Overtones Ege Journal of English Studies

Vol. 5 (2026)

Research Article

Citation: Akı, Ercan Tugay. "A Psychoanalytic Reading of *The Handmaid's Tale*: Playing Scrabble, Reading, and Writing as Phantasying in Freudian Terms." *Overtones Ege Journal of English Studies* 5 (2026): 11-7.
Received: 10 September 2025
Accepted: 1 December 2025
Corresponding Author: Ercan Tugay Akı, Department of English Language and Literature, Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara University, Türkiye.
ORCID: 0000-0001-7161-6097

A Psychoanalytic Reading of *The Handmaid's Tale*: Playing Scrabble, Reading, and Writing as Phantasying in Freudian Terms

Ercan Tugay Akı

Abstract: Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* represents the struggle of women physically and mentally imprisoned in a phallogocentric and totalitarian state called the Republic of Gilead. Even though the novel has been subjected to many readings from various vantage points, no study has so far offered a thorough psychoanalytic analysis of the novel from a Freudian perspective which focuses on the activities carried out by Offred and the Commander in the Commander's study. This article analyses Atwood's novel within a psychoanalytic context by incorporating such concepts as phantasy, pleasure principle, and defence mechanism from Freudian terminology. It specifically focuses on the time that Offred and the Commander spends in the Commander's study in private, where they read, write, and play games together, and argues that these activities function as phantasying and that Offred and the Commander create a space of phantasy together in private in Freudian terms.

Keywords: Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, phantasying, space, pleasure principle, defence mechanism, Freud, psychoanalysis

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was published in 1985, represents the struggle of women in the patriarchal, fundamentalist, and totalitarian state called the Republic of Gilead, a regime that denies women authenticity and agency. The novel has lent itself to various readings and interpretations in poststructuralist, feminist, and psychoanalytic studies. Whereas Sarah R. Morrison makes a comparison between Atwood's novel and Susan Fromberg Schaeffer's *The Madness of a Seduced Woman* in terms of their exploration of the "connection between romance and the mother-daughter bond through a playful engagement with the conventions of women's romantic fiction" (317), Deborah A. Thomas argues that *The Handmaid's Tale* echoes Dickens' *Hard Times* regarding its take on "imagination and love" (90). While Mario Klarer, from a Derridean vantage point, suggests that the novel "problematize[s]" textuality with its emphasis of "the motif of orality" (140), Dorota Filipczak puts

This article is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

*Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)

forward that "Atwood's vision of the Bible-centred society addresses the patriarchal abuse embedded in the biblical texts" (183). Corina Mariana Mitrulescu offers a reading of the novel which is a synthesis of Foucauldian and Mulveyan perspectives and maintains that "we can reframe the narrative not simply as a feminist allegory of resistance, but as an exploration of how oppression operates" (64). Lisa Buchegger scrutinises the colour symbolism with a particular focus on the colour of red as well as its function in the story in terms of the categorisation of women in Gilead and demonstrates that "there is a direct link between the colour red and the subject of female denunciation and shame" in the novel (22). E. Feldman-Kołodziejuk provides a rereading of *The Handmaid's Tale* with a particular focus on the character of Aunt Lydia "through the lens of her undercover identity, revealed in *The Testaments*" (87) to argue that some of her activities in the story may be viewed as "subversive" (99). One of the few psychoanalytic readings of the novel belongs to Sayed Razak Amin Shah and Muhammad Hassan Khoso, who explore the workings of Offred's mind and argue that Offred employs defence mechanisms in an effort to cope with the insufferable "reality of her life" (121). Although there are various analyses of the novel from different perspectives, including psychoanalytic, no critic has so far provided a thorough psychoanalytic reading of the novel in terms of phantasy in Freudian terms. This article, accordingly, from the vantage point of psychoanalysis, will argue that in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* playing, reading, and writing function as phantasying in Freudian terms for Offred and the Commander. In the context of carrying out such a psychoanalytic reading of the novel with a particular focus on the time that Offred and the Commander spend together by playing games, reading, and writing in private in the Commander's study, the article borrows such concepts as phantasy, pleasure principle, and defence mechanism from Freudian terminology.

