# Quiet, Piggy! The Silencing of Women in Literature, Film, Art, and the Media

2nd Edition of the *Weird* Conference Series

Online (Microsoft Teams) | May 2, 2026

Organized by the English Department | Faculty of Letters | "Dunărea de jos" University of Galaţi, Romania

(Original Photo: Hulu; AI-generated artistic interpretation)

Call for Papers

In the Introduction to *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*, Margaret Atwood makes a clear distinction between science fiction and speculative fiction: the former concerns events that could not happen; the latter draws on developments that could happen or that have already occurred in some historical form. The distinction was publicly contested, including in an exchange with Ursula K. Le Guin, and Atwood insists her terminology was

descriptive rather than hierarchical. She places *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) within the speculative category on the grounds that nothing in the novel exceeds documented historical precedent (Atwood 5–6). This conference takes Atwood at her word.

The *Weird* conference series is dedicated to the exploration of stranger-than-fiction developments in American politics. While Atwood is Canadian, and the novel's critical purchase on American legal, theological, and institutional history derives in part from that external vantage, the Republic of Gilead is nonetheless situated within American territory and its architecture draws on precedents specific to American history. The Hulu adaptation has further anchored the narrative within contemporary American cultural and political discourse. This situatedness is what makes the novel one of the fundamental texts for this conference edition, alongside Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984) and Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* (1937): three works which locate the suppression of women's voice within explicit legal and institutional frameworks with traceable historical precedents, and which treat such suppression as documented rather than imagined.

If speculative fiction draws on what has already occurred or remains historically possible, then the silencing of women must be approached as a political and mediatic practice with identifiable historical continuities, not as a dystopian extrapolation safely cordoned away from the present. Recent developments in the United States have materially altered the legal and institutional conditions under which women speak and are heard. The revocation of federal constitutional protection for abortion, the expansion of legislative interventions in matters of gender and sexuality within educational institutions, sustained campaigns of digital harassment directed at women journalists and scholars, and repeated dehumanizing public attacks by the President on female reporters constitute a pattern in which women who speak publicly, particularly in critical or investigative roles, are interrupted, mocked, threatened, or discredited. Across these contexts, the act of speaking becomes grounds for sanction, and attention shifts from what is said to the character or legitimacy of the speaker.

We invite 20-minute paper proposals which examine the silencing of women across literature, film, television, art, and contemporary media ecosystems, with primary attention to the American context. Comparative work tracing analogous mechanisms in other national or transnational settings is also welcome, particularly where such comparisons illuminate the specificities of the American case.

**Confirmed keynote speakers:**

Dr. Oana Celia Gheorghiu, Associate Professor, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galaţi, Romania

Dr. Andreea Mosila, Adjunct Professor, American Public University System | Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, USA | Fulbright Research Fellow

**Possible topics include, but are not limited to:**

- American dystopian and speculative fiction as political extrapolation
- The afterlives of *The Handmaid's Tale* in protest culture and media discourse
- Narrative muteness and testimonial constraint in dystopian film and television
- Reproductive politics and the regulation of voice

- Judicial and legislative transformations affecting women's speech and bodily autonomy
- Digital harassment and reputational silencing
- The discrediting of women scientists and researchers in public and institutional discourse
- Epistemic injustice in contemporary journalism
- Visual art and the representation or enactment of gendered silencing
- Transnational and comparative frameworks for gendered silencing

**Submission Guidelines**

Paper proposals should include:

- full name
- institutional affiliation
- email address
- title
- abstract (250 words)
- bio-note (150 words)

Please send proposals to weirdconference@gmail.com by March 29, 2026. Accepted participants will be notified by April 5, 2026.

[1] Margaret Atwood, *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (Signal, 2012), 5–6.