

7/10/2021

HW - Massolit Lecture 4 Handmaid's Tale: Identity

Atwood's novel

⇒ Protagonists construct themselves.
telling / being a story?

⇒ Offred ⇒ tell memories & people before Gilead

a bit deceptive; tries to keep the memories as possible.

⇒ Never tells her name (not to be identifiable)

→ free citizen.

Ch 10: "We lives in the white blank spaces... in the gaps between the stories"

⇒ Offred is no special before Gilead → Redden can relate to her.

⇒ Remaining below the radar will give her freedom

↳ opposed to the ^{her} mother who fought for women's right

↳ Do not lie low (don't stay silent) → Realizes this during Gilead & regrets.
as a prisoner.

⇒ Does not feel that her life is not in her complete control.

"I wish I was Moira" ⇒ critical of herself.

there isn't. she undo.

⇒ only option = total compliance

Ch. 12: "I wait. I compose myself. Myself is a thing I must now compose, as one composes a speech. What I must present is a made thing, not something born."

↳ needs fabrication, self-control, certain role she needs to play

↳ can manage as she suppresses her emotion as possible she can.

⇒ No longer 'June' / 'I' but 'Offred' & 'one'

otoi [I: point of her view

Eye: what she sees with her eyes (her viewpoint 观点)

Story can't tell everything; always filtered through certain perspective (Offred).

⇒ Commander: not particularly bright man
ideologue

driven by the logic of this regime
(logic & false opposition)

↳ Victim of the regime (man desperate for love)

↳ but, definitely a predator to Offred / Handmaids

⇒ Serena Joy: pedalling ideology that ends up imprisoning her = furious.
"Trapped" in different way from Offred.
Ideological indoctrination

⇒ Aunt _____: female Nazi concentration guard
→ cozy, familiar characteristic (but not)

⇒ Offred = survivor

central protagonist = survivor of smth.

key trope → that of survival

updates & plans at the heart of the HT.

passivity & reluctance to resist

↳ trying to survive.
single soul of motivation = daughter.

Notes on Offred's Character

Offred	→ victim of G's sexist ideology male = power & sexual potency female = submission & reproduction ↳ Offred's narrative: resists being reduced in this way.
Name of Offred	Identity as an individual has eroded. as if she is a property of the male.
Offred's psychological freedom:	- write = retain her psychological free- - reconstructs the past through flashback ← effective escape route for isolation. - Palimpsest (Chapter 1) ⇒ manuscript where later writing has been superimposed on earlier, erased earlier.) - Inhabiting 2 spaces HM space freer, happier space of memory.
Lively Curiosity:	- sharply observant of physical details. - curious & likes to explore. - Observation ab. garden reveals her resistance to the regime
Subversion vs Rebellion:	- discreetly subversive but never openly rebellious. - consistently refuses to be deceived in her life. - Ironically ⇒ Commander: her fullest human relationship. ↳ Scrabble game ⇒ liveliest & conventionally feminine. ↳ too intelligent to forget that it is just a parody of the past.
Offred's model of resistance:	→ Dystopian = need/want for change O's model of resistance: work surreptitiously M : confrontational
Hope for Future:	→ Detailed psychological narrative shows how she can survive loss & bereavement. how she manages to evade & find ways to challenge absolute authority of the state. → Highly self-conscious narrator: aware of her contradictions & failings "lack of flamboyant courage" → But readers are convinced of her integrity. ⇒ keeps self-respect & dignity as she embraces possibility to escape.

Maira

Offred's oldest female friend & survivor of the permissive society

A female rebel:

- strongly individual
- openly declared lesbian
- embodiment of female heroism
- 'loose women' (Grileads)
- The conventional fictional pattern of such rebellious figures.
- Express her protest against the regime.

by Bunny Girl

grotesque

clownish costume.

Speaking out:

- non-conformist
 - purple overall.
 - more astute ab. sexual politics.
 - activist in Gay Rights.
 - Despite her rebelliousness, women like her sent to colonies & commit suicide
 - challenge tyranny & oppression of Grileadean state.
- Their stories highlight the actions of individual women whose very diff. private histories become symbolic
- & voices survive as images of hope & defiance to be vindicated by history