is not the only one that investigated the notion of manipulation in Orwell's works; Jic's (2011) *Linguistic Manipulation and Ideology in Orwell's Novels* has also contributed in this field. Jic's study presented a pragmatic analysis on the sociolinguistic techniques of manipulation employed by totalitarian systems in order to achieve total control over people's thoughts. The study furthered its scope in Orwell's fiction to include *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*, and demonstrated the effective role of language to control the conceptual system of its speakers by analysing language in relation to political discourse.

Another study which investigated the social and psychological dimensions of manipulation is Asya's (2013) *Linguistic manipulation: Definition and types*. The study offered a definition of the word manipulation focusing on the notion of intentionality. It classified manipulation into two types: intentional and unintentional arguing that manipulation is a social and psychological phenomenon that has its negative effects on both individual and society. The study proceeded to claim that linguistic manipulation occurs when listeners fail to realise speakers' hidden intentions. Asya's study listed two main findings: first, discourse is said to be manipulative not only because it displays some linguistic tactics on the different levels of analysis, but also because of its association with the speaker's/writer's intentions as well as the social context of the communicative act; second, linguistic manipulation is a discursive process in which a certain type of influence is exercised by one person upon another or a group of people to change the addressee's attitudes towards a certain goal.

A further study which highlighted the rhetorical dimension of linguistic manipulation can be found in David's (2014) *Language, power and manipulation: The use of rhetoric in maintaining political influence*. The study examined the effectiveness of linguistic manipulation as a tool of political rhetoric in pursuing persuasion on the part of politicians' recipients. Through holding a comparison between different speeches of different politicians, from different parts of the world, David's study investigated some rhetorical devices, on the phonological, lexical, semantic and pragmatic levels of analysis that are employed to achieve persuasion. The study concluded that politicians, whatever their backgrounds are, use nearly the same rhetorical devices to manipulate their recipients.

Regardless of the fact that the above studies have discussed political myth and linguistic manipulation, each in isolation and from different perspectives, this paper deals with both themes collectively, i.e., political myth and linguistic manipulation. This is conducted by making a connection between the political (political myth), the narrative (The Handmaid's Tale) and the linguistic (linguistic manipulation).

4. Methodology

This paper uses *Political Discourse Analysis* as a methodological approach to analyse the linguistic manipulation of political myth in Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale. This approach is relevant to the study of political myth since it aims, according to Chilton and Schaffner (2002), to analyse discursive political practices in order to expose the implicit and the explicit power strategies, and to clarify the impact of these discursive practices on the public.

The analytical procedure adopted in this paper encompasses two stages that are systematically incorporated throughout the analysis of the selected data. The first is dedicated to mark some political discourse strategies that are used to propagate the discourse of political myth in the selected novel. The second is devoted to demonstrate the number of occurrences of some words that are highlighted as indicative in the production of the *good-of-the-nation* myth. This is conducted by using 'concordance'; a computational program which, according to Kennedy (1998), "offers a picture of the environments in which a key word occurs in a corpus" (p. 251), "provides information on the company words keep in a corpus," and "shows different senses of a word type" (p. 256).

4.1 Corpus of the Study

The corpus of the present paper consists of one novel written in 1985 by the Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood: The Handmaid's Tale. The selected novel consists of forty-six chapters, distributed in fifteen parts and followed by historical notes.

4.1.1 The Handmaid's Tale: A Brief Account

The Handmaid's Tale is one of the dystopian novels of the twentieth century that narrates the story of Offred who is taken from her family to be a handmaid in the Republic of Gilead; a totalitarian system that replaces the United States of America. The novel addresses the theme of control over women's bodies. This theme is politically and linguistically operated in the discourse of the novel by propagating the myth of the *good-of-the-nation*. Women, under Gilead, lose their identity. They are deprived of their real names and are defined by their gender roles as Wives, Handmaids, or Marthas. They are kept for reproductive purposes due to sterility. All handmaids are subjugated and indoctrinated to a very severe system of life in which the majority of human rights are missed. They are indoctrinated towards only one goal; that is, to sacrifice soul and body for the sake of their country; a myth created by politicians to guarantee their continuity in power and to maintain social control over women. Linguistically, as a dystopian novel, The Handmaid's Tale exposes the dangers of totalitarian regimes by incorporating the political, represented in maintaining power; and the linguistic, manifested in language distortion. Within Gilead, language is manipulatively utilised to maintain control over women's bodies.

4.2 The Good-of-the-Nation Myth

Creating myths is "a normal feature of political life" (Flood, 2002, p. 11) because they are used as political strategies to dominate the public. The *good-of-the-nation* myth is a political myth created by politicians in order to justify their violations. It makes use of the notion of nationality

through which the public's potential is stimulated so as to accept any unreasonable acts without any objections. This type of myth, i.e., the *good-of-the-nation* myth, always attempts to escape any possible criticism because it advocates national ideas. It depends on the ideological belief that advocates all forms of domination committed against people as mere necessities to achieve the good and glory of their nation. Within the scope of this study, this myth is linguistically manipulated throughout the novel to legalise the illogical and to defend the irrational. Political regimes always manipulate language to produce and reinforce this type of myth so as to find appropriate justifications for the oppressive practices they commit against their people.

4.3 Framework of Data Analysis

Tracing the discourse of the novel under investigation, one can identify many political discourse strategies that are dexterously employed to create and maintain the *good-of-the-nation*. However, the analysis adopted here is confined to only seven strategies that are listed in the lines below.

