
This is the **published version** of the bachelor thesis:

Conesa Manton, Elia; Hand, Felicity, dir. Is the current state of our societies an inspiration for future dystopian novels? : utopia and dystopia in Sarah Hall's The Carhullan Army and Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale. 2015. 24 pag. (836 Grau en Estudis d'Anglès i Espanyol)

This version is available at <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/137851>

under the terms of the  license

**Is the Current State of our Societies an Inspiration for
Future Dystopian Novels?: Utopia and Dystopia in
Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army* and Margaret
Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.**

TFG Grau en Estudis d'Anglès i Espanyol
Supervisor: Dr Felicity Hand Cranham

Elia Conesa Manton

June 2015



**Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona**

Acknowledgments

It has been a great experience working on this paper which has given me an insight of a world that had always intrigued me and it has been very rewarding.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Felicity Hand Cranham for suggesting these two great authors and wonderful dystopian novels. I appreciate your patience, guidance and excellent feedback.

I would also like to thank my father for teaching me the importance of fighting and never giving up through the hard times. For how he inspired and supported me from beginning to end in addition to his kindness and love.

And last but not least to my mother who read the paper, felt the urge to read both novels and enjoyed them as much as I did. I also owe many thanks to her motivational speeches and unconditional affection.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
1. Introduction.....	2
2. Utopia and Dystopia in <i>The Carhullan Army</i> and <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	2
3.1 Dystopia and Utopia in <i>The Carhullan Army</i>	3
3.2 Dystopia and Utopia in <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	5
3. The Role of Women in Both Novels.....	7
4.1 Women in <i>The Carhullan Army</i>	8
4.2 Women in <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	9
4. Parallelisms in our Society as Inspiration.....	11
5. Conclusion.....	18
Bibliography.....	20

Abstract

The dystopian novels written by Sarah Hall *The Carhullan Army* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, speculate with a pessimistic future world in which men, women, society as a whole and the environment, suffer major setbacks and disasters far worst and much more extreme than the current world in which we live. The aim of this paper is to show that there are big parallelisms between the imbalances and trends that existed in the societies of 1985 and 2007 (when the novels were written) and the issues that strongly inspired both authors and which are dealt with in both dystopian novels. Thus, this paper analyzes different aspects of the novels in relation to the world of women and relations of power, human rights and the control and loss of identity in totalitarian societies. Both novels convey a certain premonition and warning of very negative future scenarios, which if we do not monitor, could come to pass in our real world.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to study whether the authors of *The Carhullan Army* and *The Handmaid's Tale* could have been inspired by the society in which they lived when they wrote these dystopian novels. *The Carhullan Army* and *The Handmaid's Tale* are two representative novels of a new literary trend, dystopias. These dystopias deal with futuristic societies that highlight themes such as freedom of the people, systems of Government, the world of women and all of these within a conflictive scenario of climate change and environmental disasters.

The dystopias which are presented in these novels are narrated from the point of view of the protagonists, both women, as are the two authors. The work which unfolds in this paper will attempt to describe on the one hand, the female characters and how they thrive in that society and on the other, the study of these novels from the point of view of feminism. A main part of this paper will be to try and see if both authors were greatly inspired by the imbalances of the time in which the authors lived when they wrote these novels. I therefore intend to analyze the societies and imbalances of 1985 and 2007 and the dystopian future that *The Carhullan Army* and *The Handmaid's Tale* project.

2. Utopia and Dystopia in *The Carhullan Army* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Utopia (u-topia: “no place”) and dystopia (dys-topia: “bad place”) both terms express an imaginary future, the former in a positive sense and the latter in a negative one with a worst case scenario. In the novels *The Carhullan Army* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, there is “a dystopian portrayal of what [the future] might become” (Robinson, 2013: 197). There is a future society that is seen, from the point of view of today's failures, as one of the worst worlds imagined, for humanity and especially for women.

