

# EMPOWERING THE SUBALTERNS: MARGARET ATWOOD'S QUEST FOR HISTORICAL VOICES IN *THE TESTAMENT*

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**Published:** 10 December 2024

**To cite this article (APA):** Shabrang, H. (2024). Empowering the Subalterns: Margaret Atwood's Quest for Historical Voices in The Testament. *AJELP: Asian Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, 12(2), 166–176. <https://doi.org/10.37134/ajelp.vol12.2.12.2024>

**Abstract:** This article explores *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood in light of Spivak's postcolonial perspective based on her article "Can the Subalterns Speak?" such as "widow sacrifice" and "epistemic violence" to scrutinize the situation of the subaltern women in Gilead. What Atwood portrays in her novel mainly revolves around voiceless women who are silenced by the hegemony. First, it attempts to shed light on how the government of Gilead managed to keep subaltern women voiceless. Afterward, it highlights the potential benefits for a First World country like Canada in advocating the voices of marginalized Gileadeans, while also exploring the significance of amplifying those voices that may endure in history. Finally, it intends to show how Atwood managed to be the voice of the subaltern women by having formed her novel through gathering three narratives to tell their accounts of the story, in addition to an account that will be produced by future intellectuals on Gilead. It can be suggested that Atwood challenges the conventional process of shaping history through the dominant voices in power, exemplified by characters like Aunt Lydia and the Canadians, by including the perspectives of Agnes and Daisy in her novel.

**Keywords:** double marginalized, epistemic violence, postcolonial, spivak, subaltern

## INTRODUCTION

In her novel *The Testaments* (2019) Margaret Atwood portrays a society where men pave their ways toward absolute power by taking away the voices of women. Atwood pictures how women can be degraded to minorities solely used for reproduction by patriarchy when they lose their voice and how the First World tries to be their voice totally based on their perspective oblivious of the fact that silenced women need a platform to tell the world what they want.

Making women voiceless is the only functioning way to rule them over which is possible when women are kept illiterate, uneducated, and financially dependent on men to be supported. Consequently, women are defined and narrated through the male point of view since they are the ones who can practice ultimate power when women are silenced. On the other hand, there is a counter movement to patriarchy which speaks for silenced women without having provided them with a chance to speak up to say what they want. These deprivations lead the way for these women to be judged on a global level. These deprivations will put them collectively in

groups with specific needs even though they are not given a chance to tell the world who they are and what they want. So, when they have no voice, other people feel entitled to speak for them. On the one hand, the patriarchy silences women by depriving them of their basic rights; on the other hand, counter movements collectively speak for these women without knowing what they really demand.

The Gileadean regime makes women submissive to their ideologies through the divisions they make based on religion and gender. In a country such as Gilead the commanders follow a patriarchal system that is based on religion. In fact, religion is deployed by the government to fulfil the regime's patriarchal and ideological agendas. What the system does first is to include women into ethnic categories. These groups hold women in collective boxes from which they cannot escape. To make sure that women find no way out of their assigned group they use religion to justify what they are imposing on women or better say on society. Patriarchy and religion – shoulder to shoulder – hold women down to submit.

First world country sees Gileadean subalterns collectively. For instance, Canadian people like Daisy's teacher assume that taking part in the protests against the regime of Gilead is what saves Gileadeans. It might be, but it is never for sure the truth since the subalterns have never had a voice to speak up. According to Daisy, people who attend protests to protect Baby Nichole never consider how voiceless Baby Nicole and subalterns are and they are being politically used without having been given a voice. They collectively assume that Gileadeans must want the same things as Canadians assume they want. None of the subaltern women of Gilead were given the chance to speak up to tell people of the world what they needed.