The first strategy is *lexical choices*. Two strategies that depend on the ideological selection of words are used in the discourse of the novel: promises and repetition. According to Fairclough (1989, p.115), words and phrases always carry connotations that are derived from their frequent use. He argues that ideology can be expressed and conveyed through the use of some skillfully selected words. Fairclough's view is also reported by Abdi and Basarati (2016, p. 37) who state that "every word carries an implicit connotation and a hidden power" by which the powerful exercises domination over the powerless. The second strategy is *didactic indoctrination*, which means "the implanting of doctrines" and carries the connotations of "a coercive type of education" (Gatchel, 2010, p. 8). This strategy is manifested through the use of bald on- record strategies, which, according to Yule (1996), are the expressions used in discursive practices and employed by speakers to control the actions of their recipients by means of words. The third strategy is *legitimising the forbidden*, which is represented by the use of bargaining and justification. Politicians often resort to justification by claiming the public interest to find excuses for any mischievous act, guarantee the pass of their decisions, and silence their recipients. For van Dijk (1993), practices of dominance often require some justification tactics to distance their initiators from being blamed for any mischief. Bargaining is also a political device that depends on the reciprocity of interests between participants, where the powerful is always the initiator. To Chilton (2004), bargaining is essentially needed in political process as it tends to be a communicative channel between initiators and receivers.

Mollifying the present and vilifying the past is the fourth strategy used in the analysis of data. It is derived from van Dijk's (1997a) positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation strategies that are considered one of the most valuable ways of analysing forms of political discourse. These strategies attempt to "influence world opinion, that is, the minds of the public at large" (van Dijk, 1997b, p. 23). The fifth strategy is *dehumanisation*, which is attached to political discourse analysis when it addresses topics of domination, oppression and marginality. Smith (2011) emphasises the psychological dimension of dehumanisation when he argues that it occurs in situations where one group wants to psychologically harm another group. He also maintains that dehumanisation is realised when a person repudiates another person's humanity. The sixth strategy is *religionisation*, which has been used by politicians to find a religious shield that defends their irrationalities. This strategy is discursively represented by the employment of some religious quotes that are derived from religious scriptures and come to be used as slogans in the hands of politicians. For Sarfati (2014), religious texts are skillfully selected and manipulated to vilify political opponents. These religious quotes are used as slogans that are considered "a form of control" (Pinto, 2004, p. 661) because they activate dictation and undermine understanding. The seventh strategy is the use of *nonverbal language,* which is represented by the use of violence. Violence means "the inflicting of physical pain or injury by one person or another, often with the implication of excessive force" (Barish, 1991, p. 101). Sometimes, violence is exercised psychologically, which means that it depends on both the physical and the rhetorical dimensions of power.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Lexical Choices

The use of specific words and phrases is indicative in propagating the *good-of-the-nation* myth in The Handmaid's Tale. Words, for Fowler (1991), have their ideological significance in the analysis of political discourse. Promises and repetition are two political ploys that totally depend on the skillful use of words. Promises are used in the discourse of the novel to motivate the handmaids' potential in order to work assiduously and endure patiently for the good of their nation. Aunt Lydia tries to draw a brilliant future for the handmaids when, according to her, "the women will live in harmony together, all in one family; you will be like daughters to them…there can be bonds of real affection" (*The Handmaid's Tale*, p. 171, henceforth *THT*). Aunt Lydia's

selection of the phrases 'in harmony', 'one family', 'like daughters', and 'real affection' is highly indicative since they carry the connotative meanings of stability, security and welfare. The use of the truth modal 'will' is also indicative since it emphasises the idea that Aunt Lydia's promises will come true, provided that "each performing her appointed task," (*THT*, p. 171) which ultimately serves the good of Gilead. Crucially, the ideological and manipulative significance of Lydia's above words can be clearly grasped if we consider the number of their occurrence in the novel as the following table shows.

Table 1. Number of occurrences of 'harmony,' 'family' and 'affection'

The word	Total occurrence	Indicative occurrence	Indicative word in context
harmony	1	1	The women will live in *harmony* together.
family	9	1	All in one *family*.
affection	2	1	There can be bonds of real *affection*.

As clarified in Table 1, the words 'harmony', 'family' and 'affection' occur 1, 9 and 2 times, respectively. Only one occurrence for each word out of their total frequencies is indicative in the discourse of political myth. Despite the very low indicative frequencies of the three words, they reflect an ideological weight in maintaining the *good-of-the-nation* myth.

Aunt Lydia emphasises the promising future of the handmaids when she promises them: "Your daughters will have greater freedom" (*THT*, p. 172). Aunt Lydia's use of the second-person pronoun 'you' and the truth modal 'will' is highly indicative in reinforcing the myth of the *good-of-the-nation*. The second-person pronoun 'you' in Aunt Lydia's statement is used as "an indefinite pronoun" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 128) that implies a relationship of solidarity between her and her recipients. Adegoju (2013, p. 109) also postulates that 'you' is used in discourse to "create a sense of friendliness and receptivity on the part of the audience." Aunt Lydia's use of the truth modal 'will' expresses a high level of certitude, and assures her assumption of a better future for the handmaids. Further, the use of the comparative 'greater' rather than the pure adjective 'great' conveys two meanings: first, there is already some sort of freedom the handmaids lead under Gilead; second, the complete compliance to Gilead's rules will, ironically, lead to much more freedom in the future.

The skillful use of specific words to assure better future conditions continues when Aunt Lydia says: "We are working towards the goal of a little garden for each one, each one of you" (*THT*, p. 172). Aunt Lydia's use of both the first-person plural pronoun 'we' and the repetitive phrase 'each one' is indicative. As for the first-person plural pronoun 'we', it is used inclusively because it includes both speaker and hearer, and attempts superficially to convey the feeling of participation, closeness and intimacy between Aunt Lydia and the handmaids. This atmosphere of counterfeit closeness and false solidarity, which is expressed by Aunt Lydia's inclusive 'we', correlates with Pinto's (2004, p. 656) argument that the use of the pronoun 'we' "masks imposition under the guise of cooperation." This aims to manipulate the handmaids, by strengthening the idea that all of them are on the same boat and have the same fate; they are ready to sacrifice soul and body for the good of their nation. Aunt Lydia's repetitive phrase 'each one' attempts to confirm that the handmaids will lead a happy and comfortable life in the future, which accentuates the idea that what happens in Gilead is intended for its glory. Likewise, today's politicians are always promise-bearers as they frequently launch promises of better future. These promises, however, are preconditioned with the complete compliance with their policies, even if they run counter to the public interests. There is always the *good-of-the-nation* myth that stands as a pretext for any mischievous acts.