In that society we can also see an ecological disaster, where there is a scarcity of food because of climate change, environmental disasters and wars.

Thomas More was the first one to coin the term *Utopia*, for the title of his work in 1516. In its narrative he represents a fictitious ideal and peaceful island with its religious, social and political traditions. Tom Moylan defines utopia as a positive "non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space" (Moylan, 2000:74). Moylan describes dystopia or negative utopia, in the same way as utopia, but adds "that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view [the non-existent society] as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived" (Moylan, 2000: 74)

2.1 Dystopia and Utopia in *The Carhullan Army*

The Carhullan Army is set in the Lake District in the north of England and shows a very conflictive situation, where the previous society was destroyed. There are no natural resources and no agricultural fields because all of them are flooded. There has been a war and the Authority, as named in the novel, has total control over everyone. The society is described as poor; there is imported food and energy provided by the United States of America and it is all rationed. People work in factories with no labour rights and they are subjected to a strict control with close to slavery working conditions; long hours in return for scarce food.

It is a totalitarian society where power structures are led by men, people do not have any say and women even less. Women have no civil rights and are treated as objects, not only by the Authority, but also by men in general. The dehumanization of women is extreme in terms of sexuality and maternity; they cannot decide for themselves to be mothers. Motherhood is regulated in a very restricted way. On the one

hand, sexuality is controlled by a metallic gadget that is inserted in the woman's womb and on the other hand, she is only authorized to have a child by a lottery system. Only those women who have an awarded number will have the artifact removed from them and they will be able to conceive a baby. The chances of being the “lucky one” create a strong hope among the women, but at the same time, this hope is their chain. The coil is extremely cruel and humiliating, not only the object in itself but also because it could be checked at any time by the Authority, "women were sometimes asked to display themselves to the monitors in the backs of cruises" (Hall, 2007: 27). Women are treated as farm animals as far as reproduction control is concerned:

All I could think about was the doctor who had rubbed cool lubricant inside me, inserting the speculum and attaching the device as efficiently as a farmer clipping the ear of one of his herd. (Hall, 2007: 28)

Sister is the main character of *The Carhullan Army*. She is the heroine and does not agree with the situation she lives in, or with her husband Andrew, who has got used to this abnormal way of living. “I had despised the place I lived in, the work that brought no gain. And I had begun to despise Andrew” (Hall, 2007: 24).

The novel *The Carhullan Army*, through Sister, takes a turn when she projects a certain utopia when she talks about a better society, formed only by women far away from the city of Rith. The existence of this society gives her the hope to one day abandon the ghetto, fight for her rights, and live in a better place. This intriguing society appeals to her greatly, even more so after seeing the official propaganda and hearing the men speak about it in an evil way. Her present life and the utopia she had formed surrounding the idea of this new society, gave her the hope and the strength to escape from Rith and go in search of the Carhullan women at any cost. “The only thing left for me was to hope” (Hall, 2007: 14).

Although all dystopian texts offer a detailed and pessimistic presentation of the very worst of social alternatives, some affiliate with a utopian tendency as they maintain a horizon of hope. (Moylan, 2000; 147)

Sister takes the plunge and escapes from Rith and heads to Carhullan where she imagines a warm welcoming, but once she arrives, the harsh reality hits her. “Put her in the dog box” (Hall, 2007: 70). This welcoming will sink and puzzle her. Her utopia will fade away and she will be ill-treated until she overcomes all the steps to become one of them. The women of Carhullan have power and this is a radical change from what she was used to.

Jackie, the founder leader of Carhullan did not portray her society as an idyllic place when she met Sister, she “did not try to describe Carhullan as any kind of Utopia” (Hall, 2007: 100). Carhullan is a matriarchal society where men have no rights and there is no place for them. This society is organized in completely the opposite way from where Sister has come from in that men have their rights trimmed. It is also a closed society for women with their different and rigid functions. This new society is also unjust with one gender ruling over the other where women have practically complete control over the colony. Wasn't this what she was fleeing from? Is this in the end a failed utopia?

