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From Text to Screen: Adaptation and/or Appropriation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* into The Hulu Series

من النص إلى الشاشة: إقتباس و/أو ملكية رواية حكاية خادمة لمقررات أتوود في هولوسيريز

Du Texte à l'Ecran : L'adaptation et/ou L'appropriation du roman *La Servante Ecarlate* par Margaret Atwood dans la série Hulu

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## **Du Texte à l'Écran : L'Adaptation et/ou L'Appropriation du Roman *La Servante Ecarlate* par Margaret Atwood dans la série Hulu**

SAIL AMINA

جامعة الجزائر 2 ALGER 2

### **Introduction**

Film making is nowadays holding a great place on the artistic scene. Cinema has gradually imposed itself as a distinct medium and form of expression with hundreds of productions every year and all over the world. New forms of entertainment have emerged also with technology and the coming of digital media. Hence, an interrelation was born between the screen and other forms of art especially literature from which many films were inspired. Adaptation studies that emerged in the 1960s were meant to blend literary criticism with film studies in an attempt to better understand the process of adaptation and establish concepts that allow the definition and the contour of this new field of research. Adaptation is often associated with terms such as change, transformation, revision, interpretation and recreation of a piece of art into another form, medium or location. It is defined as an “extended, announced revisitation of a particular work of art.” (Hutcheon 2006: 170). It is also defined as a process and product since it implies “a continuum of fluid relationships between prior works and later...revisitations of them that constitute a system of diffusion” (171).

However, it must be noted that early adapted literary works into cinema or TV were met by a vehement criticism by literary critics who argued that this technique appears as a slippery concept that fails to put clear theoretical framework to organize the process of transformation from a medium or genre to another. The complexity lies in the changes that must accompany adaptations; they may be so drastic that the original artwork becomes hardly recognizable. Moreover, literature on adaptation has not reached a compromise about questions such as who adapts, what to adapt, to what extent, and what is the objective of an adaptation. This led critics to rise other concerns such the authenticity of the adapted work in relation to imitation and originality.

The novel of Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) was subject to several adaptations such as Volker Schlöndroff's 1999 film, the famous Hulu series (2017-2022) directed by Bruce Miller and finally a graphic novel was released by Renee Nault in 2019. Atwood's novel then offers a good example for this paper that aims at comparing the original novel of *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and the Hulu series (2017-2022) in order to explore the process of adaptation. This paper will examine both novel and series to answer the following questions:

- Is *The Handmaid's Tale* series an adaptation or an appropriation of Atwood's novel?
- what are the differences and similarities between the two works? And to what extent can we consider the Hulu adaptation as an authentic work?
- Do adaptations/and or appropriations remake their parent text to reflect contemporary ideas and concerns?

Using theories on adaptation and appropriation, I intend to follow a comparative study that aims at juxtaposing the original text by Atwood and the adapted screen version in order to detect the transformation made by the series' creators. The first two parts of this paper will be theoretical to give both a historical and conceptual understanding of both concepts of adaptation and appropriation. Using mainly Linda Hutcheon and Julie Sanders' theories of adaptation, the shift will be then made to explore the intertextuality between the two artworks in an attempt to provide satisfactory answers to the questions raised.

## 1. Early Adaptations in Cinema

Since the beginning of cinema by the August and Louis Lumière film screening in Paris in 1895, adaptation of literary works on the screen has always been a staple of film industry. As early as the silent period, film makers have found inspiration in literary classics since their plots were well known to the public which allowed a better understanding of these works by the audience especially in the absence of dialogues. In fact, early movies were adaptations of plays and novels such as *Romeo and Juliet* (1900), *Hamlet* (1900), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1910), and *The Life of Moses* (1910). William Shakespeare's plays, for example, were subject to many cinematographic adaptations in order to hook the audiences by making such complex texts more accessible to the masses.

However, early adaptations of literary texts in cinema were met by a high degree of scepticism among authors, poets and playwrights who considered films of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as "grotesque" copies of high-quality art masterpieces. Very often, films of the 1900s which mostly screened novels were regarded as "cheapening, contaminating and potentially threatening the literary text" (Corrigan 2007:29).

