

Is The Handmaid's Tale a prediction?

Is The Handmaid's Tale a prediction? That is the third question I'm asked - increasingly, as forces within American society seize power and enact decrees that embody what they were saying they wanted to do, even 5 back in 1984, when I was writing the novel. No, it isn't a prediction, because predicting the future isn't really possible: there are too many variables and unforeseen possibilities. Let's say it's an antiprediction: if this future can be described in detail, maybe it won't happen. But 10 such wishful thinking cannot be depended on either. [...]

In the wake of the recent American election, fears and anxieties proliferate. Basic civil liberties are seen as endangered, along with many of the rights for women won over the past decades, and indeed the past centuries. 15 In this divisive climate, in which hate for many groups seems on the rise and scorn for democratic institutions is being expressed by extremists of all stripes, it is a certainty that someone, somewhere - many, I would guess - are writing down what is happening as they themselves 20 are experiencing it. Or they will remember, and record later, if they can. Will their messages be suppressed and hidden? Will they be found, centuries later, in an old house, behind a wall? Let us hope it doesn't come to that. I trust it will not.

Margaret Atwood, *www.nytimes.com*, 10 March 2017