2.2 Dystopia and Utopia in *The Handmaid's Tale*

In *The Handmaid's Tale* a very hierarchically controlled society is portrayed. Every person has a place, a function and certain rights. In this society there are different hierarchies of women; the ones at a higher level have a malign cruelty with which they use their power. In this society the relationships of power are transmitted between the different groups of women.

The novel *The Handmaid's Tale* is narrated from the point of view of a Handmaid called Offred, through her memories. The Handmaids, who are fertile women,

are used by the upper class families to produce children with the man of the house, in this case, the Commander. These babies are given to the Wives of the Commanders, leaving the Maids childless and having to go to another house to perform the same function.

Offred in her memoirs remembers what her previous life with her husband, daughter, family and friends was like. She remembers her freedom, the power she had to express herself and how all of this is now lost. Her utopia is inspired in the past, as a high contrast of the present, and she projects it to a future that may or may not come. “Memory plays a key role in the dystopian opposition and locates at least one utopian node not in what could be but in what once was” (Moynan, 2000: 149).

There is a light of utopia in *The Handmaid's Tale* when Offred asks the Commander for knowledge. This desire for knowledge arises after the encounters in his office playing Scrabble. While she has the letters in her hand she feels freed and “for the moment, she controls language, language does not control her” (Pettersen, 2010: 7). Offred has hope of someday meeting her child and husband and she is also freed in the chapters of ‘Night’. “Offred’s most speculative narration comes in the series of chapters simply entitled ‘Night’ in which she seems freed from the constraints of chronology, place and narrative order” (Mahoney, 1999: 36). She remembers her past, liberates herself and in her mind she travels to a world where she is free and allowed to be with her family. That feeling of wanting to fight is what helps her stay strong minded: “I intend to get out of here” (Atwood, 2005: 144).

Both in *The Carhullan Army* as in *The Handmaid's Tale* our female protagonists are aware that they live in oppressive societies, with no access to information, culture or knowledge and are not able to express themselves without the

fear of being caught and tortured. The heroines in both novels are going to skip the rules and try to fight against these repressions. Sister will flee the city of Rith and join a colony of women, and Offred will bend the rules to gain access to communication and knowledge of the situation she is living in and then be able to report all the injustice in her memoirs.

The dominance of men over women is institutionalised in the depicted societies of both *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Daughters of The North*,¹ and both novels display a woman's first- person narrative as she struggles to retain, perhaps even to create her own identity under the full force of patriarchal oppression. (Hagane, 2010: 20)

3. The Role of Women in Both Novels

The Carhullan Army and *The Handmaid's Tale* are set in a wretched, miserable, closed-society, completely totalitarian and with a grim future: a dystopia. In this anti-utopian future there are major differences between men and women. In this sense, the distribution of functions between both sexes is clearly discriminatory towards women. It shows a great contrast to the evolution of women's rights in the last hundred years in which they have been fighting for their liberties.

Nowadays women's and men's rights are nearly equal in developed societies. In some societies women have their rights curtailed and in some there is a regression of those rights. What these two novels lay out is a totalitarian and controlled society, in which women in general have no rights.

The Carhullan Army is a novel that foregrounds issues of gender and subjectivity, highlighting how progress in gender equalities fought for by the feminist movement might easily and rapidly regress into the inequalities of the old. (Robinson, 2013: 200) [This can also work for *The Handmaid's Tale*]

In these two novels, men and women maintain a conflict where women are being dominated and this approach reveals a feminist rebellious feeling induced clearly in the texts by the writers. Here we can imagine how reality has inspired the authors, both

¹ *The Carhullan Army* was published in the United States of America as *Daughters of The North*.

women and therefore more sensitive to this tragic reality. Many dystopias of the late 20th Century “were written by women who were deeply involved in the feminist movements of the time” (Moynan, 2000: 78).