Similarly, Virginia Woolf criticised film makers as predators who according to her, relied mostly on literature in order to elevate the status of films (Woolf 1950:168). Some scholars point out the “simplification process” that novels undergo when “transferred to the screen, for a film is not very successful in dealing with complex psychological states or with dream or memory.” (Miller 1980: iii). Accordingly, G. Bluestone notes that the difference between a novel and a film concern mainly their modes of production which are quite distinct:

There is still the conception that the novelist produces a work of quality, of high art as it emerges from the solitary efforts of the individuals to express their distinct vision, untrammelled by concerns about the commercial value of the product which is deemed subsidiary to aesthetic value. A film is, conversely, produced and packaged under a company logo, the high price of production necessitating the guarantee of box office success. (Bluestone 1973: 6)

The reception of first cinematic adaptations were also met by the same discomfort among viewers who unconsciously prioritized the fictional origin over the film version. However, it must be acknowledged that technological inventions including TV and radio imposed themselves on the contemporary world and modernist writers gradually realized that integrating these new mediums of expression became inevitable. Leo Tolstoy even speaks of the necessity to create a new writing style in which authors have to adapt to “shadowy screens and to the cold machine” (quoted in Spiegel 1976: 162). Modernist artists started experiencing cinematic techniques in their novels and a link between fiction and cinema became evident. D.W. Griffith, for instance, asserted learning the technique of montage through Charles Dickens’ use of the device of parallel action in his literary works. In his preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Joseph Conrad explains how through his writings, he wants to make the reader “see” as much as a filmmaker uses the image as a means of expression. (Quoted in Spiegel 1976: 4).

Similarly, Keith Cohen, argues that: the novel had itself developed cinematic tendencies at a point when the form seemed to have exhausted itself – our century has put more rigorously into practice than even before certain theories concerning the interrelatedness of the arts which were formulated in the nineteenth century, an effort precisely to strengthen the specific effects of single arts (Kohen 1979: 1)

Gradually, cinema imposed itself as a refined and distinct form of art from literature while they remained strongly interrelated. Subsequently, the bound between text and screen led to the emergence of a new field of criticism that

proposes a hybrid study caught between literary criticism and film studies. Cinema and fiction are two different artistic mediums with different techniques which brings to the surface issues in relation to the transformation of a novel or play into a film. In fact, the process of adaptation requires a set of changes necessary to the dramatic effect that make a text suitable to be displayed on a screen whether in the form of film, series or Tv program. These alterations necessary to shift from a medium to another creates the complexity of the adaptation/appropriation process. Issues such as authenticity and originality were uncovered as criticism came to put into question the whole industry of film making that is dominated by the market forces:

The changes were often required to conform to the producers' personal fantasies and his notions of what the public, and to meet the taboos of the production codes, and tailors it all to the screen personalities and the actors who play the star roles. Sometimes only the title of the original novel or play is left (Cartmell and Whelehan 1999: 6)

The quote above confirms the complexity of the process of adaptation between an authentic reproduction of a literary text to a film version that may or not stray away from the original work. The differences of mediums also impose a better understanding of such process. We need then to define the concepts of adaptation and appropriation to set the contours of this transformation.

## **2. Adaptation and Appropriation Theory**

The 1960s saw the emergence of adaptation theory that was set by scholars such as Julie Sanders, Deborah Cartmell and Linda Hutcheon. Books such as *Theorizing Adaptation* (2020) by Kamilla Eliot and *The Theory of Adaptation* (2012) by Linda Hutcheon are today staples of adaptation studies as they contribute to a better grasp of both concepts of adaptation and appropriation serving to unveil the intricacies that surround the world of literacy, TV and cinema.

Comparing the two techniques, the scholar Julie Sanders explains that adaptation is tied to the original text while appropriation rather “affects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain” (Sanders 2005: 26). Linda Hutcheon has also extendedly debated the dividing line between the two concepts which is not always evident to determine. She argues that adaptation means “a process of the creation which involves both (re) interpretation and recreation; this has been called both appropriation and salvaging, depending on your perspective” (Hutcheon 2006 :8). However, the

two terms are not antipodal since one does not preclude the other as she further comments: “adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another’s story and filtering it, in a sense, through one’s own sensibility, interest and talent. Therefore, adapters are first interpreters and then creators” (Hutcheon 2006 :18). It seems important to note from Hutcheon’s definition that the interpretation of the original text is the first step before projecting it on the screen in a creative process. Interpretation may be a problematic concept in itself as it rises a set of questions such as who is making the interpretation, why adaptation is taking place and when, what about the interpreter’s personality and his acquaintances with other texts which brings to light the idea of intertextuality that seems thoroughly attached to this process.

