

The background of the entire page is a gradient from dark purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. Overlaid on this is a complex network diagram consisting of numerous white circular nodes of varying sizes, connected by thin white lines. Some nodes are larger and act as hubs, with many lines radiating from them. The overall effect is that of a digital or social network.

The Testaments

Written by Margaret Atwood

Published by kctv7

Table of Contents

The Testaments Atwood	1
The Testaments Spoilers	2
The Testaments Synopsis	3
The Testaments Wiki	4
The Testaments Margaret Atwood Pdf	5
The Testaments Audiobook	6
The Testaments Reddit	7
The Testaments Pdf	8
The Testaments By Margaret Atwood	9

The Testaments

By Margaret Atwood

The Testaments Atwood

More than fifteen years after the events of *The Handmaid's Tale*, the theocratic regime of the Republic of Gilead maintains its grip on power, but there are signs it is beginning to rot from within. At this crucial moment, the lives of three radically different women converge, with potentially explosive results.

The Testaments Spoilers

Two have grown up as part of the first generation to come of age in the new order. The testimonies of these two young women are joined by a third voice: a woman who wields power through the ruthless accumulation and deployment of secrets.

The Testaments Synopsis

As Atwood unfolds *The Testaments*, she opens up the innermost workings of Gilead as each woman is forced to come to terms with who she is, and how far she will go for what she believes.

The Testaments Wiki

"Dear Readers: Everything youâ€™ve ever asked me about Gilead and its inner workings is the inspiration for this book. Well, almost everything! The other inspiration is the world weâ€™ve been living in."

--Margaret Atwood

The Testaments Margaret Atwood Pdf

I can sum it up simply: this book is not needed.

I hoped that wouldn't be the case. I really really hoped Atwood had something important to add to the world of Gilead with this book, but she honestly doesn't. If anything, The Testaments serves only to weaken the power of The Handmaid's Tale.

In the past, I have spoken highly of authors who are not afraid to "be evil" with their books. This may give the impression that they are doing something particularly nefarious, but, in fact, itâ€™s not so much. I can sum it up simply: this book is not needed.

I hoped that wouldn't be the case. I really really hoped Atwood had something important to add to the world of Gilead with this book, but she honestly doesn't. If anything, The Testaments serves only to weaken the power of The Handmaid's Tale.

In the past, I have spoken highly of authors who are not afraid to "be evil" with their books. This may give the impression that they are doing something particularly nefarious, but, in fact, itâ€™s not so much something they do, but everything they donâ€™t. Itâ€™s an act of self-restraint to not say everything, to leave some things unanswered, some happy endings unexplored. That, I feel, is one of the greatest strengths of The Handmaid's Tale.

Because there is so much we don't know; can't know. Everything we experience comes from Offred's narrow world view. Everything Offred doesn't know-- we don't know. The ending, too, is famously ambiguous. And these are extremely powerful tools. What we donâ€™t know is powerful. Ambiguity is powerful. Knowing when to finish is powerful. As Aunt Lydia notes herself in this very book:

Where there is emptiness, the mind will obligingly fill it up. Fear is always at hand to supply any vacancies, as is curiosity.

The Handmaid's Tale forces us to wonder, to imagine, to fear the worst and hope for the best. The Testaments not so much.

What this book does is remove the ambiguity. It provides answers to thirty-five year old mysteries that were best left unanswered. I am reminded somewhat comically of Jojo Moyes' inability to let go of her Me Before You characters, repeatedly opening up the story after leaving it on an emotional high. Not every "ooh, I wonder what the characters did next?" should be answered. Sometimes not knowing is so much more effective. And that's Moyes. I didn't expect Atwood to indulge in this sentimentality.

The Handmaid's Tale uses one limited perspective to make us think; The Testaments uses three perspectives and an epilogue in the future to colour in all the corners, leaving nothing to the imagination.

The Testaments

I gave this book two stars for Aunt Lydia's perspective. Without her contribution I am honestly not sure I would have pushed through the second half of the book. The rest of the book is told from the perspective of two teenage girls, one living in Canada and the other in Gilead, and the "twists" regarding them are so glaringly obvious that it is actually a bit embarrassing to read the scenes with the dramatic reveals (chapter cliffhanger obviously). The whole infiltration by the resistance thing was straight out of every other dime a dozen dystopia.

I had so hoped this was going to do something new and important. I hoped it was going to impart a new message, perhaps relevant to modern times. I hoped it was going to be smart and thought-provoking. I am disappointed.