Atwood utilized three different narrators with diverse backgrounds, alongside the chapter titled "The Thirteen Symposium," in order to amplify multiple perspectives and voices. Aunt Lydia, as a prominent figure within the regime, had the privilege of sharing her account and contributing to the recorded history. On the other hand, Agnes and Daisy, as marginalized individuals, had their voices omitted from historical accounts and were unlikely to be remembered. The final chapter illuminates how history is shaped by those who hold power and possess the ability to narrate events from their own point of view. Unlike the Gileadean studies intellectuals who fail to reflect or acknowledge subaltern voices like Agnes or Daisy, Aunt Lydia's narrative remains as a source for future generations. These dominant narratives construct history, with Aunt Lydia's perspectives serving as a significant influence. However, Atwood takes a stance against this exclusive approach to history-making through literature. She employs three distinct voices and incorporates reflections from the future to underscore the importance of a diverse range of perspectives, including those marginalized voices that contribute to knowledge production.

This article acknowledges that Margaret Atwood skillfully reveals the oppressive nature of the Gileadean regime by showcasing the role of religion and patriarchy in subjugating women. Through the voices of Aunt Lydia, Agnes, and Daisy, Atwood highlights the marginalized perspectives that are often overlooked in the construction of history. While Aunt Lydia's narrative holds power and influence, it is crucial to recognize the absence of subaltern voices like Agnes and Daisy, who have been denied the opportunity to express their needs and desires. Atwood challenges this exclusive approach to history-making by emphasizing the significance of diverse perspectives. By amplifying multiple voices and shedding light on the experiences of the marginalized, Atwood calls for a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of society.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In “others, Daughters, Sisters: The Intergenerational Transmission of Womanhood in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *The Testaments*” Kołodziejuk looks at *how The Handmaid’s Tale* and *The Testaments* are a response to changes in the feminist movement. The daughters of second-wave feminists often stopped trying to achieve equality by choosing to be a housewife instead. But in the 1990s, there was a big return of the women's liberation movement called the third wave. These feminisms changed how we think about what it means to be a woman by showing that women are all different. This study of *The Handmaid’s Tale* looks at how Offred is connected to her mother. It also looks at how the mother and her friends influenced the motherly actions of the Handmaid and talks about the difficult experiences that Offred had to go through to protect her child.

In “*The Dystopian Testimony in Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale and The Testaments*” by Heggen looks at how the two books talk about women telling their stories. The article talks about how *The Handmaid’s Tale* can be seen as an allegory because it compares Offred’s story to the experiences of slaves in the 1800s. It has also been said that *The Testaments* looks at the theme of women giving their accounts by telling the story through three different characters with diverse experiences and backgrounds. This research uses the word “herstory” instead of “history” to show history from a feminist point of view and to focus on the roles of women or stories told from a woman's perspective.

Labudova in “Testimonies in *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood: Images of Food in Gilead” talked about how Atwood's book takes readers deeper into the bad world of Gilead, especially through the descriptions of food. The strict male-led Gilead government wants to treat women like they are not important. The women in the novel are afraid of Gilead because they are treated very badly and don't have enough food to eat. This article looks at how Atwood uses personal stories in a distorted world and compares them to food to create a new literary style.

Gheorghiu tried in “Rewriting Politics, or the Emerging Fourth Wave of Feminism in Margaret Atwood’s *The Testaments*” to study how *The Testaments* (2019) changed politics. The idea that personal experiences are connected to politics was a motto of feminists in the 1960s, and it's still well-known today. This study aims to show that *The Testaments*, a book by Atwood, could be seen as a declaration of a new type of feminism in literature.

“Testimonies of Trauma: Shattered Characters in Margaret Atwood’s *The Testaments*” by Eerika Lukkarinen studies shattered Characters in Margaret Atwood’s *The Testaments* aims to study how Margaret Atwood shows injury in her book *The Testaments* (2019). This study will examine the injuries and broken personalities of the three heroes, both individually and as a group. In addition, *The Testaments* is seen as a feminist novel by looking at its portrayal of social class. To explain a broad plan for the idea used, we will discuss injury theory and literature, as well as the characteristics of injury fiction. Finally, the study looks at how personality and injury affect each other and introduces the concept of collective and social trauma. This proposal says that the heroes in *The Testaments* can handle their injuries and reactions, and that these experiences have lasting effects on them. The book *The Testaments* tells three different stories of people who have been hurt. Each story is about someone of a different age and a different type of injury.

