



THE TESTAMENTS BY MARGARET ATWOOD: AN ANALYSIS IN LIGHT OF NECROPOLITICS.¹

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RESUMO: Este artigo analisa a necropolítica e sua manifestação em narrativas distópicas, com foco na resistência feminina, tendo como corpus o romance *Os Testamentos* (2019), de Margaret Atwood. A obra, continuação de *O Conto da Aia*, se passa em um cenário distópico onde a opressão e o controle sobre as mulheres são centrais. A necropolítica, conceito de Achille Mbembe, refere-se ao poder soberano de decidir sobre a vida e a morte, claramente evidente no regime de Gilead, que exerce controle absoluto sobre os corpos femininos. O objetivo deste estudo é examinar como *Os Testamentos* se conecta com a teoria necropolítica, destacando as estratégias de resistência das personagens femininas contra a dominação de suas vidas e mortes. A análise adota uma abordagem textual e teórica, comparando a obra com as teorias de necropolítica e as teorias feministas que contextualizam a resistência das personagens. A luta das mulheres contra o sistema totalitário de Gilead, que as reduz a meros corpos reprodutivos, exemplifica as tensões entre poder soberano e resistência. A pesquisa evidencia que a necropolítica em *Os Testamentos* vai além da violência física, se manifesta na destruição simbólica, na manipulação da memória e subjugação subjetiva dos indivíduos. Este trabalho busca contribuir para os estudos literários, promovendo uma reflexão crítica sobre as estruturas opressivas presentes na sociedade contemporânea e as formas de resistência contra elas, especialmente no contexto de controle sobre os corpos femininos.

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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes necropolitics and its manifestation in dystopian narratives, focusing on female resistance, using the novel *The Testaments* (2019) by Margaret Atwood as its corpus. The work, a continuation of *The Handmaid's Tale*, is set in a dystopian world where oppression and control over women are central. Necropolitics, a concept by Achille Mbembe, refers to the sovereign power to decide over life and death, clearly evident in the Gilead regime, which exerts absolute control over women's bodies. The aim of this study is to examine how *The Testaments* relates to necropolitical theory, highlighting the female characters' resistance strategies against the domination of their lives and deaths. The analysis adopts a textual and theoretical approach, comparing the novel with necropolitical theories and feminist theories that contextualize the characters' resistance. The women's struggle against Gilead's totalitarian system, which reduces them to mere reproductive bodies, exemplifies the tensions between sovereign power and resistance. The research highlights that necropolitics in *The Testaments* goes beyond physical violence, manifesting in symbolic destruction, memory manipulation, and the subjective subjugation of individuals. This study aims to contribute to literary studies by fostering a critical reflection on oppressive structures in contemporary society and the forms of resistance against them, especially in the context of control over female bodies.

Keywords: Necropolitics, Resistance, Dystopia, The Testaments, The Handmaid's Tale

INTRODUCTION

Dystopian literature has played a fundamental role in criticizing power structures and exploring dynamics of oppression and resistance. By portraying totalitarian societies and authoritarian regimes, this literary genre allows for reflection on themes such as surveillance, social control, and the restriction of individual rights. Among the various aspects addressed, the relationship between power and human life stands out, especially when analyzed through the lens of necropolitics. This concept, developed by Achille Mbembe, examines how certain social groups are subjected to conditions that restrict their existence and determine who has the right to live and who is condemned to death. Within this context, dystopian literature written by women gains relevance by exposing the specific forms of control over female bodies and their possibilities for resistance.

This work analyzes the relevance of necropolitics and how it manifests in dystopian narratives, particularly regarding female resistance, with the novel *The Testaments* (2019) by Canadian writer Margaret Atwood as the corpus. The work in question is a continuation of *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), set in a dystopian scenario where oppression and control are central elements.

Recent studies, such as Freitas (2021), highlight the importance of analyzing despotic literary works by female authors, as they present themes related to oppressive forces, religious, and gender discourses. In this context, Margaret Atwood, known for addressing themes such as feminism, dystopia, and politics in her works, stands out in dystopian literature, thus expanding interest in the study of her work *The Testaments*. This book, as a continuation of *The Handmaid's Tale*, brings aspects and elements that allow for an analysis in light of necropolitical theories.