[Blog](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Youtube](#) ...more

Return to Gilead

Check your expectations at the door: The Testaments is a highly entertaining page turner, but it is probably quite different from whatever you were anticipating.

It differs from its 1985 antecedent, *The Handmaid's Tale*, in tone, voice and literary heft. That earlier book had a power and a gravitas that is not recaptured here. For me the most striking thing about *The Handmaid's Tale* has always been Atwood's choice of narrator. Offred (in the book she has no other name) is so confined

[Return to Gilead](#)

Check your expectations at the door: The Testaments is a highly entertaining page turner, but it is probably quite different from whatever you were anticipating.

It differs from its 1985 antecedent, *The Handmaid's Tale*, in tone, voice and literary heft. That earlier book had a power and a gravitas that is not recaptured here. For me the most striking thing about *The Handmaid's Tale* has always been Atwood's choice of narrator. Offred (in the book she has no other name) is so confined by her circumstances; her isolation is claustrophobic. She is essentially passive, keeping her head down and daring to aim only for survival, while other characters have more agency (Moirra and Ofglen both find proactive ways to thwart the Gilead regime, either would have been a more natural choice for a protagonist). Offred is an Everywoman – with her passivity she confronts the reader: Well, what would you do in my place? And don't kid yourself. It's bleak, but the novel's power is in its intimate portrait of powerlessness.

The Testaments is more action-driven, more hopeful, and by extension, less realistic. We follow three characters who are prepared to buck the system, to risk everything to crush the patriarchy. That two of them are teenagers feeds the sense of buoyancy, you get the feeling that Atwood too thinks the kids are gonna save us.

The shift in tone will be familiar to viewers of Hulu's TV series – perhaps both Atwood and the

The Testaments

showrunners 'read the room' and recognised that the catharsis of a feelgood fightback is what we crave and need most right now. If the idea of a book set in Gilead being entertaining "even fun" dismays you, best skip this one.

Indeed *The Testaments*, rather shrewdly on Atwood's part, functions as a sequel to both the first book AND the TV adaptation "deftly combining elements from each, while avoiding the show's most glaring faults (eg its over-reliance on a single character, and tendency to get bogged down plot-wise).

This novel isn't flawless either. One of the narrative voices is by far more compelling than the others (no prizes for guessing that it's the mature, morally compromised Aunt Lydia, not one of the idealistic teenagers). It's a little too TV-ready in the way the characters intersect. Certain plot twists are loudly telegraphed and the narratives don't always jive with the historical documents they purport to be. And my eyes rolled more than once (*Underground Femaleroad*, really?).

Still there's much to enjoy. The conniving duplicity and monstrous ambivalence of Aunt Lydia makes for thrilling reading. Atwood's prose and story-spinning have lost none of their magic, and for an 80 year old she writes teenage voices surprisingly well! Most importantly, it's compulsively readable.

The Testaments is unlikely to become a perennially relevant classic like its predecessor, and it's unreasonable to expect that kind of greatness from it. As an expansion of the Gilead mythos though, it more than satisfies. ...more

The Testaments Audiobook

I guess I'll have to be the one who says what nobody else is willing to say. This novel is terrible. I can't decide which work Atwood should be embarrassed for more - Angel Catbird, Vol. 1 or The Testaments. The book doesn't read like a novel written by one of the most lauded authors of the 20th century. The Testaments reads like a standard-issue feminist YA dystopia, filled with every overused dystopian trope and every stereotype, penned by an author who writes for teen audience, and is published by Harper Teen. As such, it undoubtedly has some appeal to a part of Atwood's readership, but literary merit The Testaments has none. If this book had a different name on it, I would have DNFed it after 50 pages for its lack of originality, predictability and mediocre writing style. I've read a fair number of similar novels, I am not opposed to them, I enjoyed some of them, and some of them (for example the upcoming The Grace Year) held my attention much better. As an Atwood novel, The Testaments gets one disappointed, angry, heart-broken star from me.

Why did the publishers embargo Atwood's new creation, I wonder? Surely there is nothing to spoil. Maybe to conceal its poor execution, or its transparent, shallow, simplistic, and ridiculous plot?

The story is told from 3 POVs - Aunt Lydia's and two teen girls' - one growing up in Gilead and another - in Canada. Oh my, who those girls might be? Twist!