Sumerau wrote a review about *The Testaments*, where he studied the oppressive and male-dominated government of Gilead. He explains how this government is shown differently through the female characters in the story. Sumerau says that younger people in the book see Gilead in different ways. One person thinks it's normal and good, while the other person thinks it's bad and should be fought against. He believes that the book shows how people understand society based on their own social backgrounds, like their gender and age, within that society.

So, where characters live and their gender affect how they see the world. The articles mentioned above talk about how Gilead controls everything.

Raluca Moldovan wrote an article in 2020 that explains how the city is changed to match the needs of Gilead in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments*. Moldovan discusses this on page 106. The article talks about how Atwood uses space and creates a fictional world for her characters to live in. Atwood calls this type of world "ustopia", which is a mix of utopia and dystopia.

Karla-Claudia Csürös notes in "Margaret Atwood's Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* as a Dystopian Fairy Tale as a Dystopian Fairy Tale" that Margaret Atwood shows how fairy tales are controlled by men by rewriting them with a feminist perspective and showing how men and women are treated differently. Traditional fairy tale elements are used in the Gileadean society to make women fit into certain roles, and at the same time, old story patterns and character types are twisted and made fun of in a clever way. The book uses fairy tale characters and stories to show how society can be harmful to women. It changes these fairy tales to show that they promote negative ideas about women.

*The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments: A Rhetorical Character Analysis*" by Ballarin examine both *The Handmaid's Tale* and its sequel, *The Testaments* using James Phelan's rhetorical theory, focusing on how the characters are portrayed in terms of how realistic they seem, what ideas they represent, and how they are created in the story. To understand Phelan's approach better, the researcher talks about how ideas about characters have changed over time.

Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments: Sequel as Feminist Revision of the Handmaid's Tale?*" by Vuković showed how women could lose their rights easily when many people didn't do anything to stop it. In her next book *The Testaments* (2019), Atwood continues to talk about the struggle against the controlling male-dominated government in *The Handmaid's Tale*. She shows how the female main characters are fighting for their freedom and the power to control their own lives. *The Testaments* is a book with lots of exciting events, while *The Handmaid's Tale* is about the life of a woman who lived in a society that allowed Gilead, the oppressive government described in the book, to take over.

In "A Kristevan Reading of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments*", by Shahad Ahmed Haseeb, the researcher mentioned that Gilead and the time after Gilead treated women badly because of government and religious reasons. A way of looking at Atwood's novels from the perspective of Kristeva's ideas will show how important it is for the women characters to face rejection in order to become their own person. When feeling disgusted, the characters ignore the rules and focus on their own feelings using signs and symbols. This study will talk about how symbols and signs are used, and how they show the theme of women being oppressed and empowered. Finally, this study talks about how these two books are related using Kristeva's ideas about intertextuality. *The Testaments* has different parts and scenes that are similar to *The Handmaid's Tale*. The story, where it takes place, some of the same characters from the last book, and even the ending of Atwood's new book connects to her old one. In conclusion, the study finds that the main characters in these dystopian novels try to fight against the overwhelming social rejection in Gilead society, which is dominated by men. This can be better understood using Kristeva's theory.