Necropolitics, a concept developed by Achille Mbembe, deals with how sovereign power is expressed in the control over life and death. In *The Testaments*, this concept is clearly recognizable in the way the regime of Gilead exercises absolute control over the bodies and lives of women.

The main objective of this work is to analyze how *The Testaments* relates to necropolitical theory, highlighting the struggle of female characters against the control over

their lives and deaths. Specifically, we seek to identify the main elements of necropolitics in the dystopian narrative described in the work and investigate the forms of resistance led by female characters in the face of the oppressions described. The analysis involves a textual and theoretical approach, with comparisons between *The Testaments* and necropolitics theories. The textual analysis focuses on the elements of necropolitics present in the work, while the theoretical analysis employs concepts from Achille Mbembe and Giorgio Agamben. Furthermore, feminist theories that contextualize the resistance of female characters will be considered. The comparative approach will allow us to understand how *The Testaments* expands and deepens the themes introduced in *The Handmaid's Tale*, providing a broader view of the impact of necropolitics in contemporary dystopian literature.

This work aims not only to contribute to literary studies but also to critical reflections on contemporary society and the forms of resistance against oppressive structures. Through the analysis of *The Testaments*, we seek to better understand how Atwood's narrative can offer valuable insights into the dynamics of power and resistance in oppressive contexts, using the theoretical lens of necropolitics to deepen our understanding of these themes.

The choice of this topic was motivated by the relevance of discussing and analyzing such works, particularly in a sociopolitical context marked by issues of power, control, and resistance, which can influence life and death, especially in totalitarian regimes depicted in dystopian literature.

Thus, Atwood's work serves as an essential starting point for exploring how literature can reflect and critique structures of domination and the possibilities of confronting them.

METHODOLOGY

The proposed research on the relationship between *The Testaments*, by Margaret Atwood, and necropolitical theories will be qualitative in nature, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the themes present in the novel. According to Flick (2018), qualitative research is essential for understanding the meanings, experiences, and interpretations within narratives, enabling a detailed investigation of the discourses and power structures represented in the text.

The study will be conducted through reading notes, records, and textual analysis of the novel and the selected theoretical studies. The analysis will be developed in three main stages: the selection of theoretical support material, which involves gathering and choosing critical and academic texts on necropolitics and dystopian literature; interpretative imagination, which

corresponds to the process of reflecting on the central themes of the novel in dialogue with the studied theories; and, finally, argumentative articulation, in which the final analysis will be constructed, linking *The Testaments* to discussions on power, gender, and resistance.

With this approach, we seek to deepen the understanding of the relationship between dystopian literature, necropolitics, and the forms of oppression and resistance that permeate the narrative. The research aims to contribute to critical reflections on contemporary society, highlighting how oppressive structures are represented in the novel and what resistance strategies emerge within this context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of this work aims to present and discuss the key concepts that underpin the analysis of *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood, with a focus on the themes of necropolitics and resistance. The following topic discusses the key concepts used throughout the analysis.

Dystopia and social critique

Dystopia, as a literary genre, emerges as a direct critique of utopianism, offering a pessimistic view of societies that seek to achieve the "ideal," but end up revealing their contradictions and structural flaws. According to Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005), dystopian narratives construct "paradises" that conceal their fractures, exposing the vulgarization of a world that presents itself as the best, but is, in fact, a carefully crafted illusion. In this sense, the dystopian genre operates as a tool to highlight the inconsistencies present in social and political systems.

Complementing this perspective, Booker (1994) argues that dystopian literature critiques social and political conditions through the exploration of the flaws and contradictions inherent in utopian systems. These narratives directly challenge the idealization of perfect societies, warning about the risks of systems that, under the promise of order and progress, often conceal mechanisms of oppression and control.