Before venturing into the analysis of the novel, the Freudian concepts around which the article's analysis is structured should be briefly discussed for the sake of clarification. The "human mind", according to Freud, never really "give[s] up a pleasure" that it once "experience[s]" (1959, 145). It merely substitutes it with a supplement or a surrogate. The subject, to be more precise, always desires to escape her/his unhappy or unsatisfactory reality by inventing an alternative space where her/his unsatisfied wishes will be fulfilled. This invented space whereby the subject fulfils her/his wishes is called phantasy in Freudian terms. This process starts early in childhood with *playing* when the child "creates a world of his own, or, rather, rearranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him […] he takes his play very seriously and he expends large amounts of emotions on it. […] he likes to link his imagined objects and situations to the tangible and visible things of the real world" (143-4). As the subject grows up and becomes an adult, the child's play transforms into *phantasying*. The first difference between play and phantasy is that whereas the child sets up a connection between the play and the real world, phantasy is sharply differentiated from reality (144). The second one is that whereas the playing of the child occurs in public and requires no concealment, "the adult […] knows that he is expected not go on playing or phantasying any longer, but to act in the real world; […] he is ashamed of his phantasies […] as being unpermissible" (146). For Freud, furthermore, a happy person does not feel the urge to phantasise; only an unsatisfied one situated in an unsatisfactory reality desires it because phantasy is "the fulfilment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality" (146). The subject's resort to phantasying is strictly subordinated to the pleasure principle instead of the reality principle (1981, 222). Unlike the reality principle which bids the subject to act on the requirements forced upon her/him by the norms and laws of the external world, the pleasure principle, which is "kept free from reality-testing and […] dependence on real objects" (222), urges the subject to instinctively seek pleasure and avoid pain. Freud suggests that phantasying functions as the fulfilment of either "ambitious" or "erotic" wishes (1959, 147). Ambitious wishes allow the subject to elevate her/his personality whereas erotic ones enable the subject to satiate her/his sexual desires (147). Phantasying, whether ambitious or erotic or both, functions as a defence mechanism for the subject to cope with the unpleasant circumstances of her/his unsatisfactory reality. It is a form of wish fulfilment that is performed by the subject because it runs counter to the reality of the world in which the subject is situated.

In the middle of the story, the Commander invites Offred to his study to play a game of Scrabble with him at night. This is quite unusual in Gilead not only because playing games is prohibited but also because it is forbidden for the Handmaids to be alone with the Commanders under any circumstances because the Handmaids are nothing more than "two-legged wombs" and "ambulatory chalices" (*The Handmaid's Tale* 146). Offred is simultaneously shocked and amused to receive such an invitation from the Commander: "So that's what's in the forbidden room! Scrabble! I want to laugh, shriek with laughter, fall of my chair. This was once the game of old

women, old men […] to be played […] long long ago. […] Now it's forbidden, for us. Now it's dangerous. Now it's indecent. Now it's something he can't do with his Wife. Now it's desirable" (148-9). The game of Scrabble has significant psychoanalytic implications within the context of the novel because it, as the article shows, becomes a space of phantasy for both Offred and the Commander. According to Freud, child's play is replaced by phantasying that the adults enjoy in secret because playing or phantasying is not an appropriate behaviour for an adult, it is something to avoid in public in order to conform to the norms of the society—that is, unless it is produced as a work of art (1959, 145). Given their respective present circumstances, both Offred and the Commander are unhappy in their unsatisfactory reality in Gilead and both of them attempt to cope with this by escaping this very reality by means of creating a space of phantasy that is located beyond the strict boundaries of Gilead. It is not a place but a space in psychoanalytic terms because it is not appropriated within, in Lacanian terms, the Symbolic of Gilead; every act committed in the Commander's study means going against the norms and the laws of Gilead. Playing Scrabble is a fantasy and thus a wish fulfilment in Gilead in Freudian terms because it is something prohibited, something that contradicts the norms and laws of Gilead, and would have severe consequences for both Offred and the Commander if discovered: "My presence here is illegal. It's forbidden for us to be alone with the Commanders. We are for breeding purposes […]. There is supposed to be nothing entertaining about us, no room is to be permitted for the flowering of secret lusts" (146). What seems to be a harmless and simple game, therefore, is actually something to be ashamed of and something that they must enjoy in secret and keep hidden from others for their own sake. Playing a game of Scrabble in secret under such circumstances in Gilead shows that the pleasure principle is at work for both Offred and the Commander, who desperately yearn for gratification of their instinctive needs as well as for avoiding further suffering and pain.

