

INTRODUCTION

As the subjects of the investigation for my diploma thesis I chose two well-known dystopian novels, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by English writer, George Orwell and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Canadian author, Margaret Atwood. The theme of my thesis will be the moral development of the heroes in the selected negative utopias, especially regarding the progression in their attitude towards the political establishments of the countries where they live.

Above all, my thesis will describe the development of their fight against the totalitarian regimes throughout the stories and compare eventual similarities or differences, in this sphere of my research. Concerning the struggle against the political enemy, I am going to prove that an important part of their resistance is reflected in such activities which do not seem to be politically connected with it, for example their relations with the opposite sex. In reference to the relations between men and women, the thesis will be focused more on the role of the latter in dystopian novels and it will analyze their problems within those societies.

In addition, I intend to provide deeper psychological and philosophic analysis of both main characters, particularly as far as their attitude towards their identity and the influence of the environment over them. I am also going to show the importance of education and access to knowledge as the part of their fight against the political system.

The theoretical part of my diploma thesis will be focused on the characteristics of the genre of dystopian novels in general. Within this part I am going to dedicate to the theme of totalitarian regimes which in the case of both novels create an important setting. Further, I am going to focus on the position of women and the role of human sexuality in totalitarian regimes. Finally I intend to analyze the role of information and communication there.

The practical part of this thesis will deal with the analysis of each novel as far as the foregoing moral development of its main character. I plan to prove that both protagonists, Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as well as Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*, undergo basically the same progression in their attitude towards the political system of their homeland. They pass through the period of mute disagreement with the regime and through the phase of certain secret rebellion (including the relationships with the opposite sex as the part of the latter) but then they lose control over their illegal activities and relations which finally lead them to an inevitable detection. Having experienced the phases of both passive and active resistance to the political situation around them, they are unavoidably caught at the end by their own desires and they become victims not only of their personal wishes but also of the regimes which they were originally fighting against.

THEORETICAL PART

1. DYSTOPIAN NOVELS

Both novels which I am going to analyze in this diploma thesis belong to a literary genre called “dystopian novels” that can be considered a special kind of science fiction literature. The term consists of Greek negative prefix “*dys-*“ and the word “*utopia*“ proposed by Renaissance English writer, Sir Thomas More. The combination of these two lexical parts indicates that, briefly speaking, “*dystopia*“ means the opposite of utopia. It basically refers to *Utopia*, the literary work by the author mentioned above, which describes an ideal place with perfectly functioning social organization and political establishment. On the contrary, dystopian novels suggest negative visions of the world and society in the future:

“(…) a modern term invented as the opposite of utopia, and applied to any alarmingly unpleasant imaginary world, usually of the projected future. The term is also applied to fictional works depicting such worlds.” (Baldick: 64)

They often dedicate to the idea of totalitarian regimes developed into extremely undesirable societies where people are mutually alienated and an individual suffers from permanent feeling of fear, poverty, persecution, oppression and pain of both physical and psychological form. Such societies follow the principles of rigorous dictatorships which are based on both justifying their practices by rational methods and defending violence by law. Within the branch of dystopias we can find such literary works as, for example, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury or *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding.

Although dystopian novels usually narrate about future events, the readers should not overlook the fact that, by means of such invented schemes, they often refer to present situation of our world.

“*Nineteen Eighty-Four* (...) imagines a future based on the tendencies of the present. Completed in 1948, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* simply reverses the last two digits of that year, unmistakably indicating thereby that it is a book about what the present will likely turn into in the not too distant future.” (Firchow: 115)

Former or current political trends are expanded up to extreme point but while reading it, the readers still somehow feel that these dark visions are not so unlikely to happen. Therefore, one of the reasons why dystopian novels were written and why, at the same time, they gradually gained considerable popularity is that they serve us as an omnipresent reminder.

They warn us against dangerous political and social tendencies which may lurk below the surface of seemingly innocent social organization of the world of nowadays. In contrast to pure science fiction works, dystopian novels mostly suggest a link between the current state of affairs and its possible development up to some horrifying point. They can actually predict the future as in the case of both Orwell and Atwood's novel:

"The Handmaid's Tale is set in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Society has returned to a constricted re-creation of Puritan New England. The brilliance of this international bestseller rests in the creation of a future that is a too logical extension of many dimensions of the present, the horrors her heroine witnesses not far from (...) the narrow rules of the religious right in the United States" (The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood: 21)

On the other hand, there are other opinions about the function of dystopian novels. Some critics claim that the popularity of this literary genre consist in our longing for a bit of terror. It might seem paradox but many readers like reading about worse worlds just because then they can feel safer and happier in our real one. For them, dystopian novels represent a source of consolation that people do not live as badly as one might sometimes think. Other kind of readers may even understand dystopian novels as a source of adrenaline because of that relatively thin border between fiction and reality. For such persons, they embody an escape from everyday routine of their ordinary lives. In general, the way how this literary genre is comprehended and simultaneously, the reason why readers enjoy it just depends on an individual's character.

As it has been briefly outlined above, dystopian novels are defined by several specific features, which distinguish them from the rest of science fiction literature. In spite of the variety of dystopian stories, there are some common characteristics which they share. Firstly, it is an overall depressing atmosphere that, in the majority of cases, predicts in a way an inevitable failure of the main protagonists' struggle to survive in particular society without submitting himself or herself totally to the system. Secondly, dystopian novels are usually characterized by the description of an individual, standing against some hardly invincible society which determines his or her life. This ever-present comparison between limited power of a single person and the power of anonymous crowd protected by the authority and immunity of its leader contributes to intensify that pessimistic atmosphere.

On the other hand, an important feature of dystopias is the fact that they imply the idea of impossibility to deprive humans of some of their natural instincts. For example, both the main characters of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale* cannot help establishing

contacts with the opposite sex although the societies, in which they live, do not favour such relations and oppress human sexuality on behalf of their ideology. The protagonists simply cannot give up the necessity to love somebody or at least preserve for themselves some positive emotions towards other human beings. In spite of the efforts of the totalitarian regimes to alienate people among themselves as much as possible, they still long for friendship, sympathy and love. As people are naturally social beings, no political regulations can make them isolate themselves from the rest of the mankind. Therefore, though the readers can certainly find a perceivable lack of communication in dystopian novels, there are always individuals who somehow resist to the mutual alienation among people.

Unfortunately, the conservation of human instincts in dystopian novels does not only concern those which have positive impact on the protagonists' lives. This literary genre also implicitly describes the human instinct for self-preservation which can be seen not only in the protagonists' fight for improving their current conditions but also in their infidelity to their previous beliefs when the crucial moment comes. They are able to leave their original convictions when their survival is seriously endangered. Therefore, it could be said that dystopian novels follow in a way the well-known evolutionist theory of the survival of the fittest which already inspired the authors of naturalism in the late 19th century. This theory, based on the work of Charles Darwin, asserts that only those who are able to adapt themselves to the new living conditions, although quite abnormal as in the case of dystopias, can survive.

2. THE SETTING – TOTALITARIAN REGIMES

In order to understand the behaviour and feelings of the main characters from these two selected novels it is essential to analyze the setting where the stories are located. As it was said in Chapter 1, dystopian novels always take place in particular unpleasant and depressing environment where an individual has no rights and has very limited power because of the external conditions. There are, of course, many dystopian novels which describe various settings but one type of the settings stays quite popular, namely the environment of totalitarian regimes. Sometimes, such group within the genre of dystopias is even designated as “totalitarian dystopias”. Such stories often focus on an impossible struggle of few people against a crowd manipulated by political machinery. They contrast the smallness of an individual with collective power of fanaticized community and they concentrate on its impact upon the protagonist’s psyche. Consequently, totalitarian dystopias include deep psychological insight and the authors of these novels also project their political knowledge and personal interest in this topic there. It is not necessary to provide a strict division of dystopian novels here but it is obvious that Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as well as Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* could surely belong to this category if we want to specify them closer. They both dedicate to the description of life within totalitarian state, although each of these political systems is based on slightly different principles which will be commented on more in detail later in this chapter. Atwood’s novel shares characteristics with some theocracies while Orwell’s work (not only *Nineteen Eighty-Four* but also *The Animal Farm*) deals with the features of political system of the communist countries.

There are many kinds and forms of totalitarianism in the world’s history but some characteristics remain stable for this type of political system, apart from whether it is based on religious dogma, Marxism-Leninism or other social or political theories. Although totalitarianism in the 20th century developed in many states all over the world, basically, it can be characterized by several common qualities which appear in each such a state system. Various definitions which can be found under the term of totalitarian regime coincide and share several principles which are clearly visible in both analyzed novels as well. These criteria are:

- there exists an elaborated official ideology
- the only collective political party is embodied by one leader
- there is a system of physical and psychological terror

- an absolute control is exercised over the mass media, military power and economic sphere

The concept of totalitarianism is defined as:

“an extreme form of autocratic political regime based on pervasion, subjugation and absorption of all spheres of social and individual life by power control practiced on the part of a unique, exclusively ruling centre (...) In political practice it denies, explicitly or virtually, fundamental human rights and liberties, democracy and political pluralism”.

(Ottova všeobecná encyklopedie: 526)

Both authors certainly develop these features of totalitarian regimes into an extreme extension but at the same time, they derive them from historical facts and practices applied by real dictatorships which existed or were forming in the time of their lives (for instance, The Soviet Union, etc.). Despite the fact that both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale* are fictitious works, there are important autobiographical influences as their authors projected some of their personal experience into them. George Orwell as well as Margaret Atwood presumed that it was just a question of time when the political situation in authoritarian states got out of control and reach the extreme proportions related in their work.

The setting of such character totally fulfills the principal condition of dystopian novels which is to expose the readers to a terrifying vision of future political development in their country or in our world in general. However, this warning may function differently according to one's experiences. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will probably seem more likely to happen to those readers who have ever personally witnessed some kind of authoritarian regime in their homeland. On the other hand, people who always lived in a free democratic state will hardly perceive such a story as something likely to come true. For them, it will rather remain just a fictitious narrative which serves as an intimidating example of nonexistent world. If we take a brief look at the biography of George Orwell, we can see that many of his personal experiences reflect in his work and that he had some private reason to believe in such negative vision. Not only *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but also his other famous work, *Animal Farm*, is dedicated to the theme of totalitarian regimes in order to warn the mankind about a possible progression of the world. George Orwell had an opportunity to come to know many different environments which later served him as a good source of inspiration for his writing. He experienced the living conditions both of high and low social classes. As for the former, he studied at the prestigious Eton College in England and than worked as a colonial officer in Burma. On the other hand, he tried the poor life of the

working class in European cities, for instance in London and Paris, and he also saw the hard life of political fighter in the Spanish Civil War. In his literary work he makes use not only of his various social experiences but also of his numerous work experiences. Similar idea appears in Peter Edgerly Firchow's study about the modern utopian fictions:

“Interestingly, Orwell's experience exists on both sides. That is, not only was Orwell down and out in Paris and London, but he was also, as it were, up and inside in Rangoon and on the Irrawaddy. His first job (...) was that of an officer in the Indian Colonial Constabulary in Burma, so that when he writes about O'Brien in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (...) he is also writing in part from actual police experience. This is even true to some extent of Winston Smith's work at the Ministry of Truth. After all, it is probably not coincidental that Winston Smith's participation in the manufacture and re-manufacture of truth bears a resemblance to Orwell's wartime work in propaganda section of the BBC. The two activities are not the same, of course, but they are close enough in a general way to count as real experience.” (Firchow: 99)

Regarding *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the novel seems almost tremendously credible although the story describes an exaggerated form of a totalitarian state. However, the author writes about phenomena which are actually based on truth and therefore, he offers the readers quite authentic negative picture of possible political development in oncoming future. Orwell takes advantage of the fact that he was present in different worlds and political events which help him evoke the atmosphere of real authenticity, basically, even in the genre of science fiction.

“When one reads Orwell on the Spanish War, one knows that he's been there. One feels very differently too, I think, about reading a novel like *Animal Farm* or *Nineteen Eighty-Four* when one knows that the author has actually *experienced* what he is writing about. Not that George Orwell ever was an “animal” (...) or lived in the year Nineteen Eighty-Four (...) but he had actually raised animals (...) and experienced life at the very bottom of the social ladder, as, among other things, a dishwasher in a Paris hotel and a hobo drifting through London and surroundings; and he had lived in some of the worst industrial slums of the black country during the most depressing years, as he did in Wigan. In very different circumstances, he had also experienced at first hand how brutally the Stalinist Communist Party operated in Spain, where he saw and felt how they fanatically tried to suppress and even “liquidate” him and his fellow anti-Franco fighters in the Trotskyist POUM.”(Firchow: 98)

If we compare the basic principles of well-known existing dictatorships with the political establishments described in both novels, almost the only thing which varies in them is the

degree of accomplishing particular practices. The omnipresent screens in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are just an exaggerated symbol for the institution of secret national police and for censorship. Vlastimil Fiala in his article “*Authoritarian and totalitarian systems of the developing world*” within the publication called *Totalita a demokracie* establishes the following fundamental characteristics of an authoritarian political system:

- character of the ruling elite
- the manner of origin and renovation of ruling elites
- hierarchic model of decision making
- lack of civil rights
- character of the system of elections
- arbitrary arrests and imprisonment of political rivals
- existence of political refugees

The political establishments in both novels are based at least on some of the items mentioned above so that, both stories – although they belong to the genre of dystopian fiction – share common characteristics with the reality in actual totalitarian regimes.

Regarding the first criterion of totalitarian regimes listed above, the ruling elite in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is exclusively represented by the Party and especially by the personality of Big Brother. He is – apparently on purpose – constantly portrayed to the inhabitants of Oceania as a powerful, strong and friendly man who ensures perspective future for the state. For example, during the ritual of Two Minutes Hate he appears on the screen at the very end of the presentation full of terrifying scenes of enemies and impending danger in order to be contrasted with all these threats, as a symbol of confidence, security and peace. His kind face is supposed to provoke positive feelings of likeness, gratitude and often a kind of love towards him. The name itself evokes very familiar atmosphere and suggests that he is a friend of everyone. Moreover, within the sphere of family structure, “big brothers” are usually supposed to take care of their younger and more vulnerable siblings. The role of such brothers is to protect, guide and defend them in the world full of wiles and evil. The term of Big Brother can be also understood as a parallel or ironic allusion to the nickname of the leader of the Soviet Union, Stalin, who was sometimes called “Father of Nations”. Some literary critics even speak about erotic dimension of the relationship between Winston Smith and the Party, represented by the figure of Big Brother. Cass R. Sunstein in his essay on sexual and political freedom asserts that in the course of the story, Winston’s love for Julia is transformed (with the contribution of O’Brien) into passion and loyalty towards the Party.

The author compares the act of torturing Winston in the Ministry of Love with the act of sexual violation. (Gleason; 236)

On the other hand, the omnipresent figure of Big Brother does not only serve for recalling his virtues and positive qualities. He also embodies – although not so obviously but more likely in a hidden way – many negative features which are perceived by the citizens (and consequently by the readers) rather unconsciously. The ubiquitous portraits with his vigilant eyes watching every move and activity of the people deliberately remind them that he is also invincible and uncompromising. The elaborated way of his propaganda, which has created an impressive cult of his personality, suggests that Big Brother has already become a supernatural human being, a kind of modern God. Through his figure people living in Oceania are reminded that he can never be overpowered and that his existence is as dauntless as the existence of the world itself.

“He took a twenty-five cent piece out of his pocket. There, too, in tiny clear lettering, the same slogans were inscribed, and on the other face of the coin the head of Big Brother. Even from the coin the eyes pursued you. On coins, on stamps, on the covers of books, on banners, on posters and on wrapping of a cigarette packet – everywhere. Always the eyes watching you and the voice enveloping you. Asleep or awake, working or eating, indoors or out of doors, in the bath or in bed – no escape. Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull” (Orwell: 29)

Another typical feature of authoritarian states mentioned above, the hierarchical model of decision making, is closely connected with the division of the society within such political systems. The inhabitants of the totalitarian states described in these two selected novels have strictly determined social role. They belong to a particular social class or, more likely, the regime prescribes them some social position in order to prevent their possible ambitions to get into higher posts. Totalitarian societies function on the basis of precisely set rules with a view to avoid inner disputes among people. While modern democratic countries (following the well-known American concept of so-called “self-made man”) support the idea of everyone’s chance for his or her personal rise, the citizens of authoritarian (or in this case dystopian) states can never acquire better living conditions for themselves. These societies are always divided into several classes or, at least, they distinguish among the followers of the political ideology and politically questionable, even dangerous individuals. Sometimes also people who are only indifferent or who are not politically enthusiastic enough are considered opponents of the regime there.

George Orwell in his novel paints various groups such as The Inner and Outer Party, the proletarians and many other social organizations (Anti-Sex League, the Spies, etc.) to suggest the importance of concrete social classification in totalitarian states. According to one's belonging to or participation within these groups, the regime can better detect problematic persons and liquidate them. On the other hand, as Orwell later demonstrates, such extreme form of authoritarian policy remains suspicious even towards seemingly active sympathizers so that too much political involvement may also attract attention of Thought Police as in the case of Tom Parson who is finally denounced by his own daughter when she hears him speak when sleeping. Therefore, one's belonging to particular social class or organization can hardly save him or her from displeasing the political authority but the awareness of their own social classification makes people behave as they are supposed to (until the regime, anyhow, decides to get rid of them).

Speaking about the hierarchical structure of totalitarian / dystopian societies, in *The Handmaid's Tale* the readers meet with even more elaborated social system. Women are divided into eight categories (Wives, Daughters, Handmaids, Aunts, Marthas, Econowives, Jezebels and Unwomen) according to their social prestige. Men are grouped into Commanders, Eyes, Angels, Guardians and Gender Traitors. In comparison with men, women, obviously, occupy lower social position in the matter of civil rights, although they are reminded of their importance because of their capability to give life. However, not all male members of the Gileadean society possess the same social status and liberties just because they ate men. Similarly, there are also women, for instance the Wives, who stand quite high within the social ladder. Each of these classes has, in addition, its own characteristic clothing in order to be clearly recognized by the others and consequently, to be accordingly treated.

The status of women in dystopias will be discussed later in this paper but speaking about strict hierarchic structure in dystopian societies, one must realize that *The Handmaid's Tale* deals with a little special kind of totalitarian system which significantly determines the life of women there. Atwood's novel describes authoritarian theocracy which recalls, to some extent, American Puritan past and just develops some of its beliefs to an extreme point. American Puritans were the first permanent settlers in the area of today's United States who arrived there in search of religious freedom in 1620. They were English nonconformists, that is, they had separated from the Church of England as they did not agree with some of its practices which were too much similar to those of the Roman Catholic Church. The name of this religious group itself indicates their main goal. They wanted to "purify", that is deprive

the Church of England of any liturgy and other procedures which were not described in Bible as the scripture was their highest authority. Having settled down in North America, they wanted to create an exemplary community which would serve as a model of honest Christian life to other people. Puritans considered themselves to be saints elected by God and their successfully accomplished journey, seen as a sign of divine favour, reassured them in this opinion. Their first colonies were supposed to become “a city upon a hill” observed and followed by the rest of the world as John Winthrop, a governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony wrote in his sermon. However, in everyday life this theory proved to be a kind of extremism. In such a community people controlled and judged each other so that everyone was constantly under the supervision of his or her neighbours. The social standing of women within so watchful society was even more complicated as Puritans believed that women could easily conspire with the Devil and that they should be subjected to men. Girls living in Puritan communities were brought up with the view of being good wives and mothers and obedient servants for their husbands. Similarly, the Handmaids’ role is already given by their name.

Margaret Atwood attended a seminar on the topic of American Puritans during her studies at the Harvard University and she applies her knowledge about them in her work (she even dedicated this novel to her university teacher, Perry Miller, who lead that seminar).

“With her readings in American Puritan literature and her eyes focused relentlessly on the present, Atwood offers a too convincing analysis of the future directions of the American destiny.” (The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood: 21)

Nevertheless, this is not the only autobiographical feature which can be traced in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Atwood is a feminist writer and the theme of women significantly permeates the whole novel. During the course of her life she also became interested in politics and the question of women’s position within the society. In *The Handmaid’s Tale* she combines the problem of women subjugation with her political apprehensions.

“In fact, the issue of sexual and national power politics is a wide-ranging and crucial topic in Margaret Atwood’s work (...). Atwood’s political preoccupations attain their highest point in her novels *Bodily Harm* and *The Handmaid’s Tale* (...)”(The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood: 43-44)

Not only Puritans but any extremist or authoritarian society does not tolerate dissidents. People who do not accept particular official theory and rules of that society are either liquidated or – if they have a chance to save their lives at all – they have to go to exile and

live like political refugees. The readers meet such renegades in both novels. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* disobedient citizens are systematically eliminated by the Thought Police but the myth of rebellious character of Emmanuel Goldstein which permeates throughout the story and embodies political refugees there. His face appears on the screen at the end of Two Minutes Hate as the opposite to Big Brother. Goldstein is considered a public enemy and is blamed for anything; even for things that has no connection with him or his activities. In this respect, the personality of Emmanuel Goldstein can be compared to the character of Snowball from another novel by Orwell, *Animal Farm*. Although this dissident is presented by the regime as the most negative being in the world, the readers actually cannot be sure about his existence as they gradually get to know about all the lies invented by the Ministry of True (in fact, the same can be said about the mysterious person of Big Brother). No matter whether Goldstein exists or not, he is ironically very important for stabilization of power of the Party because he serves as a useful filter for public discontent, hatred and other negative emotions which would endanger the political system of Oceania if they were launched against it instead. Thus, by means of deliberate negative propaganda of Goldstein, the Party controls and determines the direction of people's undesired feelings produced by their poor living conditions. In Atwood's dystopia a typical political refugee is represented by the figure of Moira. After her unsuccessful escape in disguise her only possibility how to save her life is becoming a prostitute at a night club for the Commanders. Otherwise, she would have been sent to the Colonies where all kinds of inconvenient women (like dissidents, lesbians or sterile women) are put away. This would practically mean a sentence to death for her.

Other characteristic feature of totalitarian regimes which has been already named earlier in this chapter is a significant lack of civil rights there. The citizens of such states are deprived not only of basic human rights but they are also forbidden to do quite innocent activities. The most noticeable limitations are connected with free motion, privacy, establishing interpersonal relations, marriage and starting a family or access to information. Both Winston and Offred are constantly watched by screens or secret police so that they cannot take a risk of going anywhere or meeting people freely. Neither can they choose their partners as they would like to. Regarding the theme of privacy, in the state of Oceania people are practically never alone because thus, they would be left unattended just with their thoughts.