Sister and Offred are driven by the desire and the hope for a better change, delving and trying to imagine how their life would be in another way. They remember their previous life, a lost world, which was better. Those memories and those wishes for hope are what keep them alive and help them to bear the situation they have to live in.

Both novels could be focused from the point of view of feminism, defined by the United Nations Ambassador Emma Watson in her speech for the campaign “HeforShe”:
“[Is] the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes”². Not only could they be focused in relation to gender equality but also it would be more precise to analyze them from the point of view of the relationships of power. There is abuse of power over men, women and children and abuse over different layers of the population, something that the authors have also seen in our society. Nowadays, there are power relations between countries, social groups, families, at all different levels. Once more, the dystopia in these novels exacerbates these relationships of power to an extreme level which we could name dictatorial or totalitarian.

3.1 Women in *The Carhullan Army*

In *The Carhullan Army* there are at least three types of female characters. Sister is an active woman who is not satisfied with the role she has to lead and she flees to fight for her rights and liberties and to try and change society.

² Speech by UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson at a special event for the HeForShe campaign, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 September 2014. www.UN-Women.org

Jackie is the strongest female character in the novel. Her function is to lead the farm in a democratic way but her opinions are decisive and in the end it is a kind of covert dictatorship. Her speeches are warlike and they instigate the women to fight against a sexist society. “What do you think, Sister? Do women have it in them to fight if they need to?” (Hall, 2007: 116). This character will end up being a reflection of the Authority Sister ran away from. “Sister’s liberation from a fixed gender role gives Jackie Nixon the opportunity to remake and reshape Sister’s “void core” and use Sister’s liberation to her advantage” (Kisro, 2014: 11)

Megan is a character that was born on the farm and who has never lived in Rith. She is a pure Carhullan girl with no insight into the atrocities of other civilizations. She only believes in what she has been taught, and this is what we could expect from the future generations in *The Handmaid’s Tale*; a lack of knowledge of other types of societies.

In both novels there is a reference to a generation that “will have no memories of any other way” and who “won’t want things they can’t have” (Atwood, 2005: 127) and they will only learn about it from the women in Carhullan or the Authority in Gilead.

In *The Carhullan Army* the discrimination is for men. When a boy who is born on the farm reaches his teens, he is expelled elsewhere with fewer resources. Grown up men are used for trade and sexual favours. This type of treatment towards men is exactly the opposite of what exists in some developed and underdeveloped societies of today.

3.2 Women in *The Handmaid’s Tale*

In *The Handmaid’s Tale* the structures of families are wretched. Men and women are driven by their natural instincts of love, maternity-paternity, creation of a

home, taking care of their families as an important unit in the development of a natural unwritten law. Families in this novel are built in an artificial way. The children are from a “mandatory mother”: the Maid, and this is a completely anti-natural way and it is even harder on the women because of their maternal instinct. “When blood comes it means failure. I have failed once again to fulfil expectations of others, which have become my own” (Atwood, 2005:83). In today’s world there are many different types of families and some have broken homes but most have the liberty and choice to organize themselves as they desire.

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, apart from the Handmaids, there are various types of women such as the Un-women; these have been accused of going against the system and have been forced to work in working camps. They are at a lower scale and are in labour camps where they have all their ideas and opinions blocked and they cannot change the situation in which they live, no matter what they did in their past lives. A labour camp is the total absence of any type of rights. At a higher level but still with no power are the Marthas who are old women that serve in rich houses by cooking and cleaning. Their role is to work for the high class houses under the dominion of the Wives.

The Aunts are at a higher level than the Handmaids in the hierarchy, and they are the ones who teach them how to behave and think. They have their power delegated by the Authority in a way that they are also being controlled over. “While the Aunts may be victims of a male hierarchy, they certainly choose to utilize the power that they have over other women” (Johnson, 2004: 70). Aunts instruct Handmaids in their duties transmitting the idea of obedience towards everything they are ordered. This role of the women is controversial from a female point of view because it is the women (the Aunts) who are being forced or induced by the government, to instruct and force this abnormal

situation where other women (the Handmaids) have to procreate for a superior scale, to enable the Wives to have children. Women are being oppressed by other women.

