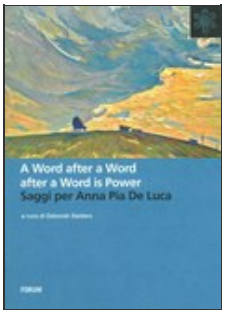
FORUM EDITRICE UNIVERSITARIA UDINESE



Coral Ann Howells

Haunted by The Handmaid's Tale

Parole chiave: Narrativa speculativa, Distopia femminista, Adattamento cinematografico di racconto, Risorse d'insegnamento, Gotico

Keywords: Speculative fiction, Feminist dystopia, Novel and film adaptation, Teaching resource, Gothic

Contenuto in: A Word after a Word after a Word is Power. Saggi per Anna Pia De Luca
Curatore: Deborah Saidero
Editore: Forum
Luogo di pubblicazione: Udine
Anno di pubblicazione: 2013
Collana: All
ISBN: 978-88-8420-839-2
ISBN: 978-88-8420-972-6 (versione digitale)
Pagine: 37-47
DOI: 10.4424/978-88-8420-839-2-07

Per citare: Coral Ann Howells, «Haunted by The Handmaid's Tale», in Deborah Saidero (a cura di), *A Word after a Word after a Word is Power. Saggi per Anna Pia De Luca*, Udine, Forum, 2013, pp. 37-47
Url: http://217.194.13.218:9012/forumeditrice/percorsi/lingua-e-letteratura/all/a-word-after-a-word-after-a-word-is-power/haunted-by-the-handmaid2019s-tale

Haunted by *The Handmaid's Tale*

Coral Ann Howells

> Some books haunt the reader. Others haunt the writer. *The Handmaid's Tale* has done both[1].

This was Margaret Atwood's opening comment in an article she wrote in 2012 reflecting back on the fame of her novel when *The Handmaid's Tale* was reissued with eerie illustrations by the British Folio Society. Since its first publication in Canada in 1985, *The Handmaid's Tale* has become the iconic Atwood text, read by millions of general readers and students all over the world, in English and in translation. (The Italian title is *Il racconto dell'ancella*.) It was made into a film by the German director Volker Schlondorff in 1990 and into an opera by Danish composer Poul Ruders in 2000; in short, it has become a political fable for our times. Atwood's characteristic Gothic vocabulary of haunting hints at the uncanny power of this novel, in the way that it relates to something emotionally or intellectually disturbing which is unresolved and so will recur at unpredictable moments. *The Handmaid's Tale* represents another version of Freud's Return of the Repressed, for nearly thirty years after its publication it continues to address concerns about political tyranny, terrorism, economic uncertainty, religious fundamentalism, reproductive technologies, environmental threats – all those anxieties which constitute the social neuroses of twenty-first century Western culture. Atwood's novel gives these fears an aesthetic form, offering a warning but also a glimmer of hope through a woman's narrative of resistance and survival: "I allowed my Handmaid a possible escape, via Maine and Canada; and I also permitted an epilogue, from the perspective of which both the Handmaid and the world she lived in have receded into history"[2]. That comment also has its own Gothic aura, for we discover that the voice we have been listening to throughout the novel is a ghostly voice speaking from beyond the grave via cassette recordings.

[1] Atwood, 2012: 20.
[2] Atwood, 2012: 20.

This essay is written as a gesture of appreciation to Professor Anna Pia De Luca for inviting me to share in teaching a couple of classes for her MA course on The Novel and Film in 2012. In class, she, Dr Deborah Saidero, the students, and I analysed *The Handmaid's Tale* in its written and filmic versions. Here I shall set down the key points of our discussions, in the hope that it may be an aid to future teachers and students and also a small tribute to Anna Pia's many years of teaching at the University of Udine.