“In principle a Party member had no spare time, and was never alone except in bed. It was assumed that when he was not working, eating or sleeping he would be taking part in some kind of communal recreation: to do anything that suggested a taste for solitude,

even to go for a walk by yourself, was always slightly dangerous. There was a word for it in Newspeak: *ownlife*, it was called, meaning individualism and eccentricity. ” (Orwell: 85)

Further, the Handmaids in Atwood’s novel are not allowed to read, speak among themselves, play games, and even decide what to eat or wear. Similarly, the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* cannot buy and possess such harmless things as a notebook or a decorative paperweight purchased in an antique shop.

When reading one of these dystopian novels, the most terrifying and impressive element for the readers is embodied by the ever-present atmosphere of fear. This negative feeling is produced by the description of violence and brutal practices introduced by the leading party or its representatives within the society. “Totalitarianism is a system of all-pervasive political power which is usually evoked by means of a constant ideological manipulation and open terror and brutality.” (Heywood: 232) The reader never knows what could be the worst possible punishment for political enemies or uncooperative persons. However, we somehow suspect that there are no limitations regarding the penalties in such undesirable social systems. In addition, this uncertainty about what may happen if the protagonists are revealed makes us feel even more frightened. We often do not know the exact reason of our anxiety till the last moment. Anyway, when Winston enters the chamber number 101 and is tortured there until a complete breakdown of his personality and dignity, it seems to us that we precisely anticipated what we had been afraid of from the very beginning of the novel. Torturing is indirectly mentioned also in *The Handmaid’s Tale* when Moira narrates to Offred about her unsuccessful attempt to escape and about her being eventually caught.

“We didn’t end up at the Centre though, we went somewhere else. I won’t go into what happened after that. I’d rather not talk about it. All I can say is that they didn’t leave any marks.” (Atwood: 260)

Either the detailed narration about torturing of Winston or passing remark made by Moira about her experience with the police leave the readers paralyzed with fear or feeling at least uncomfortable. In both novels physical violence is just a starting point of other torment and is used as a scare tactic. However, the passages which describe any kind of psychological torturing will probably have much more depressive effect on the readers. Until the main characters suffer from physical pain, hunger or another hardship in the sphere of their basic needs, the readers can feel sorry about them and see them as modern martyrs. They can be admired fro

having endured such brutal practices but at the moment when the regime comes out with psychological violence, the readers suddenly observe their heroes turning into cowards, traitors or collaborators. Although one realizes that he or she would be likely to do the same or behave in the same way if they were in the position of the protagonists, it is either uneasy for them to accept the idea of their possible poltroonery or we at least face a difficult moral dilemma that provokes too much doubts and questions in our soul.

Apart from various forms of punishment for “real” offence in the eyes of particular state ideology, in totalitarian countries there exist many intimidating mechanisms how to prevent disloyal persons. For instance, public executions help the regime to deprive of the political enemies and at the same time, they serve as a sufficient deterrent for other people.

“(…) the Gileadean regime makes ample use of repressive devices like the Salvagings and the Particution, public executions which serve to eliminate “political” enemies.” (The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood: 54)

Besides this extreme treatment with people who appear dangerous for the regime, the readers may feel uncomfortable or anxious just when they imagine the environment of totalitarian dystopias. The world of authoritarian states usually seems very cold, plain and inhospitable. The environment of Margaret Atwood’s dystopia might evoke the setting of a hospital (even laboratory) because of the treatment of the Handmaids. They are perceived as the objects of targeted progeniture so that they are treated with as patients who have to adhere right living, follow a recommended diet and do prescribed exercises. They also have to see a doctor regularly and any abnormal physical or psychical variation in their behaviour is automatically considered a symptom of health unbalance, often attributed to expected pregnancy. Any minute change in their alimentation, like partly uneaten breakfast, has to be reported back by the Marthas who, in this respect, function as nurses there. The setting of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, on the other hand, is described in almost naturalistic style. Yet in the beginning of the novel George Orwell operates on each of the readers’ senses with detailed relation of many unpleasant items. He portrays the city of London as a dead city; a place devastated by ongoing war, full of unsightly buildings in very bad condition. He also works upon the readers’ perception by means of various allusions to distasteful sensations connected with olfaction and taste. For instance, in one of the introductory scenes Winston helps to his neighbour, Mrs. Parson, to repair a sink cluttered with hair. Further, the multi-storey house where Winston lives smells of cooked cabbage and old doormats, his neighbour and fellow-worker, Tom Parson, stridently stinks of sweat; Victory Gin is actually disgusting liquor

smelling of oil and acid, etc. Another forbidding place is represented by the work canteen with dirty tables and dishes and disgusting meal. Not only unanimated things but also people themselves look shabby and worn-down there. Winston, at the age of thirty-nine, should be a man at the height of his physical might but he is gaunt instead and suffers from venous ulceration and spells of coughing. Mrs. Parson mentioned above looks much older as she has many wrinkles in her face covered with dust.

Every individual who lives in such a place is affected in a way by the political situation there. Michal Reiman in his book *O komunistickém totalitarismu a o tom, co s ním souvisí* claims that the concept of repression has many forms and introduces the example of the citizens of The Soviet Union.

“Repression in the SSSR cannot be understood merely as a sanction on the part of retributive institution; it has to be seen also in the sphere of administrative and property sanction produced by a change in economy and ownership conditions. Such kind of punishment caused permanent deterioration of material situation, a loss of job or possibility to study and it often meant restrictions in free movement for people who were affected by this form of repression.” (Reiman: 64)

The same author also declares that the regime does not care if prosecuted or charged persons are real political enemies.

“From the point of view of its function, it was absolutely indifferent who will be afflicted with terror there. Its first aim was not the suppression of active opponents but the whole social effect of terror on the society.” (Reiman: 76)

If we look into our own history, we can find many examples which illustrate the use of this strategy by the Communist regime in former Czechoslovakia. It was quite common that disloyal activities or behaviour of one concrete person brought along that all his or her family had to cope with its consequences. For instance, if someone emigrated or openly declared his or her religious views, other members of the family had problems with the national police, they could nevermore travel abroad and younger generation was usually forbidden to study.

Another source of the readers' feeling of terror comes from the fact that dystopian stories do not follow common principles which are valid in the most of other novels but also should be valid in modern societies of nowadays. Having experienced all his or her suffering, we can hardly hope that the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or *The Handmaid's Tale* will finally wait to see justice. Neither can we expect that the regimes will esteem such human virtues as for instance family life, maternal instinct, love, respect for elderly people, etc. Everything is

subjected to the ideology of the political system and its putting into practice. Therefore, in *The Handmaid's Tale* the new-born babies are taken away from their mothers and given to the Wife of the Household as the law of life in their community demands. Similarly, children in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are encouraged to spy their parents and eventually denounce them to the police although it naturally sentences them to death. Generally, political interests and commands stay superior to the principles of humanity and to natural emotions. People described in dystopian novels are supposed to obey strict laws and cooperate with the regimes in order to form perfectly functioning societies. However, all those seemingly logic rules finally result in totally inhuman systems where people become living machines which blindly follow the orders from the authorities. As Andrew Heywood writes in his work *Politické ideologie*, the objective of totalitarianism is to create a fully loyal and absolutely obedient citizen. He asserts that in totalitarian regimes collective welfare is always superior to individual well-being. There exists collective egoism which entirely absorbs individual egoism. The only human qualities that are required from people are unconditioned loyalty and obedience. (Heywood: 232) Moreover, the main characters seem to be almost the only ones who refuse to be obedient.

Although there are some secret organizations doing rebellious activities in both novels, the most of time the protagonists feel like being surrounded by a loyal crowd of fanaticized people who would not hesitate to denounce them if they got to know about the protagonists' illegal thoughts or deeds. Therefore, Offred and Winston live in permanent atmosphere of anxiety and fear of being detected. A typical representative of the fanatic adherents of the regime in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is embodied in the already mentioned figure of Tom Parson who is a workmate and neighbour of Winston. George Orwell portrays him as follows:

“He was a fattish but active man of paralysing stupidity, a mass of imbecile enthusiasm – one of those completely unquestioning, devoted drudges on whom, more even than on the Thought Police, the stability of the Party depended.” (Orwell: 24)

Further, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale* – as the typical representatives of totalitarian dystopias – deal with the theme of so-called “brainwashing”. This concept denotes an intentional and systematic manipulation with human thinking which is often practiced by various religious sects or extremist political movements. People exposed to brainwashing are forced (sometimes unobtrusively) to give up their own opinions and ideas in order to accept different beliefs which are convenient for the manipulator. Such process of actually replacing someone's personality by another is accomplished by means of many strategies which usually

imply drug-taking, purpose undermining of the person's self-confidence and long-term or repetitive exposition to the ideas which are to be adopted. As it was mentioned above, dictator states utilize their own ideologies for manipulation with the citizens which ensure them to reach the goals of their policy and gain total power over the people. This brainwashing is carried out by several strategies among which belong above all political propaganda and manipulation with information. The latter can be perceived by the readers as other source of their depressive feelings because during the reading they find themselves in a strange alienated environment where the facts do not mean any stable values.

“The Gileadean regime, which aims to be ubiquitous and internalized by the population (...) imposes its power through brainwashing and strict surveillance undertaken by security forces: the Angels (army), the Eyes (“invisible” police), and the Guardians.”
(The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood: 52)

The reality in totalitarian states can be changed whenever it does not suit the regime so nor the readers, neither the main characters can rely on their notion about the world. Regarding the facts, nothing is unchangeable in totalitarian dystopias (an extreme case appears in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* when O'Brien forces Winston to believe that two and two make five). George Orwell includes the theme of deliberate manipulation with information throughout the whole story of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The Ministry of True, a place where Winston works, ironically handles purpose changing of reality and inventing false information which are continuously (more or less dramatically) adjusted according to what version is the most suitable for the Party at particular moment. The Ministry of True functions like a huge editor's office but instead of providing actual and truthful information about the present situation it focuses on slight modification of the past so that the citizens gradually become disorientated as they are permanently maintained in lies. The regime plays with psyche and consciousness of its citizens who can nevermore get any evidence about people or things which were deleted from history forever. Whatever existed yesterday does not necessarily exist today if the Party has decided to deny it. Thus, the country which was considered an ally of Oceania (either Eastasia or Eurasia) the previous day becomes its political enemy from day to day. It actually does not mean any fundamental change in the life of people there because their living conditions remain poor anyhow, no matter with what country Oceania is at war. Nevertheless, having been mystified repeatedly in the sphere of their knowledge about the world, people more and more lose contact with reality. This strategy also implies that whether the citizens believe in any version of the truth, they can never be right and therefore, they are

always seen as mistaken in their thoughts by the Party. In addition, the only result of steady re-writing of political enemies could be that people will probably feel endangered by both states and they will feel even more attached towards their only protector, Big Brother. The protagonists' past, memories and general knowledge are exposed to the mercy of the political authorities and they can be changed or denied at any time. At first, Offred as well as Winston realize that they are subjected to this manipulation with information but after years of living in such conditions they also start to hesitate about where is the truth. They suddenly have doubts about their memories and it is more and more difficult for them to recall how the life looked like before the political situation changed. This confusion leads them to the feeling of mental insanity which consequently, weakens them in their determination to struggle against the dictatorship. The main characters' memories hurt them a lot because living in the world of totalitarian states is too much worse than their previous life. On the other hand, their remembrances and general consciousness about the past represent the only evidence that the world was not always so bad. This certainty probably holds up hopes to them that the situation could eventually get better again. That is why they are afraid of losing the contact with the past and why they dread that their memories could gradually fade out (or have already faded out). Offred even feels guilty about her memory growing weak:

“I need to remember what they look like. I try to hold them still behind my eyes, their faces, like pictures in an album. But they won't stay still for me (...) It's my fault. I am forgetting too much.” (Atwood: 203)

3. THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

Women characters and the issue of sexuality play an important paper in these dystopian novels although at first sight, it could seem to the readers that these topics refer only (or for the most part) to *The Handmaid's Tale*. Throughout the centuries women were exposed to subjugation and oppression for the benefit of men so it is logical that such subjection will not overpass them neither in the fictitious environment of undesirable dystopian societies. "This world has always belonged to men (...)," asserts Simone de Beauvoir in her study about the development of the position of women within the human society. "The mankind does not attribute supremacy to the sex which gives birth but to the one which kills." (Beauvoir: 27-28)

On the other hand, in spite of their inferior status, women have always held some special power over the men population and they could manipulate them if they had enough diplomatic abilities for that. In the eyes of men, either as objects of their desires, or as proprietresses of future life, women have always occupied a prominent position within the human society. Since the first manifestations of art or literature, they have been chanted and have served as a source of inspiration and admiration for poets, sculptors and other artists. Anyway, this adoration of women does not suit the dictator political systems which need to attract the attention of people entirely towards its ideology or leading authority. That is why the position of women in totalitarian societies (including those described in dystopian novels) is often difficult because the regime may consider them even more dangerous than men. If not, they lose at least their status of an admired sex there, as Simone de Beauvoir alludes:

"In military dictatorships and totalitarian regimes woman is never more a privileged object. It is comprehensible that in a rich country, where the citizens do not quite know what the meaning of their lives is, women are considered a kind of godhood. (...) On the contrary, socialistic ideologies require mutual conformity of all human beings and they refuse that any category of people would be perceived as an idol in the future."
(Beauvoir: 71)

As it has been already said in the introduction, sexual relations of the protagonists of dystopias often become a medium for their struggle against the rigid political system. However, in both stories the relations with the opposite sex – which firstly should serve as a functional instrument for gaining certain power and for practicing active resistance to the regime – later turn into the source of the protagonist's destruction. What has been originally meant to be just an expression of political disloyalty gets gradually out of the main characters' control and it leads them to their final detection by the regime. In chapter 2 we have already

discussed the general principles of totalitarian states but another aspects of similar political establishments should not been left aside. Above all, in both novels the state policy goes beyond the limits of the public sphere. The regimes portrayed by Orwell and Atwood intent to take control over the life of an individual and deprive him or her of the right for any private life. The authorities of such states want to gain entire attention of every inhabitant in order to prevent rebellions against the regime. From the point of view of the leading party, an ideal follower of the policy of an authoritarian country should insert all his or her emotions and passions into the support of the regime instead of giving it to his or her family, eventually to other persons. Therefore, people are discouraged from any kind of emotional relation based on love or mutual liking, including friendship. This absurd idea is suggested in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where contracting of marriage and consequently the choice of sexual partners belong to the competencies of the Party which established a special committee for this occasion. Its aim is to match couples from people who evidently do not feel any mutual affection. Thus, Winston has to get married with an emotionally distant woman who is a typical obedient follower of the regime. In their marriage she functions like a real human machine programmed according to the orthodox rules of the Party, ready to fulfill all its commands.

The only passion among people which the political system is not able to avoid remains the sexual instinct which – as our natural tendency – is too deeply rooted in each of us. More rational readers of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may consider the relationship between Winston and Julia just to be a political protest expressed through sexual and emotional bond. Other readers may see their relation from more romantic point of view as a natural result of human need for mutual understanding in that inhospitable environment. At any rate, the intention of totalitarian systems to substitute real love by political loyalty, even love for the regime itself falls flat. Some critics actually affirm that there exist a special sexual relation among Winston and the Party represented by the person of O'Brien.

“In a way the whole book is structured around a love triangle, in which O'Brien extinguishes the erotic connection between Julia and Winston, marking the triumph of the Party against a “blow” that had threatened it, and reestablishing both chastity and political orthodoxy.” (Gleason: 235)

As the authorities in these novels feel endangered by the existence of human passions, they also try to limit this natural instinct as much as possible. This is clearly visible in Atwood's dystopia where sexual relations are reduced to a simple reproductive ritual which takes place

once a month and is strictly released from anything that could remind romance. The aim of such sexual act is not any pleasure but mere conception of a baby. Simultaneously, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* sexual act among husband and wife is called “the duty to the Party” in order to deprive it from any other dimension than the political one. The procreation is considered the act of reinforcement of the Party as children are easily manipulated and are supposed to become eager spies of their own parents.

Moreover, in *The Handmaid’s Tale* intercourses are not only controlled as far as their emotional extension, but also as regards their participants. They are allowed only among the Commanders of the Households and their Handmaids. In addition, both sexes are kept far from temptation but women are guarded much more than men. At least, Commanders and other important men can visit brothels where they can afford some relief to their sexual desires and needs.

“Ironically, in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, resistance to the rules of the Gileadean regime is provided by the regime itself in the existence of clubs like Jezebel’s, where the Commanders entertain themselves with “loose” women.” (Atwood: 54)

Also in this respect, women are oppressed because they are not allowed to satisfy their needs; while men can afford it and further, by means of sexual subjection of women. The same strategy is applied by the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. However, in both novels the prostitutes appear only among women who belong to despised social classes which are not perceived as the elite of the totalitarian society. It means that they are not the members of the Party, not the Handmaids or Wives. They are classified as politically undesirable and ideologically spoilt whereas the existence of loose women among the honest citizens is not tolerated.

Talking about loose women, it is necessary to comment on this significant motif which appears in these dystopias. Normally, in modern civilizations prostitutes are perceived as marginal persons standing at the edge of society but here, they represent an important group of women. They symbolize particular protest against the strict rules of dictatorships and also embody an eternal demand for pleasure. The existence of prostitution (either in the form of night clubs as in the case of Jezebel’s or in the form of a lonely old woman like in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) paradoxically raises hope that people can never completely deny their natural instincts and just let themselves be turned into living rational machines blindly following the orders of the regime. Prostitutes are connected with loose morals which contradict the severe principles of totalitarian ideologies. At any rate, the theme of prostitution is not used by

chance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As Cass R. Sunstein writes in his essay on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* about the theme of sexual and political freedom, George Orwell believed that:

“(...) political totalitarian and sexual repression march hand in hand, both logically and empirically. (...) it is no accident that authoritarian nations – Afghanistan under the Taliban, for example, or communist China – are concerned both to crush dissent and to suppress sexual liberty. In free and less free countries, those who insist on the protection of sexual liberty (in such domains as prostitution and pornography) often claim to be political dissidents, or close cousins of political dissidents (...)” (Gleason: 234)

In both novels the repression of human sexuality is clearly noticeable also in the area of dressing. George Orwell expresses this tendency by means of unisex overalls which have become universal clothes for the Party's members as the membership represents the most important aspect of fashion in Oceania. On the top of it, the members of the Anti-Sex League wear a scarlet cordon which accentuates their determination to live in celibate. The colour serves as a warning signalization for the others and at the same time, its expressiveness visibly underlines the affiliation within this group. The cordon itself suggests the discipline and impenetrability of its members as if it were a modern chastity belt. Margaret Atwood uses another style of dressing for the Handmaids. Their characteristic red dress is designed in such a way that it perfectly follows the principles of the Gileadean society. It partly respects the demand for women's health (for example, the shoes without heels should protect their backbones but this type of shoes is also less attractive) and above all, the dress prevents them from being seen as it is a long robe covering all their body besides the face. (Atwood: 18) This kind of clothes not only makes them anonymous and almost invisible for other people (especially for men) but it further keeps them from excessive perception of their surroundings. They practically cannot see because of a special white bonnet with lateral wings and a pair of gloves guards them against any possible touch of not only the others but also of themselves which could provoke undesired temptation.

On the other hand, even the most rigid dictatorships realize that total repression of sexual instinct is hardly accomplishable so they come out with applying compensatory mechanisms for relieving redundant sexual energy. Both novels comprise them in detail. As people are not allowed to satisfy their natural needs (whether those emotional or sexual ones), they embrace the opportunity to content them by means of the alternatives which the regime offers them. That is why the majority of the inhabitants of both Republic of Gilead and Oceania accept the political ideology and do not resist active expressing of their admiration of the authorities. Through zealous collaboration with the regime, they can satisfy their sexual deprivation,

although probably unconsciously. This idea is included and greatly elaborated especially in Orwell's novel:

“Political orthodoxy is a consequence of sexual frustration, which governments can channel into marching and flag-waving and the Two Minutes Hate. Sexual satisfaction removes the taste for these forms of political participation; people will no longer “get excited” once they are happy “inside” themselves.” (Gleason: 237)

This strategy of compensation is well-known in psychological sphere and is practiced – often without intention – by many people when they are not successful in some area of their lives. Such defense mechanism protects us from feelings of anxiety, tension or frustration in particular sphere so that we can focus our attention on another compensatory activity. The idea comes from Sigmund Freud who supposed that people utilized the strategy of compensation especially in order to cope with sexual and aggressive impulses which could not be expressed directly or satisfied immediately. “The basic instincts cannot be changed but we can change the objects to which these instincts are directed.” (Atkinson: 618) It often leads to creativity or high working efficiency or – as in the case of dictatorships – to enthusiasm and high political involvement. The idea is well expressed in Orwell's concept of Anti-Sex League of Youth. The name itself suggests that the members of this group intent to suppress human sexuality; may be so openly and systematically in order to overmaster their own sexual instincts. The author also mentions that some women – especially the young ones – become the eagerest supporters of the Party which – according to the previous psychological explanation – probably springs from their inner sexual frustration.

Regarding the theme of women in dystopian novels, it is indispensable to mention not only their position in relation to men, but also the mutual relationships among the members of the fair sex. Simone de Beauvoir claims that women – in contrast to various oppressed groups – have never held together, neither have they intended to join in order to change their inferior status as many other disadvantaged groups did. She further motivates this women passivity by the idea that women have nothing more in common than their existence or membership within the female sex. On the contrary, other subjected groups could fight against their oppressors on the grounds of their distinct cultural, religious or social beliefs, etc.

“The proletarians called themselves ‘we’. The same did the blacks. They considered themselves to be a subject and thus they transform the townsmen and white people into ‘the second ones’. (...) Women – except of some congresses which remain abstract manifestations – never say ‘we’ about themselves. (...) The proletarians accomplished the revolution in Russia; the blacks did it in Haiti; the aborigines are

fighting in Indochina; the actions of women have always been just symbolic agitations where they never gain anything more than what men wanted to give them. They did not conquer anything; they only got something. It is because they do not have concrete means to create unity. (...) They have no past, no history, no religion which would be their own“ (Beauvoir: 13)

This idea rather contradicts Margaret Atwood’s vision of ancient connection and mutual silent sympathy between women which are insinuated throughout her novel by means of the allusions about the previous inhabitant of Offred’s room. Although that woman is already dead, the readers can perceive certain kind of communication among both women as if the dead Handmaid were a guide who helps Offred to bear the severity of everyday life in Gilead.

