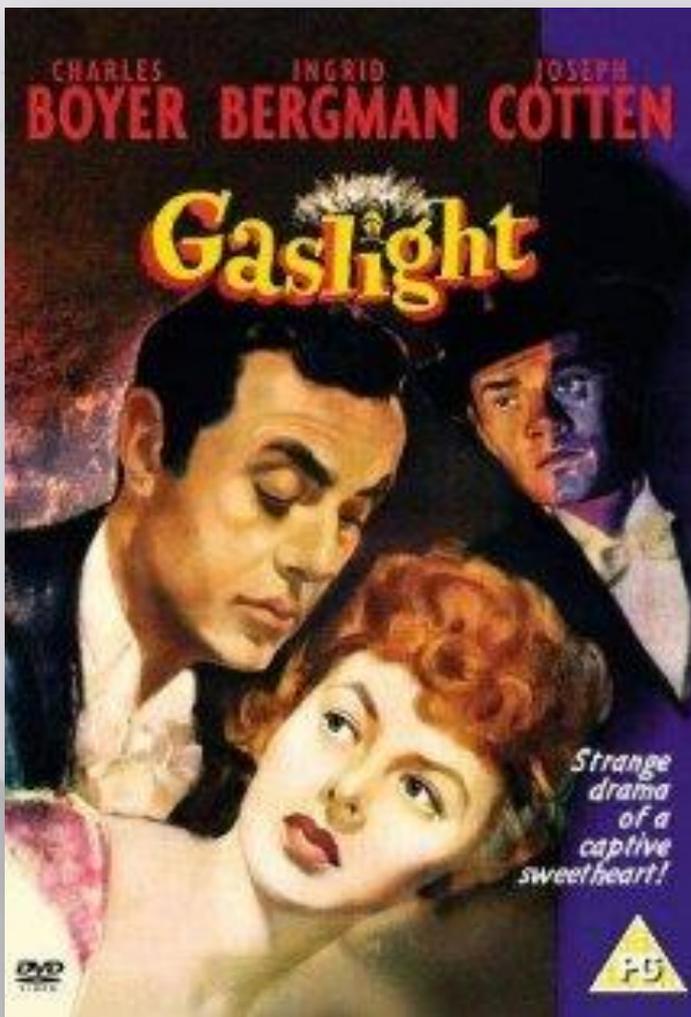


Stories & Counterstories

Hilde Lindemann Nelson's View

Identity & Literature (Summer 2013)

Laura Guidry-Grimes



What are some of the ways in which Bergman's character shows signs of being oppressed by her husband?

What causes this oppression? What does he do?

What actions does he take to try to prevent her from resisting his manipulations?

Gaslight (1944)

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Master Narratives

- “the stories round lying about in our culture that serve as summaries of socially shared understandings” (6)
 - Stock characters, plots
- Help us make sense of our experiences and justify what we do
 - Affect what we imagine to be possible, desirable

Counterstories

- “a story that resists an oppressive identity and attempts to replace it with one that commands respect” (6)
 - Respond to master narratives
 - Necessarily normative: depict oppressed person(s) as morally respectable and responsible
 - Do not end oppression itself, but it can free the agency of oppressed persons
- Identity as a product of self-conception and others' view of her
 - How can someone free herself from a denigrating identity?

Counterstories

■ 1st step:

- Identify oppressive elements of master narrative

■ 2nd step:

- Retell story about individual or group, highlighting morally important features that were previously suppressed
 - Aims: oppressed person(s) are revealed as respect-worthy, gain some freedoms
 - Affect oppressors' view *and* oppressed persons' view of themselves

Found vs. Chosen Communities

- Found: unreflective, given identity
 - Shared understandings, norms
- Choice: voluntarily reconstitute identity
 - Can break from found communities – construct own norms
- *What are some factors that could prevent someone from seeking communities outside those that are given/found?*

Features of Stories

- Depictive: raw material, represents actual or imaginary experiences
- Selective: give story form, highlighting some events and characters over others
- Interpretive: events and characters are characterized in a particular way
- Connective: among and between stories

Narrative Repair

■ Types of harm

- Deprivation of opportunity: viewed as sub/abnormal, prevented from pursuing certain roles or relationships
- Infiltrated consciousness: “internalizes as a self-understanding the hateful or dismissive views that other people have of her” (21)

■ Counterstories needed to combat both harms

- Marginalized persons are particularly susceptible to these harms

Gaslighting

- “infiltrating the agent’s consciousness and destroying her sense of who she is” (30)
 - “her view of herself has been altered so that she no longer regards herself as competent to answer for her actions in light of normative demands that she herself thinks other people might reasonably apply to her” (30)
- Needs to be able to trust her judgments, have resilient sense of self-worth
 - Otherwise can become stuck in oppressed state
 - Importance of social support



Questions? Comments?