You can only glimpse Atwood's former brilliance in Aunt Lydia's POV, but just for a few moments here and there. If the whole novel was written about Aunt Lydia, maybe Atwood would have made her journey more convincing, but alas. The other two girls are quintessential YA dystopian heroines - one abused by an evil oppressive regime, and the other - a bratty teen on the run from bad people, but who nevertheless has time for some romance. Yum! Like I said, these POVs are so similar to what's been regurgitated over and over in teen publishing, it's uncanny. Has The Testaments been partially ghost-written by Lauren Oliver? I am not trying to dump on Oliver, she has her fans and her place in the industry, but I expected something infinitely more sophisticated from Margaret Atwood.

The new information about Gilead Atwood promised? Well, new details of Gilead made the regime more nonsensical and less plausible than ever before. Who benefits from living in Gilead becomes unfathomable in this book, thus making the entire concept pointless (kind of like in *Wither*). Totalitarian regimes work, at least temporarily, because they are supported by a mass of true believers. Where are they in this book? But if you yearn for some more torture porn in addition to that supplied by the 3 seasons of the TV show, then sure. Rapists, molesters, killers, suicide victims galore, plus solitary confinement - there is an overabundance of that. All of it written bluntly, rashly, exploitatively and

The Testaments

without any kind of nuance. There is no overarching theme in The Testaments except GILEAD IS BAD. The plot to overthrow it is a joke.

If you are looking for a clever, thoughtful, well-written companion to The Handmaid's Tale, you are out of luck. If you want a bland, basic TV show fanfic ripe with action adventure and genre tropes, enjoy! The Testaments was written just for you.

P.S. What Booker judges have been smoking? Short list? Really? ...more

So I just found out about this, Margaret Atwood revealed it via twitter yesterday. I even had to create the book data myself on goodreads so I could write this update. I really did not see this coming. (did anyone?)

I'm excited and surprised. The Handmaid's Tale felt like such a closed book, so it will be real interesting to see where this one goes. I wonder if she decided to write this after the success of the television adaptation or the show was made because this book was being written.

Eit So I just found out about this, Margaret Atwood revealed it via twitter yesterday. I even had to create the book data myself on goodreads so I could write this update. I really did not see this coming. (did anyone?)

I'm excited and surprised. The Handmaid's Tale felt like such a closed book, so it will be real interesting to see where this one goes. I wonder if she decided to write this after the success of the television adaptation or the show was made because this book was being written.

Either way, I can't wait to read it.

It's set 15 years after the first book (which was published 33 years ago) and it has 3 female narrators. I hope it carries with it the same depth and power as the first one. So I will be reading and reviewing this one come September. It's certainly a release not to be missed! ...more

The Testaments Reddit

"How tedious is a tyranny in the throes of enactment. It's always the same plot."

So why does Margaret Atwood choose to tell the story again? That question has haunted me since I heard the announcement of the project almost a year ago. WHY? I was convinced I would hate the hype and the gushing reviews and the book itself, and started reading with the attitude of someone who knew the story didn't need telling again.

To my surprise, I liked it from the start, and soon engaged in the thriller unfold "How tedious is a tyranny in the throes of enactment. It's always the same plot."

So why does Margaret Atwood choose to tell the story again? That question has haunted me since I heard the announcement of the project almost a year ago. WHY? I was convinced I would hate the hype and the gushing reviews and the book itself, and started reading with the attitude of someone who knew the story didn't need telling again.

To my surprise, I liked it from the start, and soon engaged in the thriller unfolding with a rare reading joy, still wondering why Atwood wasted her precious time on a sequel like this. Not much new was added to the dystopian plot of Gilead, I thought.

But then a shift occurred in my mind.

I always saw *The Handmaid's Tale* as a warning of the slow normalisation of religious fanaticism and of the strengthening of patriarchal structures in our modern era, and the story itself as a mirror of our all too human tendencies to adjust to the most absurd situations if we are caught off-guard and left confused.

The Testaments has a different purpose, and it comes as a challenge in the era of #MeToo. Don't accept the unacceptable. Act on injustice. Speak up. Do what has to be done to make the world safer for women and children. Say no to the objectification of your body. No tyranny will last forever if you are brave enough to do your individual bit.

Whenever Aunt Lydia's badly executed statue was mentioned, I had this strange feeling that it was some kind of Atwoodian insider joke, but I could not put my finger on the reference. In the end I gave up trying to figure out what she meant, as I found my own truth. And I had to wait until the very end: the last page made me laugh out loud.