However, as women know that they can exercise particular power over the opposite sex – above all through gaining men’s favour by means of their sexual attractiveness, they often become rivals instead of being fellows. It occurs because they perceive other women as competitors who could threaten their position in the eyes of a certain man. Men usually give priority to physical confrontation which can quickly resolve their conflict. In that manner accumulated negative emotions and redundant energy are easily relieved and thereby some kind of catharsis occurs. This does not necessarily mean that those male enemies automatically become friends forever but next time they will probably refrain meeting each other or they will respect each other’s territory. On the other hand, women – maybe partly because they are not supposed to approach such direct battle in the eyes of the society – resort to machinations (often very elaborate) and other indirect forms of fighting. They are able to grow hatred, enviousness and other negative feelings in them all their lives because they mostly do not turn to physical violence. Some women even like psychological manipulation with other persons which can be much more difficult for possible enemies than physical confrontation or pain. Moreover, they do not hesitate to utilize “weapons” which are immediately connected with every woman. Thus, the readers can notice that the Gileadean women become winners or losers in terms of their fertility, pregnancy or motherhood. This phenomenon is clearly visible in one of the shopping scenes when a pregnant Handmaid called Janine enters the Milk and Honey shop. Although she does not have to go shopping anymore because of her pregnancy, she rather puts her unborn baby at risk than miss the opportunity to show her belly in public and in such way demonstrate her temporal superiority over other women there. (Atwood: 36) She simply enjoys her privileged status among them and she likes the feeling of being watched by her fellows who cannot resist envy. The Gileadean society liquidates sterile women so that only those who are fertile can survive

there. Therefore, Janine actually communicates in this manner that she will survive. Such behaviour proves that the Darwinian concept of the survival of the fittest is not merely restricted to animal world.

In dystopian societies extreme living conditions force everyone to fight firstly for his or her own survival and this tendency neither omit women who, as it has been mentioned yet, do not share any concrete interest. Therefore, women rather prefer struggling individually than all together and thus they create enemies among themselves. In *The Handmaid's Tale* the regime takes advantage of the natural rivalry among women and gives them as many reasons as possible to provoke their mutual hatred. For example, the state ideology based on increasing the natality makes women compete on the field of fertility and motherhood. The Wives are made jealous when they have to participate in that public reproductive ritual between the Commanders and Handmaids whilst, on the other hand, Handmaids hate Wives because the latter take their new-born children and can bring them up. Margaret Atwood confirms the idea of women's emulation with the following words:

"Some people mistakenly think that the society in *The Handmaid's Tale* is one in which all men have power, and all women don't. That is not true, because it is a true totalitarianism: therefore a true hierarchy. Those at the top have power, those at the bottom, don't. And those at the bottom include men, and those at the top include women. The women at the top have different kinds of power from the men at the top, but they have power nonetheless, and some of the power they have is power over other women."(Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood: 53)

Nevertheless, we can also find several examples of positive relations among women, especially in Atwood's novel. At least, they are able to cooperate occasionally in order to fight for some higher interest or to gain particular benefit for themselves. However, there are not just acquisitive relationships. Offred and Moira are real friends and they do not let the authorities destroy their friendship although both women cannot show their fellow feeling publicly. The rules within Gileadean society do not permit any manifestations of sympathies among Handmaids who cannot speak to each other, not touch one another, but still they find a way to communicate if necessary. Offred and Moira rather prefer to keep their friendship to themselves which probably makes them believe that they possess something unique and above all, something just for their own. Further, when their fellow Janine seems to go mad, all Handmaids forget their previous negative feelings about Janine's pregnancy and help to conceal her momentary attack of mental insanity. Otherwise, she would be sentenced to death as someone already inutile. It may be that in that critical moment these women not only try to

safe just their fellow Janine, but in general, they also try to defend the life of an individual against the cruel regime. It is possible that they simply imagine themselves in Janine's position and this thought forces them not to remain indifferent towards her. With such an act, they want to demonstrate that the authority cannot get them if they join their efforts together.

Offred even likes her dead ancestress, the woman who inhabited the room before her arrival and committed suicide there. She believes that her predecessor left her a secret message which indirectly encourages her to endure and never give up resisting the current unfavourable conditions.

“Behind me I feel her presence, my ancestress, my double, turning in mid-air under the chandelier, in her costume of stars and feathers, a bird stopped in flight, a woman made into an angel, waiting to be found. By me this time. How could I have believed I was alone here? There were always two of us.” (Atwood: 305)

In conclusion, the relations among women in both novels are significantly limited by their living conditions and by the political regime itself. Sometimes the difficult situation makes women to suspect each other or perceive the others as their competitors in the eternal struggle for the survival of every individual. On the other hand, there often exists special solidarity among women who stay in the same miserable position. They become silent allies and join together when the regime endangers either the life of one of them, or the life of more women.

4. THE PROBLEM OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The most totalitarian political systems try to isolate the inhabitants from any external influences in order to deprive them of the possibility to compare local and external living conditions. In addition, in the eyes of these regimes, people could become “spoiled” by the foreign way of thinking and thus become disobedient and probably demand more liberty for themselves. For many years, The Iron Curtain, dividing Western and Eastern Europe, was a classic example of such intention of separation. As it has been already outlined in Chapter 2, typical authoritarian countries apply the strategy of suppression of civil rights which creates many limitations and has often a deep-going impact.

Firstly, in totalitarian states there is a perceptible lack of information. People do not have enough information about the real state of affairs. They are kept purposely in ignorance or in a fictitious reality. The political leaders usually proportionate them false news about state prosperity and permanent menace on the part of foreign countries. If the citizens have some piece of information at all, it is based on lies and fictions in order to support political ideology and increase its popularity among people. Censorship is an omnipresent part of everyday life and propagandistic news are the only source of information for them. George Orwell analyzes the theme of censorship in his dystopia when he introduces this topic by creating the Ministry of Truth whose name itself lies about its real function. The Party, in general, makes use of the crucial connection between human language and thinking. Its policy is significantly based on three important pillars which are doublethink, newspeak and manipulation with the past. Its main political mottos (*War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength*) are actually contradictory puns which sound quite simple at first sight but only systematic brainwashing can make people believe in such nonsensical paradoxes. Doublethink and newspeak virtually represent mechanisms of brainwashing because they appeal on rejecting one’s memory and all previous ways of thinking and speaking in fact. Newspeak is presented as the only language in the world which vocabulary is constantly decreasing. The Party asserts that it will make communication easier (in both production and understanding) but it just causes that people’s linguistic means are consciously lowered to minimum in order to prevent clear expression of one’s thoughts. Reducing of human language and vocabulary is desired because of consequent reduction of people’s thinking which is considered an effective method for preventing thought crime. The citizens are supposed to progressively turn into empty machines without their own opinions and their speech should become robotic in this way.

The absurdity of political lies which are brazenly offered to people in Oceania reflects in the names of numerous institutions, products and many other things. For example, the designation of the four main ministries there sounds almost ridiculous as the readers know that they actually deal with exactly opposite spheres. The function of the Ministry of Truth has been already discussed in this chapter. Similarly, the Ministry of Peace does not ensure what one could presume on the basis of its name. It is occupied by constant fighting and inciting people against fictitious enemies. The Ministry of Plenty also sounds absurd because the life in Oceania surely cannot be characterized as being abundant. There is a continuous lack of food and various kinds of goods, people live in dilapidated houses and look run-down. The last of the four institutions, the Ministry of Love proves to be probably the most invented lie in the end of the story as the readers meet with its inhuman and brutal practices applied on disloyal persons in order to make them obedient. Love is the only thing which the poor dissidents and renegades cannot encounter there once they are detected and dragged away into that horrific building. Another paradox names invented by the regime appear throughout the novel in the area of everyday objects. Both Victory Gin and Cigarettes symbolize the senselessness of the whole political system which has not brought any victory to its inhabitants yet. Instead of being named after some fundamental event in the past or to announce an optimistic vision of Oceania's future, they are simply drugs that are provided to people with the view of getting them stupefied. The same may be said about so called memory holes, the devices which can be found in the Ministry of Truth. They are openings in the walls which serve for burning newspapers, documents and any other evidences about the past that, just at the moment, do not conform to the present state of affairs in Oceania. Thus, the destroyed material is nevermore available so that nobody can recall it in the future.

No access to information and the constant flow of lies cause that people living in such environment gradually lose contact with the reality. They do not know what the truth is and whether the world used to be the same before. They are not sure whether they remember the things properly as far as how their life looked like before. Our identity and self-awareness consist of our memories and experiences. People who lost their memory, for example as a consequence of an injury, at the same time lost a piece of themselves (if not their complete personality). Nevertheless, some recollections would rather hurt than help us. Therefore, it is a natural defensive mechanism of everyone's psyche that his or her brain displaces those injuring thoughts. In some cases like when one experiences mental shock, the whole life period can be transported into the area of unconsciousness where it is stored in a safe distance from conscious mind but close enough to reappear treacherously in the scene of our dreams or

in some unguarded moment of reminiscence. Margaret Atwood utilizes such flashbacks throughout the story of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Some of them are unpredictable remembrances which surprise Offred especially at night when she has no control over her mind. She suffers from constantly recurrent nightmare about her running away with her little daughter, both finally being caught. On the other hand, as it has been already outlined in Chapter 2, she is afraid of forgetting too much, not only details from her previous life but also such basic facts like faces of her family members. However, although the main characters of both dystopian novels do not want to forget and try to retain or recollect as much as possible in order to preserve their personality as well as history in general, their memories prove to be a deathtrap rather than their hope. It may be that their memory, finally able to recall all seemingly lost details, becomes a source of the protagonists' destruction. Offred eventually realizes that she has never turned into a breeding machine produced by the Gileadean society and that she still longs for love although under such inhuman conditions which deprived her of her husband. The relationship with Nick is probably a reason of her detection and transport from the Household. Similarly, Winston is detected when he stops being careful enough and cannot resist meeting Julia regularly in an attic room in the antique shop. The readers might suspect that the protagonists would be anyhow entrapped, even if they had not given the regime any concrete opportunity as their illegal relations have been. George Orwell also includes numerous flashbacks in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Winston, who is already apathetic by systematic brainwashing, drinking gin and stereotype life in the middle of a fanaticized crowd, has forgotten or suppressed many of his memories, especially those of his childhood but they still – now and then – come to light. He cannot avoid recalling his mother and little sister, who both died at his expense. He also remembers sexual intercourse with an old prostitute of which he feels ashamed and he despise himself because of it even after several years. Finally, he encounters with a piece of a nursery rhyme which he does not recall completely but it persecutes him persistently throughout the story as if finding the missing words meant an entire discovery of his past and a key to all his questions about it.

Those who do not want to come to terms with the current situation hope for the existence of some illegal organization preparing some rebellion but they have scarce tidings about it because people do not dare to speak on similar topics loudly. In both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale* there exist rumours among the inhabitants about the existence of some illegal organizations. People generally know about them but nobody takes risk to admit it in public. It is because not only active speaking about any kind of rebellion against the regime could be dangerous but also passive listening to such debates could result fatal for any

of the participants. Margaret Atwood utilizes the name of Mayday which refers to political resistance and permeates the story as a mystical phantom evoking momentary raise of hope but also fear of revelation in the readers as well as in the protagonists of the novel. Although Offred and some other Handmaids from the Household are interested in getting more information about the secret organization, nobody dares to ask too much because it would seem suspicious. It requires a lot of diplomacy and pragmatic skills on the part of Offred to find out whether her new shopping fellow belongs to that illegal network as well as the previous one. She can only use indirect hints about their password and she has to deduce everything just from scarce answers or the events in her surroundings. For example, she usually goes to the Wall and hopes that she will not recognize her husband among the hanging bodies with covered faces there. She is naturally concerned in what happened to her husband and child but she is both afraid of inquiring and, moreover, she has nobody to ask it. Similarly, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the main character's life is full of doubts and subaudition about other people. Winston has to rely on his own intuition as he thinks that O'Brien is a member of an illegal organization. He deduces it just from few words which the former said him and from a brief eye contact because he has no possibility to ask him personally as there are screens or spies almost everywhere.

Regarding the theme of this chapter, poor communication among people is also appreciable in both novels. It reflects, for instance, in a way of greeting in Atwood's novel where salutes are almost the only louder utterances which are allowed to be interchanged among the Handmaids but they are reduced to routine formulas reminding religious rituals during church ceremonies. Such prescribed and stereotype patterns of communication and social behaviour serve as a prevention of natural, but unwanted talks and this strategy contributes to support the method of brainwashing. The limited communication in *The Handmaid's Tale* can be further seen in the shopping scenes when the readers meet with special signs designed for each shop in order to avoid inscriptions according to the Gileadean prohibition of reading for all the women. Living in so inhospitable environment, Offred misses some companion all the time so that she often believes in special link between her and the ex-inhabitant of her room who committed suicide before Offred came to the Household. She sees hidden tidings in few marks which the dead woman left behind there and she tries to imagine what her ancestor intended to communicate her through these messages.

Speaking about secret communication, as it has been already discussed in previous chapter, the clothes also constitute a means of non-verbal communication because it actually conveys a

lot of information about the person who is wearing it. It informs, above all, about his or her social origin, status and privileges.

Totalitarian states are so obsessed with preserving their total power that they even deny the existence of the past world. They intent to make people believe that there has always been the same political establishment and that if someone recalls different situation, it is just a dream which has to be forgotten. The inhabitants, exposed to such treatment, after some time start doubting about the verity of their memories and they also hesitate about their mental health. It is the result of systematic brainwashing on the part of the regime which is officially called propaganda or political ideology. The lack of information and all the conforming lies offered by the regime produce the feelings of deep uncertainty, even mental insanity in some individuals.

“The Party said that Oceania had never been in alliance with Eurasia. He, Winston Smith, knew that Oceania had been in alliance with Eurasia as short a time as four years ago. But where did that knowledge exist? Only in his own consciousness, which in any case must soon be annihilated. And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed – if all records told the same tale – then the lie passed into history and became truth. ‘Who controls the past,’ ran the Party slogan, ‘controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.’” (Orwell: 37)

Another important area, noticeably affected by state policy of dictatorships is the sphere of education. It is now perceived not as a universal cultivation of people, but as a rigidly limited upbringing whose aim is to train up politically loyal and conscious citizens. On the other hand, some totalitarian states rather prefer to rule over an uneducated crowd of people who would blindly follow all the commands and would believe all the absurdities invented by political authorities. At this point, it is sufficient to remind the closure of all the universities in Czechoslovakia during the Nazi occupation or disabled access to studying for politically uncomfortable persons in the same country during the Communist era few decades later. Briefly speaking, totalitarian states consider intelligent people to be dangerous and if they do not persecute them because of it, they at least deprive them of the possibility of any education.

Maybe the most important paper within education is represented by the ability of reading, the primary source of information. Therefore, this human skill is considerably suppressed, if not totally prohibited in both analyzed novels. In *The Handmaid's Tale* reading is made impossible by means of global non-availability of any books or magazines. Thus, even one seemingly unintelligible phrase revealed by Offred in her cupboard has extreme value for her. Similarly, the opportunity to read in the Commander's office is some kind of privilege for her.

“On these occasions I read quickly, voraciously, almost skimming, trying to get as much into my head as possible before the next long starvation. If it were eating it would be the gluttony of the famished, if it were sex it would be a swift furtive stand-up in an alley somewhere.” (Atwood: 194)

She even welcomes the Commander’s request for playing Scrabble with him because it is also forbidden as something threatening to the regime.

“This was once the game of old women, old men, in the summers or in retirement villas, to be played when there was nothing good on television. Or of adolescents, once, long long ago. (...) Now of course it’s something different. 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. Now he’s compromised himself. It’s as if he’s offered me drugs.” (Atwood: 148-149)

Nonetheless, as the previous example demonstrates, even in the period of extreme oppression people are able to hand over important information with one another. It is proved by psychologists that in situations of high jeopardy we are capable of mobilization of both our physical and psychical efforts in order to survive or accomplish certain steps leading to our survival. This fact was brought to light, for instance, during the Second World War when people (whether it were some brave individuals or members of particular rebellious organization) often managed to invent very ingenious ways of communication in their struggle and undermining the regime. Although it could seem to be in conflict with the natural instinct of self-preservation, sometimes people prefer participating in any kind of active resistance than passive observation of injustice. For them, fighting meant a manifestation of life while silent waiting for a change was seen as a resignation, something like a slow dying without any objection.

PRACTICAL PART

1. THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF WINSTON SMITH, THE PROTAGONIST OF *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR*

1.1. First signs of rebellion

The readers meet Winston Smith in the very beginning of the novel. The first chapter portrays him as an ordinary man who seemingly got used to the existence in highly inhospitable environment of a totalitarian state called Oceania. While the readers have to get accustomed to such extremely harsh living conditions described on the introductory pages, Winston proves to be a man quite adapted to the life full of monitoring and impeding danger. One might feel there like a haunted animal which has fallen into a dangerous area where anyone can be caught if he or she does not take care. On the contrary, Winston acts almost naturally there because he knows how he is supposed to behave in order to avoid drawing attention to himself. He even knows what kind of facial expression is acceptable to show when he is being watched by the screen in his flat.

However, the readers discover quite soon that Winston is not so obedient follower of the Party as he may appear at first sight. There are already first signs of his dissatisfaction represented by his intention to write a diary which he bought in an antiquarian bookshop. This notebook embodies his disloyalty towards the political regime in several ways at once. Firstly, it is a kind of goods which is not allowed to possess. Secondly, he is going to use it as his private diary where he wants to communicate something important although, at the moment of starting writing, he does not have any idea yet about what information he should include. Writing a diary can be perceived as a multiple-purpose activity. From the point of view of psychology, it is often recommended as a therapy which helps people to organize their emotions and thoughts. In addition, it is an introspectional method leading to a particular inner meditation, even catharsis as we can express our feelings directly without any censorship there. Further, such a diary symbolizes a possible source of information for next generations which, by means of reading it, could better understand mentality and problems of their ancestors. Each person longs for immortality and Winston may hope that if he leaves some tangible mark, he cannot be forgotten by future generations or, eventually, destroyed by

the dictatorship which normally makes people vanish. In any case, he considers writing a diary, above all, to be his silent protest against the regime.

“Even with nothing written in it, it was a compromising possession. The thing that he was about to do was to open a diary. This was not illegal (nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws), but if detected it was reasonably certain that it would be punished by death, or at least by twenty-five years in a forced-labour camp.” (Orwell: 8)

On the other hand, his bravery and determination to rebel has rather momentary or volatile than steady character. His mood varies between moments of fear and rebellion. Paradoxically, he realizes that he will be detected in any case, no matter whether he has really committed some crime or not.

From the beginning of the novel Winston is described as a man who is not satisfied with the policy of the Party. Despite of its persistent propaganda and aggressive endeavour to repress the citizens, the Party represented by the figure of Big Brother has not gained Winston's favour and has not won control over his thinking yet. The readers encounter him as a man full of doubts, constantly hesitating about the surrounding world and about his intention to change it somehow. He knows that even his doubts could lead to his destruction but after all, in a fit of momentary courage he deliberately utilizes the notebook for verbalization of his illegal thoughts and thus, he commits real thought crime for the first time. Initially, Winston does not lose hope for some change in the future. In spite of general distant relations and mutual suspicion among people in Oceania, he does not feel completely alone and searches for minute indications of alliance in his surroundings. He even sees some kind of friendship in gestures or eye contacts as in the case of O'Brien. Although he is full of anxiety, he also has certain expectations. He rightly supposes that the regime in his country cannot be completely invincible and that not all its inhabitants agree with its policy. It is not in his individual power to struggle successfully against such deeply-rooted political system but he places his hopes on the proletarians who create the major part of Oceania's population. At the same time, he realizes that their alliance in eventual rebellion against the Party is hardly contrivable because of the impossibility of communication and grouping among people there. Thus, the readers see that Winston does not embody any active rebel. He is rather a kind of passive, steadily reluctant and rather silent critic who determines to take certain steps to protest in momentary attacks of anger or discontent and mainly on the grounds of outside impulses. If he had not met Julia, he would have probably remained relatively imperceptible man, constantly suspicious and unsatisfied with the political situation but too faint-hearted to show it publicly.

His opposition would have probably stayed at mental level or in the phase of writing a diary until he would be caught and vaporized one day. Only his relation with Julia and her open hatred towards the Party encourage him to become involved in more active resistance although it does not moderate his fear. However, coward persons usually dare to behave more bravely with someone courageous along their side.

1.2. Inner conflicts and permanent self-control

The difficult living conditions installed by the policy of the Party make people conduct almost in a schizophrenic way as it often imposes contradictory requirements on the citizens' behaviour. One of the most propagated pillars of the regime is acting of the society as one collective. People should overlook their individual needs or ambitions and prefer collective good instead but this goal can never be accomplished as the Party, at the same time, does not enable deeper relations among them. People are dissuaded from mutual liking and they are kept in the state of permanent mistrust to each other. They can hardly cooperate and give up their own interests when they actually have to struggle every day for their survival in the middle of a hostile crowd. Thus, the citizens feel isolated and constantly endangered by the others but simultaneously, they have to pretend solidary willingness to be a part of that society. Winston experiences the same feelings because he also tries to act as a loyal person with clear conscience showing respect and acceptable inclination to his fellow-citizens but in fact, he is afraid of any situation of contact with any of them. He interprets seemingly unimportant meetings as indications of either incoming danger or signs of secret communication encouraging him to leave his apathy and obedience apart. He gets scared in such innocent situations as when his neighbour, Mrs. Parson, comes to ask a favour of him and he rightly feels terrified of her little children who are totally engaged in the organization of Spies. The regime has managed to turn him into a fearful man who behaves like a paranoid as he sees danger around every corner. It could be even said that Winston has become a split personality, someone like a famous figure of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. In public (that virtually means almost everywhere as there is practically no privacy in Oceania) he is forced to show "an official face" conforming to the Party but concurrently, he cannot completely suppress his real personality, although reduced now to its minimum. He is employed in the Ministry of Truth and his function there is to rewrite or directly destroy evidences about the past but his actual ego longs for revealing the truth instead. He has to adore Big Brother publicly in Two Minutes Hate but he would rather show likeness to the political dissident Emmanuel

Goldstein. These inner conflicts among his real desires and the demands of the Party naturally produce deep uncertainty and perplexity in him so that he finally hesitates about what he should do and what he should believe in.