5.2 Didactic Indoctrination

Didactic indoctrination is associated with "authoritarian education" (Gatchel, 2010, p. 10), and is employed by the Aunts from the very beginning of the novel to prepare the handmaids for their planned future. Within this process of indoctrination, the handmaids are used as a means to an end. They have no choices because the ultimate product of such a process is a completely controlled-will recipient. Offred highlights the effect of indoctrination on her behavior when she says: "I thought I was sounding like that, voice of a monotone, voice of a doll" (*THT*, p. 26). Now, Offred is indoctrinated in a way that makes her respond automatically like a machine.

The Rachel and Leah Re-Education Center, which is known as the Red Center, is the place where the Aunts start a process of indoctrination in which all handmaids are learnt that they are dedicated to only one role that serves the good of their country, Gilead. Aunt Lydia heightens this goal: "Women united for a common end! Helping one another in their daily chores as they walk the path of life together, each performing her appointed task" (*THT*, p. 171). They are learnt that they are freed from the multiple social roles such as being wives, mothers, cooks, and maids; and are assigned to only one task: to work for the sake of Gilead.

The process of indoctrination is also manifested through the use of the bald on-record strategies. The Aunts in general, and Aunt Lydia in particular, have recurrently employed imperatives to subjugate the handmaids. Thomas (1995) argues that when there are occasions that constrain a speaker to speak very directly, he seems to ignore face risks and decides to go 'on-record'. Using the bald on-record strategy allows the speaker to address his recipients clearly and directly. Aunt Lydia uses this strategy to implant the Gileadean ideology. This is clearly shown by Offred herself when she reports some of the rules imposed over the handmaids:

> I remember the rules, rules that were never spelled out but that every woman know: *don't open* your door to a stranger …*Make* him slide his ID under the door. *Don't stop* on the road to help a motorist pretending to be in trouble. *Keep* the locks on and keep going. If anyone whistles, *don't turn* to look. *Don't go* into a Laundromat, by yourself at night. (*THT*, p. 34, my emphasis)

The above quote shows that Aunt Lydia uses the imperatives 'don't open', 'make', 'don't stop' 'keep', 'don't turn', and 'don't go' to convey her message directly to the handmaids. According to Yule (1996, p. 63), using imperatives is considered "the most direct approach" to express "bald on-record" because the other person is directly asked for something. Aunt Lydia's frequent use of both positive and negative imperatives aims to subjugate the handmaids into complete obedience to her message. Obviously, the Aunts try to control the handmaids' freedom in every aspect of their lives in order to achieve one ultimate goal: the total compliance to the ruling system. Even love is restricted in Gilead, none of the handmaids has the choice to fall in love because Aunt Lydia warns them: "Love…Don't let me catch you at it" (*THT*, p. 232). Here, the indoctrination process encompasses every aspect of the handmaids' life. Similarly, indoctrination processes are evidently employed by some political regimes today. Under these regimes, young pupils are pedagogically indoctrinated via politicising school textbooks in a way

that serves the regime's political purposes.

5.3 Legitimising the Forbidden

Legitimising the forbidden is another important tactic politicians use to propagate political myths. Under dictator systems, political regimes always try to find proper justifications for what is irrational, violent, forbidden, or outlawed. In the novel, the Gileadean regime, with its propagandist machines represented in the Aunts, start a brainwashing campaign to guarantee the achievement of the Gileadean sacred reproductive mission. They attempt to prohibit the permissible and to authorise the forbidden. This is done for one goal: the good and glory of Gilead. The discourse of the novel witnesses many examples in which Gileadean system legitimises what is considered to be forbidden under the guise of the *good-of-the-nation*. One flagrant example is reported by Offred herself when she describes the Ceremony, a monthly praying meeting, as "it has nothing to do with passion or love or romance or any of those other notions we used to titillate ourselves with" and "it has nothing to do with sexual desire, at least for me" (*THT*, p. 105). Significantly, despite the religious garment the Gileadean system wears as a theocratic regime, it enforces women to have sex openly with their Commanders in what is called 'The Ceremony'. The Ceremony, though legitimised by Gilead, is no longer than practices of rape and adultery, which is also stated in the historical notes of the novel in which it is described as "the collective rape ceremony" (*THT*: historical notes, p. 319).

Bargaining is a political ploy that is employed to legitimise what is forbidden in the novel. Serena Joy, the Commander's wife, uses this strategy when she offers Offred to have sex with Nick in order to give birth of a child. Serena instigates Offred to try having sex with "another man" (*THT*, p. 216) rather than the Commander. Her bargaining requires that Offred can see "a picture of her little girl" (*THT*, p. 216). When Offred replies: "It's against the law," Serena proceeds to release her fears: "I would help you. I would make sure nothing went wrong," and assures her that "women do it frequently," provided that "it could be someone we trust" (*THT*, p. 215). This explicitly shows the readiness of Gileadean elites to legitimise the illegal for Gilead's reproductive mission.