The Handmaid's Tale is Atwood's first dystopian novel, to be followed nearly twenty years later by *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013), the final novel in that trilogy. As the opposite of "utopia" the term "dystopia" is applied to any alarmingly unpleasant imaginary world, usually set in the future. Atwood sets out to map an "other world" which bears a significant if slightly surreal relationship to reality, in this case a United States of America which has been transformed in the early twenty-first century into the fundamentalist Republic of Gilead. Under this new tyrannical military regime, democracy and civil rights have been abolished, everyone is under surveillance, dressed in uniform, and coerced into functional roles as Gilead attempts to rewrite American history with an emphasis on the country's seventeenth century Puritan religious foundations. Atwood's nightmarish scenario had its genesis in her alarmed response to a specific 1980s crisis, the rise of Neo-Conservative Christian fundamentalism as a political force in the United States under Presidents Regan and Bush, popularly known as the New Right. Her novel extrapolates from current social trends to construct a stark image of their possible consequences. As she has repeatedly said, "All fictions begin with the question *What if*?… to which the novel is the answer… What if you wanted to take over the US and set up a totalitarian government, the lust for power being what it is? How would you go about it?"[3] Returning to the same question in 2011, she elaborates these issues with an emphasis on the element which makes her dystopia so distinctive, that of gender and power: "How would that motif play out for women?"[4]

Writing a novel with such political and social resonance, Atwood has consistently refused to classify *The Handmaid's Tale* as science fiction; she prefers to call it "speculative fiction" and more recently, she has coined the word "ustopia", believing that utopias and dystopias are not separate but that "each contains a latent version of the other. In addition to being, almost always, a mapped location, Ustopia is also a state of mind, as is every place in literature of whatever kind"[5]. It

[3] Atwood, 2005b: 91.
[4] Atwood, 2011a: 87.
[5] Atwood, 2011b: 2.

seems to me that the prefix "us" also suggests that we are all implicated in our society: "I made a rule for myself: I would not include anything that human beings had not already done in some other place or time, or for which the technology did not already exist. I did not wish to be accused of dark, twisted inventions, or of misrepresenting the human potential for deplorable behaviour"[6]. In her extensive research for the novel, Atwood kept a clippings file of items from newspapers and magazines, now in the Atwood Special Collection at the Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto. These show her wide ranging historical and humanitarian interests, where environmental pamphlets from Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth sit beside Amnesty International reports, together with cuttings on surrogate mothers, abortion, forms of institutional control of human reproduction from Nazi Germany to Ceausescu's Romania, plus warnings from Canadian feminist sociologists on threats to women from new reproductive technologies. The fact that all these concerns are still relevant means that the Republic of Gilead has become more, not less, frightening because it presents a mirror image of what is happening in the world around us, only slightly distorted to invent a nightmare future.

Certainly Atwood acknowledges that she is writing within the tradition of dystopian fiction, whose lineage includes Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Her radical innovation, and the one which has attracted most attention, is to tell the story from a woman's point of view: "It has become a sort of tag for those writing about shifts towards policies aimed at controlling women, and especially women's bodies and reproductive functions: 'Like something out of *The Handmaid's Tale*' and '*Here comes The Handmaid's Tale*' have become familiar phrases"[7]. Yet we still need to debate the question, is this novel a feminist dystopia? In Gilead women's freedoms have been swept away and women are defined in relation to their ability (or not) to produce children. The red-robed Handmaids are baby machines, "two-legged wombs" as Offred, the figure at the centre of the tale, declares[8]; older women past childbearing age are classified in various minor authority roles as Wives and Aunts, while female domestics are Marthas and Econowives. Biology is destiny for women under Gilead's patriarchal system. However, as the novel reminds us, human rights abuses are not confined to women. In this racist society, Blacks and Jews are "resettled" (deported), and every week male Salvagings occur, with male bodies hanging on the Wall, their heads covered by white bags. These are men who were doctors and scientists,

[6] Atwood, 2012: 20.
[7] Atwood, 2012: 20.
[8] Atwood, 2005a: 146. All page numbers provided in the text are from the Vintage paperback edition.

homosexuals, political dissidents, while the hosts of anonymous young men in uniform are forbidden to marry until they have served in the ranks. Atwood sets up no simple binary opposition between the sexes in this failed utopia: "Better never means better for everyone, he [the Commander] says. It always means worse, for some" (222). As she later commented on utopian thinking, "We should probably not try to make things perfect, especially not ourselves, for that path leads to mass graves"[9].