It has been already commented on above that Winston has already got used to the life in totalitarian state and he is apparently aware of what he should say or how he should behave, even what expression he should put on in concrete places and situations. Nevertheless, it does not mean that he can break free and feel safe there. As the readers gradually find out, Winston controls and evaluates his conduct all the time. This permanent self-control inherently produces stress tension and it deprives him of any life energy. He cannot relax anywhere because all people around him behave as orthodox followers of the Party and because of the omnipresent screens there. Moreover, even if he could totally rely on his perfect self-mastery and effective masking of his real emotions, he still cannot be sure about those moments when he does not hold control over his body and mind. He is afraid that his thoughts may betray him during sleeping or that the accumulated repression of his natural behaviour would come out, for example, in the form of nervous tics. The screens are even able to detect abnormal physical processes like accelerated pulse or shaking hands due to excitedness. Winston feels uncomfortable in the company of his co-workers as everyone seems more enthusiastic about the regime and its horrible practices than himself. His reactions or reflections are extremely exaggerated if we judge them from the point of view of outside observers. However, they appear apprehensible within so adversary environment. For instance, any common man would possibly feel delighted, eventually embarrassed when being watched by an unknown girl but Winston immediately gets nervous and presumes that the girl probably plans to denounce him to Thought Police. No matter whether people show friendliness towards him or not, he always interprets their conduct firstly in terms of possible menace on their part.

1.3. Searching for the truth and the past

It is evident that fear has become a natural part of Winston's life but it is not his strongest emotion. He is even more paralyzed by his inability to believe the course of events in his country. He still cannot get accustomed to the idea perseveringly reminded by the Party that nothing has ever changed; that the world is the same as it used to be at any time before. Sometimes he thinks that he is the only person who has retained his memory yet. Due to his job, he naturally knows that the reality is continually reshaped according to the needs of the

political system in Oceania but as everyone around him accepts those lies without any protest, he now and again doubts about the past and the verity of his memories.

“Had it always been like this? Had food always tasted like this? (...) It was true that he had no memories of anything greatly different. In any time that he could accurately remember, there had never been quite enough to eat, one had never had socks or underclothes that were not full of holes, furniture had always been battered and rickety, rooms underheated, tube trains crowded, houses falling to pieces, bread darkcoloured, tea a rarity, coffee filthy-tasting, cigarettes insufficient – nothing cheap and plentiful except synthetic gin. (...) Why should one feel it to be intolerable unless one had some kind of ancestral memory that things had once been different?” (Orwell: 62-63)

Winston evidently knows that the Party supplies people with constant flow of lies because he, as an employee of the Ministry of Truth, actually takes part in this political strategy. Nevertheless, most of time he rewrites materials which have been already falsified before so that he is not in touch with real documents or evidences about the past. He remembers only one case of encountering an unquestionable proof about the Party’s manipulation with information when he, by chance, came across a newspaper cutting manifesting false accusation of three politics called Jones, Aaronson and Rutherford. Although this revelation occurred many years ago and has already turned into a vague remembrance (something like a waking dream), it is possible that just this small but important evidence urges Winston to go on searching the truth about the past. Consequently, as he hesitates about the truthful image of the previous world (that means before Revolution), he is further afraid that he may be mistaken and that all the absurdities dictated by the Party could be true. In addition, not only he suffers from uncertainty about what the world was like before the dictatorship had been introduced, but neither does he understand for what reason the present situation is happening. If there were some comprehensible aim or reason why people live in so poor conditions (for instance, some real war conflict), he might cope with it for some time but there is apparently no visible or logical cause for that. He knows that the Party is continuously alternating the name of Oceania’s enemy so that the whole fighting seems nonsensical.

Winston’s desire to learn more about the past and to understand better the meaning of the present course of events in this way is gradually increasing throughout the story until it becomes another form of his protest along with the foregoing diary. His absorption in searching for some evidence leads him to committing more and more trespasses of the rules there. For example, he neglects his civil duty to attend Community Centre and visits the proletarian district of the city where he should better not go around instead. The passage

describing his encounter with an old man in a proletarian pub documents Winston's need for discovering somebody who would confirm or overcome his presumptions about former times and who could eventually share his or her memories about it with him. For Winston, the old man symbolizes a living clue; someone on whose recalls he could reckon. He needs to know whether "the vanished world of capitalism" (Orwell: 90) was better to live in or whether it is just his improper illusion. However, he does not manage to gain any concrete information or evidence that would support his opinion about the past. Their conversation reminds a vicious circle where everyone follows his way. At the beginning of this scene, the readers may hope that they will wait to see the first worthwhile talk within the story which lacks clear communication between people but they soon get disappointed when they find out that mutual understanding among Winston and his interviewee cannot succeed. After this conversation, Winston feels even more depressed as he found himself so close to the truth but could not reach it. He is aware of the fact that the last witnesses of former times are either already dead or their memory has grown weak as in the case of the old man. He knows that within few years nobody will be able to provide him with satisfactory answers for his burning questions.

Unsatisfied with that meeting, Winston (maybe unconsciously) seeks for alternative ways of link with the past. Therefore, he is so attracted by the antique shop where he has already bought the diary although neither this place is safe to visit for him. Nevertheless, he perceives all those ancient objects as other living evidences about the previous world and cannot help resisting them anymore. Once being in the shop and contemplating the goods, Winston experiences an intensive sensation of nostalgia, sometimes even *déjà vu* which reassures him that he must have lived in different environment many years ago. By purchasing a decorative paper-weight, he suggests that he wants to possess at least a small piece of that history for himself and protect it from the inhospitable conditions of the regime. Moreover, he considers the possession of such aesthetic and basically unimportant thing to be his other minute personal rebellion against the Party which appreciates only practicality and ordinariness. Similarly, the nursery rhyme mentioned by the owner of the shop represents, in Winston's eyes, a significant clue to his lost memories.

1.4. The relationship with Julia

While in the introductory part of the novel the main protagonist seems to be rather a timid observer, a turning point in Winston's life and behaviour comes in the second part of the novel when he meets Julia or, to speak exactly, when he finds out by means of her message

that she does not represent any menace for him. Initially, he naturally cannot credit that there would exist somebody with any human feelings left yet and he remains a little reserved towards her confession. However, his suspicion is finally defeated by natural tendency to hope for more favourable conclusion. This sudden touch of humanity and simultaneously an open manifestation of love within that cold society immediately encourage him to cling to life and to give up being so lethargic or apathic towards his survival. Those two words written on a piece of paper brings him his vitality back although he must destroy that evidence instantly by throwing it into the memory hole. In this way, he actually gets rid of the only proof about continuing valuable feelings among people. The love message forms a kind of parallel with the foregoing newspaper cutting about the three liquidated men once glimpsed by Winston in the Ministry of Truth. Both of them are equally fragile but yet irrefutable. For him, the vision of love or any normal relationship with some person in Oceania turns into an important reason why he decides to struggle with much greater spirit against the totalitarian regime which systematically fights against humanism. On the other hand, his sudden enthusiasm makes him perceive more intensely all the obstacles that two persons have to overcome in order to gain the opportunity to communicate. In addition, as he starts paying attention to Julia, he automatically becomes less cautious and thus more vulnerable. Of course, he still behaves carefully but he dares to take a risk more frequently than ever before as he longs for meeting her.

At the beginning of their contact, Winston's relation to Julia has two main dimensions. Firstly, he is excited about the idea that someone could ever feel any positive emotions towards him. Secondly, his suppressed sexual desire can finally find relief in particular object of his interest apart from many substitute aims like political zeal which the Party affords to the citizens. Thus, his inner needs can be partly satisfied by means of a concrete person. On the contrary, having known Julia, Winston experiences more tension and frustration again because he cannot see her as often as he would like to. This newly provoked discontentment consequently deprives him of usual patience and it costs him more energy and willpower to recover the required self-control necessary for his survival. His emotions about Julia mean that he nevermore acts and thinks individually as he was used to before. Aside from his previous everyday anxiety, he now begins being worried about her as well. He becomes more vigilant not only because he likes her and does not want to be caught just at the moment when his life has eventually started making sense but also on the basis of more rational reason. That is, he realizes that in case of her detection, Thought Police would certainly capture him, too. It is not only death or torment connected with possible detection that Winston is afraid of. He

also fears that under such treatment he could lose his convictions and moral principles. He feels terrified about the idea that he might become inhuman in consequence of brutal torture in the Ministry of Love. Nobody knows exactly what captured persons have to undergo and sustain there but everyone can anticipate rough practices which are actually a public secret for all people in order to intimidate them. In connection with meeting Julia, Winston gets scared that in case of their capture they never see each other again and moreover, there exists a possibility that the torment could lead one or both of them to betrayal. He does not consider his oncoming detection as a sign of his defeat but he would certainly regard as a personal failure if he betrayed Julia or his human principles. Winston himself formulates this idea in one of the dialogues with his lover when he says: "If you can *feel* that staying human is worth while, even when it can't have any result whatever, you've beaten them." (Orwell: 174)

Although Winston's life gains new (and seemingly more pleasant) dimension after his encounter with Julia, he practically never banishes his constant negative emotions which he was experiencing before. Fear, scepticism and mistrust remain an ever-present feature of his character throughout the novel. His doubts originally concerning the meaning of the contemporary situation in Oceania and the verity of the past are now transferred to the sphere of their relationship. Especially in the beginning of it, Winston hesitates about Julia's determination to be in touch with him and about her ability to outwit Thought Police. Similarly, he has many doubts about his physical appearance and generally about himself as a man who could merit her attention. He actually anticipates catastrophic events all the time of their love romance so that the readers may have an impression that he finally compels their detection. It may appear as if, by means of his negative expectations and visions, Winston wanted to confirm his conviction about the impossibility to beat the regime. He surely enjoys the idea that he has met love so unexpectedly in that hostile world but he is enjoying it just because he unconsciously suspects that there is no hope for their rescue. His hesitancy reflects in their relationship as well. Winston is rather passive element of the couple who let him be lead while Julia is more dominant and daring to rebel against the Party. She is the one who initiates their familiarization, she suggests secure places where they can meet and she also breaks the barrier among them in order to become lovers. Having grown together, Winston's relation to Julia acquires another extension. At that moment, he realizes the power of human instincts, vainly restrained by the regime, and the political importance of them. Through sexual intercourse with Julia Winston can show his willingness to struggle against the nonsensical policy of the Party as he transgresses one of its fundamental rules.

“In the old days, he thought, a man looked at a girl’s body and saw that it was desirable, and that was the end of the story. But you could not have pure love or pure lust nowadays. No emotion was pure, because everything was mixed up with fear and hatred. Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act.” (Orwell: 133)

He likes the idea that his lover does not belong to extremely chaste women brought up by the Party. On the contrary, she is the exact opposite of his wife Catherine. She embodies the dark sides of the regime that are hidden below its official virtuous surface and in which he has always secretly believed. Thanks to her adverse attitude towards the Party and her deeper knowledge of its strategies applied on the citizens, Winston becomes intimated with its elaborated machinery that logically motivates him to hate it even more. It could be said that Julia functions as a skilled guide for him and she helps him to be well acquainted with that inhospitable environment. Although both of them share the same opinion about the political system there, still the readers can notice several differences in their thinking. Firstly, while Julia believes that an individual as her is able to change the situation right now, he does not think that he could improve it somehow in the near future. Julia does not lose courage and hope (or at least does not allow her anxiety to influence them) but Winston considers himself to be sentenced to death directly when he begins seeing her. Secondly, Julia’s rebellion against the Party manifests in the spheres which are related to her personal life and relative comfort but Winston basically understands the necessity of a change in much more global context. When he is speculating about a possible subversion of the totalitarian system in his country, he does not reduce that idea to positive effects just on his existence. He worries about the whole society and feels urge to fight for the salvation of common values such as the truth, justice, human rights or security. This difference among them is probably the only thing that troubles him. In contrast to Winston, Julia seems more egoistic as she is not interested in the destiny of next generations but merely in her own life.

Probably as a logical consequence of the fact that thanks to his relationship with Julia Winston has finally given vent to his emotions and needs, other suppressed elements of his personality suddenly come to light. It is, for example, his vague memories from his childhood which appear time after time in his dreams. Although he does not remember many details, the readers can notice his irrational feeling of guilt concerning his mother and sister. Until he meets Julia, he believes that he contributed to their death. He is aware that his mother was vaporized by the regime and he could not ever influence her disappearance. However, he rather feels guilty about his selfish conduct which is partly natural for any child and partly it

was a manifestation of self-preservation. He just behaved in accordance with human instinct that appears in extreme situations when everyone has to struggle for his or her own survival. The same was happening in concentration camps during the Second World War when people often acted like beasts fighting over food, clothes, better place to sleep, etc. Winston is even more convinced that he killed his mother and sister because the vaporization of them immediately followed one of these struggles.

Another significant step which Winston takes after his relationship with Julia has begun occurs when he dares to rent an attic room hired by the owner of the antique shop, Mr. Charrington. While their previous secret dates might have been less detectable, regular meetings in one concrete place mean almost certain revelation for them. This hazardous behaviour could appear a little contradictory to Winston's everlasting fear but he finally cannot resist his need for reserving some privacy for them. Julia revived human feelings and desires in him so that he is nevermore able to return back to his former apathy and silent toleration of the cruel life in Oceania. They both have crossed the limit and liberated their suppressed needs and they already cannot go back to the previous conditions again. Winston's feelings about Julia become stronger than his self-control or self-preservation. Having rented the room, both lovers voluntarily provide sufficient reason for their capture and they hasten the process of sure arrest that nearly nobody can escape. Their relation, originally meant to be a moving power for their political struggle, later turns into the cause of their final destruction. Winston is so taken with unexpected and lucky turn in his personal life that he almost starts to believe that they have found their home in that room. Due to his sudden personal satisfaction he becomes more optimistic which consequently makes him less careful as he trusts in other people more than ever before and tries to think better about them. He imagines that any of them may experience the same situation as him and therefore, he suddenly sympathizes with them more. For instance, he does not hesitate to open his heart to Mr. Charrington as he is naturally convinced that the latter is his ally. To speak exactly, also the relationship between Winston and Julia could be characterized as a little bit schizophrenic because it varies from enthusiasm to feeling of self-destruction. Sometimes both lovers regard themselves to be already dead since the moment when they met for the first time. On the other hand, sometimes they pretend that they have managed to outsmart the regime and really acquired privacy and peace for themselves.

1.5. The relationship with O'Brien

Winston's relationship with Julia is one of the illegal acts which demonstrate his disloyalty and disagreement with the policy of the Party. Nevertheless, as it has been discussed above, it is a kind of political resistance just in the beginning but later it changes into a natural result of their repressed desires and human needs. It gradually loses its original rebellious character and it turns into personal pursue of love and domesticity within an extremely unfavourable conditions. Winston's real political engagement comes when he is contacted by O'Brien. In fact, that meeting represents another fundamental meeting after the one with Julia as it significantly determines the protagonist's next behaviour. Although the message communicated by O'Brien is seemingly unimportant as he cannot afford drawing much attention, the fact that he, anyhow, has been seeking him supports Winston's hope for the existence of some illegal organization. Winston does not doubt about the meaning of this encounter at all which lately proves to be a complete failure of his former carefulness. While he feels excited about the idea that he has become a part of the rebellion which he has been always dreaming about, he does not know (possibly together with many readers) that he has set off towards his own extermination. In the course of the story, he does know that he cannot avoid detection by Thought Police but he does not suppose that they will capture him just through a person who he has confided in the most (as the readers later discover, it is not just the figure of O'Brien but also the character of Mr. Charrington).

In the moment of being contacted by O'Brien, there is still a small chance that Winston might stop the process of being involved in an unequivocal act of political treachery and that he could prefer enjoying his personal life until the Party punishes him for his present thought crimes but one does not doubt about his joining in. Once he enters the residence of O'Brien (moreover, together with Julia), his fate is definitely sealed and next sequence of events becomes as inevitable as an avalanche rolling down the hill. According to Winston's constantly dubitative character, he hesitates about the rightness of his decision to come there and about the accuracy of his presupposition about O'Brien yet when it is too late to bear back. Eventually, he takes heart to express the motive of his visit and thus, he pronounces his illegal thoughts in public for the first time in his life. Although there is no screen within hearing, this declaration of his (and Julia's) negative attitude towards the political system in Oceania turns into the first tangible evidence about his disloyalty which he actually confesses voluntarily. Despite the fact that his diary includes his ideas as well, it still may not be necessarily revealed by Thought Police but having stated that, he unconsciously condemns both of them to death. Even though Winston's worries about O'Brien's membership in the

Brotherhood are immediately calmed down by providing detailed information about it by the latter, he suddenly finds himself facing to other moral dilemmas which bring him to trial his real determination to struggle. As O'Brien questions him about what he would be able to do in terms of fighting against the regime, the readers may perceive that the practices used by that organization are almost as violent as the practices of the Party or the Ministry of Love. One probably does not associate it with the fact that Winston has already fallen into the trap of them but as the readers have been observing his character from the beginning of the novel, they may sense that Winston, in fact, lacks courage and brutality for committing such crimes. He is an idealistic man who dreams about better world and revolution but not by means of actual violence. He rather relies on the numerous population of the proletarians who one day could become conscious of their own power and predominance over the ruling minority. In addition, as it has been quoted above, Winston hopes that he will manage to remain human being in spite of the cruel environment around him. That means that the demands of the rebellion described by O'Brien certainly represent particular disillusionment for him although he agrees with them. Nevertheless, as his relationship with Julia is nevermore a mere act of political disobedience, neither he, nor his lover, can assent to the requirement of their eventual separation at the expense of their struggle.

The meeting with O'Brien, so long desired by Winston, seems to have less significant impact on his psyche than subsequent encounter with the Book written by Emmanuel Goldstein. The appointment with O'Brien is in the beginning full of anxiety and suspicion and then it brings a lot of new information and requirements, often demanding too much. It also takes place in a strange environment under time limit and everything proves to be so unbelievable that one could consider it to be just a dream. On the other hand, when Winston meets with the Book, its reading makes him feel more convinced about the justness of his behaviour and at the same time, dauntless in several respects. Firstly, he is reading it in a familiar setting of Mr. Charrington's room where he feels safe and fully concentrated. Secondly, the book provides him with views which he has always associated himself with.

“The book fascinated him, or more exactly it reassured him. In a sense it told him nothing that was new, but that was part of the attraction. It said what he would have said, if it had been possible for him to set his scattered thoughts in order. It was a product of a mind similar to his own, but enourmously more powerful, more systematic, less fear-ridden. The best books, he perceived, are those that tell you what you know already.” (Orwell: 208)

The Book not only helps him organize his ancient opinions about the surrounding reality but it also reassures him that he is the one who has not lost common sense yet although the Party tries to persuade people about a lot of nonsensical absurdities. Through its reading, Winston finds out that to be a part of a minority does not necessarily mean that he has gone mad and he realizes that his personal contribution to final success of the rebellion consists just in the condition that he has to retain this mental sanity. The ideas presented by Goldstein convince him that it is worth to continue in struggling against this monstrous political system.

At this point it is essential to say that the encounter with O'Brien and basically his character play a crucial role in Winston's existence. Although it could seem that Julia embodies the most important person for him as she brings love and humanity to his life, in comparison with O'Brien, she actually represents a momentary and one-dimensional relation. In addition, Winston's original intention to project his political resistance to their relationship soon becomes subordinate and thus, Julia turns into a mere subject of his desires and emotions. On the other hand, the figure of O'Brien penetrates Winston's life throughout the story and takes multiple shapes on him. In the beginning, he personalizes Winston's expectations for the existence of a secret rebellion and also the readers consider him to be his ally. In this seemingly friendly epoch, Winston's admiration of O'Brien and his attraction towards him almost reaches certain sexual dimension. Later, when O'Brien's real identity is revealed he acquires other diverse roles. Firstly, he acts as Winston's confessor because he judges his alleged deeds and punishes him for them. Secondly, it can be also said that he behaves like Winston's father who castigates his disobedient son and tries to reeducate him. Winston accepts this treatment as many children in similar position do – he is afraid of him and often protests against the punishment but simultaneously searches into his soul and wants to regain O'Brien's favour. He even feels love to him despite all the pain that he gives him through brutal torment. During this torture O'Brien basically assumes the role of God as he exercises total power over Winston's life. He can decide about his death at any time or, on the contrary, liberate him from suffering if he wants to. He behaves like both Winston's torturer and guardian (it could be ironically said like his big brother) because he claims that he maltreats him on his behalf and that he actually protects him from bad thoughts. Moreover, it is always O'Brien who saves him from other pain.

“All through his interrogation he had never seen him, he had had the feeling that O'Brien was at his elbow, just out of sight. It was O'Brien who was directing everything. It was he who set the guards onto Winston and who prevented them from killing him. It was he who decided when Winston should scream with pain, when he should have a respite,

when he should be fed, when he should sleep, when the drugs should be pumped into his arm. It was he who asked the questions and suggested the answers. He was the tormentor, he was the protector, he was the inquisitor, he was the friend.” (Orwell: 255-256)

After the phase of cruel practices, O’Brien turns into Winston’s spiritual guide when he tries to introduce the Party’s ideology to him. While sometimes he acts as a patient teacher, next time he proves to be an uncompromising dictator. Apart from these various roles, O’Brien further represents a connection with the past for Winston because he performs as a source of information about old times as well. For example, during their first meeting in O’Brien’s house – still as secret conspirators – he offers red wine to Winston and Julia which is already a forgotten drink, a kind of symbol of old days. On the top of it, O’Brien knows the nursery rhyme which Winston does not remember completely yet. It suggests to Winston as if O’Brien shared not only the same political views but also as if he had the same memories and ideas. Paradoxically, Winston is told the missing part of that rhyme in the moment of his detection which is, symbolically, also the moment of full revelation of the truth. It might seem to the readers that Winston and O’Brien are spiritually united like twins who are often able to anticipate what the other is experiencing and thinking about at particular instant. There is certain telepathy among them because they frequently communicate without words and later, in the Ministry of Love O’Brien can guess Winston’s thoughts without being pronounced by the latter. They somehow complement each other and their minds gradually mingle. O’Brien, as a representative of the Party, occupies more and more space in Winston’s brain in the course of the torturing. Now and again it may appear that Winston’s natural substance virtually consists of O’Brien’s personality and therefore, he was so attracted to him from the very beginning.

““You knew this, Winston,’ said O’Brien. ‘Don’t deceive yourself. You did know it – you have always known it.’

Yes, he saw now, he had always known it. But there was no time to think of that.”

(Orwell: 251)

O’Brien can be seen as Winston’s dark side which was strongly suppressed within his personality but he, at the same time, unconsciously knew about it and consequently, was so fascinated by him. Winston actually sensed that he once had treated his mother and sister like a little torturer and that small oppressor was the dark aspect of him which was repressed in him for a long time as he felt ashamed of it. However, without this part of his personality he

would never be complete and thus, he subconsciously has been searching for the company of O'Brien because he is so similar to him in fact.