## Method

### Corpus

The corpus of the present study includes Atwood's novel, *the testaments*, published by McClelland & Stewart in Canada on September 2019. The novel grabbed a great deal of attention worldwide and brought credit for its author. The Testaments was a joint winner of the 2019 Booker Prize, alongside Bernardine Evaristo's novel *Girl, Woman, Other*. It was also voted 'Best Fiction' novel in the Goodreads Choice Awards 2019, winning by over 50,000 votes. In 1988 Spivak wrote an essay called "Can the Subaltern Speak?" which echoes her main postcolonial notions. The focus of the essay is on voiceless people, particularly women, and if they can be heard. The novel is chosen as Atwood's use of multiple narrators in *the testaments* highlights the necessity of including marginalized voices in historical narratives, challenging the dominance of those in power and advocating for a more inclusive understanding of the world. Atwood employs three different narrators and the chapter titled "The Thirteen Symposium" to amplify various voices. Atwood highlights how Aunt Lydia, as an elite figure, is given the opportunity to record her account and influence future generations, while the voices of subaltern women like Agnes and Daisy are disregarded and silenced. Atwood challenges the dominant narrative constructed by the powerful by advocating for a more inclusive understanding of the world. By incorporating a variety of voices, including those of the subalterns, she encourages future generations to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective on history.

### Theoretical Background

In 1988 Spivak wrote an essay called "Can the Subaltern Speak?" which echoes her main postcolonial notions. The focus of the essay is on voiceless people, particularly women, and if they can be heard. To make her point, she combines ideas from Marxism, feminism, and deconstruction which enables her to make a connection between class, gender, and race. It can be mentioned that she believes how these items can effectively and ideologically create minorities who "in the contest of colonial production [have] no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 41). In her view subalterns are voiceless people who cannot speak or be heard since they are separated by race, gender, class or even religion. At first, she analyzes Deleuze and Foucault's notions and criticizes them for ignoring the fact that what they tend to produce as knowledge which is totally Eurocentric eliminates the voice of the subalterns. She believes that these thinkers have "desire for subjectivity" which is accompanied with power, "[a]n undifferentiated desire is the agent, and power slips in to create the effects of desire" (Spivak 26). This according to Spivak can put in motion a process called "epistemic violence" which subalterns have always been exposed to on the side of scholars or colonizers. This kind of violence "inflicted through thought, speech, and writing rather than actual physical harm" (Riach 11). According to Spivak one of the consequences of epistemic violence is that the voice of subalterns – specifically subaltern women – gets lost in the account of history since they cannot speak or be heard. This is all due to discourse and system of knowledge "that support a particular ideology" (Spivak 27) which is imposed on subalterns from the colonizer.

She criticizes Western scholars as well as patriarchs who silence women one way or another. She asserts that one of the most important reasons that does not let the subalterns speak or be heard is the fact that more privileged people always speak for them in society. She argues that scholarship, especially the Western one "always misrepresents so-called 'Third World' peoples [...] and shows why subaltern women are double marginalized" (11). First, they are

colonized as a person and second, they are colonized as a woman. In her essay “Can the Subalterns Speak?” Spivak refers to an Indian tradition known as “widow sacrifice” or “*sati*” according to which “[t]he Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it” (49) which was banned by British colonizers implying that “white men are saving brown women from brown men” (50). Spivak points out that this is all to homogenize the other which is the colonized here. Consequently, considering all people from the Third world can pave the way toward colonialism, logocentrism, and the fact that the subalterns cannot speak for themselves, and they depend on the Western scholars to speak for them. Finally, she refers to the truth of the suicide of Bhubaneswari which was differently narrated for the benefit of the family to highlight the fact that it would be similarly impossible to rewrite history in the Western framework. In conclusion, she asserts that subalterns cannot speak up or be heard when there are always colonizers to take their voice away one way or another.

