

Narrative Techniques and Strategies in Margaret Atwood's Novels - A Study of Selected Novels

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Margaret Eleanor Atwood, a celebrated novelist, poet, critic, and cultural activist, is one of Canada's most eminent writers.

Canadian author Margaret Atwood is a well-known and prolific author. As a social activist and a feminist, Atwood has captivated readers and reviewers worldwide more than any other contemporary Canadian author. She has been dubbed "the most distinguished novelist, currently writing in English" by The London Review of Books. . No other writer in Canada of Margaret Atwood's time has such a broad mastery of the resources of literature, or so telling a restraint in their use, as George Woodcock, a renowned critic and writer, judges Atwood.

Atwood's literary career as a contemporary fiction author, which began with her debut book *The Edible Women* (1969), was followed by *Surfacing* (1972), *Lady Oracle* (1976), *Life Before Man* (1979), *Bodily Harm* (1981), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Cat's Eye* (1988), *The Robber Bride* (1993), *Alias Grace* (1996), and her most recent work, *The Blind Assassin* (2000), has cemented her place among the top women novelists in the world. She is perhaps most recognised, though, for her novels, in which she masterfully tells open-ended tales while analysing modern urban life and sexual politics. Her female characters are strong and frequently enigmatic. In the mid-1980s, Atwood spent time writing *The Handmaid's Tale* in West Berlin and Alabama. The book soon rose to the top of sales. *The Handmaid's Tale* fits squarely within the canon of "dystopian" or anti-utopian literature from the 20th century. The envisaged civilizations and cultures in these novels are not ideal; rather, they are fearful or constricting. The dystopian future presented in Atwood's book is firmly feminised.

The Handmaid's Tale investigates the effects of reversing women's rights.

The term "dystopia" refers to a dystopian future society where people suffer from human suffering, poverty, oppression, violence, disease, and/or pollution. It is a society where people live in a state of scarcity, tyranny, or both. The author's perspective on the future is obscured by inciting dread of the undesirable effects of current behaviour.

A wonderful illustration of how a postmodern novel alters the Gothic style is *The Handmaid's Tale*. The uniqueness of Margaret Atwood's book is that it prominently features a variety of Gothic characteristics while also being heavily infused with postmodernist ideas. As a result, in order to understand their meanings and roles in the story, the analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale* leads to the distinction of the Gothic mode in the postmodern novel.

The Gothic places a focus on ladies. It is conceivable to see Gothic as a parabolic investigation of the restricted and even endangered lives of women.

The lone maiden in danger of sexual assault is a common image. Prisoner victims are another type (Watson 4). Even in modern times, it was thought that these books were written by and for women, specifically scullery maids.

For *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, a first-person narrator is employed. As a result, the Handmaid's voice is used to tell the story to us. The author adopts the role of a character when writing in the first person and narrates the tale "from the inside." This makes us, the readers, feel interested and able to empathise with the character, strengthening the impression that the book is "real." First of all, the story has a significant role for the proper name alone. In the mask, the persona is dehumanised. Offred is not who she truly is; she is a Handmaid. This results in the creation of a fantastical universe that appears completely weird, warped, and terrible. Defamiliarization is the author's method for achieving this impact. Atwood places the story near the end of the 20th century, at the time the oppressive totalitarian regime known as the Republic of Gilead was established in what had formerly been New England. The author manipulates real materials to create elements that are almost surreal and frightful. Newspapers were censored, and others were shut down, allegedly for security concerns. Identipasses and barriers started to appear (THT 183).

The story as a whole alternates between forced action and withdrawal, between stealthy risk taking and hesitant pulling back. Additionally, the author astounds readers not only with a wide range of narrative techniques that show odd and horrifying situations, but also with a profusion of textual games. Atwood alludes to the cultural experience recorded in the Bible and paints what appears to be an apocalyptic picture of the near future of our world, one in which women will be compelled to bear children for wealthy couples who are childless and in which religion would serve as the primary means of power discourse for securing authoritarian rule. One of the primary causes of the sexual exploitation and

manipulation of women in Gilead is religion. Since men have stolen the Bible to oppress and control women, the totalitarian state of Gilead is in fact a theocracy in which the Bible rules. The Bible is cited by the authorities as the source for their laws. They are able to sanction the hiring of the Handmaids thanks to the Old Testament's polygamy. According to Coomi S. Vevaina, the Republic of Gilead's sexist policies are justified by the socio-biological doctrine of natural polygamy, which claims biblical precedent for such practises. Thus, religion also aids men in their deception of women. There are no pastors or priests in Gilead. Only the commanders have access to the Bible, and they gave it to the Handmaids before to the impregnation ritual. She has lost interest in her body since it was turned into a tool or an item for having children.