1.6. Passivity at the capture

When the moment of Winston's capture comes, it is so sudden and shock action that he firstly almost feels relief that it has finally happened. Although he has been imagining that instant many times over, he is just the same taken by surprise by its uncompromising form which does not admit any chance for escape, discussion or fight for his own survival. There is no time for saying goodbye to Julia, nor clear thinking about what he should basically do. The arrival of Thought Police makes him paralyzed without any thought of resistance. In few minutes his hopes become disappointed forever (in the same way as the glass paper-weight is easily broken into pieces by one of the intruders). He naturally supposed that it was only a question of time when he would be caught one day. However, he probably did not assume that it would reach him in a place where he felt most safe and by means of persons whom he trusted most. Despite his previous determination to fight against them and eventually lay down his life in that struggle, since the moment of his detection Winston returns to his original passive character dominated by fear and thus, he becomes a puppet in the hands of the Party. He not even tries to kiss or hug Julia for the last time because he simply does not dare to disobey the commands and take the risk of being punished for it (although if he had known what treatment was waiting for him in the Ministry of Love, he would not probably have endeavoured to save his life at any price). Nevertheless, as every individual acts in accordance with the instinct of self-preservation, Winston just expects that maybe there is still some promise of his rescue and therefore, he decides to do everything possible to keep himself alive. Facing to his first real contact with Thought Police, his former ideals about the importance of remaining human and faithful to his views quickly vanish. Instead of it, he comes to realize that the only thing which he now really cares is postponing, eventually, avoiding physical attack as long as possible through submissive behaviour. Although Winston is afraid of being hurt above everything else and, in general, lacks courage to defend either him or Julia from the outset, in the first moments of their capture he cannot help being worried about her as well. When he sees her being hit by the members of Thought Police he experiences pain together with her but his terror of the men does not permit him to protect her. He prefers silent and nonresistant observation of the course of events around him than putting himself at risk too soon. One might say that Winston has gone a little mad as he is

watching the scene of their arrestment somehow from distance as if it were no concern of his. Instead of mightily thinking up some emergency solutions, he is contemplating about essentially useless items and thus, he consciously wastes the last minutes of his time for taking any action (no matter how vain) against the aggressors.

1.7. Feelings of vanity and disillusionment

In the third part of the novel, taking place largely in the Ministry of Love, the readers meet with Winston in very miserable and humiliating conditions. He is no longer a person with particular dignity but a frightened bundle of nerves. He rather reminds an imprisoned injured animal which is licking its lesions and is awaiting others with dread. His feelings and thoughts are reduced to intensive perception of pain, hunger and anxiety. Anything else like thoughts of escape or his previous ideas about political protest can hardly appear when his basic needs stay unsatisfied. According to hierarchical structure of human needs, physical privation totally overshadows any intellectual desires which once seemed to be burning questions when he lived more or less at ease. Similarly, in the moments when his suffering softens a little to let him a power for thinking a bit he does not speculate about anything noble-minded but he just appreciates his scare. Because of the extremely stressful environment he cannot reflect upon anything else apart from his own problems and destiny. There is no space left for Julia in his heart and mind anymore as he is fully concentrated on his survival or any kind of getaway from the present highly unfavourable situation. In addition, as he might be aware that she (or the relationship with her, in general) has been one of the main reasons for his detection he can hardly feel any positive emotions towards her all along. She rather embodies a bitter remembrance of his foolish expectations of outwitting the regime which now seem to have been pure madness heading directly to his perdition. On the other hand, though he does not love Julia anymore he preserves certain loyalty towards her as he is firmly resolved not to betray her. At the same time, he is not so convinced about whether he would be able to suffer instead of her if he had an opportunity to help her through his own sacrifice.

The only person which Winston is able to think of at that time is O'Brien who remains the last connecting link with his ancient opinions and, simultaneously, his only chance of putting a dignified end to his life as the latter promised to deliver a razor blade to him in case of being caught. On the other hand, even in the middle of such hardship Winston doubts about whether he would actually manage to take advantage of this "help" as he has never been so internally

strong. The vision of dying as a political martyr in the Ministry of Love falls flat when compared with pain and, at the same time, with the slightest possibility of salvation.

“Everything came back to his sick body, which shrank trembling from the smallest pain. He was not certain that he would use the razor blade even if he got the chance. It was more natural to exist from moment to moment, accepting another ten minutes’ life even with the certainty that there was torture at the end of it.” (Orwell: 241)

However, he does not have to solve this moral dilemma for a long time because he soon waits to see complete disillusionment about both the Brotherhood and O’Brien. Not only the former does not supply him with the occasion of evasion of torment by means of the razor blade but he also discovers that he has been wrong about O’Brien’s political views from the very beginning. Moreover, immediately after this crucial revelation O’Brien suggests him that Winston actually knew about O’Brien’s real identity which consequently makes Winston responsible for his present suffering. This manipulation or imposing of this idea is probably meant to make him hesitate about his actual intentions in the past. In addition, if he accepts this theory he can no more blame anyone else than himself for being in the Ministry of Love as it suddenly seems to be his own (although unconscious) will.

The encounter with O’Brien in the Ministry of Love is not the only disillusionment which Winston experiences within few hours of his stay there. He also meets with other people there including some of his work fellows and through these meetings he becomes aware that the Party is virtually going to destroy everyone, no matter how obedient he or she has been. By means of the dialogue with the poet Ampleforth Winston realizes that they clutch at minute details and innocent grounds for one’s accusation in order to retain their supremacy. They simply cannot leave even inculpable people to exist calmly all their lives without being vaporized or charged with a thought crime because it would weaken their power in the eyes of the citizens. Therefore, also orthodox persons like Tom Parsons with whom Winston encounters in the Ministry of Love as well must be removed from the scene because people have to know that also these seemingly faithful individuals can easily commit an offence against the regime. In this way, the inhabitants of Oceania not only have to be afraid of the state authority but, above all, they begin to fear and suspect themselves which, by return, contributes to political control. Through these abrupt awakenings to the cruel reality (much worse than the one before his detection) Winston becomes depressed and concludes that both the struggle with the Party and thought of his survival are pure vanity.

1.8. The breakdown of Winston's personality

A turning point in Winston's behaviour and thinking is closely connected with brutal torture which he has to undergo in the Ministry of Love. Logically, this change in his moral development is not natural as it is caused by violent treatment from outside. In the closing part of the novel the readers are witnesses of the struggle between last remains of his courage and increasing cowardliness and submission provoked by extreme exposition to both physical and psychological violence which eventually leads to complete breakdown of his personality. Until he was situated in the cell with other persons he was same vulnerable and hopeless though but there was still particular atmosphere of collective consciousness of injustice and solidarity; at least on the part of people who have not been maltreated enough to behave like beasts towards their fellows in order to prevent other torment. Nevertheless, since he has been placed in the questioning room there is no hope that anyone would be sorry about him, the more to help him or indicate sympathy for him. Because of the permanent sadistic torture Winston firstly loses those parts of his character that seem useless in such cruel environment, that is pride and feelings of shame about showing pain, impotence or his weak points. Paradoxically, his self-preservation, once considered a positive phenomenon, lately turns into an aggravating circumstance that he would preferably deprived of if he could because it just prolongs his suffering. In these difficult moments the readers can notice yet that he still has not been totally broken as he sometimes finds sufficient inner strength to postpone the act of his subjection as much as possible.

“There were times when his nerve so forsook him that he began shouting for mercy even before the beating began, when the mere sight of a fist drawn back for a blow was enough to make him pour forth a confession of real and imaginary crimes. There were other times when he started out with the resolve of confessing nothing, when every word had to be forced out of him between gasps of pain, and there were times when he feebly tried to compromise, when he said to himself: ‘I will confess, but not yet. I must hold out till the pain becomes unbearable. Three more kicks, two more kicks, and then I will tell them what they want.’” (Orwell: 252-253)

As fear and anxiety determined his conduct in the beginning of the story, now pain becomes the main moving power which gradually forces him to act in conflict with his moral convictions. Being kept constantly under threat of violence which can come at any time, Winston later does not hesitate to confess any invented crime that he reportedly committed just to avoid further torture (that, anyhow, does not elude him in the end). Physical suffering surely takes a significant part in the change of Winston's personality but it would not have so

destructional impact on his mind as when it is practiced in combination with psychical manipulation and maltreatment. The latter not only overtires him but it also makes him despise himself when he sees what kind of human ruin the Party has made of him. As a consequence of his bad state of mind and extreme conditions there Winston, moreover, starts to believe that he might really be guilty. At the same time, he begins to doubt about whether he is not actually mistaken in his opinions. He now and again wonders whether O'Brien is his friend or enemy and he sometimes does not know who of them is virtually in the right. Once situated in the examination room, his feelings vary from helplessness to resignation according to the intensity of the torment. While he shows last manifestation of resistance and disbelief towards the absurdities presented by O'Brien when he has space and courage to express them, he becomes absolutely subjugated when exposed to drugs and electroshocks. It is naturally an unequal and unfair struggle which cannot fall out well for him.

More and more scarce expressions of Winston's protest mentioned above already do not originate from his previous willingness to rebel in order to oppose for political reasons but his intellect simply refuses to adopt all the nonsense in which O'Brien seems to trust. Winston would be glad indeed if he was able to assume those lies because it might keep him from other torture. He would sincerely welcome the fact that the Party says the truth but it is not possible as he is aware that they are wrong instead but at the same time, they will never admit it because it is either profitable for them to pretend it or, even worse, they really believe in the verity of that invented reality. Exposed to brutal violence, he later even wants to change his beliefs into those conforming to the Party's ideology because thus, he could escape other torturing but he does not know how to do it as it is so illogical. Winston feels as if he found himself within a strange civilization which speaks unintelligible language, professes completely different religion and holds contrary views about the world. He wonders whether he should get acclimatized there in terms of his further existence or should try to awake those people from their ignorance by means of presenting his own persuasion. However, O'Brien holds the same attitude and, from his point of view, intends to bring Winston to senses. Thus, they can never understand each other as they not even want to but Winston is sentenced to failure in advance as he is not the authority there. In addition, while he has always had tendency to hesitate about everything including himself, the Party appears unshakable in its confidence which helps them to gain victory over him.

Apart from fear, the feeling of strong uncertainty accompanies Winston's stay in the Ministry of Love all the time. It does not refer only to the question of his further life and the mystery of Room 101 but he also does not comprehend why they waste so much time and

efforts for his torment if they are going to kill him in the end. Another source of his uncertainty ironically comes when he is given an opportunity to ask O'Brien a few questions about anything which he would like to know but he finally does not get any satisfactory answers, just on the contrary. The pieces of information that he is told only deepen his confusion and frustration because of several reasons. Firstly, although the readers as outside observers can suspect that the answers may be false or adjusted in order to dishearten him utmost, the protagonist himself situated in the middle of highly inhospitable environment cannot judge it objectively and easily succumbs to desperation. Secondly, through O'Brien's responses he feels like misunderstood and alone in his logic. First of all, he wants to learn what happened with Julia. Despite the fact that he does not feel the same towards her as before he has not become so indifferent to her yet to stop worrying about a woman who was once so important for him. He probably wonders whether, eventually how, she was able to cope with the treatment there. When he is told that she betrayed him and, moreover, quickly converted to the Party's ideology he might not regret her betrayal at all. After all, they both knew that in the case of their capture they would confess and supposedly betray each other owing to torturing. Winston rather wonders how she managed to change her thinking and adapt to official political mentality so easily when it is so much difficult for him even when he has begun trying it. He does not discover yet whether she has changed her mind under threat of torture but the thought of her possible voluntary conversion surely troubles him a lot. Speculating about this version, it must seem to him that he is the only man with common sense in the world, unfortunately caught in the hands of political maniacs or, even worse, that he is really mad. This idea intensifies with his other question about the existence of Big Brother when O'Brien tries to convince him that everything concerning the Party and its leader is real while Winston actually does not exist.

“Once again the sense of helplessness assailed him. He knew, or he could imagine, the arguments which proved his own non-existence; but they were nonsense, they were only a play on words. Did not the statement, ‘You do not exist’, contain a logical absurdity? But what use was it to say so? His mind shrivelled as he thought of the unanswerable, mad arguments with which O'Brien would demolish him.” (Orwell: 272)

1.9. Last manifestations of protest

Having undergone the first part of his stay in the Ministry of Love based on brutal torment, Winston is later exposed to intensive ideological treatment combined rather with psychological pressure. In the beginning of this stage the readers can remark particular revival of his former resistance and determination to retain his sanity at any rate. Throughout the extensive dialogue with O'Brien during one of their "consultations" Winston perseveringly adheres to his opinions and refuses to accept the theories introduced by his torturer. He desperately refers to laws of nature and other irrefutable facts that, in his eyes, the Party can never come to control in order to find a weak point in the Party's doctrines but he is always silenced by incredibly elaborated though crazy tales in which O'Brien seems to believe. After momentary doubts about his own mental health he now sees that he faces to a fanatic. The consciousness of being in the right encourages him in his protests but he simultaneously realizes that he is completely helpless as O'Brien is the one who has the power there. "What can you do, thought Winston, against the lunatic who is more intelligent than yourself, who gives your arguments a fair hearing and then simply persists in his lunacy?" (Orwell: 275) Although Winston partly recovers the confidence in the validity of his thinking and relies on unanswerability of ancient laws of nature he, at the same time, gets scared about the idea that the Party could finally accomplish its visions about future world which O'Brien is enthusiastically presenting to him. Listening to them, he is paralyzed with terror but still tries to object to O'Brien's strong beliefs. They are so alarming for him that he cannot help rejecting them openly although it can mean punishment in the form of other torture for him. In this passage the readers may have an impression as if Winston were defending the whole world against the horrible machinery of dictatorship. The feeling of panic produced by all those negative plans for remaking the world and the intended subjugation of the mankind vitalize him to exclaim, at least verbally. As he is listening to O'Brien's perverse views he suddenly becomes conscious that he will be probably defeated in the struggle with the Party but despite this fact, he has already won over them because he has never really interiorized their ideology. He is proud of being able to honestly say that he has remained human as he had always wanted in spite of all that torturing, agitation and psychological maltreatment on the part of Thought Police. He may hope that if an ordinary, almost coward, man as him has managed to stay faithful to his moral principles, there will be other people like him who will resist against the regime and if not people, at least the nature can never be conquered by them. This idea animates him in such a way that he dares to claim in front of his torturer that he feels like a moral winner then. However, this momentary sensation of self-confidence and

victory over the Party finally proves to be fatal for him because O'Brien naturally cannot allow that.

In the following scene the readers witness Winston's quick awakening from the previous glimpse of triumph as he is confronted with the view of his physical appearance after several months of his stay in the Ministry of Love. At once, he has chance to see his damaged body heading to death which immediately leads to his nervous breakdown and definitive resignation. His recent vision of hope is directly destroyed by the discovery that anyone like him who would oppose them will be liquidated in the same way as himself. His poor physical condition reflects the passing character of individual strength in comparison with the nameless crowd which supports the domination of fanatics like O'Brien. The latter, moreover, reminds him that it is exclusively his fault and choice that he looks so miserably. Within his last attempt to resist, Winston tries to appeal once more to his incorrupt mind by means of stating that he has never stopped loving Julia and therefore, he has never betrayed her in fact. He wants to suggest that they can torture him to death or change his body beyond recognition but they can never take possession of his thoughts and emotions. However, not even this provocation and belief will go unpunished afterwards.

The closing part of the novel provides the readers a seemingly positive picture of the main protagonist. At first sight, it may appear that Winston has eventually decided to conform to the Party once he was granted relatively comfortable life in much more human conditions. After his nervous breakdown when facing to the view of his pitiful body in the mirror, he seems determined to recover good shape in exchange for sacrificing his moral values. Initially, the readers might think that Winston is voluntarily turning into an empty clod who manages with enough food and a little sensitive treatment. Sudden improvement of his living conditions causes that he already does not want to return to previous cruel torturing by no means. He is exhausted by former ill-usage to such a degree that once he is afforded slightly better existence, he no more longs for intellectual dimension of his life. Instead of it, he focuses on his miserable physical appearance as if he desired to compensate, even apologize to his body for having allowed them to damage it in so far. The only thing which he wishes for is enough relaxation and his basic needs like sleep and nourishment to be satisfied. He even enjoys his idleness as it enables him to observe the process of his slow convalescence and activation of his energy. As soon as he regains sufficient strength he is able to speculate about his psychological condition again. He realizes his present situation of a loser who was sentenced to failure not since the moment of his capture in Mr. Charrington's house but already since he firstly gave a thought to any kind of the struggle against the regime. He fully

perceives the impossibility of defeating the Party and its manipulation with human thinking. Being aware of his own resignation, he now consciously and systematically tries to accept their illogical doctrines as it proves to be much easier, despite their absurdity, than refusing them.

“How easy it all was! Only surrender, and everything else followed. It was like swimming against a current that swept you backwards however hard you struggled, and then suddenly deciding to turn round and go with the current instead of opposing it. Nothing had changed except your own attitude: the predestined thing happened in any case. He hardly knew why he had ever rebelled.” (Orwell: 290-291)

Nevertheless, Winston finally learns that he is too much intelligent and unspoilt by doublethink and other absurd mechanisms invented by the Party to become a loyal fatheaded follower of the regime. In addition, he realizes that he has never forgotten his emotions about Julia which now grow stronger again as their relationship definitely came to an end. He probably feels much more intensive love for her than ever before just because their mutual living seems so far-away and unattainable at the present time. On the other hand, he is afraid of his unexpected attacks of nostalgia because, in contrast to former times, he now knows about the forms of possible punishment and no more wants to take a risk of being tortured or even killed. Basically, the readers find out that, despite his horrible experiences in the Ministry of Love, Winston's behaviour and thinking has remained the same as before his detection; he only became more terrified and cautious. Therefore, he intends to hide his continuing negative attitude towards the Party much more carefully than ever before. He plans to suppress his hatred to an extreme point but, at the same time, he wants to keep being aware of it. He proposes to have it stored secure but still within reach at the bottom of his mind in such a way to be able to recall it when they are going to shoot him. From his point of view, this strategy should allow him to both stay undetectable and remain a silent political opponent till the last moment of his life. He imagines that if he managed to preserve secret disagreement deeply in his consciousness, he would recollect it shortly before his death and thus, he could die as a living proof of the Party's ideological failure. In his eyes, this vision symbolizes real freedom because he could leave that inhuman world full of intimidation and torture with unspoilt thinking and with his original opinions about the regime there. On the other hand, he is aware that if he wants to accomplish this goal, it will require maximal self-denial, especially when his emotions about Julia come to light again with new intension.

“For the first time he perceived that if you want to keep a secret you must also hide it from yourself. You must know all the while that it is there, but until it is needed you must never let it emerge into your consciousness in any shape that could be given a name. From now onwards he must not only think right; he must feel right, dream right. And all the while he must keep his hatred locked up inside him like a ball of matter which was part of himself and yet unconnected with the rest of him, a kind of cyst.” (Orwell: 294)

1.10. Final resignation

Unfortunately, not even this tactics results in success. Despite Winston’s plans to conceal his hatred for the Party, he is detected again and transferred to Room 101 as an incorrigible enemy of the regime after having admitted openly that he hates Big Brother. In that room Winston has to face to his deepest anxiety and to the revelation that there is nothing that he could keep back from O’Brien or that he could do for defeating him. O’Brien knows everything about him including not only the last remains of his resistance and persisting love for Julia but also his biggest weak point – fear of rats. Confronting the cage full of those hungry animals, Winston is totally paralyzed with uncontrollable panic and phobia and he is immediately ready to do anything just in order to avoid the threat of being exposed to them. Simultaneously, he feels frustrated because he still does not comprehend what he is asked for to do but he, probably subconsciously, suspects that this time he will have to make the highest sacrifice that – if not the rats – will destroy him in the end. In that moment Winston does not think about anything else than the oncoming danger and proceeds by instinct although his behaviour might seem to be a willful decision. He not only acts according to self-preservation but also by other instinct which protects his psychical integrity that surely would not endure so traumatic experience. As in the case of his previous torment, in this moment of the highest jeopardy (both physical and psychical) he is not able to adhere to his former emotions that prove to be unimportant at that instant. The only thing that remains fundamental is his survival at any price. Therefore, he finally does not hesitate to betray Julia, even to wish her the same punishment instead of him because that means his own rescue from rats. Any noble feeling falls flat when compared with his unmanageable fear of death in the form of those animals.

The closing section of the novel portrays Winston as a fallen person and completely broken individual who is apathetically waiting for his death. In the final chapter the readers meet him after a long time at liberty again but this fact no more means any privileges for him

or any significant improvement of his life. On the contrary, he rather seems to be buried alive as he has no perspective future ahead for him.

“‘They can’t get inside you,’ she had said. But they could get inside you. ‘What happens to you here is for ever,’ O’Brien had said. That was a true word. There were things, your own acts, from which you could not recover. Something was killed in your breast: burnt out, cauterised out.” (Orwell: 303-304)

Symbolically, in the end of the story he is sitting and drinking Victory Gin at The Chestnut Tree which is a place where he once saw the three political derelicts Aaronson, Rutherford and Jones. It turns out to be his regular destination probably since he has been discharged from the Ministry of Love. This time it is Winston who is considered an outcast and therefore, he is left alone at “his” usual table by the other guests of the café. After the incident with rats, he definitely became an empty crushed man who is drowning his traumatic memories and feelings of guilt in alcohol and occupies his mind by momentary interest in fictitious pieces of information from the war. He finally believed in all those artificial news about invented fighting and it is now his only source of emotional excitement; the only events in his otherwise poor existence. He tries to forget by the help of gin but, at the same time, absorbed by drunkard nostalgia he remembers his marred ideals and, above all, Julia. He is thinking back about the meeting with her after their dismissal from political imprisonment and he over and over feels somehow numb sorrow connected with this remembrance. It may even appear to the readers as if the setting of this encounter, in contrast to their first date in the beginning of the second part of the novel, reflected their present hopeless situation. While their first meeting took place in May in the middle of romantic nature where everything was flourishing and seemed more spontaneous or optimistic, the reunion after their stay in the Ministry of Love occurs under very formal and pessimistic conditions. Even the weather is inhospitable and the scenery of the chilly Hyde Park evokes an image of almost dying nature. Further, they both have changed not only psychically but also their physical appearance has dramatically got worse because of previous suffering. Julia’s body is even compared to a corpse as she has turned into a rigid cold woman. Neither Winston, nor Julia feels any deeper emotions towards each other; paradoxically, at the moment when they practically stopped being watched by Thought Police as they are regarded harmless persons, two derelicts, who are sooner or later sentenced to death for their former activities. Although they do not love each other anymore, they possible still feel frustrated about the idea of their mutual alienation and indifference. Moreover, each of them realizes their mutual betrayal and the fact that after such treachery,

which was their sincere wish and voluntary decision at the moment of the torturing, their old emotions are destroyed forever. They actually do not have anything to talk about as each of them already has different life and no ambitions, so far from with regard to the other. Winston has become a self-indulgent man who manages with spending his free time in The Chestnut Tree and is more attracted by the vision of stupefying gin. He also unexpectedly recalls almost forgotten moments of his childhood when he was happy, at least for a while, in spite of omnipresent poverty, hunger and constant struggle for survival among him and his mother and sister. It could be said that he is replaying his life in his mind as a man just before his death, a walking skeleton.

