

Total Power : Surveillance and Punishment

Concept of the Panopticon → an institutional building where all prisoners can be observed
← by a single security guard without inmates being able to tell they are being watched

Enough surveillance will cause people to internalise the regimes values and be good because they know they are being watched

Surveillance + Religion → these concepts are explored by the focus on sight and the eye

→ Through fear and the feeling of being watched they can force people to internalise values + beliefs

Fear is key → to create fear the regime will use a number of techniques

- 1) Harsh punishments such as killings or salvagings
- 2) Mystery / uncertainty, making individuals disappear while leaving the reason up to others imagination
- 3) Spies + Informant so people feel like they can't trust others

Enforcing these techniques for surveillance helps totalitarian regimes to enforce their beliefs.

The handmaids clothes also restricts their sights, if they can't fully see they don't have full control. The regime knows the power of sight and trains handmaids to look down.

Power is connected to sight and gaze

- the guards, Offgen + Offred meet eyes, **Japanese tourists scene**
- ↪ doesn't meet eyes translator may be an 'eye'
↪ aunt Lydia says to be seen is to be penetrated

Gilead has many extreme forms of punishments

- The wall is a gruesome and a public way of instilling fear within Gilead
↪ there is also a major focus on these bodies being seen, they are hung up clearly, floodlights... They can't be missed, subliminally this makes people want to be hidden and unseen because the only way people are seen is if they are hanged, which no one wants
- ↪ The wall also highlights the crimes of the individuals and reinforces the ideology of Gilead eg, anti-abortion, homophobic, etc..

Indoctrination, Ideology & Control

Chapters 13, 15, and 16

The regimes theocratic ideology. What values, beliefs and attitudes are central to this ideology?
In what ways is this religious ideology central to the control and suppression of both the individual and the masses in Gilead?

In Gilead the regime is totalitarian and specifically theocratic → Based on religion (the old testament)
↳ The regime is patriarchal in nature, women have a domestic role. → Takes inspiration from the holocaust

What does Gilead do to enforce their beliefs?

The idea of power is key. When people feel that they have some power or control they are more likely to fall in line. However no one has total power. Everyone is a victim!! (Both male + female). However women are very oppressed.

A strong focus on a woman's maternity. The justification of the regime is that women can better do their duty to make babies if they are in the regime.

Women exercising power over other women (Policing).

↳ The aunts and the circle of blame where Janine was victim blamed for being gang raped
↳ The manipulation of language "Freedom to vs. Freedom from"

The ideology is recognisable to audiences

↳ Women judging each other ↔ victim blaming ↔ Slut shaming ↔ anti-choice
↳ anti-abortion many people can recognise this behaviour as it is still common in society
↳ victim-blaming instills fear, people won't speak out

The justifications used are lies, the idea that no woman will be left without a man is a lie as many women are sent to the colonies and there has been no mention of women with disabilities, likelihood is they are also sent to the colonies. Women who can't produce babies are also at risk.

In the context of Gilead and the US I feel like using religious ideology is very powerful as Christianity or the bible is already well respected. Having religious justification can be more convincing than other ideologies because people can try to convince themselves of a higher purpose or morally correct way. Religion also gives the impression of being set in stone because of how old they are however religion can be easily interpreted to suit one's previous beliefs.

Religion is used to justify the roles and attitudes within Gilead and people are afraid to question those in power because there are harsh punishments. This causes people to internalise Gilead's ideology.