Justification is another argumentative political strategy that is used to legitimise the forbidden. Many illegal acts are committed and then permitted under the guise of a series of justifications that target the reinforcement of the *good-of-the-nation* myth. The Commander tries to justify the oppressive sexual atmosphere the handmaids suffer in Gilead: "This way they're protected, they can fulfill their biological destinies in peace, with full support and encouragement" (*THT*, p. 231). He attempts to assure the handmaids that they are protected under Gilead, the thing which, according to Gilead's regime, was missed before. He uses the word 'destinies' rather than, for example, 'task' or 'job', to affirm that the handmaids have no chance to escape their determined fate in Gilead; they are dedicated either to give birth to children or to be sent to the colonies, where they work hard and wait their death. The Commander continues to justify the Gileadean irrationalities against the handmaids: "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs" (*THT*, p. 222), which conversationally implies that there is always a price for any revolutionary act, even if it requires violence and oppression. Notice the frequencies of the words 'destinies' and 'protected' in the following table.

Table 2. Number of occurrences of 'destinies' and 'protected'

The word	Total occurrence	Indicative occurrence	Indicative word in context
destinies	1	1	They can fulfill their biological *destinies* in peace.
protected	5	3	We are well *protected* already.
			Women were not *protected* then.
			This way they're *protected*.

Table 2 shows that the words 'destinies' and 'protected', though low in frequency, are very indicative in supporting the concept of justification for Gilead's irrationalities. This also tends to institutionalise the forbidden.

Further, the Commander tries to justify the whole problem in Gilead when he reports that it "wasn't only with the women" but it "was with the men" (*THT*, p. 221). The Commander tends to communicate his belief that men share women the same suffering in Gilead. He continues to assert that the problem was not in sex since, for him, "anyone could just buy it" (*THT*, p. 221). However, the problem in Gilead, according to him, lies in the fact that "there was nothing to work for, nothing to fight for" (*THT*, p. 221). He summarises the problem of Gileadean men in two things: first, "men were turning off on sex"; and second, "they were turning off on marriage" (*THT*, p. 221). The Commander's justifications function to establish a common ground with Offred and to create an atmosphere of closeness, which assures her that it is not only women who suffer under Gileadean regime, but also men have their share in such suffering.

5.4 Mollifying the Present and Vilifying the Past

Mollifying a present regime and vilifying a previous one is a political strategy that is always used in politics. The employment of this strategy attempts to influence the minds of the public, positively or negatively in a way that changes their attitudes. In the discourse of the novel, euphemism is used to beautify the Giledean era. According to Allan and Burridge (1991, p. 11), any euphemistic term is used as "an alternative to a dispreferred expression," and in Orwell's words, "euphemism is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable" (Orwell, 1999, p. 501). Early in the novel, Aunt Lydia uses the word 'ordinary' to describe what the handmaids are used to do in Gilead. She tries to euphemise all acts of domination and suppression to appear ordinary: "This may not seem ordinary to you now, but after a time it will. It will become ordinary" (*THT*, p. 43). Aunt Lydia's use of the modal 'will' functions to emphasise that her words will be achieved in the near future. Furthermore, Aunt Lydia also euphemises death: "Death is a beautiful woman" (*THT*, p. 175) in an attempt to beautify the Gileadean regime, and to deceive the handmaids so as not to suspect the justice of Gilead. The following table demonstrates the number of occurrences of the words 'ordinary' and 'beautiful'.

Table 3. Number of occurrences of 'ordinary' and 'beautiful'

The word	Total occurrence	Indicative occurrence	Indicative word in context
ordinary	13	3	*Ordinary*, said Aunt Lydia, is what you are used to.
			This may not seem *ordinary* to you now.
			but after a time, it will, It will become *ordinary*.
beautiful	12	1	Death is a *beautiful* woman, with wings and one breast almost bare.

Table 3 shows that the total frequency of the word 'ordinary' is 13, but only 3 occurrences are indicative in producing the *good-of-the-nation* myth. Similarly, only one occurrence out of 12 of the word 'beautiful' is indicative in maintaining political myth.

The Commander also embellishes Gilead's regime when he describes what is happening in Gilead as just a return to "Nature's norm" (*THT*, p. 232, capital in original). He tries to curtail all kinds of domination committed against the handmaids as something natural because these actions target one sacred goal, the good of Gilead. The capitalised 'Nature' is very indicative here since dictator regimes always employ words such as 'natural', 'ordinary' and 'normal' to justify the atrocities they commit against their people. On the contrary, the pre-Gilead era is frequently vilified in the hands of both the Aunts and the Commander. This vilification process starts when Aunt Lydia describes the pre-Gilead era as "the days of anarchy" (*THT*, p. 34). The word 'anarchy' carries the negative connotations of disorder, war, fear, and instability. These meanings, when attributed to pre-Gilead era, tend to convey that they no longer exist in present Gilead. As such, their semantic antonyms are inferred here: Gilead is an era of peace, security and stability. The Commander also plays a part in vilifying the pre-Gilead age when he describes it as "just an anomaly" and "just a fluke" (*THT*, p. 232) in order to distort the previous regime. This has always been the adopted ideology of some ruling systems today; the new intensifies the mistakes of the old and undermines its achievements. Consider the following table.

Table 4. Number of occurrences of 'nature' and 'anarchy'

The word	Total occurrence	Indicative occurrence	Indicative word in context
nature	6	1	All we've done is return things to *Nature's* norm.
anarchy	1	1	In the days of *anarchy*, it was freedom to.

Table 4 reflects that the word 'nature' occurs 6 times, but only one of them is highly significant in euphemising the atrocities committed against the handmaids in the discourse of political myth. The same thing holds true for the word 'anarchy' as it is very low in frequency, but extremely indicative in vilifying the pre-Gilead age.