The dystopian genre frequently appropriates concepts such as the state of exception, as presented by Agamben (2004), reflecting on how certain societies reduce individuals to the condition of "bare life," an existence devoid of rights and exposed to extreme vulnerability.

Thus, dystopian narratives explore the relationships between power, fear, and repression, highlighting the fragility of human life under authoritarian regimes.

In this context, dystopian characters are usually depicted as individuals living in an oppressive and controlling society where individual freedom is severely restricted. They often endure constant surveillance, undergo alienation and psychological manipulation, and experience repression of thoughts and behaviors. Their identities are either suppressed or reshaped by repressive social structures (Hilario, 2013). However, many of these characters also carry the potential for insurgency. According to Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005), such a character can be a rebel who actively fights the system, a conformist who tries to survive within imposed rules, or someone who initially accepts their circumstances but eventually awakens to reality and seeks new forms of resistance whether by recovering their memory, uncovering hidden truths, or adopting a stance of defiance against the ruling system.

Dystopian regimes operate through a series of strategies aimed at achieving absolute control over society, employing constant surveillance, repression, ideological manipulation, and, above all, the erasure of history as an essential tool for maintaining power. As analyzed by Hilário (2013), Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005), and Oliveira and Rios (2019), dystopian narratives expose the dangers of these authoritarian mechanisms by demonstrating how rewriting collective memory prevents resistance and legitimizes oppressive regimes.

The manipulation of history is one of the main instruments used by dystopian governments to secure their dominance. In *1984* (1949) by George Orwell, the Ministry of Truth is responsible for constantly altering historical records, rewriting the past so that it always aligns with the regime's interests. The erasure of history not only eliminates the possibility of learning from the past but also prevents citizens from having a reference point to question the present. As Hilário (2013) points out, this strategy ensures that the population remains in a state of alienation, unable to engage in critical analysis or contestation of reality. The erasure of the past thus functions as an extreme form of ideological control since those who do not know their history lack the foundation to resist or envision an alternative future.

In addition to manipulating collective memory, dystopian regimes impose constant surveillance on society, restricting individual freedoms and monitoring all citizen activities. In *1984*, telescreens symbolize the State's omnipresence, ensuring that any act of dissent is immediately identified and punished. Oliveira and Rios (2019) highlight that this absolute control over individuals' privacy generates a culture of fear, where even a mere thought

opposing the regime becomes a crime. Consequently, fear is instrumentalized as a political tool, keeping society in a permanent state of obedience.

Another essential mechanism of dystopian control is the imposition of a single ideology and the systematic repression of critical thought. Censorship and propaganda are used to shape people's perceptions of reality, eliminating any alternative discourse that could threaten the regime's stability. Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005) argues that this ideological manipulation not only keeps the population submissive but also creates an environment where truth is malleable and subject to the regime's needs. In *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury, this logic manifests in the systematic destruction of books, preventing dissenting ideas from surviving and ensuring that only the official version of reality is known (Hilário, 2013).

Physical and psychological repression is also a fundamental component of dystopian societies. The use of torture, the persecution of opponents, and the dehumanization of individuals are commonly depicted strategies. Hilário (2013) observes that such regimes reduce their citizens to mere numbers within the state apparatus, stripping them of their individuality and turning them into disposable cogs in the system. This process of depersonalization reinforces social alienation and makes it difficult to form bonds of solidarity, weakening any attempts at resistance.

Finally, betrayal and political manipulation emerge as tools for dismantling resistance movements. Oliveira and Rios (2019) analyze how, in *The Hunger Games*, the figure of the internal enemy is frequently exploited to undermine trust among dissidents, weakening opposition before it can consolidate. This strategy reflects the logic of totalitarian control, in which internal division among the population serves as an additional mechanism for maintaining power.

Thus, dystopia is not only a space for social critique but also a field for reflecting on ethical and political alternatives to the limitations of the present. As Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005) and Booker (1994) point out, the genre functions as a critical mechanism that exposes the contradictions of idealized systems, inviting readers to question the narratives of progress and power that shape contemporary societies.