The readers gradually find out that Winston is an alcoholic who lives from day to day, most of the time drunk. His existence does not have any sense yet and his new job within the Ministry of Truth exactly represents this emptiness as it is based on absolutely useless work. Maybe therefore, he is so interested in the fictitious adventures of Oceania's army which at the present time is the only meaning of his life. In his eyes, the victory of Oceania's troops compensates his own failure as he as an individual cannot feel strong and unwincing anymore but it is still possible if he considers himself to be a part of the regime. As a consequence of his personal breakdown, his attitude towards the Party and its leader has markedly changed. From his point of view, Big Brother is no more his enemy or the object of his hatred but a protector who ensures his security and provides long-awaited relief to his soul.

“He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.” (Orwell: 311)

1.11. Summary of Winston's development

In the beginning of the novel Winston's behaviour is characterized by seeming conformity with the political system in consequence of his fear that he will be caught for his inner disagreement with the regime there. However, the readers soon discover his other significant feature, that is, persistent necessity to find out the truth about both his past and the course of events in his country. Throughout the story he never stops being worried about his oncoming punishment but the need of knowledge as well as his natural human desires finally prevail and

he gradually gets involved in active political resistance. He not only joins in a secret rebellious organization but also establishes a relationship with a girl which, by itself, means gross violation of the social and political rules. He is eventually detected just because of this illegal relation and consequent decline of his previous precaution. Once situated in the imprisonment, Winston realizes how futile and naive it was to fight against such terrible machinery and hope for defeating it. He feels disillusioned about the real identity of O'Brien whom he has confided the most and who, nonetheless, seals his fate, though in different way than he originally supposed. He experiences very cruel torturing which, despite his strong determination to remain faithful to his original belief, leads to final breakdown of his character and dramatic change in both his political and personal opinions. He ends up as a derelict who has betrayed all his moral principles. He has been converted into an obedient follower of the political system but after all he is waiting for his death as the regime will never forget him his former offence. He becomes a blind supporter of the Party to which he has been resisting almost all his life.

2. THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF OFFRED, THE PROTAGONIST OF *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*

2.1. Double identity

The protagonist of Margaret Atwood's novel is, at the same time, the narrator of the whole story. Therefore, the readers encounter her from its very beginning and they experience her life, including her emotional and moral progress, exclusively from her point of view. It could be also said that she functions as a guide for the readers because she introduces them into the inhospitable world of the Republic of Gilead. In the introductory chapter Offred starts her narration with the description of the setting where she is presently living. The environment of the former gymnasium evokes a lot of nostalgic remembrances in her mind so that she seems totally absorbed by the feeling of deep sorrow about something good and lost that can never return back again. Although the readers at that moment do not already know all the connections, they can anticipate that she once had distinct life but now, because of strange reason for the time being, she has to be completely different personality. It gradually comes to light that her new reality consists of illegal restraint and strict supervision that forces her to search for alternative ways of how to make her existence bearable as much as possible. For example, she secretly communicates with her roommates at night and proposes the idea of being ready to take advantage of her body if necessary. She feels frustrated about her own invisibility and inviolability (determined by her status and – as it later appears – also by special clothes) even on the part of the guardians who, simultaneously, provoke fear in her. However, they are still human beings who might notice her hopelessness and maybe help her somehow “if only they would look.” (Atwood: 14)

In the next scene the readers get to know more in detail Offred's room and the environment of the Household to which she belongs now. She is describing it with very reserved attitude as she has never considered it to be her home. She even remarks that her incarcerators are aware of depressive mood of their prisoners and thus, they removed all the things that might be used for committing suicide there. Apart from Offred's scornful tone, the house, at first sight, does not seem to be an unpleasant place at all as it is clean and simply furnished. On the other hand, since the introductory pages of the novel the readers may suspect particular terrifying system behind all that as everything is too much organized and because of several hints made by the main protagonist. She alludes to peculiar names of other people there (the Angels, Marthas, Commander, etc.) and comments on precise division of

colours, dressing style or functions prescribed for each of these groups. Having glimpsed herself in the mirror, Offred compares herself to a funny creature dressed in red and she, in general, suggests that she is a nameless individual there; her personality was reduced to an anonymous figure hidden in that characteristic uniform. Offred does not reveal her living conditions and the principles on which the Gileadean society is based at once. Neither has she presented herself in the very beginning. She initiates her relation as an unknown, almost mysterious woman whom the readers get to know step by step through individual episodes and her memories which are gradually put together as a puzzle. She later even reveals that Offred is not her real name at all which intensifies the puzzling impression of her lost existence.

“My name isn’t Offred, I have another name, which nobody uses now because it’s forbidden. I tell myself it doesn’t matter, your name is like your telephone number, useful only to others; but what I tell myself is wrong, it does matter. I keep the knowledge of this name like something hidden, some treasure I’ll come back to dig up, one day. I think of this name as buried.” (Atwood: 94)

She tells her story by degrees and interlaces the narration about her present life not only with descriptions of other inhabitants of the Household and her everyday activities but also with numerous flashbacks from her previous existence. These flashbacks happen unexpectedly, both for Offred and the readers, in connection with concrete background, objects or words. By means of her relation the readers can observe both the events in Offred’s life and her inner feelings.

2.2. Complicated relations and depressive impact of the setting

Through often minute details Offred informs the readers about the attitude of other persons towards her and in this way they gradually get the picture of hierarchical structure established among people living in that Household. They find out that Offred is a subordinate being though, at the same time, she has certain privileged position in contrast to other women there. Due to so far unknown reason which later proves to be her fertility, she is kept there in submissive role under omnipresent control because, in the eyes of that society, she means a rarity which, simultaneously, produces momentary enviousness or at least disdain on the part of Marthas. On the other hand, shortly after implying these mysterious differences among female inhabitants of the Household which are sometimes the source of mutual hostility

Offred also acknowledges certain solidarity among those women and she expresses her wish to be in touch with them. In the opening part of the novel she has already mentioned her loneliness caused by her immunity and she continues in this topic in the following section as well. She apparently suffers from her isolation, all the more because it once used to be different and now she is missing human companionship or any declaration of affection as it is forbidden in fact.

“I hunger to touch something, other than cloth or wood. I hunger to commit the act of touch. But even if I were to ask, even if I were to violate decorum to that extent, Rita would not allow it. She would be too afraid. The Marthas are not supposed to fraternize with us. (Atwood: 21)

According to Offred’s further narration, another important woman in her new life (except of her two attendants, Rita and Cora) is embodied by the Commander’s Wife called Serena Joy. She represents the most highly standing woman within the Household’s hierarchy but except for this official status she could be rather characterized as a loser among the women there. That is, unlike the Handmaids the Wives are sterile so that they naturally do not like the former although they are concurrently dependent on them because the Handmaids impersonate the only hope for them for having baby someday. Offred briefly summarizes their mutual relationship by the following statement: “I am a reproach to her; and a necessity.” (Atwood: 23) In Chapter 3 she is recollecting her first meeting with Serena Joy on the day of her arrival to the Household. She admits that she had been longing for the latter to become her ally and protector but yet during their first encounter she discovered that it had been a foolish idea (actually, the relation between the Wives and the Handmaids probably cannot work at all as the readers later find out). Therefore, Offred accepted the rules told by Serena Joy during that appointment and she prefers avoiding her as much as possible since then.

The main protagonist is surrounded exclusively by women all the time as it furthermore appears in the shopping scene. For this occasion, she is allowed to go out only when accompanied by other Handmaid who, nevertheless, does not serve as her lady-companion in fact but she rather functions as her keeper and vice versa. Their communication is reduced to common formulas as they cannot trust in each other. They got used to walk side by side and exchange only superficial pieces of information among themselves although Offred so much years after normal talk or preferably after hearing news that could encourage her somehow. However, she has to resist this temptation because the other woman might report her for that.

In contrast to female company, Offred is deprived of any contact with men, aside from formal dealing with the guards or coming across the Commander's chauffeur Nick. These episodes and isolation from men, paradoxically, make her attracted to them. More likely than by sexual overtones, her interest in them originates from her own frustration about being an invisible figure for them. She just wants to convince herself that she still can be appealing to them despite her face and body hidden in an anonymous veiling. In addition, as it has been mentioned above, Offred lacks human attachment within that distant society and it is comprehensible that she rather longs for men's company than the women's one. On the top of it, through occasional imperceptible flirtation with men she actually commits minor illegal acts. She likes the thought of breaking the rules because she makes herself certain of her individual power not only over male inhabitants but also over the regime itself.

"It's an event, a small defiance of rule, so small as to be undetectable, but such moments are the rewards I hold out for myself, like the candy I hoarded, as a child, at the back of a drawer. Such moments are possibilities, tiny peepholes. (...) It's like thumbing your nose from behind a fence or teasing a dog with a bone held out of reach, and I'm ashamed of myself for doing it, because none of this is the fault of these men, they're too young. Then I find I'm not ashamed after all. I enjoy the power; power of a dog bone, passive but there." (Atwood: 31-32)

While the readers are watching Offred doing shopping, they have the opportunity to become acquainted with the outer neighbourhood of her residence. She portrays it as a kind of dead city as it looks like the same as in the old days but the conditions and people living there have significantly changed. The sight of the places where she used to walk in former times is hurting her and it revives her memories. She fully realizes the differences between her previous and current existence in terms of both fundamental and seemingly unimportant aspects. She comes to realize that even minute matters of fact like dreaming about one's future or having the possibility to choose one's clothes virtually meant freedom at that time. Later her recollection gets out of control as she unexpectedly bethinks of her husband Luke and their little daughter. These remembrances prove to be still too much painful for her so that she has to expel them from her mind with great self-denial. Though, she seems to repent that she once had considered it to be a natural part of her life while now she cannot decide about anything at all. There are other persons who make decisions instead of her and she only performs the duties and tasks required from the Handmaids. For example, she cannot buy the food she would like to eat because she has been assigned special tokens which say exactly what she is allowed to buy in every shop. Neither can she read the names of the shops as each

is characterized by particular sign which stands for the lettering because the most of women in the Republic of Gilead are forbidden to read. Offred, as well as the other Handmaids, is treated like an irresponsible being whose rights have been restricted to minimum.

In spite of all these humiliating facts, she welcomes the possibility of going shopping because she hopes for meeting some of her former friends among the customers there so she is searching for some familiar face in that crowd. In general, although Offred feels dejected about her present situation, especially when confronted with the past, she never gives up trying to make this new life tolerable utmost. In her heart and mind she preserves secret disagreement with the Gileadean regime and she clutches at anything that would connect her with the previous world again. This time the visit to the shops rather spoils her mood because of seeing a pregnant woman called Janine there who is a kind of reproach to her, the same way as Offred is to Serena Joy as it has been already commented on above. At this point the readers learn that pregnancy is the source of envy among the Handmaids because it is directly related to their salvation.

“One of them is vastly pregnant; her belly, under her loose garment, swells triumphantly. There is a shifting in the room, a murmur, an escape of breath; despite ourselves we turn our heads, blatantly, to see better; our fingers itch to touch her. She’s a magic presence to us, an object of envy and desire, we covet her. She’s a flag on a hilltop, showing us what can still be done: we too can be saved.” (Atwood: 36)

Offred feels not only stressed with the consciousness that she has limited time for becoming pregnant (there is an obscure allusion in the beginning of the story about her already third household to attempt it) but she is also aware of her failure as a woman in contrast to Janine. Facing to the latter, she is ashamed of her flat belly which reveals her incapability to conceive till this time. Another frustrating encounter comes when Offred and her shopping partner, on their way home, meet a group of Japanese tourists who are observing them as if they were a touristic rarity; something like exotic animals in the zoo. Moreover, she is surprised by the sudden change in her thinking produced by the Gileadean ideology. She is embarrassed about the tourists’ dressing style, now too provocative in her eyes, although she, at the same time, knows that she once used to wear similar clothes. She fears of being seen by them and of the possibility that their guide is actually a spy who could inspect the rightness of her behaviour in front of the foreigners. Perhaps she also feels offended that the tourists are told a tale about different lifestyle of Gileadean women as if it were their choice, their voluntary decision. In addition, she is asked whether their strange living habits satisfy them and she has to answer

positively as any other response is not acceptable. To speak exactly, Offred's life is, in general, full of traumatic or, at least embarrassing places, experiences and moments. When going back from shopping, she introduces one of such places, the Wall, to the readers. Offred herself has not already accustomed to the view of this provisional gallows-tree because of its horrible function and consequently, because of the menace that one day she might recognize her husband among the people hanged on it. She is supposed to hate the convicts for their offences against the regime but her feelings definitely do not include anything like hatred or disdain.

2.3. Coping with the memories

Offred's narration is interlaced with passages titled "Night" which deal with her emotions and thoughts at the time when she is supposed to sleep. In the first of these chapters she confesses that nights are often the most difficult parts of the day as she is left alone with her unquiet mind. Although it is the only time when she does not have to perform the role of an obedient Handmaid and participate in activities designated for them, she does not enjoy it at all. During the day she cannot pay much attention to her thoughts or spend much time by recalling the past because she is under permanent control. However, when the night comes round, she cannot help evoking her memories, partly to escape the cruel reality and partly because they simply arise from her inner space and cross her mind to hurt her again. The images of her past vary a lot; from pleasant recalls of her studies including those of her eccentric friend Moira, to vague pictures of her childhood when she was brought up by her emancipated mother. The most delicate memories are concerned with her own family; that is her husband Luke and their little daughter. The remembrance of the moments which they spent together in harmony and mutual love now seem too painful and unbelievable. For instance, she is evoking the image of making love with Luke and she experiences, even more intensively than as usual, her present emotional privation.

"If I thought this would never happen again I would die. But this is wrong, nobody dies from lack of sex. It's lack of love we die from. There's nobody here I can love, all the people I could love are dead or elsewhere. Who knows where they are or what their names are now? They might as well be nowhere, as I am for them. I too am a missing person." (Atwood: 113)

She also suffers from various nightmares from which the most horrible concerns her attempt to cross the border with her daughter in her arms and thus escape the newly established regime in her country. Through this nightmare the readers may fully understand her never-ending frustration caused by the fact that she and her husband were once so close to the salvation of their family but their plans failed in the end. On the other hand, except of these dreams over which she does not have any control, Offred is able to suppress all the hurting memories at the moment when they become unbearable. In spite of her suffering, it appears that she never loses hope for better future; actually her narration itself is the evidence of it as it makes sense only in the case that she believes in the existence of someone to be there to listen to her. During the nights she does not only retrospect but she is also inventing what has happened with her beloved persons, especially with Luke. Her visions about him range from desperate ideas to optimistic views all at once. Sometimes she fears that he was shot on the run and then, she trusts in that his death was preferably quick and painless. Next time, she is not so pessimistic when she hopes that he was caught and imprisoned, like her in fact, or at best he managed to escape and is planning her salvation from exile. The idea of meeting him again or, at least, receiving some letter from him raises her hope and it virtually forces her to go on living in such difficult conditions. Perhaps the vision of her family waiting for her somewhere, the same way as she is expecting their existence, prevents her from suicidal ideation.

“The message will say that I must have patience: sooner or later he will get me out, we will find her, wherever they’ve put her. She’ll remember us and we will be all three of us together. Meanwhile I must endure, keep myself safe for later. What has happened to me, what’s happening to me now won’t make any difference to him, he loves me anyway, he knows it isn’t my fault. The message will say that also. It’s this message, which may never arrive, that keeps me alive. I believe in the message.” (Atwood: 116)

2.4. Need of communication and activism

While the nights make Offred very nostalgic and worried about the fate of her family, during the days she has to cope with another serious problem. Firstly, she lives in constant tension and anxiety not only because of all the dangers connected with her position or general state of affairs in her country but also because of the impossibility of normal communication among people there which complicates her life a lot. As if it were not enough that she must perform the role of a Handmaid with all its drawbacks, moreover, she cannot make her

existence easier by means of talking to someone. Ironically, there are many women in the same situation, the Handmaids, who might share their problems among themselves and support each other in their troubles but they are not allowed to do that. Instead of it, they are set against each other through the strategy of mutual spying and if there is no reason for mistrust in this respect, the regime makes enemies of them through their reproductive abilities. Thus, Offred cannot vent her heart neither in front of her shopping partner, Ofglen, nor in front of Rita and Cora, the two of the Marthas in the Household. When walking with Ofglen, she has to guess whether her lady-companion tries to communicate her something important beyond her seemingly innocent words, eventually what. Similarly, in the company of the two Marthas she has to judge all the time according to their gestures or face-play whether it is acceptable to attempt talking to them or not. The same guessing applies to the communication with male inhabitants of the Household which is much less common than the one with women but all the more significant. She analyzes any slight deviation from their usual, or strictly speaking, compulsory behaviour and tries to interpret its meaning. At the same time, she does not know whether she should consider it to be really important message or just momentary deviation from prescribed norms. For example, she feels perplexed about the meeting with both the Commander's chauffeur Nick and the Commander himself. The former bewilders Offred just by harmless attempt at small talk while the latter disconcerts her when she encounters him near-by her room. As she is not allowed to talk to them, she can neither find out the reason of their extraordinary behaviour nor satisfy her natural need of communication so that she has even more unanswered questions and inquietude in her troubled mind. The readers are told that before Offred arrived to the Household, she had been instructed in some special educational centre for the Handmaids about men's inscrutability and incorrigibility and then, according to Gileadean ideology she should avoid both men, as well as any other man in her surrounding. Nevertheless, they are objects of her interest and she is neither able to suppress her natural concern about men nor hold any negative opinion about them as she is supposed to.

It could be said that Offred obtains (or is forced to gain) more information from non-verbal communication. She has to rely on her intuition about possible signals from other people around her and she gradually learns that what is not said by words can be much voluminous than empty phrases which are normally exchanged among the citizens at that time. She even tries to deduce some meaningful notification from the Latin inscription which she found written down on the cupboard wall in her room shortly after her arrival to the current Household. Although she does not understand it, she decides to believe that it was meant to be

a message written by the previous inhabitant for encouraging her. In her eyes, it does not only mean that through the inscription she is in particular touch with that woman but they actually share a secret and moreover, based on illegal offence against the Gileadean laws as women are forbidden to both write and read.

“I didn’t know what it meant, or even what language it was in. (...) Still, it was a message, and it was in writing, forbidden by that very fact, and it hadn’t yet been discovered. Except by me, for whom it was intended. It was intended for whoever came next. It pleases me to ponder this message. It pleases me to think I’m communing with her, this unknown woman. (...) It pleases me to know that her taboo message made it through, to at least one other person, washed itself up on the wall of my cupboard, was opened and read by me.” (Atwood: 62)

In addition to poor communication, during the days Offred also suffers from too much free time which, in local context, does not mean the same as nowadays. After all, it has been already pointed out that she hardly copes with the time spent awake in bed at nights. Therefore, another spare time prescribed for the Handmaids in order to make them relax to gather strength and thus, actually prepare them for the period of their future pregnancy depresses her a lot. It seems as if she were buried alive there in fact. She cannot stand such passive way of life and any extra time when she cannot occupy her mind with any activity. On the other hand, she admits that the daily programme in the Household which emphasizes the importance of resting makes her sleepy, probably in combination with doping of drugs in their meal. She feels desperate about being so drowsy because it prevents her from taking any, at least slightly rebellious, action against the authorities but she tries to comfort herself with the idea that sufficient relaxation might help her to vitalize.

2.5. Frustration about present infertility and lost motherhood

Besides all daily troubles to which Offred has to face, by means of her further narration in Chapter 11 the readers experience the first more substantial moral dilemma that occurs during one of her regular visits to a doctor. Offred explains that all the Handmaids go there every month and on each this occasion they hope for being informed about their pregnancy. This once the doctor suggests a kind of favour for her which, under different conditions, would certainly sound as an insult or it could be even considered a delict. Namely, he proposes her help with her impregnation which virtually means that he is suggesting her sexual intercourse with him. There is no unique reason for his behaviour so that it is up to Offred (and the

readers, too) to interpret his actual intentions. Through that offer he probably partly intends to compensate his own loneliness or sexual frustration and simultaneously, he may enjoy his momentary power over his patient who needs to conceive as soon as possible. On the other hand, his intentions might not be necessarily vicious. He may be sorry for her and thus, he is proposing her a kind of cooperation, though strange, but the only one that he can do in his position. Both Offred and the doctor know that her time for becoming pregnant and, consequently, the chance for her rescue are getting shorter. Therefore, Offred does not feel much offended by that proposal but she rather has to consider carefully the hazards of that plan. On the one hand, she might take a risk of being caught in the act by the guards which would practically sentence her to death. However, the doctor himself could take revenge upon her because of having rejected him or, much worse, by refusing him she might condemn herself as it may be her last opportunity to start a baby at all. Finally, her caution and possibly the remains of her self-reverence prevail and she decides to refuse his offer or, strictly speaking, postpone it, at least for the time being. Anyhow, the dilemma that she has had to resolve so unexpectedly largely disconcerts her.

“I put on my clothes again, behind the screen. My hands are shaking. Why am I frightened? I’ve crossed no boundaries, I’ve given no trust, taken no risk, all is safe. It’s the choice that terrifies me. A way out, a salvation.” (Atwood: 71)

As it gradually appears, the Gileadean society focuses on human reproduction and strives for supporting it by means of coldly elaborated, almost scientific approach which is, at the same time, very unnatural. Through several allusions, the readers subsequently comprehend that many citizens of that country are sterile probably because of some nuclear pollution and the minority of women who have stayed fertile were turned into the Handmaids. That is, their social role is based on the duty to preserve life and ensure next generations which will be both born unspoiled by the previous immoral lifestyle and will be brought up in accordance with the Gileadean ideology. For Offred it must be very difficult to be treated as a potential mother of that new generation as she actually has her own child, though sequestered by the state authorities in order to be educated elsewhere by other “more convenient” people. Aside from Luke, her daughter is certainly a person whom she misses the most and the memories of her are the most hurting ones. She not only worries about what has happened to her and whether they will ever meet again but also about whether her daughter still remembers her.

“I lie, lapped by the water, beside an open drawer that does not exist, and think about a girl who did not die when she was five; who still does exist, I hope, though not for me.

Do I exist for her? Am I a picture somewhere, in the dark at the back of her mind?"