5.5 Dehumanisation

The *good-of-the-nation* myth continues to be supported by an incessant process of dehumanisation. The handmaids under Gilead are dehumanised for the sake of the alleged prosperous future of Gilead. They are deprived of their freedom; the freedom to choose for themselves. They have no control over their lives. Aunt Lydia tells them: "There is more than one kind of freedom… freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from" (*THT*, p. 34). The freedom, which Aunt Lydia mentions, tends to restrict the handmaids' right to choose. The Gileadean freedom controls the behavior of citizens. By this freedom the handmaids are deprived of both their bodies and identities. The use of the past tense 'was' functions to emphasise the end of the past era, whereas the use of the present progressive passive in 'you are being given freedom from' indicates continuity and permanence for Gilead's regime. The following table shows the number of occurrences of the word 'freedom'.

Table 5. Number of occurrences of 'freedom'

The word	Total occurrence	Indicative occurrence	Indicative word in context
freedom	18	6	There is more than one kind of *freedom*, said Aunt Lydia. *Freedom* to and *freedom* from. Now you are being given *freedom* from. We were losing the taste for *freedom*. *Freedom*, like everything else, is relative. Your daughters will have greater *freedom*.

As revealed in Table 5, the word 'freedom' has been mentioned with a total frequency of 18. However, it is employed only 6 times to represent the process of dehumanisation. This exposes the deceptive discourse Gilead used to manage the handmaid's lives. Regardless of the fact that the word 'freedom' is one of the prerequisites of humanity, it is ironically utilised to dehumanise the handmaids.

The handmaids are also deprived of their feminist identity as they cease to fulfill their natural role in life. In the eyes of Gilead, they are only "containers," "two-legged wombs," "sacred vessels," "ambulatory chalices" and "viable ovaries" (*THT*, pp.107−146−153, respectively). Here, the handmaids are deprived of their human nature. The use of the phrases 'sacred vessels' and 'ambulatory chalices' is highly indicative since they are employed to envelop the proposed national task of the handmaids with honor and singularity. Now, it is clear that the inside part of the handmaids' bodies is the most important thing, while their souls, emotions and feelings are out of Gilead's concern. This is stated by Offred: "I used to think of my body as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation" (*THT*, p. 83). She also reiterates: "It's only the insides of our bodies that are important" (*THT*, p. 107). If one of the handmaids fails to do her assigned task (to give birth to a sound child), she will be declared "Unwoman" (*THT*, p. 137). The same thing holds true for a handmaid who gives birth to "Unbabies" (*THT*, p. 123), that is, babies born with some sort of disease. In both cases, the handmaid will be sent to the colonies, where she works hard till death. For a handmaid, to be declared 'Unwoman' means death. Offred asserts this when she answers the Commander's question: "You want a baby, don't you?" (*THT*, p. 71). She replies: "Yes, … Give me children, or else I die" (*THT*, p. 71). Consequently, giving birth to a baby means life, while the failure means loss of not only identity but life as well. The following table shows the frequencies of the words 'Unwoman' and 'Unbabies'.

Table 6. Number of occurrences of 'Unwoman' and 'Unbabies'

The word	Total occurrence	Indicative occurrence	Indicative word in context
Unwoman	4	3	She'll never be declared *Unwoman*. That is her reward. I could become an *Unwoman*. They burn you up with the garbage, like an *Unwoman*.
Unbabies	1	1	The babies that didn't get passed, that were declared *Unbabies*.

Table 6 demonstrates that the word 'Unwoman', on the one hand, occurs 4 times throughout the discourse of the novel. However, only 3 of them are significantly used in the process of dehumanisation. The word 'Unbabies', on the other hand, is very low in frequency but highly indicative in dehumanising the handmaids.

5.6 Religionisation

As a theocratic state, the Republic of Gilead religionises every aspect of daily life. Everything is circulated by religious trimmings, where "GOD IS A NATIONAL RESOURCE" (*THT*, p. 225, capitals in original). The capitalised form of the slogan adds more emphasis on its meaning and importance. Religion is used for justifying the violations committed against the public as is the case with fundamentalist regimes that use religion as a constitutional shield for their mischievous acts. Within Gilead, scriptural sources such as the Bible play an important role in propagating the *good-of-the-nation* myth. Some quotes are skillfully selected from the Bible, and interpreted in a way that supports the regime's political purposes.

These religious quotes are conceived to be general slogans that organise the lives of the handmaids in Gilead. The following table shows the frequencies of both 'national' and 'resource'.

Table 7. Number of occurrences of 'national' and 'resource'

The word	Total occurrence	Indicative occurrence	Indicative word in context
national	5	2	I am a *national* resource.
			God Is a *National* Resource.
resource	3	2	I am a national *resource*.
			God Is a National *Resource*.

As shown in Table 7, the words 'national' and 'resource' have 2 indicative occurrences out of 5 and 3, respectively. In both occurrences, the two words display a harmonious collocation relationship. This collocational pair has two functions: the first shows how Offred perceives herself under Gilead, which reflects the extent to which she is religiously indoctrinated to Gileadean rules in a way that makes her describe herself as 'a national resource'; and the second emphasises Gilead's main religious doctrine that all aspects of life are derived, ordained and accepted by God, the 'National Resource'.

In The Handmaid's Tale, some biblical expressions, such as "Blessed are the fruit" and "May the Lord open" (*THT*, p. 294) are ideologically chosen to be slogans that replace the ordinary terms of everyday conversations. Other examples of the religionisation process in Gilead can be found in the different phrases that are directly quoted from the Bible. "Blessed be the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," "Blessed are the merciful," "Blessed be the meek," and "Blessed are the silent" (*THT*, p. 100) are all used to manipulate and silence the handmaids, on the one hand, and to support the *good-of-the-nation* myth, on the other hand. Religion is deceitfully employed to be an ideological basis that defends and justifies the Gilead's control over the masses. Furthermore, all acts of spying, which are supposed to be illegal, are religiously justified by Gilead's system: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to know himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him" (*THT*, p. 103). These words are usually said by the Commander at the monthly praying ceremony. They are quoted from the Bible to legitimise acts of spying, which prevail on the Republic of Gilead.