## **Procedure**

In Margaret Atwood’s *The Testaments*, she chose multiple narratives, one of a woman in power, one of a subaltern girl who had no voice having grown up in Gilead, the other was an outsider of culture of Gilead who could give readers various perspectives over the events. From Spivak’s postcolonial perspective based on her article “Can the Subalterns Speak?” What Atwood portrays in her novel mainly revolves around voiceless women who are silenced by the system. Spivak’s postcolonial concepts such as “widow sacrifice” and “epistemic violence” analyze the situation of the subaltern women in Gilead. Atwood attempts to shed light on how the government of Gilead managed to keep subaltern women voiceless. Spivak mentions that the potential benefits for a First World country like Canada in advocating for the voices of marginalized Gileadeans, while also exploring the significance of amplifying those voices that may endure in history. It is intended to show how Atwood managed to be the voice of the subaltern women by having formed her novel through gathering three narratives to tell their accounts of the story, in addition to an account that will be produced by future intellectuals on Gilead. It can be suggested that Atwood challenges the conventional process of shaping history through the dominant voices in power, exemplified by characters like Aunt Lydia and the Canadians, by including the perspectives of Agnes and Daisy in her novel.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Voiceless women who are silenced by religion**

Women are considered as Other in the patriarchal system of Gilead through religion. The first thing that one notices when reading the novel is how women are categorized into separate groups based on their so-called religion. The Commanders colonize women by having divided them into collective groups based on religion to adopt an ideology that gives them the opportunity to exercise unlimited power; this takes freedom away, “only boys could taste that freedom” (Atwood 33). To do that they create the community of Aunts to keep close tabs on the rest of the women. Aunt Lydia used to be a lawyer in her pre-Gilead life, and after the rise of Gilead when she was arrested along with her peers, she was forced to be part of an elite group stationed in Ardua Hall to control women and make sure that rules are followed accordingly. The Aunts in Gilead oversee groups of women as such: handmaids, fertile women who are assigned to Commanders for reproduction; Wives and daughters of Commanders; pearl girls, missionary girls who are on their way to become Aunts; Marthas, barren women who work as maids in Commanders’ houses. So, in Gilead women are collectively kept illiterate, jobless and voiceless, “it was a terrible, terrible place, where women couldn’t have

jobs or drive, and where the Handmaids were forced to get pregnant like cows” (Atwood 88). The patriarchal system including the Aunts and the Commanders are the only ones who speak for women. These factors according to Spivak make women subalterns from whom the chance to speak up is taken away, instead they are constantly narrated either by the patriarchy, the colonizer or the West and their scholars.

Handmaids, Wives, pearl girls, and Marthas are each ethicized thoroughly based on their gender. Handmaids are collectively in a group only because they can reproduce. Their reproduction power is what imprisoned them in their assigned category. Handmaids are the most disrespected group of all. They are hated by women, girls or even men. They are called “double sluts” (156). They are not allowed to be talked to or talk to others. Their only job which is assigned to them by Commanders is to circulate through Commanders’ houses to get pregnant by one of them. Marthas are women who have lost the ability to reproduce, which is why they are stuck as servants in the houses of Commanders. Wives are a little more dignified, but in reality, they are stuck in their role as obedient wives of the Commanders who are supposed to collectively perform their assigned role. Consequently, women are defined based on their gender, and their ability to reproduce is what includes them in a specific category. The division that is created because of patriarchy charged by religion deprives women of unity and leads them toward submission. So, each woman is included to a group that systematically silences that woman.

### **Epistemic Violence**

According to Spivak epistemic violence that can make subalterns voiceless on global and intellectual levels throughout history can occur partly due to the concept of widow sacrifice. This concept relates to an Indian tradition where women had to sacrifice their lives if they became widows in a symbolic ceremony. After India was colonized by the British this was announced illegal. Spivak believes that the British did that without considering what women had thought about this old tradition of theirs. This according to Spivak implied that ““White men are saving brown women from brown men’ - giving honorary whiteness to the colonial subject” (Atwood 49). So, by having honored the whiteness of the colonizers, the voice of the subaltern women – widows – are again silenced since they were never given a voice to speak up to tell the colonizers what they wanted, “[o]ne never encounters the testimony of the women’s voice consciousness” (Atwood 50). This can be well attributed to the situation of Baby Nicole, and women in Gilead.