Another scientific conference on Gileadean Studies, another reflection on the difficulty to find truth in details. Truth is in the symbol though, and that noseless, broken statue of Aunt Lydia that was found after the breakdown of Gilead spoke of the ephemeral immortality (deliberately oxymoronic from the

The Testaments

start) that Ozimandias fell victim to in Shelley's famous sonnet. I will close with him, as he speaks of the timelessness of power(lessness) and (im)mutability:

"I met a traveller from an antique land,
 Who saidâ€”â€œTwo vast and trunkless legs of stone
 Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
 Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
 And on the pedestal, these words appear:
 My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
 Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
 Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.â€•

Nothing beside remains to be said. I leave my earlier testimonies as a tribute to the process of discovering the truth of the storyteller in each (his)story:

My predictions will face reality(or fiction?)-check now! I can't believe I am actually holding a brandnew copy of The Testaments in my hands... we are writing the date of 9/11 Anno Domini 2019.

Let the journey begin!

Thoughts on hearing it was coming in 2018:

Based on the scary prophetic power of some of Margaret Atwood's other dystopian social studies, I am not sure I can even stomach the idea of what will happen to Offred next.

May I suggest a feel-good start, changing her name into Nofred?

No, that's not going to happen. I think the world is currently growing into Margaret Atwood's new novel, demonstrating the insanity a bit more each day. Getting very, very impatient by now.

If I were to embrace a religion (No!), it would have to be the religion of literature, and I would praise the special god in Atwood's MaddAddam every day by now: "Oh Fuck", as Snowman-the-Jimmy said only when it was really, really bad (which was quite often). ...more

Holy shit is this real? Because I need it!

The Testaments Pdf

Shortlisted for the Booker Prize 2019

This is a flashy, placative, but also intelligent thriller, here to make some points about society and to entertain - it's certainly not the most layered or subtle literature ever written, but you know what? It's engaging, rather suspenseful and great fun to read, full of quips and commentary on the world we live in, and sometimes, that's more than enough. And honestly: *The Handmaid's Tale* wasn't particularly ambiguous or enigmatic either.

As we already know f Shortlisted for the Booker Prize 2019

This is a flashy, placative, but also intelligent thriller, here to make some points about society and to entertain - it's certainly not the most layered or subtle literature ever written, but you know what? It's engaging, rather suspenseful and great fun to read, full of quips and commentary on the world we live in, and sometimes, that's more than enough. And honestly: *The Handmaid's Tale* wasn't particularly ambiguous or enigmatic either.

As we already know from the book's predecessor, the theocratic terror regime of Gilead did fall - the book ended with a historic symposium on the failed state. "The Testaments" now tells us how this downfall came about, and we hear the story from the alternating perspectives of three women: The infamous and powerful Aunt Lydia from #1, who is one of the women who helped develop the misogynist rules and rites of Gileadean society; a teenage girl who grows up in Gilead and is supposed to submit to her role as a women without any rights; and another young girl who lives in Canada (which borders to Gilead) and discovers her family's connection to Mayday, the resistance group that aims to save women and bring down the vicious regime. In case you are now wondering what happened to Offred, the handmaid at the center of #1, let me tell you that all of the characters are somehow connected to her - beware, readers, it does not make much sense to start "The Testaments" before reading *The Handmaid's Tale* first.

Atwood does a great job addressing all kinds of current issues within the narrative: Not only the misogyny of the current US President is lurking between the lines, there are also parts that refer to ISIS, the refugee crisis at state borders and in the Mediterranean, xenophobia and the lack of empathy and solidarity. Another important topic is that of opportunism: We learn how Aunt Lydia became an instrumental part in a machine that systemtically exploits and violates women, and as we all know, it's the mass of enablers who keep such machines running, not those at the very top. Just like in #1, the threat of fascism is at the core of the whole story: When inventing Gilead, Atwood was inspired by the diaries of Joseph Goebbels, and the appearance of the women in the book was influenced by the aesthetics of Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda film "Triumph of the Will".

And yes, Atwood paints with very broad brush strokes: This book is highly accessible, and readers aren't required to do much work themselves. I also suppose that the enormous marketing campaign put some people off and, in the eyes of quite a few readers, compromised the novel as a work of "serious"

The Testaments

literature. I have to say that I don't really mind though: If "serious" movies with world-class actors can have major premiere events with red carpets, fancy dresses, press frenzy and all, why shouldn't a world-class writer like Margaret Atwood live it up at Waterstones London with her gang of Jeanette Winterson and freakin' Neil Gaiman as well as people dressed as handmaids and Pearl Girls while the whole literary world watches? More power to you, Ms Atwood!