Within the wider frame of political tyranny and state terrorism, Atwood chooses to concentrate on microhistory, for this is the story of one woman under the regime, the Handmaid Offred whose earnest intention is to represent the condition of women in Gilead. Restricted to private domestic spaces and relegated to the margins of a political structure which denies her existence as an individual, nevertheless Offred asserts her right to tell her story in defiance of the regime's insistence that women keep silent. So, this is a prison narrative, but it is also a story of private resistance and a struggle for psychological and emotional survival, similar to real life memoirs like Jung Chang's *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* or Marina Nemat's *Prisoner of Tehran*. Feminist critics Pilar Somacarrera and Gina Wisker have drawn attention to the close relationship between language, power and sexuality and the theories of Michel Foucault: "Foucault relates language to power, surveillance and sexuality, showing that language and power can enable the expression of self and sexuality, or repress them. In Gilead, there seems to be only repression"[10]. Offred evades this repression not by overt rebellion like her lesbian friend Moira, but by a form of passive resistance and subversive thinking in her "inner space" narrative, where the daily events and crises of her present life are continually overlaid by flashbacks through which she reconstructs her former life before Gilead robbed her of her husband, her young daughter, her mother, her best friend, her job as a librarian, and crucially her own name. Offred exists in a condition of double vision. Like a "wraith of red smoke" (210), she is a haunted being, conjuring figures from her past: "But they fade, though I stretch out my arms towards them, they slip away from me, ghosts at daybreak" (203). Remembering is painful but it is also her greatest psychological resource, for it is her power of memory which enables her to survive in the present: "What I need is perspective. The illusion of depth… Otherwise you live in the moment. Which is not where I want to be" (153).

Her postmodern narrative self-consciousness is always evident, in her frequent comments on the purpose and aims of her storytelling, on her occasional

[9] Atwood, 2011b: 4.
[10] Wisker, 2012: 95.

unreliability as a narrator ("I made that up. It didn't happen that way" 273), and in her yearning to communicate with someone else: "Because I'm telling you this story I will your existence. I tell, therefore you are" (279). Like Scheherazade, she is telling stories to save her life: "I would like to believe this is a story I'm telling. I need to believe it. I must believe it. Those who can believe that such stories are only stories have a better chance" (49).

The Handmaid's Tale works as counter-discourse to Gilead's social gospel on more than a private and personal level, for Offred manages to tell not only her own story but also the stories of other women as well in all their variety: there are heroines and villainesses, rebels and victims, while Offred herself is more ambiguously positioned as neither rebel nor victim but survivor. She is a new kind of heroine and her narrative remains as witness to the freedom and resilience of the human spirit. It is important to remember that Gilead is a society in transition, where all the women Offred encounters are survivors of the time before, and their voices represent a range of feminine and feminist positions dating back to the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s, which was then challenged by the New Right in the 1980s. Atwood contrives to give a brief history of North American Second Wave feminism in Offred's account of women across the generations – from her mother, Serena Joy the Commander's Wife and the terrible Aunts, to her own contemporaries. By appropriating their voices and distinctive idioms, her storytelling voice multiplies to become the voices of "women", which is another form of resistance to Gilead's essentialist definition of "Woman", and one which echoes Atwood's own understanding that there is no single feminine or feminist position: "Eternal Woman. But really, 'Woman' is the sum total of women. It doesn't exist apart from that, except as an abstracted idea"[11].

As well as individuated portraits, the relationship of some of these women to Offred is worth exploring in terms of characterisation, for despite superficial differences, several of them might be seen as her own doubles. Atwood has written about "slippery doubles" in relation to the creative writer in an attempt to spell out the connection between the person and "that other, more shadowy and altogether more equivocal personage who shares the same body, and who, when no one is looking, takes it over and uses it to commit the actual writing"[12]. This may help us to understand the function of doubles for Offred, as alter egos on to whom her unspoken fears and desires may be projected. At the beginning of her narrative, on a shopping trip with another Handmaid, Offred comments: "Doubled, I walk the street" (33) where she is referring to their identical outfits,

[11] Ingersoll, 1992: 201.
[12] Atwood, 2002: 35.