Subalterns’ suffrage is only used by governments to circulate their political agendas. This is why Daisy’s teacher expect her to think like other Canadian people which collectivizes the existence of Gileadean women and children who have gotten accustomed to the way things are in Gilead since they know no other way. In conclusion, it can be suggested that Agnes and Nicole are right, no one is concerned with the fact that Baby Nicole who is just a baby is being used for the political agendas of both movements, and also people of the First World might never consider the fact that those who have grown up in Gilead according to the values of the system have also had good times despite the difficulty of life there. Despite all that might go on with subalterns in Gilead, Canada prefers to publicize the way they see Gileadeans along with what they must want instead of giving the subalterns a chance to speak up to tell the world what they might be after. So, Baby Nicole, subaltern women are both like the brown women that the British tried to save from brown men to honor their whiteness and freedom that have brought about for people of the world without considering what Baby Nichole and subaltern women actually say and need. Canada hosts different groups pro and against Gilead to empower the body of their knowledge which gives them a platform to impose their view of Gilead to the world without giving a platform to Gileadean subalterns to speak up. The

transparency of intellectual along with power and desire is what drives Canada to speak for the subalterns and not give them the opportunity they require to be heard. This as Spivak mentions can lead to epistemic violence on the side of Canada and its scholars. They try to support the freedom of Gileadean, but since they have never included the voice of the subalterns, they epistemically violate their right of existence. As history is written based on the view of those who have a voice, subalterns are eliminated from history since they were never given a platform to speak up and to be part of history.

Another example of epistemic violence can be found at the end of the novel. There is a part called “The Thirteen Symposium” that is dedicated to a lecture given by a professor in the year 2197 on Gilead. Based on this lecture the readers find out that Gilead will have been eradicated by then. The lecturer mentions that their organization, Gileadean studies, “has grown, and with good reason. We must continue to remind ourselves of the wrong turnings taken in the past, so we do not repeat them” (Atwood 792). Most of the documents that they have on Gilead are not reliable, but they keep theorizing different scenarios about what happened in Gilead. The point is having read the story of Gilead through the points of view of two subaltern narrators— Agnes and Daisy – as well as a non-subaltern narrator – Aunt Lydia – can give the readers a reliable account of the story. Indeed, Atwood amplifies the voice of subaltern women in Gilead by having used first-person narrators. In other words, Atwood deploys her book as a platform for voiceless women in Gilead to tell the readers their side of story unlike the Thirteen Symposium on Gileadean studies that is based on assumption since no voice of the subalterns survived except for Aunt Lydia's journal which was found and studied by next generations.

### **First World Shapes History**

Spivak in her essay “Can the Subalterns Speak?” mentions that the West only includes the Third World in their “resistance program of an alliance politics” (Spivak 43) only when those groups are “directly accessible to the First World.” This Spivak believes is thoroughly based on the “characteristic of much Third-Worldism in the U.S. human sciences today.” she states that the way to know the other passes through the “imperialist constitution of the colonial subject and the foreclosure of the figure of the ‘native informant’” (Spivak 46). It can be assumed that after the eradication of Gilead the voices of the subalterns did not find a way to survive except for Aunt Lydia’s whose account of the story of Gilead could survive to be used as a source for Gileadean studies. This process is like the constitutions located in the First World countries trying to understand the Third World countries through the native informants who are selectively chosen to speak for the subaltern. Since Aunt Lydia was in power back then, she had the opportunity to record her viewpoint on life in Gilead and make it accessible to scholars in the future. This makes her voice dominate to the voiceless women who did not ever have the chance to write their view on life in Gilead for future generations. From the Spivakian perspective, naturally, history is not filled with voices of subalterns since they have always been kept voiceless by both patriarchy and the First world intellectual, but rather history is packed with voices that had the power to speak up to survive throughout history.

