In the near future, a new totalitarian regime of religious fanatics is established. It divides women in castes, confiscates their right and enslaves the last fertile women : the handmaids, recognizable thanks to their red clothes. They are used in reproduction to repair the fall of fertility caused by pollution.

To write this novel, Margaret Atwood was inspired by different hystorical facts. Themes such as oppression, resistance, and the atmosphere of distrust are such that they mind us of the second world war. Or the policy of monitoring pregnant women and the prohibition of birth control to increase the birth rate in Roumania under the regime of Nicolai Ceausescu. Indeed the writer has set a rule : not to include in her novel elements that humanity had not already commited. Atwood conceived the novel as « speculative fiction », a work that imagines a future that could conceivably happen without any advances in technology.

Through her novel, Margaret Atwood pushes the dystopian genre to its climax and plunges us into a society whose model is full of asperity and where equality no longer exists. This novel allows us to question about the excesses of authoritaranism.

This novel is also feminist. It illustrates how from a simple ecological crisis a reversal of power and the suppression of women’s right follow. The strength of this story is its similarity to reality.

*«  nolite te bastardes carborundorum »*

