

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the world of *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and *The Testaments* (2019), works of Margaret Atwood. The dystopian theocratic totalitarian regime featured in these novels invites a socio-historical and anthropological analysis and interpretation from the perspective of the subjugated female characters. The theoretical part, introduced by an overview of Atwood's work, provides the reader with crucial information regarding the historical parallels which inspired the narrative, as well as a delimitation of relevant anthropological concepts, such as *liminality* or *status reversal*. Subsequently, using both the knowledge gathered in the theoretical and in Atwood's works, the rise of the fundamentalist cult of the Sons of Jacob and their project, the Republic of Gilead, is explained, and their ideology is uncovered in the first section of the practical part. Second part of the interpretation focuses on the position of women within the system that subjugates and oppresses them. The analysis is performed by the means of comparing and contrasting the ideal models of the positions of women as designed by the architects of the system with the actual application on the example of selected characters. The ultimate aims of this thesis are to prove the innate sexism and misogyny of the Gileadean theocracy, to find explanations for its ascension, to ponder the designed place for women within it and, most importantly, to show how the demise of the system was caused by its underestimating the power of the oppressed, who would eventually strive to regain the basic human rights they were deprived of.

Key words: Margaret Atwood; *The Handmaid's Tale*; *The Testaments*; Theocracy; Totalitarianism; Liminality; Communitas; Status reversal; Status reversal; Religious fundamentalism; Ideology; Oppression; Female experience