Necropolitics and dystopian control

Necropolitics, a concept developed by philosopher Achille Mbembe, refers to the sovereign power to decide who may live and who must die, highlighting the management of

death as a form of control over life. In his work *Necropolitics* (2018), Mbembe describes necropolitics as a set of political practices and strategies aimed at controlling populations through the elimination or marginalization of certain social groups. Unlike biopower, a concept developed by Michel Foucault between 1974 and 1979, which refers to the management of life and bodies (Nogueira Furtado; Oliveira Camilo, 2017), necropolitics focuses on death and the destruction of undesirable social bodies.

Necropolitics primarily manifests itself in contexts of war, genocide, structural racism, and authoritarian regimes. In this sense, Mbembe highlights that the exercise of this power is often directed toward marginalized bodies, such as racialized populations or religious groups considered threats by the sovereigns (MBEMBE, 2018). Necropolitics becomes a tool for justifying the elimination of these "undesirable" or "disposable" lives, establishing a hierarchy in which some lives are considered more valuable, while others are treated as objects for sacrifice. Thus, necropolitics is not limited to simple control over death but also involves a structure of exclusion and systemic violence.

To understand the depth of the concept of necropolitics, it is essential to comprehend its relationship with biopower. Foucault, in his work *Discipline and Punish* (1975), describes biopower as the set of mechanisms through which the State regulates life, health, reproduction, and the movement of populations. However, Mbembe expands this notion, arguing that while biopower works with the preservation and management of life, necropolitics deals with its selective destruction. In contexts of necropolitics, the sovereign not only governs the lives of individuals but also has the power to decide who must die, revealing a profound control over the conditions of existence.

Another crucial aspect of necropolitics is its manifestation in states of exception and states of siege, concepts used by Mbembe to illustrate the environment in which necropolitics intensifies. The state of exception is a situation in which normal laws are suspended, allowing the sovereign to take exceptional measures, including death or the exclusion of certain groups. This state becomes a normative tool for justifying violent practices, such as selective wars and genocides (MBEMBE, 2018). The state of siege, in turn, expands this idea, allowing absolute control over the lives of people by suppressing any resistance and normalizing violence.

Necropolitics also reveals the structural inequalities present in contemporary societies. By defining those certain lives are not worth living, an explicit division is created between "valuable" and "disposable" lives. Marginalized populations, often the most affected by necropolitic policies, are deprived of essential resources such as health, education, and security.

As a result, these populations are often exposed to violence, extreme poverty, and death. In this context, necropolitics not only determines physical death but also imposes a social and political death, rendering these groups invisible or sub-human (Mbembe, 2018).

Finally, necropolitics is a form of oppression that not only results in physical deaths but also in the perpetuation of systems of domination. By operating through the elimination of certain lives, it ensures the continuity of a political and social system that maintains privileges for some and subordination for others. In this sense, necropolitics is intimately linked to issues of resistance, as marginalized groups often seek, through social and political movements, to challenge this order of death and reclaim their right to life and dignity.

Resistance in dystopian narratives

The concept of resistance plays a central role in academic debates about power, domination, and emancipation. According to Alfredo Bosi (1996), resistance is an attitude of insubmission towards the system that seeks to restrict individual freedoms. For the author, this practice goes beyond direct confrontation and establishes itself as an ethical stance, grounded in the preservation of dignity and human autonomy. In this context, resistance is both an act of survival and an affirmation of freedom, manifesting as a response to oppression.

As Bosi (1996) further asserts, resistance can take both explicit and subtle forms, but in all of them, it maintains a deeply political character. Through it, individuals and groups not only oppose power structures but also build alternative ways of existence. This opposition is also a denunciation of the control devices that attempt to homogenize and silence differences

Sarmento-Pantoja (2023) contributes to this analysis by proposing that resistance is equivalent to profanation, or the subversion of power devices that capture human practices and spaces, removing them from common use. For the author, resistance involves deconstructing the mechanisms that sustain the established order and opening possibilities for the emergence of new forms of existence. This view broadens the understanding of resistance, pointing to its creative and liberating character. By profaning power devices, individuals break with imposed normativities and restore to the collective the right to re-signify practices and spaces (Sarmento-Pantoja, 2023).