Atwood intentionally created the Aunts as powerful females in a dystopia. [...] she said [...] if you want to control women, you have to grant some women a tiny bit more power so that they'll control the others. (Johnson, 2004: 69)

At the top of the hierarchy we find the Commanders, who dominate all the society under the motto "Under the Eye" by delegating some power to the Wives and Aunts in order to maintain their own.

Summarizing, the role of women in this novel is very different depending on the hierarchical level they are in, but there is discrimination and dominance at all levels. There is no possibility to question the system or to change it. Complete control is imposed by the government which is led by men.

4. Parallelisms in our Society as an Inspiration

The Handmaid's Tale (1985) and *The Carhullan Army* (2007) are recent novels with a time span of twenty years between each one. If we consider that the main themes of both novels may have been inspired in current societies, these twenty years, will mark some differences in the societies lived by the authors. 1985 predates the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and we can also say that 2007 is prior to the economic crisis that still lingers in the Western economies and which is the most serious one since 1929.

We could also say that *The Handmaid's Tale* was inspired partly by the novel *1984* by George Orwell. Orwell wrote it forty years before the year of the title and his premonition was more or less true in 1984 where there is still a 'dystopian' social, political and information control that remains today.

In relation to the world of women in 1985, the dystopia presented in *The Handmaid's Tale* reflects the role that women have led in societies and states where

religion stands as a fundamental rule and transmits modes, customs and behaviors at all levels of society without allowing changes.

In 1985 and nowadays, from a Western point of view, we can say that there are religions and ancient customs in many countries that leave women as second class citizens with respect to men. This does not invalidate that many women accept and do not question those rules and feel them as their own but these societies still are unjust between both sexes.

There are numerous examples of inferior treatment towards women in the Middle East and parts of Africa and Asia where they apply the Koranic law. In very Christian religious societies which are inspired by paragraphs of the Bible where women have a diminished role such as the Quakers, Mennonites and others as well as in some tribal societies, ethnic groups such as Gypsies among others, women are not treated equally. This happens in *The Handmaid's Tale* because "Gilead reads the biblical text literally and makes it the basis for the state-sanctioned rape, the impregnation ceremony the handmaids must undergo each month. (Stein, 1996: 61)

In the more developed Western societies of 1985, women had achieved gigantic steps in equality. Among these advances would be the right to study, to vote, to an equal pay (though this has not been reached yet), to freedom of movement, to women's emancipation of the parents or the family or the right to equality in marriage. All these improvements in the rights of woman are cut or suppressed in the dystopia of *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the world of 1985, although women had achieved all of these advances in freedom, a possible reactionary rollback still remained latent. That is to say, the breakthroughs may not have continuity they may even have a regression in some parts of the world.

In 1985, the Berlin Wall had not fallen yet and this bipolarity of the world divided into blocks because of the Cold War, maintained the societies of the Soviet orbit with their "religion," a closed- communist society a "dictatorship of the proletariat" which kept society without freedom of movement, economy, press or opinion, while a few elites who governed on behalf of the people kept their privileges. Altogether they were undeveloped societies, badly informed and unhappy. Nowadays, and as a very extreme case we have North Korea that would fit perfectly with the atmosphere of both novels, a present dystopia come true.

North Korea in 1985, and also currently, is a closed, very isolated society. It has hardly any contact with the rest of the countries of the world. It is a nation that emerged after the Korea War armistice in 1953 which saw the division of the country into two Koreas, the North and the South. During the Cold War, North Korea aligned with the Communist-Socialist block. The evolution of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been to maintain closed structures and a pyramidal and dictatorial power. To ensure that this type of society would endure in time "Power" had to control absolutely everything. It prohibited political parties, a representative democracy, freedom of opinion, freedom of press, of assembly and of movement. All these prohibitions are maintained with an iron-fisted control of the population and a military type discipline, therefore anyone who breaks the rules will be exposed to severe punishments.