In fact, adaptation and appropriation can barely be disassociated from intertextuality since no text is fixed. There is a constant juxtaposing of (at least) one text against another as Julia Kristeva holds, “any text is the adsorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva 1986 :37). In other words, all adaptations are obviously intertexts with a fluid relationship between prior and later works shaping the contours of contemporary cultures. Hence, when a TV program or a film is made, showrunners and film makers can rarely ignore the social, political, economic and cultural reality in which they are and this affects their adaptation and/or appropriation. Not only the original text and other prior literary works interfere in the process, but also the location and environment where the screened version will be released. In this respect Jason Mittel comments:

We cannot isolate a text from its historical context of production and consumption but also, we cannot treat a text as a bounded, clearly defined, stable object of study. Especially (though not exclusively) in the digital era, a television program is suffused within and constituted by an intertextual web that pushes textual boundaries outward, burring the experiential borders between watching a program and engaging in its paratexts (Mittel 2015: 7)

Intertextuality and context appear as staples of the process of adaptations as they consciously and/or unconsciously shape the adapter’s derivation of the original artwork. Both adaptation and appropriation transform and derive but in adaptation, elements from the first source such as themes, characters, settings are carefully transmuted and only peripheral aspects are changed. On the other hand, appropriation transposes these elements which are appropriated and then transferred to suit the target culture. (Macfarlane 1996: 31).

As a technique, appropriation gives more space to film makers and show runners to deviate from the departing text ; hence, fidelity does not appear

as a problem. However, this process is not as simple as it may seem since the transposing of an original culture to a new one may be a risky exercise. Concerns about the extent to which an artist who makes adaptation and/or appropriation can change and bring modifications to a given artwork were always in the heart of debates about authenticity since factors such as production, box office success, audience satisfaction and even censorship are to be taken into consideration.

### **3. The Handmaid's Tale: From Novel to Hulu Series**

Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) tells the story of Offred, a woman who lives in the dystopian world of Gilead. This imaginary state set in future America is governed by a totalitarian regime that divided society into the haves and have nots. Women are treated as properties and are categorized into rich wives, and concubines who are subject to forced sex in order to solve the problem of severe infertility that hit this fundamentalist autocratic dictatorship after an environmental crisis. Offred serves the commander and his wife Serena Joy who fails to conceive. Every month, the handmaid must have a ritualized sex ceremony with the presence of Serena, her freedom is restricted and the Eye which represents the secret police watches her movements. The founders of Gilead assassinated the president and members of Congress and took power. They started by breaking all laws including depriving women from their rights to education, employment and property. It was also a world characterized by chemical pollution that led to high rates of infertility; hence, the creation of handmaids who are dedicated to bear children for government leaders

Through flashbacks, we discover that the protagonist was married to Luke and had a daughter but the instauration of the new regime made her a second-class citizen, a servant. She tries to escape with her family to Canada before they got caught and separated. The protagonist is then brainwashed, indoctrinated and cannot even recall her name before Gilead. The constitution of the name given to her by the authoritarian regime made of "of" and Fred (the name of the commander) reflects her object status in this society. After several attempts, the commander fails to conceive and falls in love with Offred. Serena arranges secretly meetings between the maid and her husband's driver to have sex wishing for a future pregnancy. She accepted the deal with Serena in exchange of information about her daughter that was taken from her. Through another maid called Ofglen, Offred learned about a new resistance movement called Mayday which worked to overthrow Gilead regime. After discovering the love affair with her husband, Serena denounces her and she is taken by The Eye (secret police). The novel closes

with Offred's future being uncertain since Nick came to take her with some men in a black van and explains that he is part of the Mayday resistance.