This creative dimension of resistance is essential for understanding how it operates in different contexts. It is not merely a reactive movement but an active process of transformation. As Bosi (1996) states, "resistance is an ethical and political act that goes beyond the mere

negation of power and seeks to rebuild narratives and practices of emancipation." By combining refusal with construction, resistance becomes an essential force for the renewal of social relations and the pursuit of justice.

Thus, understanding resistance as a theoretical concept involves recognizing it as a multifaceted practice that operates both at the structural level and in everyday life. Its relevance lies in its ability to destabilize power, promote emancipation, and create conditions for the emergence of new ways of life. In this sense, it is not just a response to authoritarianism but a strategy to subvert control mechanisms and claim dignity.

To understand how *The Testaments* develops these issues, it is essential to present a general overview of the novel. After all, how would the process of "shoving women back into their homes and stripping them of all their achievements how would that happen?" (Atwood, 2018, n.p).

OVERVIEW OF THE NARRATIVE

The Testaments takes place 15 years after the events of *The Handmaid's Tale*, in a dystopian future where Gilead, a theocratic and oppressive regime, controls much of the United States. Gilead's society is marked by rigid control over women, who are divided into categories based on their social and reproductive roles. The book is narrated by three characters: Aunt Lydia, a powerful leader of Gilead; Agnes Jemima, a young woman raised within the system; and Daisy, a teenager living in Canada who discovers she has ties to Gilead.

Aunt Lydia is one of Gilead's founders and is responsible for training and controlling the Handmaids, women forced to become pregnant to maintain the population. However, over the years, Aunt Lydia has developed a more critical stance towards the regime, questioning its methods and accumulating secret information about the Commanders. She keeps a hidden journal where she documents the abuses and corruption she witnesses. Aunt Lydia uses her position of power to manipulate Gilead's rules for her own benefit but also to prepare a coup against the regime. Throughout the narrative, she emerges as a complex figure, driven both by self-preservation and by a desire to destroy Gilead from within.

Agnes Jemima is a young woman raised in Gilead, the daughter of an elite family. From an early age, Agnes was taught to obey the regime's rules and accept her destiny as the wife of a Commander. However, as she grows up, she begins to question the treatment of women and the pressure she faces to marry and submit to a man. She also discovers secrets about her past,

including the fact that she is the biological daughter of June, the protagonist of *The Handmaid's Tale*. When she decides not to marry, Agnes chooses to become one of the aunts, women who have some power within Gilead but live under constant surveillance and restrictions.

Daisy lives in Canada, outside of Gilead, and grew up believing she was just an ordinary girl. She helps her adoptive parents in a clothing store and participates in protests against Gilead, unaware of how deeply her life is connected to the regime. When her adoptive parents are killed in an attack, Daisy discovers that she is actually Nicole, the daughter June managed to smuggle out of Gilead as a baby. This revelation completely changes her life, and she joins the resistance movement against Gilead. Daisy is recruited for a secret mission inside the regime, where she confronts her true identity and fights to overthrow the theocratic government that controls her country of origin.

As the stories of these three women unfold, they begin to intertwine in unexpected ways. Aunt Lydia, Agnes, and Daisy, each in their own way, work to undermine Gilead's authority, whether through internal conspiracies or external resistance. The book reveals the inner workings of the regime and the vulnerabilities of its leaders, many of whom are deeply corrupt and selfish.

In the end, the combined efforts of these women to expose Gilead's corruption and hypocrisy lead to a crisis within the regime. The story suggests that Gilead's fall is imminent and that the resistance of individuals like Aunt Lydia, Agnes, and Daisy was crucial to this outcome. *The Testaments* offers a more hopeful vision than *The Handmaid's Tale*, showing how, even in oppressive systems, resistance and the desire for freedom can prevail.