What emanates from the Supreme Leader and the elites is the only official "religion", the cult to the President. The cult to the leader is mandatory, the repression linked with the strict discipline and the food shortages make all of the individuals behave as automats or robots. They know what time they must be up, what clothes they must wear, how they must greet people, the proper way of walking and they know how to tilt their head and show submission to their superiors. In addition, they have no

knowledge due to the lack of information of what the world beyond their homes, factories or their country's borders is like.

This may be the largest dystopia that is currently taking place on this planet in the year 2015. In this state of affairs, which we could call state of terror, people live in fear of facing terrible punishment if they do not comply with all the established norms and this creates an atmosphere of mistrust "to the other". Anyone can be accused of having spoken in an ill way of the beloved leader, of failing to meet the goals at work, or of having done an inappropriate gesture outside the norm. The severity is extreme and as complete obedience is rewarded this instigates some people to spy and snitch on anyone. Family, friends, neighbours and co-workers can report on you to their superiors of their district, city, region etc. This creates an atmosphere in which many individuals become "the police" and without security cameras in the streets, the ruling group has information and control of the entire population.

The latest example is from May 2015 where a high military command had apparently briefly fallen asleep during a speech of the President. The response to this contempt could not be stronger, he was executed by a cannon shot. The discipline and the state of terror are at all levels, "big brother" does not forgive.

Everything that is happening in North Korea today, and which was already happening when both novels were written, could be clearly related to the social and political environment in which *The Handmaid's Tale* is set. There is also a controlled society and depending on your social status you have a different function, there are also extreme disciplines and severe punishments. In *The Handmaid's Tale* the great leader would be the Eye who observes everything thanks to his guardians, spies, and reporters. In *The Handmaid's Tale* a true or false accusation was enough to condemn someone to

death and then hang him/ her on the Wall. The cruelty and accusation with the spies and informers are very similar to what goes on in North Korea. “Spies are everywhere, and women have been taught by the Aunts to spy on each other during what constituted for this transitional generation a kind of thorough indoctrination” (Bartkowski, 199: 147)

North Korea may also be reflected in *The Carhullan Army* since the shortage of food is a weapon of war and a system to control the population. If you do not obey, you are condemned to starvation and therefore death. This is an extreme method of control. In North Korea and in *The Carhullan Army* some, very few, dare to try and escape from the system to another world or a more benevolent society. Women who escape from Rith in *The Carhullan Army* could be compared with those who manage to escape the Korean system fleeing to South Korea where they later relate the atrocities they have lived. In *The Carhullan Army* the lights go off at night to save energy and as an austerity measure. When the Korean peninsula is photographed at night from a satellite in space, the North appears pitch black and the South brightly lit. Two different worlds which before 1950 were the same.



³ Google image, North Korea night satellite image.

In 1985 when Margaret Atwood wrote *The Handmaid's Tale*, feminism was an emerging and powerful movement. Originally its objectives were to achieve and equal their rights with men's in a harmonious partnership between the sexes. There are many variants in the struggle of feminism, some reaching the point of subverting the inequality of women for the inequality of men. From a feminist egalitarian standpoint, *The Handmaid's Tale* reflects an appalling world for women. This awful world, seen in today's extreme cases would be the abduction and rape of school children in Nigeria by Boko-Haram. Women are used as a weapon of war and are kidnapped and raped in the conquered areas or sold as sex slaves in the international white slave traffic. Selective abortions in Eastern societies are carried out to have male rather than female children. Girls are sold for economic issues to avoid the dowry in poor Oriental societies. In some countries the use of surrogate mothers is regulated however in many others it is considered a crime. In the novel the Handmaids are mandatory surrogate mothers and as happens in real life this practice dehumanizes women by depriving them of their natural instinct of motherhood in exchange for a few coins in some places and a shelter, security and food in others. This dystopia of *The Handmaid's Tale* is as an extreme extrapolation of what is already happening in some parts of the world.