(Atwood: 74)

From the point of view of a mother who was involuntarily separated from her child, every single day means more and more perceptible distance among them. Each further day reminds her that she has been deprived of her maternal right to see her daughter growing up. Especially, she feels frustrated about the idea that she has lost the most significant age of her daughter's childhood which is so important for establishing positive relation among mother and child. Therefore, it is possible that daily stress originating from extreme living conditions together with so many traumatic experiences including the loss of her family prevent Offred from becoming pregnant again. The importance of women's good state of mind has been, after all, acknowledged to be one of the factors which facilitate the chance of successful conception. Offred might have subconsciously decided that she will not give birth to another child who would be secluded from her and would have to grow up in such inhospitable environment without her.

2.6. First signs of rebellion

Although Offred refused to run a risk connected with the doctor's proposal, she otherwise does not hesitate to take small rebellious actions by means of which she makes sure that there is always some way how to outwit her incarcerators and the whole Gileadean system. For instance, she often stores away a piece of butter left from her dinner and she saves it secretly in her reserve pair of shoes. She later utilizes it as a hand lotion but it rather functions symbolically. Through these little cheats she convinces herself that she is not going to neglect her beauty and physical culture. In this way she expresses her disagreement with the imposed opinion that her body should serve just as a bearer of new life. She is encouraged even more in these minute personal rebellions by the coming of her university friend Moira to the Household. Moira has not given up being spirited and unconventional even under extreme conditions of religious dictatorship and this fact animates Offred a lot. She is glad to see that the regime with all its inhuman practices did not succeed in breaking her friend's personality down. Consequently, she takes heart to meet Moira and speak to her, at least for a while, in relatively secure places now and again as it is too dangerous for them to communicate in public. Offred so desires to break the rules of the strict system installed in the Household that she even longs for stealing something from its salon just to demonstrate that she is able to transgress it.

“I would like to steal something from this room. I would like to take some small thing, the scrolled ashtray, the little silver pillbox from the mantel perhaps, or a dried flower: hide it in the folds of my dress or in my zippered sleeve, keep it there until this evening is over, secrete it in my room, under the bed, or in a shoe, or in a slit in the hard petit-point FAITH cushion. Every once in a while I would take it out and look at it. It would make me feel that I have power.” (Atwood: 90)

With the help of other Handmaids of the Household, Offred also dares to organize secret smuggling of extra sugar for Moira and thus supply her friend with the only source of energy available after Moira has been injured because of her unsuccessful escape.

In Chapter 16 Offred’s relation about her growing rebellious tendency is interrupted with an episode which on the other hand, refers to the moment of her total subjection to the regime. In that part of the novel the readers are told probably the most shocking aspect of Offred’s new existence as she narrates about the crucial part of so called Ceremony which is held every month. It consists in mass reproductive ritual when the Commander of the Household has sexual intercourse with Offred but she is, at the same time, lying on Serena Joy’s lap in order to involve her, at least symbolically, to the process of reproduction as well. Thus, if it has not occurred earlier in the course of the story through many more or less direct allusions, in that scene the readers can finally comprehend the terrible mechanism of the Gileadean policy and they get a complete explanation for mutual dislike among different groups of women there. Aside from her own emotions, Offred is fully aware of how embarrassing and humbling it must be for the Commander’s Wife to be present at their sexual intercourse and moreover, to pretend her cooperation or interest in it. She wonders who of them has more difficult position and rather than being absorbed by her own suffering she seems to feel pity for both the Commander and Serena Joy as she is observing them during that almost ridiculous act. Offred describes the Ceremony with very distant attitude as she does not narrate it as an episode about her violation which actually takes place there. She suggests that when confronted with other possibilities of how to dispose of her further life, it was her own decision to become a Handmaid in fact which some Marthas take ill of her. Likewise the others participants of that ritual, she conceives it as if it were just one of the common tasks, a kind of business. However, behind this superficial posture all of them have to cope with certain emotional stress which is not pronounced in public but it remains unspoken and still noticeable in the air.

Having endured another act of her subjugation, Offred does not give up being tempted by undertaking other illegal activities on her own. She seems even encouraged by her previous humiliation to commit something forbidden, as if it were her right to avenge herself on for

that. This time she resolves to wander about the Household at night and eventually steal something just for her pleasure. Nevertheless, this nocturnal adventure results in much more fundamental breakthrough within her rebellious behaviour than she has been originally planning. While she is searching in the sitting room for some imperceptible object to steal, she runs upon Nick, the Commander's chauffeur. Since that moment her night excursion acquires totally distinct dimension because the meeting with a man in such a place and daytime is considered inconceivable and unforgivable. After the moment of surprise and dread of being caught there, Offred lets herself captivate by an unexpected opportunity to touch somebody and also be touched by a man who does not do it just because it is his duty. She both enjoys the fact that she is offending the laws of the Gileadean society and the chance to satisfy her hunger for human contact.

“I want to reach up, taste his skin, he makes me hungry. His fingers move, feeling my arm under the nightgown sleeve, as if his hand won't listen to reason. It's so good, to be touched by someone, to be felt so greedily, to feel so greedy.” (Atwood: 109-110)

On the other hand, in spite of sudden emotional impact, Offred cannot avoid thinking about danger which threatens not only to her but also to Nick. She does not want to be responsible for his possible punishment so that she almost immediately withdraws. In addition to her consequent worries she is perplexed when she finds out the main reason of Nick's arrival as he has actually come to inform her about the Commander's wish to see her.

2.7. The turning point

In Chapter 19 Offred interrupts the narration of the foregoing episode and starts the description of another ritual which is held in the Gileadean society. She introduces the gathering and visit to the neighbouring Household which take place when one of the Handmaids, Janine, is giving birth to her baby. As in the case of the reproductive ceremony, also this “social event” is officially supposed to be experienced enthusiastically by all participants. However, such day produces completely different and much more complicated emotions in both the Handmaids (including the one in childbed) and the Wives. As Offred communicates, the only positive aspect of this occasion is that the Handmaids are afforded more freedom than as usual because in the Republic of Gilead the nativity of a baby is always considered a feast day, at least till there are expectations that the baby will be born alive and sane. Therefore, all women sincerely hope that these conditions will be fulfilled as they

sympathize with the expectant mother in a way, partly because next time, some of them could find herself in her position. In this respect, it can be said that every woman there, including Offred, feels particular solidarity towards Janine deep inside her which possibly originates from natural maternal instinct. Moreover, the ritual dictates them to participate in the childbirth through mass chanting and get involved in it as if they were breeding instead of Janine. Offred admits that this strategy of collective hysteria really functions as it entrances them all and makes her feel minute pains despite her general disregard for such fanatic manifestations of female fellowship. At the same time, as it has been already mentioned above, within the Gileadean context, where woman's privileges, even life, depends on her fertility, any woman giving the birth to her baby becomes the source of envy or eventual grudge. Offred describes unnatural practices connected with the delivery which, as well as those concerning the sexual intercourse, set the Wives against the Handmaids because the latter, in contrast to the former, can experience both "events" personally while the Wives just have to pretend their participation. They know that in spite of their higher social status they actually look ridiculous and inferior in the eyes of the Handmaids. On the other hand, the Handmaids prove to be losers in the end when the baby is born and festively handed over to the Wife of the Household as if it were hers in fact. On the top of it, Offred together with the other Handmaids do not feel defeated only in comparison with the Wives but also when contrasted to Janine who has been deprived of her new-born child though but she has simultaneously saved her life because she managed to deliver it. After their collective enthusiasm has passed over, they have to cope with the cruel reality again which reminds them of their present inability to conceive.

"We sit on our benches, facing one another, as we are transported; we're without emotion now, almost without feeling, we might be bundles of red cloth. We ache. Each of us holds in her lap a phantom, a ghost baby. What confronts us, now the excitement's over, is our own failure." (Atwood: 137)

In addition, the baby and newly acquired motherhood immediately turn into the object of enviousness among the other Wives who have to simulate their happiness about it but they are virtually envious of their more successful fellow instead.

Having returned from the birth celebration, Offred feels so emotionally exhausted that she cannot go on narrating her own story and prefers to interlace it with the episode about Moira's escape in disguise from the Household. Although this incident does not directly concern the main protagonist, it has significant impact on her state of mind as well. She partly admires

Moira's courage and bravery to oppose the treatment and lifestyle in the Gileadean regime because it gives evidence about minute imperfections within the strict rules and supervision there of which she could take advantage one day. Moira's runaway also raises hopes for some other rebellion from outside provided her success. On the other hand, her friend's deed also terrifies Offred in a way. She naturally worries about her destiny as she anticipates that such offence against the rules would be surely punished severely. In comparison with Moira, Offred has already become less resistive not because of her agreement with the regime but as a consequence of permanent intimidation about the menaces of the outside world. Having been exposed to constant propagandistic lies, Offred has gradually begun to believe that she is safe only when living in the Household. Moreover, she cannot help being a little egoistic as she repents that Moira did not stay there with her because the former represented a kind of spiritual support not only for her but also for the other Handmaids there.

“Moira was like an elevator with open sides. She made us dizzy. Already we were losing the taste for freedom, already we were finding these walls secure. (...) Nevertheless Moira was our fantasy. We hugged her to us, she was with us in secret, a giggle; she was lava beneath the crust of daily life. In the light of Moira, the Aunts were less fearsome and more absurd.” (Atwood: 143)

In the evening after the exhaustive Birth Day Offred has to face another difficult situation as she has been invited to the Commander's office yet this same day. The appointment bears several kinds of risk at once. Firstly, the private meeting between a Handmaid and the Commander is prohibited so she might be penalized for that if caught by the Wife who would not certainly hesitate to make the best of the opportunity to take her revenge on Offred for all previous humiliating moments. Secondly, Offred cannot dare to refuse the invitation because it might also become the reason for her punishment. She realizes how selfishly the Commander acts as he is aware of his undeniable authority but still he puts her at risk although in case of her capture, she would be the only one to blame. When going to his room, Offred tries to deduce why the Commander wants to see her but none of the alternatives appears too pleasing. She supposes that she may be reprimanded for having done something bad or that he will demand some extra services from her, probably based on sexual subtext. However, Offred is not afraid of the latter possibility, just on the contrary. She is conscious of the fact that if she is asked a favour, she should enjoy the right to want some reward in return for it then. This is one of the common rules which have not expired even under so much

changed conditions. In addition, Offred guesses that if he shows any wish, no matter of what kind, he will reveal, at the same time, particular vulnerability which she might exploit later.

“But there must be something he wants, from me. To want is to have a weakness. It’s this weakness, whatever it is, that entices me. It’s like a small crack in a wall, before now impenetrable. If I press my eye to it, this weakness of his, I may be able to see my way clear.” (Atwood: 146)

2.8. The relationship with the Commander

Despite her courageous thoughts and rebellious intentions, Offred feels quite scared when she enters the Commander’s office as since that moment she is exposed merely to his mercy. All the more she is surprised that he treats her politely and rather shyly from the very beginning of their secret encounter. Having prepared herself for much worse alternatives, she is now moved by not only his old-fashioned behaviour and ancient way of greeting but also by the environment of his room which reminds her of former living style. Further, she cannot help being almost paralyzed by the view of his full bookcases which even more intensify the feeling of having tasted the forbidden fruits. Nevertheless, the most shocking discovery comes when Offred is told the real cause of her invitation there; that is, to keep company and play Scrabble with him. Initially, she cannot believe that she has been called for to his office only because of such simple reason. She still expects another requirement to appear on the part of him while they are already playing that game but then she finds out that he really just must have felt alone. Although she has been planning to take advantage of his weak points if he shows any of them, she suddenly feels sorry about him and does not want to abuse his loneliness for her own benefit anymore, even when he asks a farewell kiss from her. She probably realizes that the Commander feels isolated just like her and that his emotional privation, regardless his higher social position, must be as oppressive as her own loneliness. The encounter has had so strong impact on her that she reflects about it and about the character of the Commander even when she comes back to her room. Having met him personally, she can no more think badly of him as she has penetrated his official cold face and discovered the more human one. Similarly, she does not feel guilty about her visit to his office, especially when nothing immoral or really culpable has happened there. However, she knows that many people from the Household would surely condemn her for it because they might consider her presence there to be either a sign of cooperation with the regime or an

attempt to gain some privileges for her in any way. The newly incurred situation reminds her of a document which she saw as a little girl and which dealt with a confession of a woman who had been a mistress of a Nazi supervisor. Offred can suddenly see certain similarity between her own story and the story of that woman. Now she is able to understand that the latter might have felt love towards the man who was responsible for the death of many Jews because he just did his job and did not speculate about the extension of barbarity in which he took part at that time. She imagines that for that woman he did not represent a criminal as she more likely knew him within totally different context. She tries to put herself on the place of that woman and she realizes that, in her eyes, the Nazi supervisor did not necessarily have to be a mere killer but a man with normal human habits which can be found in any person.

“She did not believe he was a monster. He was not a monster, to her. Probably he had some endearing trait: he whistled, off key, in the shower, he had a yen for truffles, he called his dog Liebchen and made it sit up for little pieces of raw steak. How easy it is to invent a humanity, for anyone at all. What an available temptation. A big child, she would have said to herself. Her heart would have melted, she’d have smoothed the hair back from his forehead, kissed him on the ear, and not just to get something out of him either.”

(Atwood: 155)

The cumulation of complicated feelings connected with the Birth Day and the following meeting with the Commander cause that Offred has to give vent to her suppressed emotions. Due to long-lasting existence full of pretence, her inner tension finally breaks free and she experiences almost uncontrollable burst of emotions. It is a combination of both weeping and laughter, probably produced by nervousity and brain-fag of the previous day, which she, anyhow, tries to restrain because such conduct would attract attention and could be qualified as unsuitable. She eventually recovers peace of mind and falls asleep while wondering again about the purpose of the message left in the cupboard by her predecessor.

After the description of that extremely exhaustive day, Offred skips over in her narration so that in the next chapter the readers find out that her appointments with the Commander have become a routine in the meantime. She explains how they communicate with the help of Nick and agreed secret signs which inform Offred whether or not it is secure to visit the Commander in particular evening. Although she is still aware of his authority and illegal dimension of their meetings, she gradually dares to treat him as an equal partner which is a natural result of their regular appointments. Offred admits that in the beginning she was quite disappointed about the innocent character of her visits there because it would have been certainly easier to demand something in return from him if he had asked any more delicate

favour of her. They both actually have a need of variegating every other meeting by means of minute manifestations of growing affection and confidence. Thus, during their second evening spent together the Commander astonishes Offred when he allows her to leaf through a woman magazine which is naturally forbidden to possess in the Gileadean society. Offred is partly surprised by this act as she feels excited about the possibility to read and hold a prohibited object in her hands which, simultaneously, represents a tangible link with the past. On the other hand, she does not comprehend why she is afforded such illegal pleasure and not asked anything for that. She does not know why the Commander intends to make her life more bearable. Firstly, she thinks that he is just tempting her and checking her loyalty to the rules of the regime. Then she almost seems to be angry about that momentary present because it also makes her nostalgic and she cannot stand the idea that the Commander might entertain himself in this way. However, she later discovers that he rather wants to please her and simply share it with her as there is nobody else with whom he could spend his time in a spirit of former times. Offred makes sure again that the Commander has remained a normal man inside who only finds himself in different position at the present but his manners and mentality are the same as before the conditions in their country dramatically changed. Offred, in return, decides to share with him her little secret about using butter as a hand cream and on the basis of this confession she dares to ask him for some skin lotion in order to afford herself a small reward as well. At the same time, she feels injured by the revelation that the Commander does not have any notion about the poor conditions and humiliating treatment which the Handmaids in his Household have to tolerate. She tries to outline their real situation to him but he seems distant which reminds her of the fact that he does not have to sympathize with her, even if he pays her more attention. "For him, I must remember, I am only a whim." (Atwood: 168) This disillusionment even intensifies when Offred reveals that her dead predecessor also used to visit the Commander. Nonetheless, despite momentary disenchantment about it she does not really think that he is simply exploiting her. She somehow anticipates that she is a unique person in his life. As time goes on, playing Scrabble virtually turns into a supplementary activity; it has become just pretence for their regular meetings. They both want to fill in their abundant spare time by means of something meaningful and talking to each other is, simultaneously, great opportunity not only for satisfying their lack of human contact but also for Offred to get some knowledge about what is going on there.

Not only Offred but also the readers realize the full impact of the relationship with the Commander when other reproductive ritual comes. Although their relationship cannot be

characterized as love or passion, they can never more understand their controlled sexual intercourse as a mere duty which has to be done. While both “main participants” in it always used to try being as much distant as possible during that act, now they cannot avoid perceiving the presence of each other and feeling certain embarrassment about the whole situation. Offred suddenly feels ashamed both of him and her own physical appearance. She does not love him but neither considers him an anonymous man in charge of fertilizing her as it used to happen before. He has turned into an important person of her present life who has concrete characteristics and cannot be ignored by her anymore. Her changed emotions do not refer only to the Commander. She also experiences different and more complicated feelings about his wife, Serena Joy. Offred admits that her attitude towards the latter does not include just hatred like formerly but now she feels guilty about her as well.

“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, if only to play his games and listen to him talk, 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. I was filching. Never mind that it was something she apparently didn’t want or had no use for, had rejected even; still, it was hers, and if I took it away, this mysterious “it” I couldn’t quite define – for the Commander wasn’t in love with me, I refused to believe he felt anything for me as extreme as that – what would be left for her?” (Atwood: 170)

On the other hand, Offred cannot help feeling superior to Serena Joy at the same time and she actually likes that idea. Simultaneously, she is afraid of the risk that their relationship might be detected just during the Ceremony because it is so easy to be carried away by one’s emotions and show particular affection to each other in such situation. It even occurs to her that Serena Joy might know about her visits to the Commander’s room and enjoy observing Offred as future captive. However, despite her worries and consciousness that she has complicated her already difficult life, she still feels grateful for that special relation among her and the Commander because it has brought certain sense into her existence as well. She likes the idea that she has also become an important part of someone’s life and thus, she never more embodies just a walking womb for him.

2.9. Further involvement into conscious resistance

The relationship with the Commander is not the only one which is developing throughout the story. There is a significant change in Offred’s relation with her shopping partner, Ofglen,

as well. It happens during one of their regular shopping walks in summer, shortly after Offred started seeing the Commander in the evenings. In that part of the novel the readers may have an impression as if the main protagonist's life – so far quite calm, almost boring – were suddenly undergoing dramatic turns. As it has been mentioned earlier, the communication among both women is reduced to minimum, partly because they are not allowed to talk too much and partly because they do not trust in each other. Offred supposes that her shopping fellow might monitor her and denounce any slightest detail which might seem suspicious or disloyal to Ofglen. Nevertheless, through mutual inconspicuous testing by means of seemingly innocent discontinuous conversation now and again they finally find out that day that they both do not agree with the regime and do not have to fear of each other any more in this respect. They become allies and Ofglen even suggests that Offred could join her in some organization which stays further unspecified as their talk cannot continue at that moment because of too much danger. Later Offred is told their password which has been already mentioned before as Ofglen was trying to draw her attention. The revelation that Ofglen does not embody any menace for her, just on the contrary, animates Offred a lot. From her point of view, the allusion to the existence of some organized rebellion means not only hope for the defeat of the present political system but also hope for getting some information about the destiny of her family members. In addition, apart from the political dimension of that discovery Offred surely appreciates that she has found a friend in whom she can confide after Moira disappeared. On the other hand, the newly established confidence and friendship among the two women is also partly pinioning. She is actually drawn by Ofglen to active illegal involvement which cannot be stopped since then even if she changed her mind or lost courage in the course of time. Moreover, as her shopping partner soon learns about her regular contact with the Commander, Offred gains quite difficult position because she might either be considered a kind of traitor in the case of showing particular attachment towards him or she might feel obligated to perform much more fundamental role within the rebellion.

Another fundamental change in Offred's life (and consequently behaviour) is paradoxically initiated by the woman from who the main character would hardly expect such act; a kind of rebellion against the established social rules in fact. Namely, Serena Joy proposes her to have sexual intercourse with somebody else, probably Nick, in order to increase the possibility to conceive (by the way, in this scene it might seem quite ironic to the readers that both the Commander and his wife have decided to take advantage of Nick to fulfill their whims or needs). Through this idea she definitely does not want to help Offred because she might feel sorry about her shortening time to become pregnant. It is a cold

business deal on the part of the Wife as she longs for having a baby on her own, possibly not just to content her maternal desires but also to raise both the reputation of the Household and her social status at once. Serena Joy dares to suggest this plan because she is aware of Offred's time-limited chance to save her life by impregnation. Except for an unexpected author of such proposal, Offred is not shocked or scandalized by it as she has been already thinking about that possibility but she feels touched by Serena Joy's way of negotiating instead. The latter tries to make her accept her suggestion by means of the vision that Offred might get a photo of her daughter in return for her compliance. For the main protagonist, this is the very most provoking aspect of the whole proposal in fact.

“She knows where they've put her then, where they're keeping her. She's known all along. Something chokes in my throat. The bitch, not to tell me, bring me news, any news at all. Not even to let on. She's made of wood, or iron, she can't imagine. But I can't say this, I can't lose sight, even of so small a thing. I can't let go this hope.” (Atwood: 216)

Although having sex with another man besides the Commander means a high crime there, she cannot refuse both her supervisor and the possible reward as the former might avenge for her disobedience and the latter represents too much appealing challenge for her. Therefore, Offred finally agrees with that strange cooperation which is not based on mutual sympathy but on mere egoistic impulses of both women. As it later appears, Serena Joy keeps the promise and brings Offred the picture of her daughter to see it for a while but it proves to be a kind of punishment rather than reward for the main protagonist because she suddenly has to face the cruel reality. Getting the view of her growing daughter, she fully understands that the regime has succeeded in its terrible strategy and has destroyed her family life forever. She comes to realize that she has been definitely deprived of her role of mother, at least respecting that girl, as the latter seems to have forgotten about her and be already adapted to her new family.

Offred experiences similar kind of bitter disillusionment when the Commander takes her secretly out of the Household in order to please her. Nevertheless, once finding herself in the lower world of the Jezebel's club, she rather feels disappointed about apparent efforts of the people there to return to the past and its morals because it all suddenly seems too much constrained and inauthentic. At the same time, she perceives that she herself, especially her manners and self-confidence, have changed a lot so that the momentary comeback to old times makes her more likely embarrassed than satisfied in fact. Moreover, although the Commander has introduced this trip as other favour done for her, Offred is actually aware that she functions as a source of entertainment for him instead and does not like much the idea of

being a toy in his hands. The meeting and consequent talk to Moira there confirms her in this belief as her friend undeceives her about the Commander's real intentions. Although Offred still believes in some special dimension of her relationship with the Commander, when confronted with unemotional opinion of Moira, she again feels like a naive girl who might be imagining things which are not true at all. However, this idea is not the main reason of her frustration that evening. Offred's sincere joy about the reencounter with Moira and the possibility to talk privately with her for a moment soon disappears when she finds out that her friend has virtually resigned to her previous rebelliousness. Though her presence in the Jezebel's club still means some kind of illegal existence, Moira is practically sentenced to death in advance as there is no way how to escape from there. Moreover, she otherwise seems to having decided to give it up even if it were possible and come to terms with her present life instead. Offred cannot cope with the vision that her friend who, in her eyes, has always represented certain spiritual model might finally conform to one of the alternatives of existence offered by the regime.