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK IN LIGHT OF NECROPOLITICS

To begin our analysis of the object of study, it is crucial to understand the broader contexts. The analysis of *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood in light of necropolitics reveals the complex dynamics between power, sovereignty, and control over life and death, especially regarding women under the theocratic regime of Gilead. According to Achille Mbembe (2018), necropolitics is the sovereign capacity to decide who may live and who must die, a power that materializes in the work through the systematic oppression of women, whose bodies are controlled, and their existence reduced to mere instruments of reproduction. The Handmaids, for example, embody the concept of "bare life," as established by Giorgio Agamben, which describes individuals whose lives are reduced to their most basic biological state, devoid of any

legal rights or protection, being under the complete dominion of the state. In Gilead, these women are subordinated to biopower, deprived of autonomy over their bodies and often sacrificed in the name of maintaining a social order that views them as mere reproductive resources.

Necropolitics, as a concept formulated by Achille Mbembe (2018), explores the sovereign power to decide who should live and who should die, revealing the control over bodies, memories, and cultures in contexts of exclusion and domination. This politics of death is not limited to physical violence but also encompasses symbolic forms of erasure, such as the destruction of knowledge and narratives that challenge the hegemonic order. Since the corpus analyzed belongs to the dystopian genre, these characteristics become even more evident. The excerpt narrated by Aunt Lydia illustrates these mechanisms of power through a narrative that associates the control of knowledge with the process of symbolic and cultural elimination:

I write these words in my private office within the library of Ardua Hall, one of the few remaining libraries after the lively book burnings that have occurred in our land. The filthy, bloodstained fingerprints of the past need to be purged to leave a clean slate for the morally pure generation that will surely succeed us. In theory, at least, that's the idea." (Atwood, 2019, p.12)

The destruction of libraries and books, as mentioned in the excerpt, can be seen as a form of cultural necropolitics, where the elimination of knowledge and history is used as a tool for control and domination. The idea of a "clean slate" for a "morally pure generation" suggests an attempt to rewrite history and impose a new order by erasing the past and its memories. This rewriting of collective memory as a means of absolute control is one of the main mechanisms of dystopian societies. As Hilário (2013) and Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005) point out, dystopia exposes the dangers of historical manipulation, highlighting how the suppression of alternative narratives prevents resistance and makes the oppressive regime even more evident.

Mbembe (2018) emphasizes that necropolitics reconfigures the relationships between resistance, sacrifice, and terror, creating "death worlds" where vast populations are subjected to living conditions that reduce them to the status of "living dead." The destruction of libraries can be seen as part of this process of subjugation and control, where access to knowledge and history is restricted to maintain power over the population. In other words, by erasing history, the regime eliminates the possibility of resistance and imposes a new ideological order. As Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005) observes, many dystopian narratives explore this erasure of the past as a tool of domination, ensuring that only the official version of reality remains accessible.

The regime of Gilead, by controlling reproduction and the freedoms of women, exemplifies the exercise of necropolitics, where the power of the state extends over the death and suffering of bodies considered "useful" or "disposable." This control is legitimized by the theocracy and sacred texts, reflecting the narrative domination that sustains state violence.

In an account by Aunt Lydia in her manuscript, where she seeks memories about the early days of the Gilead regime, she recounts that the women under Gilead's power were reduced to sub-human conditions, treated like captive animals, highlighting Agamben's concept of bare life, which refers to human life reduced to its mere biological existence, stripped of rights and dignity (Agamben, 2007). The passage describes:

We had been sleeping in work clothes, without changing our underwear. Some had already gone into menopause, but others had not. So the smell of coagulated blood mingled with sweat, tears, feces, and vomit. Breathing was nauseating. They were reducing us to beasts, beasts in captivity. Our animal nature. They were rubbing our animal nature in our faces. So that we would consider ourselves sub-human." (Atwood, 2019, p.159)

According to Agamben (2007), "bare life" is that which can be exposed to violence and death without it being considered a crime, as occurs with the *homo sacer*⁴. The passage depicts a situation of extreme human degradation, in which women are subjected to inhumane conditions, deprivation of dignity, and exposure to physical and psychological violence. The description emphasizes the abandonment of basic needs, the coexistence with bodily waste, and the reduction of their humanity to mere "animal nature." This state of extreme dehumanization and reduction to bare life illustrates how sovereign power can exert total control over individuals, transforming them into mere biological bodies, devoid of any legal or moral protection.