If we move on to the year 2007 when Sarah Hall wrote *The Carhullan Army* we can say that the most significant change in our society is the fall of the Berlin Wall that revolutionized the international political and economic relationships leaving the United States as the indisputable leader. This coincided with the emergence of China as a new power and the technological revolution in communications and the ultra-connectivity. In 2007, inequalities still remain against women which already existed before but we have to add that we also feel our information and privacy is being observed by a Big Brother on a large scale. Is this an Orwellian society? We can say that Big Brother is observing

our lifestyle, people's habits, the information we consume, where we travel and the manipulation of communication and the manipulation of masses for political orientation. We are all controlled by a technological Big Brother. Public opinion, published opinion, practically tell us what we need to talk about, what we have to think, where to direct our tastes, who we have to vote for and who not, all done in a subtle yet sophisticated way. It may seem exaggerated, but new technologies of Big Data know our tastes, our hobbies, which pages we visit, where we buy, eat, etc. The media is concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. The political and economic world and the mass-media have a great influence on what we think. The threads of power move the world.

Returning to *The Carhullan Army* we can compare our current society and our apparent freedom of choice and thought with the society which Sister came from. Apparently we have it all, freedom of all kinds but all under a strict control of the opinion of the masses. Is this a free society? We can say it is but very conditioned and with a high control in communication, technologies which could in the end reach the kind of dystopias that are exposed here.

It is not a coincidence that *The Carhullan Army* talks about environmental disasters, pollution, pests or food shortages as the issue of climate change is increasingly on the world agenda, an issue that in 2007 was more or less unknown to the majority of the population. However, nowadays the theme is of primary importance, and therefore this could be seen as a premonition by the author. The natural disasters that climate change can cause by the action of men linked with other disasters such as: earthquakes, wars, air and water pollution, international terrorism of religious inspiration, pests and new diseases with difficult control such as Ebola or AIDS, all of these brought together create an extreme dystopian scenery as described in *The Carhullan Army*.

5. Conclusion

The hypothesis of this paper has been to show whether the authors of *The Carhullan Army* and *The Handmaid's Tale* may have been inspired by the society of the time in which the novels were written and the trends that pointed towards a pessimistic future. The paper discusses the parallelisms found in both dystopian novels and the negative scenarios they portray. Logically although a novel can take all the creative liberties, these dystopias relate directly, as we have discussed, with real-world scenarios and projections of these scenarios to negative futures at all levels. In 1985 and 2007 exclusive societies without freedom were already very present in the world and still continue today.

Among the parallelisms identified, the evolution of women's rights in the real world is reflected in the novels as a complaint and warning of possible future setbacks. It has also been seen that closed totalitarian societies, to a greater or lesser extent, exist in the world with great injustices, conflicts and wars. Environmental disasters are reflected in the novels. Climate change is already unquestionable and its effects are being felt in different parts of the world.

Another parallelism is social control in the novels. We are facing a 'Big Brother' of information, technology and the media. This control is important to maintain the existence of different classes. In today's society, social classes all over the world are very hermetic and with very little mobility between them. Finally, a great similitude has been found in the "authority". In both novels, resemblance can be seen with the present day existence of a partially hidden "world power" that makes decisions on a global level and which despite world organizations such as the United Nations does not answer to anyone and is exempt from democratic control.

In conclusion and to summarize this paper, I affirm that the authors have been greatly inspired by the time in which they wrote their novels. These dystopias they describe have been submitted as a complaint and also as a premonition or warning of what might happen in the world if the trends that point to the dystopias are not corrected.

Bibliography

Primary:

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. London: Vintage Future Classics, 2005.