Consequently, in the final part of the novel it is observable that only Aunt Lydia’s journal survived to be used as a Lense to the life in Gilead, while none of the future scholars shares Agnes and Daisy’s narrations since they had totally gotten lost in history due to the voicelessness of these characters. Additionally, this would be worst for those people who were illiterate in Gilead to have their voice heard, “[...] especially any concerning the lives of girls and women. It is hard for those deprived of literacy to leave such records” (803). Presumably, all the assumptions about Gilead will be made based on dominate voices such as Aunt Lydia’s. The novel ends with an inscription on a sculptor attributed to either Agnes or Daisy as follows:



In loving memory of Becka, aunt immortelle  
This memorial was erected by her sisters  
And their mother, their two fathers,  
Their children and their grandchildren  
And in recognition of the invaluable services provide  
By A.L.  
A bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which  
Hath wings shall  
Tell matter.  
Love is as strong as death. (812)

This piece is the only thing that is left of those girls that cannot provide future scholars with practical views on life in Gilead. From Spivak's perspective and based on the inscription, the bird of the air that is supposed to carry the voice should be patriarchally a dominate voice or the voice of a native elite chosen by the colonizer to be picked by the First World countries to define the Third World countries. The bird that carried mostly the voice of Aunt Lydia can establish the base of most of the knowledge that is produced on Gilead. For instance, the lecturer mentions that there are some Gilead-based activities designed for the attendees such as "Recreational Gilead Period Hymn Sing at the Church of Saint Jude, [...] Period Costume Re-enactment Day" and many other activities as well as TV shows that are formed based on the previous knowledge obtained from dominant voices in history.

The other point that can be referred to here is the tendency of these constitutions to commercialize such ideas to normalize accounts of history that are recorded by voices in power, not subalterns specifically subaltern women whose voice had gotten lost in history or whose voice never had a platform to be heard. Therefore, it can be highlighted that knowledge is power in the world and colonizers are naturally equipped with it. When they colonize people, relying on their capability to be the voice of the colonized, they record their version of events which leads to producing knowledge in their constitutions for the world. This is what future generations will remember about those colonized countries, not the voice of the subalterns. It can be assumed that history is filled with accounts that are produced and validated by colonizers. Naturally, accounts by subalterns such as Agnes and Daisy disappear, but those research papers and articles that are produced in the Gileadean studies will be what people of the world or even next generations hear about Gilead, most of these accounts by are based on voices in power such as Aunt Lydia's and the research papers that were produced by Gileadean studies constitutions.

This could be the reason why reading the novel including three narratives is more reliable than reading "The Thirteen Symposium" which gives a limited view on Gilead. Atwood chose multiple narratives, one of a woman in power, one of a subaltern girl who had no voice having grown up in Gilead, the other was an outsider of culture of Gilead who could give readers various perspectives over the events. What is left for next generations or constitutions to judge Third World countries are accounts like "The Thirteen Symposium" which is totally based on the voice of those in power like Aunt Lydia, but multiplicity of narrations and voices never survive since they never have the opportunity to speak up to be heard or recorded. This is what the post colonized world needs, more accounts of voiceless people, more platforms for those who do not have a voice, more records of accounts of stories from subalterns. The world needs to hear raw views on what is going on in Third World countries. Unfortunately, this does not happen since knowledge has always been a strong and powerful tool for First World countries.

That is why they never let raw accounts of history be recorded. They produce knowledge in a way that lets the world see accounts of Third World countries through their perspective. Colonizers and First World countries are equipped with constitutions to do research on Third