So if you expect intricately crafted, subtly plotted, lyrically written prose, or a completely new twist on the whole Gilead saga, this novel will probably disappoint you. But if you want to read a straightforward, intelligent, well-paced, witty thriller spiced with social commentary in which women take down the patriarchy, this is the book for you. This text has the potential to reach many readers who normally wouldn't pick up a book on feminism, and it will allow people to join the conversation. ...more

this is the most unexpected thing of 2019 so far

The Testaments By Margaret Atwood

Shortlisted for the 2019 Booker Prize.

Youâ€™ll labour over this manuscript of mine, reading and rereading, picking nits as you go.

I was fortunate enough to attend one of the live cinema screenings of the readings and author Q&A from the National Theatre on the evening of the book's official publication, managing to complete my first read of the book just as the event started.

The event was excellent - and I think only reinforced my view that Handmaid's Tale is a great works of fiction. Great Shortlisted for the 2019 Booker Prize.

Youâ€™ll labour over this manuscript of mine, reading and rereading, picking nits as you go.

I was fortunate enough to attend one of the live cinema screenings of the readings and author Q&A from the National Theatre on the evening of the book's official publication, managing to complete my first read of the book just as the event started.

The event was excellent - and I think only reinforced my view that Handmaid's Tale is a great works of fiction. Great firstly because it proved so prescient - I always felt that Brave New World was a better written book than 1984, but only one is still widely quoted and referred to today - and Handmaid's Tale has I think equalled if not eclipsed 1984. And great also because it has inspired and resonated with so many people.

Trump and anti-abortion male legislatures (Atwood remarked that young, fertile women - a minority in any society have across so many civilisations and cultures been a resource that society feels it can shape for its own purpose and without their consent) have been subject to the silent but dramatically effective protest of the Handmaids.

Even these last two weeks in the light of the proposed (and now executed) prorogation of the UK parliament a quote from the Handmaid's Tale is going viral:

"That was when they suspended the Constitution. They said it would be temporary. There wasn't even any rioting in the street. People stayed at home at night, watching television"

So to the extent that the publication of the Testaments causes people to revisit the novel - address some of the misconceptions around its message, celebrate Atwood as a writer then I welcome it.

But it is the novel itself where I start to pick nits:

The Testaments

Atwood has said that she was inspired to write the novel as she wanted to examine how oppressive regimes fall, and perhaps secondarily to explore how people survive in those regimes and even what causes people to resist the regimes.

On the second front I think she does succeed. The Aunt Lydia character is an excellent one - inspired heavily by Thomas Cromwell. From the event this evening Atwood is fascinated by the parallels between Gilead and Henry VIII's court and particularly the way in which Thomas Cromwell navigated his way to a position of power while carrying out his own schemings. She is obviously familiar with and a fan of both the Mantel trilogy (well the two published and knows of the one to come - she jokingly stage whispered "it doesn't end well for him") and the Diarmaid MacCulloch biography last year (she did not mention the author).

On the first though I struggle really to see the insights she brings. Atwood has made a big thing - in both books (and as a pre-condition for the TV serialisation of the Gilead world) that all events must have a basis in real life events. However I am struggling to tie the way in which the Gilead regime to the downfall of various regimes that she references heavily as inspirations for the book. These include USSR (where the Stalinist purges are a key inspiration for this novel), East Germany (more of an inspiration for the first), Pinochet's Chile, the Argentina Junta (the latter two inspiring the stadium scenes in this book and the disappeared babies of Argentina having clear parallels with one of the characters here). In most if not all the cases the actual abuses of the regime I think emerged as a result of (and post) their fall rather than precipitating it.

And the resistance part of the novel ends more as a rather simplistic adventure story - I don't really read literary fiction for passages like this

â€œGlad you made it,â€• said Captain Mishimengo. He shook our hands; he had two fingers missing. He was stocky, about sixty, with tanned skin and a short black beard. â€œNow hereâ€™s our story, supposing youâ€™re asked: this is a cod schooner, solar, with fuel backup. Flag of convenience is Lebanon. Weâ€™ve delivered a cargo of cod and lemons by special licence, which means the grey market, and now weâ€™re heading back out. Youâ€™ll need to stay out of sight during the day: I heard from my contact, via Bert who dropped you at the dock, that theyâ€™re bound to be looking for you soon. Thereâ€™s a place for you to sleep, in the hold. If thereâ€™s an inspection, coast guard, it wonâ€™t be thorough, itâ€™s guys we know.â€• He rubbed his fingers together, which I knew meant money.