The passage highlights the brutality and violence that can occur when human life is reduced to absolute vulnerability a process directly connected to the theory of necropolitics, which describes the sovereign power to decide who may live and who must die. In this context, women are placed in a condition of "death-in-life," where dignity is denied, and they are relegated to a status of sub-humanity. The description of unsanitary conditions and the loss of dignity reflects how oppressive power exercises control over vulnerable bodies, destroying their identities and reducing them to a state of precarious survival.

⁴ The term "homo sacer" originates from ancient Roman law, referring to a man condemned for a crime whose life can be taken by anyone without it being considered homicide, but he cannot be sacrificed in religious rituals. Giorgio Agamben uses this concept to analyze the relationship between sovereignty and "bare life," understanding the production of bare life as the foundation of sovereign power. (Agamben, 2007)

Biopolitics, which deals with the control and management of bodies by sovereignty, also applies here. Women are transformed into biological objects, lacking autonomy, treated as disposable lives, and subordinated to the conditions imposed by power. The mention of the smell of coagulated blood and other bodily secretions reflects an attempt to dehumanize them, reducing them to their biology without recognizing their humanity and subjectivity.

From the perspective of necropolitics, as outlined by Achille Mbembe, control in Gilead is not limited to physical violence but also encompasses the symbolic and emotional management of existence.

On some days, I see myself as the angel who Records, collecting all the sins of Gilead, including my own; on other days, I reject this moralistic tone." [...] "We all vibrate; we tremble, we are always on alert. Reigning with terror, as they used to say, but terror does not reign, not exactly. It paralyzes. Hence this abnormal calm." (Atwood, 2019, p.297)

The terror described in the text that does not reign, but paralyzes manifests as the politics of death, in which the sovereign decides not only who lives or dies but also who will be subjected to a "bare life." This state of constant alert highlights how fear and vigilance dehumanize individuals, reinforcing power hierarchies that privilege some bodies while discarding others.

In dystopian regimes, necropolitics does not operate in isolation. It intertwines with Michel Foucault's concept of biopower, which describes how modern regimes regulate life through mechanisms of control and normalization. In dystopian narratives, this control is evident, where constant surveillance is used to restrict individual freedoms and shape subjectivities. In Gilead, this logic is reflected in moral and social surveillance, symbolized by the "angel who records." This figure represents the regime's effort to shape subjectivities and behaviors, imposing an artificial calm that conceals structural violence and the suppression of freedoms. Biopower in Gilead operates over both bodies and minds, creating a society that appears stable while keeping individuals trapped in a state of emotional and physical paralysis.

However, *The Testaments* also offers an analysis of forms of resistance to this necropolitical power. The female characters, especially Agnes, Daisy, and Aunt Lydia, challenge the regime by subverting the narrative control imposed by the state. Language, initially used as a mechanism of oppression, is reappropriated as a tool of resistance. Aunt Lydia, in particular, exemplifies internal resistance to the regime, working subversively to bring down Gilead from within, as she recounts in her manuscript:

I will keep this rant in its proper hiding place, avoiding the surveillance cameras that I know where they are, since I myself installed them. Despite these concerns, I am aware of the risk I run. Writing can be dangerous. What betrayals, then, what accusations might await me?" (Atwood, 2019, p.20)

The passage reveals a reflection on the act of writing as an act of resistance in a context of surveillance and control, marking writing as a political and subversive act. The tension between the desire to record thoughts and the fear of possible consequences translates into a struggle against power devices that seek to limit individual freedom and creative expression.

The statement "writing can be dangerous" positions writing as an act of resistance against a regime that fears the circulation of ideas and narratives that challenge the established order. In this context, the act of writing subverts power devices, operating as a form of profanation, as Sarmiento-Pantoja (2023) understands resistance: dismantling and diverting control mechanisms imposed. Writing, then, becomes an action that transcends censorship and suggests the possibility of freedom amidst repression.