Hall, Sarah. *The Carhullan Army*. London: Faber and Faber, 2007.

Secondary:

Bartkowski, Frances. *Feminist Utopias*. London: University of Nebraska Press, 1991.

Hagane, Inger K.F. *Visions of nightmare, dreams of freedom. Ecofeminism in two dystopias*. BA Dissertation, University of Oslo, 2009-2010
<http://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/25245?show=full>

Johnson, Tara. "The Aunts as an Analysis of Feminine Power in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*". *Nobleworld*, www.nobleworld.biz (Accessed 24/03/2015)

Kisro, Johan. Finding Dystopia in Utopia: Gender, Power and Politics in The Carhullan Army. BA Dissertation, Stockholm University, 2014 <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:723718/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

Mahoney, Elisabeth. "Writing so to speak: the feminist dystopia." In Sarah Sceats and Gail Cunningham, *Image & power. Woman in Fiction in the twentieth Century*, New York: Longman, 1996. 29-41.

Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky. Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Cultural Studies Series, Colorado: Paul Smith, Series Editor, Westview Press, 2000.

Petterson, Fredrik. *Discourse and Oppression in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale*. BA Dissertation, Linnaeus University, 2010 <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:321781/fulltext01.pdf>

Robinson, Ian. "You just know when the world is about to break apart: Utopia, Dystopia, and New Global Uncertainties in Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army*". In Sian Adieseshiah and Rupert Hildyard, *Twenty-first Fiction. What Happens now?* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013. 197-210.

Stein, Karen. "Margaret Atwood's Modest Proposal: *The Handmaid's Tale*". *Canadian Literature*. 148:57-72. 1996. digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu. (Accessed 09/04/2015)

Watson, Emma. *Gender Equality is Your Issue Too*. UN-Women. 20/09/2014.
<http://www.unwomen.org/news/stories/2014/9/emma-watson-gender-equality-is-your-issue-too#sthash.zu2GxxST.dpuf>

Further Reading:

Baker-Smith, Dominic. Bartfoot, C.C. *Between Dream and Nature: Essays on Utopia and Dystopia*. Studies in Literature 2. The Netherlands: Ed. Amsterdam, 1987.

Benstock, Shari. Ferriss, Suzanne. Woods, Susanne. *A Handbook of Literary Feminisms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Darnovsky, Maray. Beeson, Diane. *Global Surrogacy Practices*. Working Paper No. 601. Netherlands: International Institute of Social Studies, December 2014.

Dorius, Shawn. F. Firebaugh, Glenn. *Trends in Global Gender Inequality*. Social Forces, Vol.88, No.5, 2010: 1941- 1968. Oxford University Press. (Accessed 04/03/2015) www.jstor.org

Greene, Vivien. *Utopia/Dystopia*. American Art, Vol.25 , No.2, 2011. The University of Chicago. (Accessed 20/03/2015)

Markens, Susan. "Interrogating Narratives About the Global Surrogacy Market". *S&F Online: The Scholar & Feminist Online*. (Published Fall 2010- Spring 2011) (Accessed 27/05/2015) www.sfonline.barnard.edu

Orwell, George. *1984*, London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2004.

Parker, Katherine. "Women, Gender and Utopia: *The Death of Nature* and the Historiography of Early Modern Science". *Isis*, Vol. 97, No. 3, 2006: 487-495. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Accessed 20/03/2015) www.jstor.org

Terman, Elly. "The social construction of surrogacy research: An anthropological critique of the psychosocial scholarship on surrogate motherhood". *Social Science & Medicine*. Vol. 67, Issue 7, p- 1104-1112. (Uploaded 24/06/2008) (Accessed 28/05/2015) www.elsevier.com

Wither, James. K. *British Bulldog or Bush's Poodle? Anglo- American Relations and the Iraq War*, www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army (Created in winter 2003-2004) (Accessed 01/04/2015)