Similes, personifications, symbols, and metaphors all play a very specific role in Atwood's writings. First off, they frequently relate disparate fields.

Second, they help the character's perception to be accurate, vivid, and clear. Last but not least, the characters objectify even hazy emotions by concretizing these figures of speech. Although Atwood strives to make her message clear and compelling, words frequently fall short of what she wants to say or think.

In *Alias Grace*, the author used "a split narrative"—multiple narratives—to create the reader's perception of Grace, her guilt or innocence, and maintain objectivity.

Atwood's narrative in *Alias Grace* is primarily chronological. She grows more self-assured, and her inventiveness demonstrates this. She will even give birth to a child. The idea that history is only as meaningful as one chooses to make it is one of the central tenets of the postmodern movement. To the postmodern philosopher, history is merely a narrative that people construct about their past. This postmodern concept is beautifully explored in *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood. Atwood investigates how a story's framing affects its meaning by utilising postmodern writing styles and techniques. Atwood creates a complicated work that investigates a historical moment in an original way by blending several literary styles, including prose, poetry, letters written in a bygone era, and historical documents like newspaper clippings. *Alias Grace's* Background Atwood states in her afterword, "I have not changed any known facts, but the documented stories are so inconsistent that few people can be sure of anything.

Unquestionably known facts come to light (464). Even though Grace Mark's case is cloaked in mystery, Atwood does a fantastic job of piecing together the scant historical evidence she had at her disposal. The manner Atwood fills in the spaces reveals her interpretation of Grace Marks' story.

Atwood retells a historical woman's tale that explores gender identity in the same way that she explores national identity. To provide a new space for creativity, narrativization, and historical possibility—one that blurs the lines between history and fiction—all of them, however, draw on history as it is documented in documents.

Writings by Atwood *The Blind Assassin* is an example of "Historographic Metafiction," as postmodern literary theorist Linda Hutcheon puts it. In such works, Atwood specifically examines the dynamics between history and narrative as well as the methods of literary history.

Her literary works include Atwood's contribution to Canadian theoretical thought.

A mystery book about a death investigation is titled *The Blind Assassin*. The tale of two sisters and a man is featured in the novel that portrays a tragedy in the family.

Iris, the main character, is investigating the circumstances behind her sister Laura's suicide. Historical occurrences that coincided with the Great Depression and the World Wars serve as the backdrop. Historical accuracy is overshadowed by the author's obsession with life and all of its varied facets, and significance in the work is assigned more to the repercussions of historical events on the lives of the characters than to the reconstructed historical actuality. *The Blind Assassin* claimed novel within the novel, written by Laura, was actually written by Iris. This Canadian literary cult favourite brings posthumous justice to Laura by bringing down Richard and, in the process, derailing his political aspirations. This story of illicit love between a young disgruntled aristocrat and a left-wing sympathiser on the run from the law is written for Sabrina's benefit. Sabrina is the daughter of Aimee, who is the daughter of Iris and Alex and not Iris and Richard as previously thought, which is another unexpected turn in the tale. A young slave boy named the *Blind Assassin* is expected to kill the king by killing and replacing a young mute girl, a victim kept ready for the next day's ritual sacrifice, in the story told by the Marxist to his mistress. The victim is a victim kept ready for the ritual sacrifice the next day.

In *The Blind Assassin*, Margaret Atwood used situational irony in which the sisters Iris and Laura conceal Alex in their attic but lose their lives as a result of his actions. In *Alias Grace*, Grace was urged to fabricate information about the actual murder occurrence but was imprisoned instead. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred, the main character, has a sarcastic attitude towards the government. She sets the tone as the narrator.

Margaret Atwood has used the well-known novel from the nineteenth century, *Alias Grace*, to convey the tale of Grace as she undergoes reconstruction through her memories.

The main character narrates her life by hypnotising herself and reconstructing it. A conscious internal monologue can also be produced by hypnosis. The unexpected revelation that Mary Whitney's spirit was present in Grace's body came

as a result of this manner of presenting, which allowed us to learn about the actual events that occurred at the time of the murder. This kind of narrative is used by Atwood to generate objectivity since Mary Whitney is accountable for the actions that Grace had taken.

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