I also felt that rather than illuminating how things in Gilead worked, the book at times struggled to maintain a coherent and consistent world view (for example I was not entirely convinced how the extreme punitive emphasis on the sanctity of the handmaids tied with the dentists ability to abuse children; the food shortages did not always seem prevalent; the continuing use of "MayDay" as a password by an organisation known to everyone as MayDay, and the addition of "June Moon" to add more secrecy is just silly) and other than the Pearl Girls I did not gain as much additional understanding of new depths to the societal picture as I had wished.

And whereas I liked the Aunt Lydia character - her depth and complexity, the other characters seemed far more one-dimensional. While I think I can excuse this for the Gilead based girl (and I think she does give a sense of how people can rapidly become assimilated to any culture if they have grown up with it); the Canadian girl was much less convincing - the device of having her unable to curb her language, attitude or atheism was significantly over-used and her (lack of) reaction to the murder of the people she thought were her parents for the first 16 years of her life was simply implausible.

The book ends - like *Handmaid's Tale* - with a 22nd Century Symposium looking back at the events of Gilead and using source materials (which are effectively the book we have been reading).

This is one area where *The Testaments* is better constructed than its predecessor - we are given more convincing explanations of the provenance of the documents that make the novel and even a clever hint by Atwood (via a link with *Mary Queen of Scots* and the *Casket Letters*) that the Aunt Lydia piece may even be a fake - Atwood left a rather hanging comment in the launch event that she is "fascinated by forgeries".

The character links between this book and its predecessor (taken for granted in pretty well every review - not least due to the influence of the TV series) are instead described as "not definitively excluded ... jumping to conclusions ... [for] future scholars to examine"

We are also told that the Professor and his assistant prepared a "facsimile edition of the three batches of materials, which we have interleaved in an order that made approximate narrative sense to us" - initially for the symposium attendees but also for the "benefit of a broader audience".

And here I think is the crux of my dilemma with this novel. *The Handmaid's Tale* even as a novel had moved well beyond the literary fiction space, and the TV series took it into popular culture. Atwood has I think written a novel which is deliberately broad in its appeal: it cleverly builds on the novel, fan theories and the TV series while adding her own stamp; it is also much more clearly an adventure type book and less literary. But its those very strengths which I think will lessen its appeal to fans of literary fiction.

So on the day of its publication I am: more convinced than ever of the greatness of its predecessor; glad I read this book; pleased it has been written; unconvinced of its individual literary merits; of the view that a lifetime achievement Nobel Prize would be a more appropriate recognition for the author than the Booker would be for this book. ...more

“*The Testaments*” opens in Gilead about 15 years after “*The Handmaid’s Tale*,” but it’s an entirely different novel in form and tone. Inevitably, the details are less shocking at least in part because the horrors of Gilead’s male-centered theocracy are already so well known. When Offred first told her sad and mutilated story, we were hearing about the hangings, the Unbabies and the Sons of Jacob for the first time. But by now, Gilead’s breeding Ceremony is a creepy cultural touchstone.

Atwood's "The Testaments" opens in Gilead about 15 years after "The Handmaid's Tale," but it's an entirely different novel in form and tone. Inevitably, the details are less shocking at least in part because the horrors of Gilead's male-centered theocracy are already so well known. When Offred first told her "sad and mutilated story," we were hearing about the hangings, the Unbabies and the Sons of Jacob for the first time. But by now, Gilead's breeding Ceremony is a creepy cultural touchstone.

Atwood responds to the challenge of that familiarity by giving us the narrator we least expect: Aunt Lydia. It's a brilliant strategic move that turns the world of Gilead inside out. In "The Handmaid's Tale," Aunt Lydia is the orthodox teacher whose platitudes and instructions cycle through Offred's mind. But in "The Testaments," Aunt Lydia speaks directly to us in all her conflicted complexity. She has become the supreme matriarch of this masculine cult. "I control the women's side of their enterprise with an iron fist in a leather glove in a woollen mitten," she says. "And I keep things orderly: like a harem eunuch." As a living legend, the very model of moral perfection and feminine wisdom, she enjoys a special position of extraordinary power and she knows just how. . . .

To read the rest of this review, go to The Washington Post:
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/entert...> ...more