In 2017, Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale* appeared on the screen. However, neither the Hulu production nor its showrunner Bruce Miller were expecting such a large success of this adaptation that lasted for five seasons with the last one broadcasted in 2022. The series has been a breakthrough and received a Golden Globe, BAFTA's, a Peabody Award and eight Emmy awards. The program won audience from the first episodes and we can claim that the book gains an unprecedented popularity. It is stated that *The Handmaid's Tale (2017-2022)* series stands as:

a flagship series for the streaming platform highlighting the changing nature of media in this new trans-medial age, where past and present works can transcend the time and the culture in which they are made to an unprecedented extent ... it demonstrated Atwood's participation in the melding of print and digital media and the changes it has occurred with respect to the production and marketing of literature (Wells-Lassagne and McMahon 2021:4-5)

The series then offers a good case study to answer the main concern of this paper about the artistic value of adapted literary works on the screen and the issue of authenticity that was raised by anti-adaptation critics who see TV shows, films and series as "belittling and contaminating" the original work as stated earlier. *The Handmaid's Tale* series gives also the opportunity to have the point of view of the novel writer on the adapted version. It must be noted that Margaret Atwood was highly involved in the process of making the series and she was consulted by Bruce Miller about every change applied to the novel to make it adaptable to the form and medium of a TV program made of episodes and seasons. Indeed, by casting light on the differences and similarities between the original text and the final adapted screen product, we can decide on its respect of fidelity; whether it stands as a mere imitation or rather as an appropriation by the Hulu studios resulting into a completely different version.

First and foremost, we need to explore the plot as it stands as the primary aspect in all adaptations and/or appropriation. Telling or retelling the story is the starting point of adaptation and here changes may or may not occur according to the director's vision but also to the production needs and conditions. Indeed, in some cases, the absence of a main actor or budget shortcuts can be responsible for some deviations from the main plot by omitting scenes that may be financially demanding.

Concerning our novel's plot, some changes were brought to the general organization of events. The narrative structure of the TV program is different since the novel follows Offred's journey when she has become a handmaid in the house of the commander and it is through flashbacks that readers discover her prior life and the creation of Gilead. The series on the other hand follows the narrative beyond the novels premise as it includes the stories of other characters who played larger roles in the screened version. Intertextuality and context cannot be separated from adaptation and appropriation as stated in the theoretical part of this paper. As far as intertextuality is concerned, the Hulu creators were not only inspired by Atwood's text to build the screened narrative but also other paratextual relations shaped the series. In fact, Miller borrowed from Schlöndroff's 1999 film adaptation when he makes Offred pregnant from Nick which is not clearly out worded in the novel. Offred also learns in the series as in the film that her daughter was adopted by a family in Gilead and she resolved not to quit the country without her. She managed to meet her while in the novel, Atwood does not give any information about Luke or Offred's daughter who were caught when they tried to escape to Canada. It seems that the adaptors whether Schlöndroff or Miller did not want to keep questions not answered about the protagonist's future. It can be seen as a hooking technique that aims at satisfying the curiosity of the audience after reading the novel and an attempt to propose something different.

It must be noted that these artistic liberties do not affect the essence of the novel's spirit. Gilead and the conditions of its creation are the same; hence, the intertextuality between the book and the show works perfectly to capture the same dystopian aspect of modern societies. The overthrow of the president of America and the suspension of the constitution by the sons of Jacob are represented in the series. The same laws are dissolved concerning women's rights and their status as wives or handmaids sent to prostitution or labour camp. The dictatorship using brutality and secret police to repress people's freedom is reflected in both works with the execution site of Harvard university walls where bodies of dissidents were hanging. In doing so, Miller transferred through the screen, the essence of Atwood's vision of totalitarian regimes.

Some critics such as Linda Hutcheon; however, find the plot much more linear than in the novel and its space differs with episodes to fill in with side stories of secondary characters in the novel. She finds also that although the projection of Gilead on screen is effective with "its oppressive surveillance culture [that] is both audible and visible on screen ... it loses the other dimension that the novel can provide through Offred's sensual descriptions of smelling the garden's flowers in