World countries only to produce the kind of knowledge that strengthen their power in the world. What the patriarchal system and the so-called elite society of Aunts seem to be eliminating is the fact that “the colonized subaltern *subject* is irretrievably heterogeneous” (Spivak 38). It can be assumed that what Atwood intended to do was to put all accounts together in a book to appreciate the heterogeneous voices that can lead to heterogeneous subalterns that the world needs to hear to form an idea about a culture, not just the one account which is given platform to. To move toward letting subalterns such as Agnes and Daisy speak, the world needs to follow what Atwood did in her book. Instead of producing knowledge as a means of power, the focus should be on transparency and heterogeneous subaltern subjects. Subaltern subjects such as Agnes and Daisy should be heard as much as louder voices such as of Aunt Lydia and constitutions on Gileadean studies.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in a country such as Gilead the commanders follow a patriarchal system that is based on religion. In fact, religion is deployed by the government to fulfil the regime’s patriarchal and ideological agendas. To make sure that women find no way out of their assigned group they use religion too to justify what they are imposing on women or better say on society. Patriarchy and religion – shoulder to shoulder – hold women down to submit. In other words, Gileadean regime makes women submissive to their ideologies through the divisions they make based on religion and gender. In case of lower rank women age and reproductivity is what separates them. In higher ranked women like Wives of the Commanders and their daughters’ religion and lack of education is what keeps them submissive to the regime. Canada plays a significant role in the novel as a destination for pearl girls and Gileadean refugees. As a first world country, Canada welcomes both supporters and opponents of the Gileadean regime, actively engaging in political movements related to Gilead. By providing shelter and support for these refugees, Canada not only takes on the risk associated with hosting these movements but also benefits from the labor force they provide.

Atwood challenges the dominant narrative constructed by the powerful by advocating for a more inclusive understanding of the world. By incorporating a variety of voices, including those of the subalterns, she encourages future generations to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective on history. The existing historical approach often excludes or speaks on behalf of marginalized individuals, making it difficult to discern whether they are truly speaking up or being spoken for. Atwood's emphasis on diverse voices emphasizes the need for a knowledge production constitution that represents and reflects the experiences of all individuals, creating a more equitable and holistic understanding of history. There is a necessity of including marginalized voices in historical narratives, challenging the dominance of those in power and advocating for a more inclusive understanding of the world.

توانبخشی فرودستان: جستجوی مارگارت آتوود برای یافتن صداهای  
تاریخی در رمان *وصایا*

چکیده:

این مقاله با هدف تحلیل رمان *وصایا* اثر مارگارت آتوود از منظر دیدگاه پسااستعماری اسپیوک بر اساس مقاله اش "آیا فرودستان می توانند سخن بگویند؟" می پردازد. آنچه آتوود در رمان خود به تصویر می کشد به طور عمده حول زنانی بی صدا می چرخد که توسط سیستم صامت شده اند. این مقاله با استناد به مفاهیم پسااستعماری اسپیوک نظیر

"فدیه بر بیوه ها" و "خشونت معرفتی" به تجزیه و تحلیل وضعیت زنان فرودست در گلیاد به می پردازد. در ابتدا، سعی می کند روش دولت گلیاد برای حفظ صامت نگه داشتن زنان فرودست را روشن کند. سپس، قصد دارد به منفعتهای احتمالی برای یک کشور جهان اول مانند کانادا در حمایت از صداهای به حاشیه رانده شده مردم گلیاد بپردازد، همچنین اهمیت برجسته سازی آن صداها که ممکن است در تاریخ ماندگار شوند را مورد بررسی قرار می دهد. در نهایت، قصد این مقاله نشان دادن این مطلب است که چگونه آتوود موفق شده از طریق جمع آوری دیدگاههای سه راوی مختلف برای گفتن داستان هایش، و همچنین بر اساس آن نقل قول هایی که در آینده توسط متفکران در مورد گلیاد تولید خواهد شد به گونه ای صدای زنان فرودست باشد. می توان گفت که آتوود با به تصویر کشیدن نظرات شخصیتهای زن داستان مانند آگنس و دیزی در تقابل با دیگر شخصیتها مانند عمه لیدیا و کانادایی ها، روند سنتی شکل دادن به تاریخ از طریق صداهایی که در قدرت هستن را به چالش می کشد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** اسپیک، خشونت معرفتی، پسااستعماری، فرودست و دوباربه حاشیه رانده شده.

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