and at the end when sitting her room in dark despair she remembers her ghostly double, the Handmaid before her who hanged herself from the chandelier: "How could I have believed I was alone in here? There were always two of us" (305). Of the three "slippery doubles" in the narrative – Serena Joy ("I see the two of us, a blue shape, a red shape… Myself, my obverse" 271), and the Handmaids Ofglen and Janine (Ofwarren) – the most disturbing by far is Janine, for her life story is a dark mirror of everything that Offred dreads most in Gilead. Janine is the classic female victim; gang raped in the time before, she becomes the most pathetically pliable of all the Handmaids, "like a puppy that's been kicked too often" (139). Though she has her moment of triumph as the pregnant Ofwarren, she is also a victim of the system with which she has tried to curry favour. Even at the time of giving birth, she is neglected as soon as the baby is born, and when her baby is declared a Shredder and destroyed, Janine's bad luck settles on her thin shoulders like a "veil of untouchability" (227). The last time Offred sees her, Janine has become a madwoman, wandering around clutching a clump of a murdered man's hair: "Easy out, is what I think. I don't even feel sorry for her, although I should. I feel angry" (292). But why is Offred angry? I suggest it is because Janine is her abject double, the embodiment of her own darkest fears of her fate in Gilead, and Offred's only strategy for survival is total denial of any connection between them. The sad truth is that any woman's chances of survival in Gilead are slim, and many women's stories, including Offred's, remain unfinished in a novel that is full of missing persons. Offred does not know her own fate and nor do we, as she steps up into the Black Van used to carry criminals and dissidents away. Will she escape or is she going to her death? "And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light" (307).

Offred's story ends there and so did our class discussion, though that is not quite the end of the novel. There is a supplement in the Historical Notes, another futuristic scenario two hundred years later, when Gilead has become ancient history and Offred's narrative is finally made public. However, the central mystery remains, for like Eurydice, "she slips from our grasp and flees" (324) and her voice eludes the boundaries of time to challenge readers to make connections between her world and our own, in the hope of averting a nightmare future like Gilead.

It is that challenge which Volker Schlondorff has taken up in his filmic adaptation in 1990, with screenplay by Harold Pinter and starring Natasha Richardson as Offred, Robert Duvall as the Commander, Faye Dunaway as Serena Joy, and Aidan Quinn as Offred's lover Nick. The openness of the novel's ending encourages reinterpretation, and a film about a totalitarian state made in Hollywood by a German director with leftist political sympathies and starring high profile American and British actors is likely to highlight specific aspects of Atwood's

story and to downplay others. We need to remember the advice about film adaptations by the theorist Linda Cahir:

> A film based on a literary work carries its own distinctive ideas about the book, and the filmmaker takes on the responsibility of attempting to capture and translate those essential qualities which he / she perceives to be present in the literature. It has a life of its own, but tethered to its literary parent[13].

The novel and the film, though separate entities, need to be explored relationally, or as Linda Hutcheon phrases it, an adaptation is "an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work"[14].

Before considering differences it is worth spending a moment on the language of film construction and its relation to the language of literature, as we did in class. Just as a novel is composed of words, sentences, paragraphs and chapters, so we find a parallel structure in film, though "the linguistic energy of literary writing turns into the audio-visual-performative energy of the adaptation"[15]. A film is basically a sequence of still images known as "frames" and we can pause on a single frame as on a word in a sentence. Frame sequences compose a "shot" (like sentence or a paragraph) and then the shot sequences are combined to make "chapters" which are then edited and spliced together to compose the film. Editing is crucially important, whether it be continuity editing for naturalistic narrative effects or montage editing which works by rapid shifts between time and place, and which may approximate to a character's interior monologue. (This is the method adopted in *The Handmaid's Tale*.) The film editor works with the director to determine the form that the final cut takes.