the heart of summer for instance” (Hutcheon 2021 :258). However, it must be observed that one of the definitions of adaptation equates with the transfer of one work to another form and medium which leads to different means of expression. Hence, the adapter has to change the medium and reach the same effect. Hutcheon compares her reading experience of the novel where imagination plays a great part in interpretation to the film director’s representation of emotions through oral and visual devices. The series is more “self-reflexive” since actors can express themselves with other means than language in front of a camera. Hutcheon regrets, for example, Offred’s need to tell her stories with her own words that was lost for the sake of cinematographic needs. Language is then a form of identity affirmation tool as the reader observes her wish to tell and share her story. Offred says “Because I am telling you this story, I will your existence. I tell, therefore, you are!” (Atwood 1985 e-book). However, it is worth to note that cinema can also amplify sensations and emotions through sound, light, color, music in addition to the acting performance. These effects offer a different experience from reading but it leaves the same strong impact on the receptor by appealing to other senses than imagination.

After dealing with the narrative structure, characterization marks an important element of adaptation. All the characters of the novel are present in the series and keep more or less the same general traits and function. However, the adapter took some liberties in the representation of some figures for reasons that will be explained in the following lines. Starting with the protagonist, Offred is played by the actress Elizabeth Moss who physically corresponds to Atwood’s character’s construction. Offred is a white woman with fair hair, about 5 feet seven and is 33 years old when the events of the novel take place. The only difference between the two Offreds concerns the name. In fact, we learn in the series that the real name of Offred is June which is not the case of the novel. As stated earlier in this paper, the name of the protagonist is composed of “of” and “Fred” which is the name of the commander for which she works. Atwood dramatizes here the idea of ownership or the fact that she belongs to Fred. When asked about his choice to reveal Offred’s real name as June on the first episode, Bruce Miller answers:

I just thought the character’s name was June ... so I just used it not knowing whether Margaret intended it or not ... it is an important thing that she has a name because part of the show is that she is going to let that go ... she is strong and stubborn – even though she has to be content looking and silent and meek and keeping a hold of her identity was such an important part needed the name to do it (Miller 2017)

In order to build a strong feminist character, Miller considers Offred's appropriation of a name of her own as the first step towards individuation and self-assertion. Her new name stands as a strong symbol of identification and freedom from the totalitarian regime of Gilead especially that the first one was imposed on her by that same system. This decision to change the protagonist's name is an act of adaptation since Miller puts the work in its contemporary context especially after the *The Me-Too* movement that bursts in America and around the world to stand against sexual harassment and call for the empowerment of women to have control over their bodies which seems to perfectly fit the theme of the novel. When she was asked about her opinion concerning the adoption of June as a name to her female protagonist, Atwood welcomed the idea although it was not hers. Miller then brought another perception about the characterization that needed to be refreshed and made more suitable to the contemporary context of the series.

In the same respect, *The Handmaids Tale* (2017-2022) series is marked by a more diversified set of characters in an attempt to remove the outward racism of Gilead that rejects non-white citizens. The cast is made of actors from different ethnic groups such as Samira Wiley as Moira, O-T Fagbenle as Luke, and Amande Brugel as Rita. Atwood reflects the racist ideologies of Gilead through a newscaster in the novel which states "the resettlement of the Children of ham" in the Dakotas. It stands as a symbol of racism in most totalitarian regimes that consecrate the white man's superiority over other races and ethnicities. The phrase holds a discriminatory vision that the blacks were descendants of the figure of Ham in the bible who was cursed and forced to serve the whites. Miller wanted a different Gilead in his version where society should take care of more serious issues than racism such as environmental crisis and infertility. He observes:

"in today's society, fertility would outweigh skin color and ethnic background; it is clear that the predominantly white upper echelon of Gilead tolerates "racial impurity" for the sake of procreation."  
(Miller 2017)

Miller considers that racism on screen is outdated as he claims:

"in this age, what's the difference between making a TV show about racism and making a racist TV show? It is a distinction without a difference. All actors look the same on television. It is white people's problem" (Miller 2017).

The Hulu series creators then made such adjustments that correspond to the realities of their times making the novel of Atwood more contemporary and up to date.