According to Freud, a happy person does not feel the need to have fantasies; only an unsatisfied one yearns for it (1959, 145). Moreover, fantasy is a fulfilment of a wish, and this wish can have to do either with ambitions or sexual desires. In this case both Offred and the Commander play the game of Scrabble as an escape from the strict boundaries of Gilead and create themselves a space that is located beyond the boundaries of it. It goes without saying that this fantasy, in addition to ambitions, has everything to do with sexual desires because neither Offred nor the Commander are allowed to satiate those desires within the boundaries of Gilead. It is a wish fulfilment for them as they get intimate with each other and share some time together in private. The Commander gets to do the things that he is not allowed to do with his own wife, whereas Offred gets to experience, albeit illusory, a sense of freedom and a brief and limited return to the time before: "This is like being on a date. This is like sneaking into the dorm after hours. This is conspiracy" (149); "My tongue felt thick with the effort of spelling. It was like using a language I'd once known but had nearly forgotten, a language having to do with customs that had long before passed out of the world" (164). Offred resorts to phantasying because the phallogocentric ideology of Gilead makes sure that women are confined, isolated, and oppressed so that they can never break free of their chains. Indeed, the women are mentally and physically imprisoned in Gilead where "the famous Harvard Library has been turned into a giant torture chamber and […] an ordinary high school gym has been converted into a forced re-education institution in which fertile women are imprisoned and indoctrinated into the spirit of the new regime" (Moldovan 118). There are only six options/categories for women to submit to in Gilead: Wife, Martha, Handmaid, Aunt, Jezebel, and Unwoman. All of these categories reduce women's existence to a state of pragmatism/utilitarianism with no room for individuation or unique subject formation. You are either "a worthy vessel" (75) or else you do not exist at all within the boundaries of Gilead. Arranged marriage is the norm because one can no longer have a casual relationship with anyone. The entire epistemology has been reconstructed in such a way that the past turns into a dream that will never happen again. Playing the game of Scrabble in secret in an isolated room, then, functions as both phantasying and defence mechanism for Offred because when she is in the Commander's study with him, she, in a way, travels back to the time before Gilead, to a place of freedom and happiness just like when she dreams:

> Offred's unconscious often leads her back to the pleasant memories of her past which are very few but recurrent. She recalls all the happy times and joyous moments spent with Luke, her daughter and her mother which still give her a hope for the future. Her unconscious uses the mechanism of selective memory to avoid the unpleasant events of her past. […] they are a reminder of Offred's independent nature and a strong sense of individuality. (Shah and Khoso 121)

Offred's recurrently turning to the pleasant memories of the past can be viewed as a form of resistance manifested in the form of phantasy in psychoanalytic terms—that is, an unconscious endeavour by the subject to prevent complete nervous breakdown by resorting to the symbolic symmetries of a previous reality.

Freud distinguishes fantasy/wish fulfilment into ambitions and eroticism, and although he generally associates eroticism with women and ambitions with men, in the case of the novel it is exactly the opposite. It is beyond dispute that the game of Scrabble incorporates sexual desires for Offred too, but more than that it is about ambition and power for her: "The pen between my fingers is sensuous, alive almost, I can feel its power, the power of the words it contains. Pen is Envy, Aunt Lydia would say […] warning us away from such objects. And they were right, it is envy. Just holding it is envy. I envy the Commander his pen" (*The Handmaid's Tale* 196). The parallelism between pen and penis offers psychoanalytic implications. As writing is access to power in the poststructuralist sense, and as the Bible indicates how "In the beginning was the Word", pen is thus phallus in psychoanalytic terms. The specific word sequence "Pen is Envy" here refers to the Freudian notion of "penis envy". The pen/penis symbolism represented here implies a criticism of phallogocentrism as well as of Freudian theory made by French feminism or, more specifically, by *écriture féminine*. Indeed, Cixous argues that writing is access to power and it has been denied to women (884). Women, accordingly, should not shy away from exploring the "unheard-of songs" of their bodies and create a new space of signification that would transgress the boundaries of phallogocentrism (876). As for women being "penis envy" in Freudian terms, Cixous puts forward that women cannot be characterised by the so-called lack/desire dichotomy:

> Woman of course has a desire for a "loving desire" and not a jealous one. But not because she is gelded; not because she's deprived and needs to be filled out, like some wounded person who wants to console herself or seek vengeance: I don't want a penis to decorate my body with. But I do desire the other for the other, whole and entire, male or female; because living means wanting everything that is, everything that lives, and wanting it alive. Castration? Let others toy with it. What's a desire originating from a lack? A pretty meager desire. (891)

Offred, in other words, desires to steal the Commander's Pen to have access to power and share this power with other women, similar to Prometheus who steals fire from Gods to share it with other people. The entire sequence implies a symbolic juxtaposition of Offred with Prometheus. Offred's remarks on the Bible as well as on the idea of having power through access to writing and reading should also be mentioned here: "The Bible is kept locked up […]. It is an incendiary device: who knows what we'd make of it, if we ever got our hands on it? We can be read to from it, by him, but we cannot read. […] He has something we don't have, he has the word" (98-9). Offred's remarks here are important because they are "[a] clear illustration of the connection between power and writing is that the Commander is in material possession of the Bible, which literally makes him the divine *logos*, the Son and the Word of God" (Klarer 138) (emphasis original). The idea of possessing power by holding a pen and thus by writing is, in addition to its poststructuralist implications, also closely related to phantasying in Freudian sense within the context of the novel because phantasying, as mentioned above, is also the fulfilment of ambitious wishes which elevates the subject's personality. What's more, phantasying is also closely associated with creative writing by Freud. In this respect, Offred in this particular scene experiences phantasy not only of freedom but also of power. This phantasying, of course, is limited to the confines of the Commander's study, which functions as a space of phantasy for both him and her. The Commander's study and the rest of the Gilead function as two completely different sights of existence and the things that Offred and the Commander do together in the room cannot possibly exist outside the boundaries of that room. By spending time with the Commander in his study, Offred is allowed to read and write, which "are the bridges to the past and the keys to power over the present" (Klarer 134). She gets to escape the prison of her present circumstances in Gilead, which denies women not only individuality and authenticity but also basic human rights by enslaving them as reproductive servants and surrogate mothers, and experience freedom in the remnants of the past. She, in Freudian terms, "turns away from reality […] towards the life of phantasy, in which [she] creates new wishful structures and revives the traces of earlier, forgotten ones" (Freud 1981, 232).

As for the Commander, the game of Scrabble as well as the time he spends alone with Offred is all about his repressed sexual desires finding space to manifest themselves in the form of phantasying as he turns into a "sugar-daddy", who allows Offred certain privileges otherwise prohibited and in return gets to experience sexual gratification by being kissed by her (*The Handmaid's Tale* 149) and in watching her doing activities that are illegal

