The Lover by Marguerite Duras: Book Report

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1. Marguerite Duras’s *The Lover* is both first-person and third-person narrative. The narrator knows about the thoughts of the character since she becomes this character herself. Bringing the story plot and the character’s feelings and motives nearer to the reader, the first-person narrative is always subjective. The first-person narrative seems more truthful being considered the eyewitness’s evidence. Third-person narrative brings the objectivity to the story and helps to take the detached view on it.

2. The protagonist is referred as “I” when the author wants to approximate the protagonist to the reader through depicting its thoughts, and “she” is used when the narrator estranges from the protagonist. In that way, the narrator looks at his own actions from the side, reconsiders them from the detached view.

3. The protagonist narrates its story from the perspective of sixty year old woman; the tense structure of the story includes past, present, and future tenses. Switching between past and present narrative tenses, Duras focuses on the memories of the past events more than events themselves.

4. Duras organized the book structure in short paragraphs in order to provide not the development of events, but the development of memories. As the story proceeds, Duras adds details, revising and building memories, arriving at a new understanding of them. Each short paragraph looks like a snapshot of the memory detail or thought.

5. The lover’s attitude towards the girl is quite evident. It is obvious that he is in love with the girl: he admires her white and slim body, treats her like a treasure, his potency depends on her. It pains him to hear that she would prefer him acting with her just like with other women. Though the lover knows he is too old for the girl and she will not be faithful to him, hence, there is no future for their love, he cannot deny the girl. Concerning the girls’
feelings about the Chinese, it is not until much later that she understands she loves him too. Together, they are emblematic of the forbidden love.

6. *The Lover* may be considered outrageous and unconventional. First, because of its Lolita-like theme of love between a 27-year-old son of Chinese financial magnate and 15-year-old French-born student. Second, the novel contains extremely outspoken intimacy descriptions. Therefore, the author touches upon the racial and child molestation issues.

7. In the novel, the girl’s family represents the example of poverty, and the lover’s family incarnates the wealth. In that aspect, the narrator blames the family for being hypocritical about the Chinese lover. Being ashamed of their poverty, the girl’s family became hardened against each other instead of uniting against the poverty. Concerning the lover’s family, the author states the wealth does not bring happiness. Despite being rich and powerful, the lover was forced by his father to reject the beloved girl and marry another woman. Thus, the happiness depends neither on the poverty, nor on the wealth.

8. *The Lover* is mostly autobiographical novel where the author describes the memories about her initiation in the sexual life in short, flat, yet lurid phrases. Writing her own life, the author subjectively weaves the present and the past into one story. This story is represented by a flow of memories—snapshots.

9. At the age of 60, the protagonist describes herself as emotionally deflated and ravaged. She has the face of a drinker. She looks back at the time when she was 15 and admits she was not beautiful even then. She had been said to have nice hair until she had cut it off. After that, she was said to have nice eyes and smile. At the age of 15, the girl thinks the fedora man’s hat, golden shoes, and bright makeup make her one-off; at the age of about 60, she depicts herself in that period as a small prostitute.

10. The mother and the eldest brother are two-faced towards the Chinese lover. They do refuse to speak to the Chinese lover, but they do not refuse to live on for his account. The
girl’s mother is very proud of their lineage and disdains the Chinese, but she allows her only daughter to be the mistress of the rich Chinese. The brother and mother allow the girl to sleep with the lover for money, but they forbid to fall in love for him.
References