Further, slogans facilitate the process of domination because they always summarise the ideology of an individual or a group. Fowler and Kress (1979, p. 41) notice some linguistic features of slogans as the omission of agents and the nominalisation of verbs, the thing which makes it difficult "to infer the roles associated with the underlying verb." This is clearly shown in the slogan, "from each according to her ability; to each according to his needs," (*THT*, p. 127) which the handmaids recite "three times, after dessert." It is one of the religious slogans that are used in Gilead to put emphasis on the reproductive mission devoted to the handmaids. Emphasising their ideological weight in political discourse, Hahn (1989), argues that slogans are simple, popular and effective techniques of conveying ideologies since they are used to express the adopted ideology of a particular party or a group. With the passage of time, Hahn proceeds, slogans cease to express any ideological belief and come to be a belief themselves.

The religionisation process continues when the role of the handmaids, represented in giving birth to more children, is accentuated. They are repeatedly told of the religious role they adopt. Offred report:

> It's the usual story, the usual stories. God to Adam, God to Noah. *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.* Then comes the moldy old Rachel and Leah stuff we had drummed into us at the Centre. *Give me children, or else I die. Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? Behold my maid Bilhah. She shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.* And so on and so forth. We had it read to us every breakfast. (*THT*, p. 99, emphasis in original)

As indicated in the above quote, the Gileadean system tries to convey that producing more children for Gilead is something divine. Committing themselves to fulfill such a fake religious role means that the handmaids work for the good of their country. Here is a table which displays the words that carry the associative meaning of religion and their frequencies.

Table 8. Words that carry associative meanings of religion

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
God	42	Hell	4
Lord	12	Adam	3
Church	12	Jesus	3
prayers	11	ritual	3
Faith	11	Christ	2
Jacob	8	Gospel	1
Heaven	6	Noah	1
Bible	5	sacred	1

Table 8 demonstrates frequencies of words that convey the associative meanings of religion. This indicates how discursively Gilead makes use of religious words to reproduce the *good-of-the-nation* myth.

5.7 Nonverbal Strategies

Nonverbal language is an indispensable element in the production of the myth of the *good-of-the-nation* in the novel. This nonverbal language is represented by the use of violence, which is profoundly employed in the novel, physically and psychologically, and then justified as mere

necessities to achieve the good of Gilead. The first act in which violence is exercised physically is clearly shown in the severe punishment Moira has because of her disobedience to the rules. Moira is taken to the Science Lab, a place none of the handmaids "ever went willingly" (*THT*, p.102). Offred says: "They used steel cables, frayed at the ends" (*THT*, p. 102) to punish Moira whose feet "looked like drowned feet, swollen and boneless…they looked like lungs" (*THT*, p. 102). After Moira's punishment, Aunt Lydia launches a direct threat: "Remember, for our purposes your feet and your hands are not essential" (*THT*, p. 102). Again, Aunt Lydia's words reiterate the importance of the handmaids' inside bodies. Feet and hands are not essential, wombs are.

Another form of physical violence is practiced by the Eyes, who represent the secret police in the novel, against one of Gileadean people. Offred recounts:

> They grab a man who is walking along….an *ordinary*-looking man; *slam* him back against the black side of the van. He's there a moment, splayed out against the metal as if stuck to it; then one of the Eyes moves in on him, does something sharp and brutal that doubles him over, into a limp cloth bundle. They pick him up and *heave* him into the back of the van like a sack of mail. Then they are also inside and the doors are closed and the van moves on. It's over, in seconds, and the traffic on the street resumes *as if nothing has happened. What I feel is relief.* It wasn't me. (*THT*, p. 179, my emphasis)

The violent acts recounted in the above quote summarise the extent to which violence is employed in Gilead to subjugate others. The use of the adjective 'ordinary' clarifies that the victim is not a political opponent to the regime, which emphasises that violence in Gilead has no limits and is rationalised to achieve other purposes. The verbs 'slam' and 'heave' also clarify the amount of brutality used against the victim. Again, resuming the traffic on the street immediately after the accident demonstrates the state of helplessness, passivity and submission people in Gilead reach. This helplessness is also emphasised by Offred's words: "What I feel is relief." All that Offred cares about is the only fact that she is not in place of the victim. It is the feeling of despair and subjugation dictator systems seek to create among the masses in order to guarantee their silence. The following table displays the words that carry literal and/or associative meanings of violence and their frequencies.

Table 9. Words that carry literal/associative meanings of violence

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
cry	30	frightened	4
blood	24	punished	3
scream	20	shooting	2
kill	16	cruel	2
hurt	11	crushed	1
fear	11	punishable	1
shot	8	execute	1
shoot	7	torture	1
destroyed	7	slam	1
attack	5	execution	1
brutal	5	punishment	1

As clarified in Table 9, the meaning of violence is expressed in the discourse of <u>The Handmaid's Tale</u> with high frequency words, such as 'cry, blood', 'scream', 'kill' and 'hurt'; and low frequency words, such as 'shot', 'destroyed', 'attack', 'brutal', etc. The table also shows that violence is literally and associatively conveyed on the different levels of the word: nouns (blood, brutality, torture, execution); verbs (scream, kill, shoot, shot, slam, punished, attack, hurt, destroyed, crushed); and adjectives (brutal, punishable). This shows how language is distorted in Gilead, and also indicates that it is not only the physical dimension of power that operates in maintaining political myths, but also its rhetorical dimension has been marked as highly indicative to propagate them.