Among the transformations brought to characterization, we can also mention the commander and his wife Serena who are made more glamorous for the TV screen. They are made younger which may imply that even young couples may have fertility problems which seems more frequent in modern days. There is always then this attempt to transpose the novel into more contemporary context to make it more vivid and easier to identify with. Serena and other wives enjoy certain freedom compared to the handmaids yet they are deprived from some rights such as reading, playing scrubs, and making public speeches. Although this aspect is represented in the novel, female characters are endowed with more power such as Moira and Ofglen who hold feminist ideas and rebelled against their autocratic society. Ofglen joined the Mayday resistance and while she died in Atwood's novel, she managed to escape to Canada. This act of adaptation reveals again the will of Bruce Miller to propose a different vision of women who can take hold of their lives and trigger a change in their societies. However, the exile in Canada does not end Moira and Ofglen's suffering as they fail to belong to their new social environment since they both suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Again, the devastating effects of dystopian systems of government especially on women are reflected.

In addition to Ofglen and Moira, Janine is revealed to the audience with a more important position on screen than in the novel. She is an example of resilience and strength for although she was completely broken by the system, she remains strong. While other handmaids opted for "disassociation" to forget their traumatic experiences, she reminds the powerful wives of their brutality. She exchanged commanders and underwent several pregnancies but she lost her babies. She is tortured and her mouth is sewed to prevent her from asking for her rights. Her last pregnancy is very symbolic in the novel as she defies the system and refuses to abandon her baby despite the horrible consequences of such act on her. Along with the other female handmaids, such as Offred, Ofglen and Moira, Janine is endowed with feminine consciousness that was significant for the audience.

The Hulu series proposes also a more modernized society that reflects technological advances of the American society in which the story is set. References from the everyday life of Americans such as Uber and Craigslist are adopted as Bruce Miller holds: "the show version of *The Handmaid's Tale* is meant to take place in 2017. Contemporary references were included as a way of indicating that the world of Gilead was not some faraway possibility ... everything has to be grounded and real." (Miller 2017). Another transformation made by adapters concerns the tattoo on the ankles of the handmaids to make them

recognizable. This identification method is substituted by a tracker which seems to correspond better to the modernization of the novel. In fact, the novel was released in 1985, while the series first broadcast took place in 2017; hence, a need to adapt the series to its era.

It is said that adaptations often remake their parent texts to reflect contemporary ideas and concerns (Elliot 2020). The release of the series came right after Donald Trump's election in 2016, an era characterized by strict laws against abortion. The leading theme of *The Handmaid's Tale* being women's rights over their bodies and reproduction freedom make the work very relevant to its time. More than a mere series on a streaming platform, it becomes a source of inspiration to women who stood against Trump's policies (he made abortion a punishable offense in many states, illegal in eleven states in 2019 and punishable by life in prison in Alabama and Georgia). Protestors were holding slogans such as "Make Atwood fiction again" manifesting in red robes to recall the handmaids' uniforms in the show. This symbolic scene shows the impact of Atwood's adaptation on contemporary concerns. It transposes the literary work that was written in the 1980s into a new location different in terms of political, cultural and social conditions yet, it seems very relevant to its time.

Quite symbolic is also The First Lady's decoration of the White House for Christmas 2018 with red trees that looked like the handmaids in the series and memes decorated them with white bonnets. Joyce Goggin comments on the very "realistic" aspect of Atwood's works: "the remarkable coincidence of some of the occurrences in the narrative- or the very real-seeming possibility of their arrival- has given rise to heightened interest in Atwood's novel resulting in the successful and powerful visual TV Hulu series" (Goggin 2021 :162).

Intertextuality then bypasses the literary written text to include the context in which the adapted version is made as Jason Mittel explains earlier. The boundaries of a text recede to leave space to the integration of socio-historical contextual elements that make it less frozen in its time of production. The juxtaposition with contemporary concerns gives another dimension to Atwood's work which facilitates the viewer's identification with its content and opens the possibilities of a multitude of readings depending on the film maker's interpretation and perception of his time. However, the series has remained faithful to the original work's conception and general philosophy.

## Conclusion

The study conducted on both Atwood's novel and Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale* confirms that the series is rather an adaptation and not an appropriation

owing to the demonstrated intertextuality between the two narratives. They are of the same species and are thoroughly interrelated. The plot, characters, themes and general spirit of the novel are identically reproduced to a great extent by Bruce Miller. It is true that the showrunner brought a set of transformations that concern mainly characterization, but the alterations remain minor. In fact, the female characters were represented in the TV show with slight changes that reflect their empowerment. Offred's name is revealed as a form of self-affirmation and other figures such as Ofglen and Moira show more rebellion. The cast is also more diversified by including black actors who play the roles of Luke and Moira.

