

## Explore individuals seeking to establish new identities in challenging environments.

The Dystopian tradition of an insurmountable established regime is founded firmly in the opening chapter of 'The Handmaid's Tale' with the indistinguishable 'army cots' and the issued red uniform with modest 'ankle-length shirt' and 'Wings [that] are prescribed issue.' These items not only serve to remove any individuality but also resemble the ideal modest clothing of women from radical islamists. Meanwhile, the events of 'War of the Worlds' have hallmarks for the beginning of a dystopian regime with 'glittering' killing machines providing an implication of downfall. With seemingly impossible forces of government facing the characters in both War and Handmaids, it may seem futile to seek any individuality. However, many characters in the novels do undergo some changes, but whether these have been sought or imposed is left to the power of authority.

In 'The Handmaid's Tale', Moira is introduced as the rebellious character, succeeding in escaping the dreaded Red Centre and somewhat accurately predicting the outcome of the terrorist attack on congress of pre-Gilead. From the fragmented narrative structure of the novel, we only learn Moira's prophetic outlook from the latter parts of the tale, perhaps hitting at Offred's own change and reflection of her alteration of status. In Chapter 27 Moira announces to Offred that 'They've been building up to this' in relation to the new formation of government and the newfound oppression of women. This almost entitled nature could be presented as insight and intelligence, with her use of the pronoun 'they' marking the inevitable distinguishing between the higher status men and the women, or shameless bravado as even Offred expresses herself in her reflection of complacency in the final chapter. Yet, Moira's apparent insight may also resonate with Chapter 7 of Book II of War of the Worlds where our narrator stumbles upon the artilleryman whom he'd met at the start of the novel. Here, the artilleryman expresses almost fascist predictions for humanity, instructing that once (with certainty) the Martians had taken over, the weak 'ought to die' and they should create a new underground society to be 'independent' of the Martians. Here, we can draw parallels between the changing identity of Moira and the artilleryman. With both novels being narrative reconstructions, the narrator in Wells' being told six years in the future and the historical notes in Handmaid's revealing how the chapters were tapes transcribed in retrospect, it leaves Moira's bravado being told at the beginning of the creation of Gilead, and the Artilleryman's bravado at the beginning of an apparent new world. However, Moira's bravado fades through the creation of a new world as when we see her again in Jezebel's, she even implores Offred to subvert the regime and become the Commander's obedient call girl: 'You should figure out some way of getting in here'. Her rebellious identity has been disappointingly crushed by the regime, yet the Artilleryman's has yet to be distilled. Though the progression for Moira's identity from naively brave to helpless may foreshadow the inevitable demise of the artilleryman's attitude alongside humanity.

Despite some drastic identity crises of Moira and the artilleryman, some characters do not seem to evolve at all. For example, the Curate in War of the Worlds is introduced at Chapter 13 and is presented as a rambling preacher, obsessed with materialism, Wells' Victorian criticism, under the façade of religion. 'The church! We only rebuilt it only three years ago.

Gone!' The exclamations of 'church' and 'gone', fragmented sentences focused on the material symbols of religion provide a twisted view on faith and its perhaps meaninglessness if it can be weakened so easily. A curate, one would assume, upholds the identity of a caregiver, hopeful and helpful to those in need. Yet, he soon gives up all hope, ranting about how this is 'the end' and even at death, in chapter 4 of Book 2, foregoes religion altogether to drink heavily and cause his own destruction. He is almost presented as having only a façade of religion. Meanwhile, the commander in 'The Handmaid's Tale' is realised to be a monster in the Jezebel's sequence wherein he lays his opinion of previous society and his views on women: 'We have quite a collection', instantaneously objectifying women in a manner only expressed pre-Gilead, where women had 'freedom to' instead of 'freedom from' harassment. Yet, the Historical Notes simply imply that the Commander was involved in the designing of the red uniforms and creation of Gilead which implies his sexist views permeated through both societies, just like the Curate's misguided religion prevailed through both versions of humanity. For these two characters, the only identity that changes is the identity of the society that surrounds them.

Ironically, both Offred and the narrator actively attempt to avoid changing. Offred begins with a brave sanctimony of 'I intend to last', yet this bravado is only upheld until Chapter 8 where, following the abnormality in the rigidity of Gilead, she falters calling her bedroom 'mine', despite her strong refusal to do that. The reader may doubt her resilience. A similar notion is also experienced by the narrator in 'war'. He condemns the curate for saying 'what good is religion if it collapses at calamity' yet by the final chapters he is uttering 'fetish prayers' thanking God for the ends of Martians that could have only been accomplished through science. The inability to uphold individuality and freedom is a times old trope in the dystopian genre. In 'We' by Zevgemy Zamyatin, the protagonist describes his newfound freedom on the rebel side of the regime as 'wonderful captivity', implying he is only exchanging one form of blind subordination for another. We see this in our novels with Offred subjugating herself by letting herself be complacent through, at first, small fractures in her resilience such as her use of the noun 'mine', to larger ones such as submitting herself to the commander – another symbol of the regime. Even the narrator in 'War' gives up his freedom of thinking for rigid religion, in a similar manner to that explained by the Grand Inquisitor in 'The Brothers Karamazov' where he explains that humans do not wish for freedom, they wish for the certainty of satisfaction/happiness: '[they] will say 'make us your slaves, but feed us', highlighting the ease at which the narrator, Offred and even Moira will sacrifice their doomed rebellious identities for certainty of happiness.

With the social upheaval portrayed through the revolutions of Gilead and the Martians, it would be difficult to assume that nobody would change to adjust to their surroundings. However, characters such as Offred, the narrator and Moira expressed naivety in their refusal to change. Ironically, H.G Wells' own dislike of the new industrialisation at the fin de siècle would also place him as naively unwilling to change. Although, the nature of lack of change constantly differs – the narrator initially refuses but eventually submits to religion, both Offred and Moira initially subvert the regime but end up its slaves (though Offred opted for complacency instead of Moira's rebelliousness). Even the commander and the curate may be subject to criticism for being naïve as although their fundamental attitudes of religion and society did not change, their surroundings forced them to: the curate had to adapt, fighting for survival in place of abiding by Christian laws of modesty and restraint and

the commander had to create a façade of the law-abiding, religious citizen to mask his true, primitive and sexist attitudes. Willingly or not, our society and surroundings alter our lives and identities, so it would be futile to assume such radical social upheaval would never change the characters, whether they worked for it or not.