in Gilead: "While I read, the Commander sits and watches me doing it, without speaking but also without taking his eyes off me. This watching is a curiously sexual act, and I feel undressed while he does it" (194). The Commander takes sexual pleasure in watching Offred reading books and playing games with him; doing things that are prohibited by the law. The fact that he has control over her and that he can make her do anything he wants; the power he has over her gives him a sense of sexual gratification. They are both each other's object of desire in different ways, but for now he appears to be the one holding the reins. The fact that the Handmaids are associated only with child-bearing and surrogate motherhood indicates that this relationship might also have an Oedipal dimension, that it might have to do with, in psychoanalytic terms, the desire for origin or the desire to penetrate into the mother's womb. The sequence following the game of Scrabble is indicative of this: "'Thank you,' he says. 'For the game.' Then he says, 'I want you to kiss me'" (149). The entire sequence is reminiscent of a moment between mother and child. That is, the mother indulging her child to play a game with her and rewards him with a kiss before going to bed. The Oedipal tension is symbolically portrayed here in this scene. Lack of achieving sexual gratification on the part of the Commanders creates the desire to seek it in the Handmaids. Lack and desire, in psychoanalytic terms, go hand in hand in the context of the novel: "The fact is that I'm his mistress. […] *Outside woman*, they used to be called, in some countries. I am the outside woman. It's my job to provide what is otherwise lacking. Even the Scrabble. It's an absurd as well as an ignominious position" (172) (emphasis original). There cannot be a lack without desire in psychoanalytic sense. As an "outside woman", Offred fills in what is lacking on the inside. She is the supplement, the floating signifier, or the simulacra. Moreover, one would expect such a conservative and patriarchal society as Gilead to heavily rely on the notion of nuclear family, but there is a gigantic wall between the husband and the wife as they barely communicate or interact with one another: "Who else could I show it to? he said, and there it was again, that sadness. […] How about your Wife? […] No, he said. She wouldn't understand. Anyway, she won't talk to me much any more. We don't seem to have much in common" (166). Marriage institution in Gilead is based on estrangement and alienation. Husband and wife are situated in such a way that it prohibits anything that is even remotely associated with passion, feelings, and instincts. The entire system of Gilead is built upon the idea that everyone should renounce any desire pertaining to flesh. Hence the rise of phantasy. In Freudian terms, then, the Commander "turns away from reality because he cannot come to terms with the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction […] and […] allows his erotic and ambitious wishes full play in the life of phantasy" (Freud 1981, 224). This is where repression, as a psychoanalytic concept, kicks in on the part of the Commander. Repression, in Freudian context, means "a repression of pleasure and erotic drives" (Kristeva 162). For Lacan, on the other hand, it designates a "discordance between the signified and the signifier that is brought on by all censorship of social origin" (Lacan 310). Repression, accordingly, structures the subject's desire in so far as it functions as a pre-condition for the symbolic to operate properly. This is exactly what happens in the Commander's case. Because anything pertaining to flesh or sexual desires has to be repressed within the boundaries of the symbolic, they manifest themselves in the form of phantasy.

The Ceremony that takes place following the game nights of Offred and the Commander complicates things considerably:

> Before, I'd treated it as a job, an unpleasant job to be gone through as fast as possible so it could be over with. […] I would pretend not to be present, not in the flesh. This state of absence, of existing apart from the body, had been true of the Commander too, I knew now. Probably he thought about other things the whole time […]. The sexual act, although he performed it in a perfunctory way, must have been largely unconscious, for him, like scratching himself. But that night, the first since the beginning of whatever his new arrangement was between us – I had no name for it – I felt shy of him. […] He was no longer a thing to me. That was the problem. I realized it that night, and the realization has stayed with me. It complicates. Serena Joy had changed for me, too. Once I'd merely hated her, for her part in what was being done to me […] the hatred was no longer pure and simple. Partly I was jealous of her […] You can only be jealous of someone who has something you think you ought to have yourself. […] I felt I was an intruder, in a territory that ought to have been hers. Now that I was seeing the Commander on the sly […] our functions were no longer as separate as they should have been in theory. I was taking something away from her, although she didn't know it. (*The Handmaid's Tale* 169-70)

The reason why Offred feels different about both the Commander and Serena now is that she feels attracted to the Commander because of the changed nature of their relationship. He gradually turns into an object of desire for her as she likewise becomes an object of desire for the Commander. Offred does not sexually desire him as

much as he desires her, but the time she spends with him in his study means an escape from her unbearable reality, and thus, freedom in the world of fantasy; therefore, it is not specifically him that she yearns for but the act of doing something else, anything at all outside the realm of Gilead that would give her a space to breathe. The space of phantasy they have created together in secret allow them to act upon their repressed desires and feelings, to be able to transgress the boundaries of the laws of Gilead and enjoy themselves while doing so. Under normal circumstances, the Commander should have been free to do all of these things with Serena, but since that is not possible in Gilead, he does them with Offred—a supplement—in secret. The adrenaline and the feeling of satiating one's desires by doing something impermissible and doing it in secret provoke both Offred and the Commander and they continue to share this space of phantasy, which is dependent on the pleasure principle, together up until the point when she is taken away by the Eyes, who may or may not be from May Day, and goes "into the darkness within; or else the light" (307).