It can be assumed that Bruce Miller's aim is to modernize the series and make it more contemporary. This transposition of the novel's Gilead into the modern America of 2017 answers our question on the reflection of contemporary ideas and concerns through adaptations of prior texts. The series adopts anti-racial and feminist stands that came amid events such as Me-too movement, the Black Lives Matter movement and Trump's anti-abortion laws. Following Hutcheon's definition, Bruce Miller appears as an interpreter who filtered the original work according to his sensibilities and recreated it to reflect the realities of his time. Yet, the deviation from her text cannot be considered as a form of appropriation since it remains an Atwoodian product.

*The Handmaids Tale* series can be seen as a modernization and continuation of the novel, an excellent companion to the novel which gains more popularity after the series' diffusion. Texts' Adaptations into screen then stand as worthy pieces of art that have their own value as much as any other literary work does.

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### Abstract

Cinema has always found inspiration in literature through the adaptation of famous literary works into screen. This creative technique is based on the transformation of an artwork into another medium, form or location but this seemingly simple definition implies thorny issues in relation to originality, fidelity, inferiority and authenticity of the adopted texts which very often have to be altered to fit the cinematographic needs and film market. Using the concepts of adaptation and appropriation, this article attempts to study Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and its screening as Hulu series (2017-2022). It aims at comparing the series and its fictional version in order to explore the transformation process made by the showrunner Bruce Miller in addition to its impact on the novel's narrative, essence and spirit that were reflected by its author to see whether it stands as an appropriation or adaptation.

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### Keywords

Adaptation, Appropriation, Text, Screen, Margaret Atwood, Hulu Series, authenticity

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### المخلص

لطالما وجدت السينما مصدر إلهام في الأدب من خلال إقتباس الأعمال الأدبية الشهيرة على الشاشة. تعتمد هذه التقنية الإبداعية على تحويل العمل الفني إلى وسيط أو شكل آخر، لكن هذا التعريف الذي يبدو بسيطاً ينطوي على قضايا شائكة فيما يتعلق بالإخلاص وأصالة النصوص المعتمدة والتي غالباً ما يتعين تغييرها لتناسب الاحتياجات السينمائية وسوق الأفلام. باستخدام مفاهيم الإقتباس والملكية، تحاول هذه المقالة دراسة رواية مارجريت أتوود *The Handmaid's Tale*

(1985 Tale) وعرضها في شكل سلسلة (2017 Hulu-2022) لمقارنة المسلسل مع نسخته الأدبية من أجل استكشاف عملية التحول التي قام بها المخرج بروس ميلر بالإضافة إلى تأثيره على سرد الرواية وجوهرها وروحها التي عكسها مؤلفها لمعرفة ما إذا كانت تمثل ملكية أو إقتباس

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#### كلمات مفتاحية

إقتباس، ملكية، النص، الشاشة، مارقرات أتوود، هولوسيريز، الأصالة

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#### Résumé

Le cinéma s'est toujours inspiré de la littérature à travers l'adaptation à l'écran d'œuvres littéraires célèbres. Cette technique de création repose sur la transformation d'une œuvre d'art en un autre médium, une autre forme ou un autre lieu mais cette définition apparemment simple implique des questions épineuses en matière d'originalité, de fidélité, d'infériorité et d'authenticité des textes adoptés qui doivent très souvent être modifiés pour s'adapter aux besoins cinématographiques et marché du film. Utilisant les concepts d'adaptation et d'appropriation, cet article tente d'étudier le roman de Margaret Atwood *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) et sa diffusion en tant que Hulu série (2017-2022). Il vise à comparer la série et sa version en fiction afin d'explorer le processus de transformation effectué par le réalisateur Bruce Miller en plus de son impact sur le récit, l'essence et l'esprit du roman qui ont été reflétés par son auteur pour voir s'il s'agit d'une appropriation ou adaptation .

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#### Mots-clés

Adaptation, Appropriation, Texte, Ecran, Margaret Atwood, Hulu Series, authenticité