A further form of violence is practiced psychologically, and manifests itself in the representation of the 'Wall', where people are hanged and executed for violating Gilead's rules. The wall is a symbol of torture and fear the Gileadean regime is concerned to keep. Offred describes the manner through which people are executed on the wall: "What they are hanging from is hooks… the hooks look like appliances for the armless," (*THT*, p. 42) and, she maintains: "On the Wall hang the three women from this morning… Their arms have been untied and are stiff and proper at their sides" (*THT*, p. 295). She, out of extreme fear, concludes: "I don't want to be a doll hung up on the Wall" (*THT*, p. 298). These psychological disturbances and terrifying feelings are always there, even if the wall is empty. Offred reports: "Somehow the Wall is even more foreboding when it's empty like this…. But vacant, it is also potential, like a storm approaching" (*THT*, p. 174). Offred's statement: "They don't leave the bodies hanging as long in summer as they do in winter, because of the flies and the smell" (*THT*, p. 174) highlights the malicious treatment that Gilead's regime practices against the public. They exceed the limits of brutality not only by hanging the executed bodies on the wall, but also by leaving them for a long time after their death.

Indicatively, the capitalised word 'Wall' is mentioned in the novel with frequency of 23 occurrences. This recurrent use of the word, given that it is the place where disobedient and rebellious are hanged and executed, emphasises the psychological violence the handmaids face under Gilead. Violence, whether consummated physically or psychologically, restricts the freedom of recipients and forces them to adopt only one choice that serves the objectives of dominant elites. Crucially, the different violent acts, including bombarding, killing and torturing, which are committed against innocents in different parts of the world, are clear examples of the extent to which violence is mobilised to oppress under the guise of the *good-of-the-nation*.

6. Results and Discussion

The foregoing analysis reveals the employment of more than one level of analysis in the investigation of linguistic manipulation in Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale: lexical, pragmatic, grammatical and morphological. On the lexical level, four PDA strategies are used to reproduce the *good-of-the-nation* myth in the novel as is shown in the following table.

Table 10. Lexical strategies and their linguistic realisations

Level of analysis	PDA strategy	Linguistic realisations
Lexical	Lexical choices	Promises
		Repetition
	Legitimising the forbidden	Bargaining
		Justification
	Mollifying the present and vilifying the past	Euphemism
		Dysphemism
	Religionisation	Slogans

Table 10 reveals that the *good-of-the-nation* myth is lexically presented in the discourse of the novel through lexical choices, legitimising the forbidden, mollifying the present and vilifying the past, and religionisation. These PDA strategies are linguistically realised by a skillful use of lexis, represented in the form of repetition, promise-laden messages, shortened slogans, euphemised and dysphemised expressions, justifiable acts, and bargaining. This level of analysis sheds light on the importance of lexis in propagating the *good-of-the-nation* myth.

Significantly, the lexical level of analysis adopted in this paper answers Fairclough's (1989, p. 110) two questions concerning the use of lexis in discourse: "what experiential values do words have?" and "what relational values do words have?". The answer of the first question manifests itself in the use of some words that are "ideologically contested" (ibid., p. 110); that is, words skillfully selected to generate and maintain specific ideologies in texts. Examples of words carrying experiential values, which are used in the analysis of this paper, are: harmony, family, affection (see Subsection 5.1 above); destinies, protected (see Subsection 5.3 above); freedom (see Subsection 5.5 above); and Wall (see Subsection 5.7 above). Further, Fairclough's second question is linguistically answered by means of using words that communicate relational values. Among these words are: ordinary and beautiful, which are marked as indicative in political myth discourse through the dexterous use of euphemism (see Subsection 5.4 above).

Pragmatically, the *good-of-the-nation* myth is proliferated both verbally and nonverbally. Consider the following table.

Table 11. Pragmatic strategies and their linguistic realisations

Level of analysis	PDA strategy	Linguistic realisations
Pragmatic	Didactic indoctrination	Bald on-record strategies (imperatives)
	Religionisation	Intertextuality
	Nonverbal strategy	Violence

As demonstrated in Table 11, the pragmatic dimension is used verbally, through didactic indoctrination and religionisation; and nonverbally, via the use of violence. The bald on-record strategies, which are linguistically realised through the use of positive and negative imperatives, are mobilised to indoctrinate the handmaids towards complete submission to Gilead's foundations. The table also shows that intertextuality, a term firstly introduced by Julia Kristeva (1980) is employed to religionise the discourse of political myth in the novel. This is realised by employing some scriptural quotes from religious sources that are used as intertexts in the discourse of political myth in the novel, which is also manifested by associating certain discursive practices to the Bible. This intertextual relationship between Atwood's novel and the Bible is supported by Kristeva's (1980, p. 66) argument that "any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another," and is also confirmed by Hutchean (1989, p. 7) who points out that "it is only through prior discourses that any text derives meaning and significance." The table further reflects the use of violence to reinforce the *good-of-the-nation* myth nonverbally, which, in turn, emphasises the importance of the verbal and the nonverbal dimensions in linguistic analysis.

In terms of the grammatical level of analysis, the analysis of data has shown the effectiveness of some grammatical aspects in the production of the *good-of-the-nation* myth as is displayed in the following table.

Table 12. Grammatical strategies and their linguistic realisations

Level of analysis	PDA strategy	Linguistic realisations
Grammatical	Didactic indoctrination	Agency (the inclusive first-person plural 'we' & the second-person pronoun 'you')
	Mollifying the present and	Modality (the truth modal 'will')
	vilifying the past	Tense (The simple past tense)
	Dehumanisation	Voice (the present progressive passive)

Table 12 clarifies that the *good-of-the-nation* myth is represented in three PDA strategies: didactic indoctrination, mollifying the present and vilifying the past, and dehumanisation. These strategies are linguistically realised, on the grammatical level, by means of the use of agency (pronouns 'we, you'), modality (the truth modal 'will'), tense (the simple past tense), and voice (the present progressive passive). Crucially, using agency, modality, tense and voice, for Fairclough (1989), is closely related to notions of power and domination, which are relevant to the study of manipulation in political discourse.