“She is frightening me now, because what I hear in her voice is indifference, a lack of volition. (...) I don't want her to be like me. Give in, go along, save her skin. That is what it comes down to. I want gallantry from her, swashbuckling, heroism, single-handed combat. Something I lack. (...) I'd like to tell a story about how Moira escaped, for good this time. (...) I'd like her to end with something daring and spectacular, some outrage, something that would befit her. But as far as I know that didn't happen. I don't know how she ended, or even if she did, because I never saw her again.” (Atwood: 261-262)

That night the relationship among Offred and the Commander basically culminates when they have sex in the Jezebel's club. However, it has nothing to do with voluntary intercourse as a natural result of their mutual increasing affection. From the point of view of Offred, it is particular redemption; something she knows she is supposed to afford him for all his previous (maybe purpose-built) attempts to variegate her life of a Handmaid. Anyway, the readers can notice certain disenchantment on the part of the main protagonist who definitely realizes that their prior meetings were presumably meant to end in this way. Although the Commander still behaves very politely towards her and does not abuse the situation to treat her by no means perversely, she loses her idea about his more noble-minded intentions with her anyhow. Their unique relationship, based on his almost paternal protection and her admiration for his gentlemanlike behaviour, is in a way damaged by her revelation that it might have been all just pretence leading to sex with her.

2.10. The relationship with Nick

A turning point in the main character's behaviour occurs when she establishes the relationship with the Commander's chauffeur Nick. What was originally meant to be a simple act based on the secret agreement with Serena Joy in order to increase her chance of becoming pregnant turns into almost irrational obsession which dramatically changes not only Offred's moral attitudes but also her relations with other people. While she perceives her first visit to Nick's apartment as a mere task to be done for her rescue, it later, directly endangers her as she loses control over her emotions about him and starts to visit him regularly at any rate. When following Offred's narration in the closing part of the novel, the readers might think that she has gone mad after all the suffering or has completely lost her self-preservation because of fatal passion. She is less cautious than before because her only worries have practically reduced to the fact that Nick might stop being interested in her one day. The protagonist herself tries to explain and justify her conduct at that time when she totally denied her previous interests and spiritual values but she cannot (and partly does not want to) provide any reasonable argument except of blaming herself for that. It even seems as if she were proud of heading herself for her destruction.

“Telling this, I'm ashamed of myself. But there's more to it than that. Even now, I can recognize this admission as a kind of boasting. There's pride in it, because it demonstrates how extreme and therefore justified it was, for me. How well worth it. It's like stories of illness and near-death, from which you have recovered; like stories of war. They demonstrate seriousness.” (Atwood: 283)

Listening to Offred's unexpected confession about the development of her relationship with Nick, the readers must have an impression that she finally did not manage to go on suppressing her feelings. The only logical explanation for her changed behaviour and sudden indifference towards her own destiny might be that she has become obsessed with Nick because she already could not tolerate other emotional privation. However, Nick is not actually as important for her as it might seem at first sight. She rather got obsessed with her own pleasure as she once learned that her sexual and emotional needs, so long neglected and starving, could be satisfied again. Since then she no longer could deny herself that momentary feeling of happiness. She is so absorbed by the relationship with Nick that she is no more interested in both the appointments with the Commander and Ofglen's news about the activities of the rebellious organization. She even does not want to escape from the Household

as before because now it would mean to leave Nick there. Moreover, Offred gradually gives up adhering to the memories of her husband and does not seem to be much sorry for it.

“I ought to have done that with Luke, paid more attention, to the details, the moles and scars, the singular creases; I didn’t and he’s fading. Day by day, night by night he recedes, and I become more faithless.” (Atwood: 281)

Similarly, her former admiration for the dead inhabitant of her room and the special bond among them lose its importance as she perceives that woman as her eventual rival from the past. Offred’s only motivation for pretending her old manners originates from her fear that someone might notice the change in her behaviour and reveal its cause. She also suggests that she has finally become pregnant but it ironically does not save her from falling into Serena Joy’s disfavour as she has gone too far. Once Offred gave vent to her emotions and sincerity, she cannot help behaving according to her real desires and no more recuperates her previous self-control. As she wants to feel natural in front of Nick and share everything with him, she does not hesitate to tell him about things which she has never confessed to anyone before, including her illegal contacts with Moira and Ofglen. Neither is she able to repress her curiosity and need of knowing the truth in front of her new shopping partner after Ofglen’s disappearance. However, such thoughtless conduct makes her more vulnerable and suspicious which she unfortunately realizes too late. It seems as if through the relationship with Nick Offred got fed up with pretence, deprived of any constraint and definitely liberated herself from dissimulation and restraint of her current needs.

2.11. Final resignation and willingness to submit

In the very end of the story, Offred partly recovers from her blind behaviour because of immediate touch of menace. It happens shortly after she unwillingly took part in mass execution. When confronted with the view of hanged Handmaids who probably committed some offence against the Gileadean rules, she came to realize that she would never be so strong to rebel and end up in their position. In addition, she feels grateful (and little guilty as well) that Ofglen rescued her from capture when the latter decided to commit suicide, probably in order to prevent the Eyes from torturing her and thus detecting other persons involved in the rebellion. Offred considers her friend’s deed to be a kind of a divine sign, the second chance for her to set off, this time in right, that is, more secure direction. Although too late, she swears for herself that she will conform to the life of an obedient Handmaid and do

anything just to save herself. Despite various forms of her previous resistance, ranging from silent disagreement with the regime or the meetings with the Commander to open and regular illegal contact with Nick, at the moment of direct jeopardy she clings to her own life as it is the only thing which really matters. Facing to immediate threat and the vision of terrible punishment in its entirety, she is completely discouraged and succumbs to the authority.

“I don’t want pain. I don’t want to be a dancer, my feet in the air, my head faceless oblong of white cloth. I don’t want to be a doll hung up on the Wall. I don’t want to be a wingless angel. I want to keep on living, in any form. I resign my body freely, to the uses of others. They can do what they like with me. I am abject. I feel, for the first time, their true power.” (Atwood: 298)

Ironically, almost immediately after her awakening and taking decision to submit to the demands of the Gileadean society, her relationship with the Commander is revealed by Serena Joy which definitely defeats her hope for salvation. On the other hand, in contrast to her expectations, she does not burst into panic but she rather feels a kind of relief inside as she does not have to hide anything and can finally be one’s own man instead. However, her sudden calmness, at the same time, appeals terrifying as it also suggests particular resignation, her reconciliation with the impossibility to overcome the regime in any way. Though she is thinking about the alternatives how to avoid the capture while waiting for it in her room, she does not intend to accomplish any of them in fact. The consciousness of vanity of taking any action against that invincible system makes her passive and she already does not dare to resist. She is totally tired of rebelling.

“I consider these things idly. Each one of them seems the same size as all the others. Not one seems preferable. Fatigue is here, in my body, in my legs and eyes. That is what gets you in the end. Faith is only a word, embroidered.” (Atwood: 304)

Nevertheless, in spite of her seeming serenity Offred does not head for a definite destination in the end of the story. Although she considered the arrival of the black van to be a clear and inevitable consequence of her transgression with which she was ready to cope, the moment of her arrest rather brings much more uncertainty than she could ever imagine. Her previous composedness and resignation are disturbed when she faces to Nick coming to seize her. At first, she blames him for having been a traitor since the beginning of their relationship but then she lays her last hopes on his asseveration that they have arrived to rescue her instead. She is also perplexed about the fact that nobody in the Household claims responsibility for having called the black van which also may be interpreted in two ways. Namely, either it is

really initiated for effect by the rebellious organization or basically anyone from the Household might have denounced her. In any case, there is no time yet for any explanation, justification or appealing for help. Offred knows that she has to take a risk and undergo her last trial which can both lead to her final destruction or salvation.

“The van waits in the driveway, its double doors stand open. The two of them, one on either side now, take me by the elbows to help me in. Whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing: I have given myself over into the hands of strangers, because it can’t be helped. And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light.” (Atwood: 307)

2.12. Summary of Offred’s development

Offred’s behaviour and political resistance are closely connected with outside matters. In the beginning of the novel Offred is rather silent opponent of the regime who secretly despises its ideology and does not hesitate to take minute actions which do not directly endanger her life but make it more tolerable. She longs for escape from the unfavourable reality of her present existence but does not have any concrete plan how to accomplish it. She hopes that she will manage to survive the extreme conditions there and meet her family again some day. Therefore, she is able to endure many traumatic or humiliating experiences and temporarily suppress her moral values to outlast her stay in the Household. However, everyday life there not only forces her to stick to positive vision of her future but she also (both consciously and unknowingly) adapts to her new life and cannot avoid establishing new relations with people there. Although illegal meetings with the Commander were not initiated by her, she later voluntarily takes part in this relationship but she actually does not consider it to be a manifestation of her resistance against the rules but rather a kind of human contact. Offred’s most rebellious activities concern her involvement with Ofglen and the secret organization on which both women lay their hopes and above all, her relationship with Nick. The latter soon loses its political dimension as it gradually refers just to her personal interests. She even refuses other cooperation with Ofglen because she wants to focus merely on her own pleasure. In the eyes of the regime, it still means rebelliousness but she ironically no longer wants to escape as she has found love there. In fact, in this part of the story the readers witness particulate moral fall of the main protagonist as she rejects all her previous beliefs and instead of it, is interested just in her desires. She betrays her moral values and people who she liked

but she finally recovers her former behaviour and feels blameful for that. She suffers from remorse, especially as for Ofglen who laid down her life in order to protect her from detection. On the other hand, in the end of the novel the readers discover that by means of the character of Nick she, maybe unconsciously, might have got in touch with the revolt itself as Nick finally arrives in the black van to either arrest her or smuggle her across the border.

3. COMPARISON OF *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR* AND *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*

Both analyzed novels bear several similarities, especially in regard to the environment and its influence on the development of the main protagonists. They describe extreme political regimes which restrict human rights to minimum and manipulate with people's mind and/or behaviour. Although these state systems are exaggerated, both George Orwell and Margaret Atwood criticize real political or religious movements in these works by means of depicting and extending some of their basic features to sci-fi hyperbole. While Orwell refers to Stalinist dictatorship, Atwood creates a fictitious fascist-theocratic regime which, in addition, can be characterized as misogynist, that is, hostile to women. She also alludes to religious fanaticism, namely to American Puritanism which promoted the community life and mutual supervision among its members. Regardless their fundamental ideology, both regimes function on the basis of the same common principles such as omnipresent monitoring of the inhabitants or their compulsory involvement into mass rituals (Two Minutes Hate, Hate Week, Birth Day, Salvaging, etc.) which serve for intimidation, regulating their emotions and systematic brainwashing.

As a natural reaction against that inhuman treatment in both novels the readers, soon or later, meet with individual rebelliousness as well as collective form of revolt, that is, some kind of illegal organization. Its existence stays rather unconfirmed as it is either a safety measure or it means that the rebellion is more likely just a product of a collective dream. Further, the protagonists of both novels suffer from lack of communication and normal interpersonal relations, yet Winston seems to be little more isolated than Offred. Anyhow, in particular moment of their lives they cannot stand anymore their emotional privation and therefore, they establish forbidden contacts with other persons there which later prove to be fatal for them in a way. While Offred – except for the terrible practices of the regime – lives in quite pleasant environment in respect to housing and alimentation, Winston, in addition, suffers from apparent poverty. On the other hand, Offred has more difficult position than Winston due to her sex because women, who are still often discriminated in many modern societies, are repressed even more than men in such inhospitable regimes as it is clearly noticeable in Atwood's work.

Both novels emphasize the importance of memory for human integrity but also its negative, even destructive, impact on the main characters' mind. Winston feels urge to recollect the early memories from his childhood practically throughout the whole story and once having recovered them, he is actually ruined by them whereas Offred remembers her

previous life in detail but it basically brings her the same torment. The most significant difference among the two novels consists in the final conclusion. While Winston ends up completely broken by the political system in his country and his thinking has been totally infiltrated with the state ideology, *The Handmaid's Tale* does not supply the readers with such definite ending. There is a high probability that Offred has been finally saved by the illegal rebellion and escaped from punishment. Nevertheless, both protagonists have been actually damaged by the political regime. Although they have survived either torturing or any other vengeance for their resistance, they have lost their original personality and they can never recuperate from their previous physical and psychical hardships.

CONCLUSION

My diploma paper focuses on moral development of the main protagonists of two selected novels; *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, which both belong to literary genre called dystopian novels.

The theoretical part of the paper is divided into four chapters which are dedicated to brief characteristics of the genre and common questions with which the two novels deal. It outlines main items and themes to which dystopian novels usually refer and further comments on their function as they virtually serve as a social warning against possible political development. It describes general principles of totalitarian regimes and the strategies by which these political systems maintain their power over the citizens. It especially targets the method of brainwashing and other repressive mechanisms that make the inhabitants obedient. The theoretical part also focuses on the role of women in dystopian novels which proves to be much more difficult than the position of men but also crucial in a way as women, at the same time, have insuppressible influence over men. It deals with the role of human sexuality which is considered dangerous in the eyes of the totalitarian regimes but despite their efforts to exterminate it, people cannot entirely deny their natural instincts after all. It concerns with the importance of human communication which the regimes try to reduce utmost. Moreover, they intend to manipulate with people's minds through providing them false information all the time. They want to keep the citizens in ignorance and false reality because knowledge would certainly destroy their total power. Besides the general issues, the theoretical part, at the same time, provides concrete illustrations of given problems as they occur in both literary works.

The second part of my paper includes two central chapters which analyze separately the moral development of each protagonist throughout the story. They survey individual stages in the protagonists' behaviour and attitudes towards the regimes, ranging from their original illusory conformity to first manifestations of protest up to open illegal activity. Both analyses also include particular turning point in the main characters' conduct which encourages them to fight against the political system as well as another turning point which leads them to astray. On the top of it, the two analyses are followed by a concise comparison of both novels.

My research on this topic should give evidence about the fact that the extreme environment and political systems in which both main characters have to live cannot prevent them from natural human behaviour and deprive them of emotions or memories. In this respect, they have managed to discomfit the political machinery in their countries and overcome it morally in fact. On the other hand, their driving motives such as love and memory finally become fatal

for them as the regime eventually defeats each of them just by means of their inextinguishable humanity. The protagonists' adherence to their moral principles and feelings simultaneously make them more vulnerable and less cautious as in particular moment they fail in their usual careful behaviour and blindly focus on the objects of their emotions. The regime let them protest to a certain degree and thus the protagonists have momentary impression that they might defeat it in the end. However, as soon as they exceed certain limit in their rebellion, the regime makes them know that their possibilities are very restricted in comparison to political authority. The two literary works demonstrate that no political ideology can completely suppress human naturalism but simultaneously, individual human will can never gain victory over totalitarian regimes.

RESUMÉ

Tématem mé diplomové práce je morální vývoj hlavních postav ve vybraných negativních utopiích, konkrétně v románech “1984” od George Orwella a “*The Handmaid’s Tale*” od Margaret Atwoodové. Tato dvě literární díla bývají obvykle řazena do žánru zvaného „dystopické novely“.

V teoretické části této práce jsem se podrobněji zabývala obecnými charakteristikami tohoto literárního žánru se zvláštním přihlédnutím k prostředí totalitních režimů, které bývá typické právě pro negativní utopie, jejichž důležitou funkcí a zároveň úmyslem autora bývá často skryté varování čtenářů před možným politickým či společenským vývojem současného světa. Tato část se zaměřuje především na společné principy totalitních režimů a různé mechanismy či strategie, pomocí nichž si tyto politické systémy udržují svou absolutní moc nejen nad národem jako celkem, ale i nad každým jednotlivým občanem. Mezi takové strategie patří například metoda tzv. „brainwashingu“, která usiluje o maximální ovládnutí lidského myšlení, což je velmi dobře patrné obzvláště v Orwellově díle. Zásadní roli v obou románech hraje i manipulace s informacemi, pamětí a identitou hlavních hrdinů, jejichž snaha o uchování vlastní osobnosti v kontextu nucené konformity a politických represí nabývá téměř odbojové dimenze, ale ve výsledku přispívá ke zkáze obou protagonistů.

Teoretická část dále zkoumá pozici žen v rámci totalitních systémů, které svými vysoce nepříznivými životními podmínkami znovu uvrhují ženy do silně podřízeného postavení vůči mužům. Mají-li občané totalitních režimů obecně extrémně omezená lidská práva, pak ženy zde trpí mnohem více než muži, poněvadž je zapomenuta veškerá dřívější emancipace či rovnoprávnost mezi pohlavími a ženy jsou opět v područí mužů. Totalitní systémy jsou si dobře vědomy ženské moci nad muži i jejich přirozené autority dané jejich schopností plodit nový život, a tak se nezdrahají využívat ke své manipulaci s občany i takové mechanismy jako je potlačování mateřského instinktu, kontrolovaná porodnost či štvání dětí proti svým rodičům a naopak. To vše se hluboce dotýká v první řadě hlavně žen a tím je jejich život v takovém prostředí ještě více nesnesitelný než z pohledu mužů.

Kromě výsadního postavení žen v rámci společnosti spatřují totalitní režimy nebezpečí i v lidské sexualitě, kterou se snaží využít k vlastnímu prospěchu a transformovat ji do politického fanatismu. Navzdory jejich značnému úsilí řídit vztahy mezi lidmi a potlačit jejich přirozené instinkty, však nemohou úplně vykořenit biologicky dané zákonitosti lidského chování, a tak se čtenáři i v tak nehostinných podmínkách prostřednictvím hlavních hrdinů setkávají s touhou, láskou i obyčejnou potřebou sdílet s někým své pocity a myšlenky.

Podobným nezdarem končí i snaha politických systémů omezit lidskou komunikaci na minimum pomocí všudypřítomného dozoru či udržování lidí ve strachu ze vzájemného udavačství. Pokaždé se najdou jedinci, kteří dokáží překonat tyto nástrahy a komunikovat s ostatními prostřednictvím mnohdy neuvěřitelných strategií. Teoretická část kromě obecných témat a problémů dystopických novel, potažmo totalitních režimů, poskytuje řadu konkrétních příkladů, které ilustrují určitou problematiku a způsob, jakým se vyskytuje v daném díle.

Praktická část mé diplomové práce zahrnuje podrobný rozbor obou vybraných románů. Nejprve analyzuje morální vývoj hlavního hrdiny "1984" Winstona Smithe v průběhu celé knihy, poté stejným způsobem rozebírá vývoj protagonistky "The Handmaid's Tale" Offred a nakonec nabízí srovnání obou postav. V této části jsem se zaměřila na jednotlivé etapy vývoje hlavních hrdinů, konkrétně jejich chování a postoje k politické situaci v jejich zemi, které se pohybují od počáteční zdánlivé pasivity k prvním projevům nesouhlasu s daným režimem až po otevřené aktivní zapojení v odbojové organizaci a vědomé porušování dalších zákazů. V obou dílech lze přitom nalézt určitý bod zlomu, kdy hlavní hrdina najde odvahu vystoupit ze své konformity a více či méně bojovat proti politickému systému. Tento protest v obou případech souvisí s navázáním zakázaného vztahu s osobou druhého pohlaví, který má zpočátku spíše charakter politického odboje, ale vzápětí přerůstá tento rámec a protagonista nad ním ztrácí kontrolu. To, co bylo původně chápáno jako zdroj síly a odvahy pro boj s režimem, se nakonec stává pro hlavního hrdinu zdrojem záhuby.

Hlavním záměrem mé práce bylo prostřednictvím těchto dvou literárních děl dokázat, že sebevíc extrémní prostředí totalitních režimů, v kterém oba protagonisté žijí, jim nemůže zabránit v jejich lidské přirozenosti, ať už po stránce komunikační, citové nebo sexuální, a v tom spočívá jejich morální vítězství nad politickou mašinérií. Na druhou stranu právě tato jejich lidskost a neschopnost být poslušným občanem slepě podporujícím režim se stávají pro oba hlavní hrdiny osudnými, protože politický systém je nakonec zlikviduje právě na základě jejich „nezničitelné“ lidskosti. Jejich lpění na svých pocitech a morálních zásadách je totiž současně oslabuje a brání jim v obezřetnosti, jelikož v určitém okamžiku se již nedokážou ovládat a bezhlavě se přimknou k objektům svých emocí. Politické režimy jim dovolí rebelovat jen do jisté „bezpečné“ míry, což vede k ještě větší neopatrnosti hlavních hrdinů a troufalému pocitu, že se jim nakonec podaří zvítězit. Avšak jakmile překročí určitou hranici nebezpečného chování, režim je přesvědčí o tom, že jejich možnosti vzpoury jsou ve skutečnosti velmi omezené a předem prohrané. Obě literární díla jsou důkazem, že základní lidská přirozenost nemůže být zničena žádným politickým režimem, ale zároveň individuální moc nemůže nikdy zvítězit nad hrůznou mocí totalitních systémů.

ANOTACE

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Tato práce si klade za cíl popsat morální vývoj hlavních postav obou vybraných románů a srovnat jejich průběh. Teoretická část diplomové práce se zaměřuje na charakteristiku žánru dystopických novel, typické rysy totalitních režimů, v nichž se oba romány odehrávají, a jejich vliv na osobnost hlavního hrdiny. Dále se tato část zabývá postavením žen v rámci totalitních politických systémů, rolí lidské sexuality či problematikou komunikace a manipulování s informacemi v tomto prostředí. Praktická část diplomové práce je věnována podrobné analýze morálního a psychologického vývoje obou hlavních hrdinů včetně jejich závěrečného srovnání.

ABSTRACT

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This diploma thesis intends to describe the moral development of the main protagonists of both selected novels and compare their progress. The theoretical part of the thesis focuses on the characteristics of dystopian novels, typical features of totalitarian regimes where both stories take place and their impact on the main protagonists' personality. It further studies the role of women within totalitarian political systems, the role of human sexuality or the problem of information and communication in such environment. The practical part of the thesis includes detailed analyses of moral and psychological development of both protagonists and their comparison.

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