In considering what a film does that a novel cannot do, Hutcheon notes that this transfer from a telling to a performative mode has the advantage of much greater resources, for its dominantly visual mode is supplemented by the sound effects of dialogue and the musical score. Cinematic techniques of montage, camera angles, close-ups, and lighting effects combine to present an alternative other world from multiple perspectives, as summarised by Hutcheon: "Facial expressions, dress and gestures take their place along with architecture and sets to convey cultural information that is both verisimilar and an index of the ideologies, values and conventions by which we order experience and predicate activity"[16]. However, a film is far less successful than a novel at transposing interior mono-

[13] Cahir, 2006: 97.
[14] Hutcheon, 2006: 8.
[15] Cartmell & Whelehan, 2010: 13.
[16] Hutcheon, 2006: 150.

logue on to screen, a problem with *The Handmaid's Tale*, for the novel works entirely in that narratological mode. For Atwood the major challenge in writing the novel was to find a way of creating her Handmaid's voice and viewpoint: "She was boxed in. How do you tell a narrative from the point of view of that person?"[17]. Schlondorff had to solve the problem in another way; whereas the first person novel is focused *through* Offred's eyes, the film is focused *on* Offred, with the camera eye operating like an omniscient narrator. As a result, the filmic Offred (now christened Kate) is a flatter more passive character who lacks the inner dynamism which sustains Atwood's protagonist's witty ironical narrative.

Yet Schlondorff clearly wanted Offred's experience to dominate the film, so that while he works within dystopian conventions, he actually changes the plot so that it becomes not merely feminist protest but a female revenge thriller. In the novel, Offred imagined killing the Commander in the parody of a love scene, and in the film she actually knifes him in the neck during a forced embrace. Schlondorff also changed the ending (or rather, Pinter did), replacing the novel's Historical Notes with a different flash forward which confirms Offred's escape into the mountains where, pregnant, she awaits the arrival of her lover Nick. Unlike the novel, the film has a happy ending where Offred's secret hopes are on the point of being realised, and at that moment we hear her voice for the first time as she reassumes her own identity, while Gilead recedes into the background to the accompaniment of serene music. Of course in making a commercial film, Schlondorff needed to make his adaptation work at the level of popular entertainment to meet the expectations of a North American audience. As Hutcheon reminds us, "An adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context – a time and a place, a society and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum"[18].

Just as the endings of the novel and the film are different, so are the beginnings. Atwood's first chapter deliberately dislocates the reader by plunging us into a first person narrative in what looks like a college gymnasium now converted for use as a dormitory in a women's prison patrolled by women gaolers ironically called Aunts and with a heavy guard outside. As the narrator whispers in the dark, we do not know who she is or where she is. Only gradually by Chapter 3 does the narrative frame begin to fill in, as the narrator tries to piece together her history and present circumstances as a Handmaid in the republic of Gilead. By contrast, as we noted in considering the first few minutes of the DVD, the film's aim is to orientate viewers by presenting a collage of images outlining the main thematic elements in an opening sequence, which functions like an

[17] Ingersoll, 1992: 216.
[18] Hutcheon, 2006: 142.

overture to a symphony or an opera. The opening shots behind the credits feature an icy road in the mountains where a man, woman and child are driving, until they are stopped by an armed border patrol. There follows a terrible confrontation as the couple try to flee on foot, during which the man is shot and the woman and the terrified child are left wandering through the snow. The film then cuts to an urban scene where crowds of young women are carted off in trucks labelled "Livestock", followed in quick succession by a fragmented selection of images which show the woman and child being forcibly separated, young red-robed women being addressed by an older woman in military uniform in what is apparently a detention centre, with another shot of women in rags clearing up debris in a wasteland. By such dramatic montage editing, Schlondorff sets out his agenda, introducing the apparatus of a totalitarian state and its traumatic effects on individual women, at the same time highlighting the film's wider theme of the relation between gender and power. By concentrating on women's oppression under this patriarchal regime, the film comes closer to the binary opposition between the sexes that Atwood portrayed in her early poetry collection *Power Politics* (1971). Schlondorff's adaptation presents a feminist dystopia, prompting the *New York Times* film critic to remark: "This vision of a hellish dehumanizing future could never be mistaken for a man's"[19]. Atwood's own account of life in Gilead is rather more nuanced than this simple two-layered structure.