As for the morphological level of analysis, it is manifested in the process of dehumanisation, which is practiced against women in the discourse of the novel. Consider the following table.

Table 13. Morphological strategies and their linguistic realisations

Level of analysis	PDA strategy	Linguistic realisations
Morphological	Dehumanisation	Prefixation (the prefix 'un')

Table 13 highlights the use of prefixation as a morphological device to reinforce the *good-of-the-nation* myth. The prefix 'Un' is attached to two words in the discourse of the novel: 'Unwoman' and 'Unbabies'. The use of the prefix 'un' in the two indicated words, however morphologically unfamiliar, is highly indicative in exposing the extent to which language is prejudicially distorted for manipulative and political purposes.

The analysis of the selected data also demonstrates that this paper comes to terms with some previous studies but it shows conflict with others in certain points. First, within the framework of politics, mythmaking, unlike Spinoza's (1951) claims, is not always attached to the notion of creating social hope for people, which aims to strengthen the process of democracy within societies. However, as is stated in the analysis of data, political systems employ political myths in general, and the *good-of-the-nation* myth in particular, to hide facts, and to find excuses for their callous activities (see Section 3 above). Furthermore, political myths are not desperate means, as is argued by Cassirer (1973), which are utilised to face a situation of deep crisis when other means are not available. However, they are vigorous ploys in the hands of powerful politicians that are intentionally employed to achieve domination and control over the powerless.

Second, Sorel's (1975) related political myth to the notion of proletarian struggle focusing on its political dimension and separating it from religion. This paper, on the contrary, clarifies the effective role of religion in propagating political myth. The *good-of-the-nation* myth shares a communicative channel with religion, particularly under theocratic regimes. The same holds true for Hafez's (1995) and Jic's (2011); that is, despite the fact that this paper reconciles with these two studies (i.e., Hafez's and Jic's) in demonstrating the linguistic manipulation through which language is abused to dominate the public, this paper highlights the intertextual use of religion, which is completely neglected in the aforementioned two studies, as a PDA tool in the discourse of political myths (see Subsection 5.6 above).

Third, the *good-of-the-nation* myth, discussed in this paper, encapsulates Edelman's (qtd. in Charteris-Black, 2005) classification of political myth (see Section 3 above). Edelman's three types of political myth: the *Conspiratorial Enemy* myth, the *Valiant Leader* myth, and the *United We Stand* myth can be traced within the scope of the *good-of-the-nation* myth in this paper. In the case of The Handmaid's Tale, there are three pillars that constitute the whole process of the *good-of-the-nation* myth: first, the problem of infertility, which threatens the country due to the low rates of productivity (*the conspiratorial enemy* myth); second, the Commanders' desires, which must be fulfilled in order to guarantee their continuation in power (*the valiant leader* myth); and third, the handmaids whose social, religious and sexual efforts should be united towards one goal that serves the good of Gilead (*the united we* myth). As such, the *good-of-the-nation* myth can be considered to be an augmentation of Edelman's types of political myth.

Fourth, and last, this paper agrees with Asyas's (2013) concept of intentionality beyond political myths. Obviously, all political myths, including the one addressed in this paper, ought to be intentional (see Barthes, 1972). That is because notions of dominance and control are often associated with intentionality in political discourse. The absence of intention in political myths diminishes its manipulative dimension and supports its persuasive nature. The concept of persuasion beyond political myth, which is also advocated in David's (2014) study, makes myth-making useless in the production of dominance and control. Consequently, the discourse of political myth, in the light of this paper, is an intentionally manipulation-oriented type of discourse that addresses concepts of power, domination and control, the main themes of dystopian fiction.

7. Conclusion

This paper discusses the linguistic manipulation of political myth in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale by using political discourse analysis. It shows that through the dystopia, Atwood is critiquing the manipulative use of language against women. Therefore, through presenting the abuse that women suffer, she is simultaneously saying something about politics now. The linguistic analysis of the novel, then, accentuates the connection between the fictional incidents of the novel and the real practices of present politics, by emphasising the effective role of language as a means of attitude change, and the important role of political myths in contemporary societies as a means of manipulation. Under dictatorial regimes, political myths serve to be ideological frames for the subjugation of people. They are used to manipulate rather than to illuminate.

As demonstrated in the analysis of the selected data, the discourse of the selected novel witnesses the employment of some verbal and nonverbal PDA strategies to propagate the *good-of-the-nation* myth. This paper clarifies that the discourse of political myth is systematised to affect attitudes and re/direct behavior. Linguistically, the analysis highlights the integration of the lexical, pragmatic, grammatical and morphological levels of analysis in representing the *good-of-the-nation* myth. Lexically, this myth is represented by means of using some words and phrases that are ideologically selected and manipulatively represented through euphemism, promises, repetition, bargaining and justification. Pragmatically, the analysis demonstrates the use of the bald on-record strategies for the didactic indoctrination of the handmaids; and the employment of intertextuality to religionise some aspects of political myth in the novel. Also, violence is highlighted as an effective nonverbal tactic in maintaining political myths. On the grammatical level, the use of agency via the employment of specific pronouns, such as the inclusive 'we' and the second-person pronoun 'you', the use of the truth modality, together with the specific use of the past and the progressive tenses are highlighted as indicative in reproducing the discourse of political myth in Atwood's novel. Prefixation is also marked as an indicative morphologically-based device in the discourse of political myth in the selected novel.

For future research, this paper suggests the use of the same political discourse analysis approach to address the same theme of political myth in another conversational genre, with the purpose of exposing the fundamental differences between the linguistic strategies used in a narrative text (as is done in this paper) and those that could be used in a conversational one to communicate the same meanings. Actually, this could contribute in highlighting different analytical frameworks for the analysis of political themes in both conversational and narrative genres.

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