Despite this oppression, resistance emerges as a possibility, though limited and ethical. According to Bosi (1996), resistance goes beyond explicit opposition, representing an attitude of insubordination against the established order.

In the transcription of Witness 369A, the moment is narrated when she gains access to the library of Ardua Hall, a place where knowledge and power intertwine. Upon exploring its documents, she discovers hidden secrets and manipulated information by the totalitarian regime, revealing the true nature of the system. Agnes's (Aunt Victoria) possibility of exposing these secrets highlights the inequality between those who control knowledge and those who have been marginalized throughout history. Upon gaining access to books, especially the Bible—a text highly restricted in Gilead's theocratic regime Agnes begins to notice the distortions made by the system in the sacred stories:

My first personal conflict came when, after four years of reading more elementary texts, I was granted permission to read the full text of the Bible. [...] And now I was reading the story in its entirety. [...] Until that moment, I had never truly doubted the righteousness and especially the truthfulness of Gilead's theology. If I did not achieve perfection, I blamed myself. But as I discovered everything that had been altered by Gilead, what had been added, and what had been omitted, I became afraid of losing my faith. (Atwood, 2019, p.322- 323)

The crisis faced by the character upon discovering distortions in the sacred texts is, in a way, an awakening to resistance. As Sarmiento-Pantoja (2023) points out, resistance can manifest subtly and internally, as a movement of reflection and subversion of imposed values.

The character begins to question the righteousness and truthfulness of Gilead's theology, and this can be seen as a first step toward intellectual and emotional resistance, even if not necessarily visible or explicit. Resistance in this case does not occur solely through external actions but also through the refusal to surrender thought and belief, creating space for freedom of thought and action in the future.

Atwood's work, by exploring necropolitics through the oppression and control of women in Gilead, offers a critique of sovereign power that relies on the death and suffering of marginalized populations. *The Testaments* shows how, even under authoritarian and necropolitical regimes, resistance is possible, and the subversion of imposed narratives can be a powerful weapon against oppression.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of *The Testaments* through the perspective of necropolitics allows us to understand how the Gileadean regime structures its power relations through violence, control, and the suppression of subjectivities. Inspired by the reflections of Achille Mbembe, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben, the novel exposes a system in which the state decides who must live and who can be reduced to a state of "bare life," where existence becomes merely biological, without rights or autonomy.

Necropolitics in Gilead is not limited to physical death; it manifests in symbolic and cultural destruction, the denial of dignity, and the subjugation of individuals to a state of constant surveillance and fear. The destruction of libraries, the manipulation of sacred texts, and the suppression of women as autonomous subjects exemplify how totalitarian power imposes itself, erasing memories and distorting reality to perpetuate its domination.

However, as *The Testaments* also demonstrates, resistance is a constant, even under the most brutal conditions. Whether through Tia Lydia's clandestine writings, Agnes' search for knowledge, or Daisy's refusal to submit to imposed norms, the work highlights that oppression is never absolute and that subversion can emerge in the most unlikely spaces. The struggle against forgetfulness and for the preservation of memory becomes a fundamental political act, as it challenges the regime's hegemony and allows other narratives and possibilities of existence to continue to survive.

In this sense, Atwood's work functions not only as a critique of authoritarianism and misogyny but also as a warning about the dangers of erasing history and the naturalization of

oppression. By exploring the intersection between necropolitics, biopower, and resistance, *The Testaments* invites us to reflect on contemporary forms of domination and the importance of keeping the memory of injustices alive, as it is from this knowledge that resistance is strengthened and change becomes possible.

Finally, the analysis of the corpus in light of necropolitics expands discussions on power, violence, and social control in contemporary dystopian literature. By highlighting how the narrative of *The Testaments* dialogues with the concepts of necropolitics, this study creates space for new critical approaches to dystopias and their reflections on political reality. However, this analysis is only a starting point for research that can further explore the relationship between necropolitics and the dystopian genre, thus enriching the debate on literature and political theory.

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