Only after the overture does the film narrative chime with the opening of the novel as it cuts to the scene of the young women in the dormitory. It would be possible in a full analysis of the film to explore the ways in which Schlondorff's cinematic methods bring some features of the novel more emphatically to our attention. The film is most successful with scenes of external action, and here I shall mention only the striking contrast between the grim shots of a city under siege conditions (rather like East Berlin of the 1980s) and the Hollywood spectaculars in which the Gileadean regime delighted as entertainment and warning to its restive population. Processions, parades and mass events are their speciality; superbly choreographed like huge festivals they are really occasions for public punishments and executions. Schlondorff's filming of the Women's Salvaging and the Particicution ceremony at Duke University in North Carolina (and not at Harvard University as in the novel) catches perfectly the disturbing mix of the festive and sinister, with its long distance shots of the spectacle juxtaposed with close-ups of individual faces and seemingly irrelevant details like a long thick rope winding like a snake between the rows of spectators' chairs. The scene culminates with an outburst of mass hysteria when the Handmaids collectively dismember a

[19] Maslin, 1990.

male prisoner falsely accused of being a rapist, and this is rapidly followed by a close-up of Janine's bloodied face as smilingly she confronts Offred with a lock of the man's hair. That shot sequence is then juxtaposed with a very domestic one as two Handmaids go out shopping, for the film constantly organises its narrative information by a fragmented selection of images on the montage principle.

To return briefly to the question of context, recalling Offred's comment that "Context is all" (154) in reference to her present circumstances, it is worth noting the context of production for both novel and film. Atwood began *The Handmaid's Tale* in West Berlin in 1984 while the city was surrounded by the Berlin Wall which did not come down till summer 1989, and Schlondorff's film, first shown at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1990, was being made during that previous traumatic year. Both novelist and film director had what Atwood describes as "first-hand experiences of the flavour of life in a totalitarian – but supposedly utopian – regime"[20], and they both tried to translate those experiences to readers and audiences outside the Iron Curtain in modern Western democracies. The context of their immediate popular reception is not my main concern here, but rather how a group of Italian students responded to these artefacts nearly thirty years later. Had they become irrelevant in the twenty-first century? The answer would seem to be No, for students' oral presentations in class and then their essays written later suggested a lively curiosity on the thematic level, while their essays covered a surprising range of topics. Many worked across novel and film, exploring the implications of the dystopian genre, sometimes in an explicitly feminist context and sometimes more broadly in relation to the imbalances of power within Gileadean society, while one essay emphasised contemporary parallels, drawing out the contemporary resonances of *The Handmaid's Tale*. This is exactly the range of thoughtful engaged responses that Atwood would hope for; after all, the final words of her novel are, "Are there any questions?" (324). This is itself a question which transgresses the boundaries between fiction and real life, a signal that *The Handmaid's Tale* deals with what Linda Hutcheon calls "unfinished business", addressing the social and cultural anxieties which continue to haunt us.

Works cited

Atwood, Margaret. 2002. *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Atwood, Margaret. 2003. *Oryx and Crake*. London: Bloomsbury.

[20] Atwood, 2011a: 86-87.

Atwood, Margaret. 2004. *Il racconto dell'ancella*. Trad. it. Camillo Pennati. Firenze: Ponte alle Grazie.
Atwood, Margaret. [1985] 2005a. *The Handmaid's Tale*. London: Vintage.
Atwood, Margaret. 2005b. Writing Utopia. *Curious Pursuits: Occasional Writing 1970-2005*. London: Virago.
Atwood, Margaret. 2009. *The Year of the Flood*. London: Bloomsbury.
Atwood, Margaret. 2011a. *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*. London: Virago.
Atwood, Margaret. 2011b. The Road to Ustopia. *Guardian Review* 15 October: 2-4.
Atwood, Margaret. 2012. Fertile Material. *Guardian Review* 21 January: 20.
Atwood, Margaret. 2013. *MaddAddam*. London: Bloomsbury.
Cahir, Linda Costanza. 2006. *Literature and Film: Theory and Practical Approaches*. North Carolina: McFarland.
Cartmell, Deborah & Imelda Whelehan. 2010. *Screen Adaptation: Impure Cinema*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Hutcheon, Linda. 2006. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York and London: Routledge.
Ingersoll, Earl G. ed. 1992. *Margaret Atwood: Conversations*. London: Virago.
Maslin, Janet. 1990. Review of *The Handmaid's Tale* film. *New York Times* 7 March. http://moveis.nytimes.com/movie/ 21379.
Somacarrera, Pilar. 2006. Power Politics: Power and Identity. Coral Ann Howells ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 43-57.
Wisker, Gina. 2012. *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.