This article argued that the prohibited activities that Offred and the Commander do in private in the Commander's study such as playing the game of Scrabble, reading books and magazines as well as writing function as phantasying while the room itself functions as a space of phantasy in Freudian terms. The article borrowed such terms as phantasy, pleasure principle, and defence mechanism from Freudian terminology in order to put the novel under scrutiny with a particular focus on the activities that Offred and the Commander do together in secret in the Commander's study. For Freud, only those who are situated in unsatisfactory circumstances feel the urge to phantasise as a defence mechanism to escape from the unpleasant reality into the world of phantasy. Offred's and the Commander's present circumstances meet this precondition, and accordingly, they create a space of phantasy together in private. Offred's reality is unbearable because she basically has no rights, freedom or agency. She exists only to serve as a surrogate mother, as a means for procreation in a patriarchal and fundamentalist regime that aims to oppress women through physical, psychological, and epistemic violence. The Commander, on the other hand, lives in a much better condition than Offred, but lacks fundamental things of human existence such as love, compassion, intimacy, and fulfilment of sexual desires even though he is married. Both of them, therefore, resort to phantasying in the form of playing, reading, and writing to cope with the unsatisfactory realities of their present circumstances. These activities are phantasying in Freudian terms not only because they are wish fulfilments pertaining to the pleasure principle and performed in secret and but also because they are prohibited by the law and directly contradicts the norms of Gilead. In this hidden space of phantasy, both Offred and the Commander compromise to a certain extent to fulfil their ambitious and erotic wishes by escaping into the world of phantasy, which is located outside the boundaries of Gilead. To be more specific, Offred gets to play, read, and write as she pleases. She gets a glimpse of the power of writing by taking part in the written discourse that is denied to women altogether in Gilead. The Commander, on the other hand, gets to experience sexual gratification by watching Offred do prohibited activities as well as by kissing her. To conclude, then, as the article has shown, whereas Offred fulfils her ambitious wishes through phantasying, the Commander fulfils his erotic wishes through phantasying in Freudian terms. As for the future studies within Atwood scholarship, this psychoanalytic reading of Atwood's novel may indicate that there is still much to be explored in *The Handmaid's Tale* not only from a Freudian vantage point but also from Lacanian and even Kristevan perspectives as far as subject formation, the symbolic, the semiotic, subjectivity, and space are concerned.

Works Cited

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. London: Vintage, 1996.

Buchegger, Lisa. "'In Burning Red' – Red as the Color of Female Shame in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*." *AmLit* 3.2 (2023): 12-25.

Cixous, Hélène. The Laugh of the Medusa." Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs* 1. 4 (1976): 875-93. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239.

Feldman-Kołodziejuk, Ewelina. "From Villainess to Gilead's Nemesis: The (Un)easy Rehabilitation of Aunt Lydia". *Canada and Beyond: A Journal of Canadian Literary and Cultural Studies* 14 (Jan. 2025): 85-103.

Filipczak, Dorota. "Is There No Balm in Gilead? — Biblical Intertext in *The Handmaid's Tale*." *Literature and Theology* 7.2 (1993): 171-85.

Freud, Sigmund. "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 9*. Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth, 1959. 143-53.

———. "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 12: The Case of Schreber Papers on Technique and Other Works*. Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth, [1958] 1981. 218-26.

Klarer, Mario. "Orality and Literacy as Gender-Supporting Structures in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 28.4 (1995): 129-42.

Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia UP, 1984.

Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, [1966] 2006.

Mitrulescu, Corina Mariana. "From Page to Screen: Male Gaze, Female Oppression, and Docile Bodies in *The Handmaid's Tale*." *Incursions Into the Imaginary* 16.2 (2025): 48-65.

Moldovan, Raluca. "The Dystopian Transformation of Urban Space in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*." *American, British and Canadian Studies* 34.1 (2020): 103-23.

Morrison, Sarah R. "Mothering Desire: The Romance Plot in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Susan Fromberg Schaeffer's *The Madness of a Seduced Woman*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 19. 2 (2000): 315-36.

Shah, R. A. Sayed and Muhammad H. Khoso. "Freudian Analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale*: Analyzing the Defence Mechanisms." *International Journal of English Literature and Culture* 5.5 (Sept. 2017): 117-22.

Thomas, Deborah A. "'Don't Let The Bastards Grind You Down': Echoes of *Hard Times* in *The Handmaid's Tale*.'" *Dickens Quarterly* 25.2 (2008): 90–7. https://www.jstor.org/stable/45292159.