

'A Handmaid's Tale': Now in Feminist Imaginations Everywhere

And the award for most contrived, unrealistic, and preachy television drama goes to...

I've always thought that the best way to ruin a book's audience is to make a movie out of it. Once the movie is made (and if it is successful), no one wants to read the book anymore. I'm thinking *Lord of the Rings* here, *The African Queen*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Forrest Gump*.

But ruining the book may be the one and only good thing about "The Handmaid's Tale," Hulu's dramatization of Margaret Atwood's 1985 dystopian novel. It might at least save us the trouble of reading about a young woman who is a concubine in a male-dominated future society brought about through some unexplained and improbable coup.

The book is about a future society run by an evangelical Christian theocracy. This means, of course, that society is militarized (*cue ominous drum beats*), women are in subjugation to men (*cue sinister-sounding minor keys*), and, most terrible of all, homophobia reigns (*cue screeching violins*).

Women are even forbidden to read, which would at least have the advantage of saving them the torment of reading sanctimonious feminist dystopian novels. If the quality of dystopian novels were the only measure of the quality of a society, I'll take patriarchal dominance any day.

If you haven't yet seen "The Handmaids Tale," just imagine what a liberal feminist nightmare would look like. Think of a world in which no absurd feminist stereotype of traditional

society goes unemployed. Add characters either looking stern and intimidating, or cowering and looking furtively from left to right, right to left, and back again. And again. And again.

Presto! “The Handmaid’s Tale.”

The plot is derivative, the setting unbelievable, and there is not a convincing character in the lot.

There was nothing unrealistic about George Orwell’s [1984](#). It was a brilliant and prophetic novel which succeeded in capturing the horrors of a totalitarian society. The imaginary world it created was the real world of the Soviet Union, communist China, as well as today’s North Korea.

Aldous Huxley’s [Brave New World](#) was, if anything, even more prophetic, postulating a world where—unlike *1984*, in which we are enslaved by what we hate—we become enslaved by what we love. Its fulfillment is seen in every product of our omnipresent entertainment media today.

A dystopian story only works when its actual instantiation in some society, somewhere, is actually believable.

But we live in a society in which women now excel men in all but a few academic disciplines, and where even conservative politicians now kowtow to every feminist demand. Other than a few grim professors in university gender and women’s studies departments, or a handful of the most tiresome protesters at anti-Trump rallies, no one really believes that the world of Margaret Atwood’s story is even remotely thinkable.

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