

Concubines, Handmaids Or Sister Wives: Polygamy In The Media, A Comparison Between The TV Dramas "The Legend of Zhen Huan", "The Handmaid's Tale" And "Big Love"

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Abstract : Polygamy is a sensitive issue yet a surprisingly popular topic on television. In China, among other palace intrigues dramas, "The Legend of Zhen Huan" stands out in its harsh portrayal of sequestered concubines in the Forbidden City. In the United States the critically acclaimed "Big Love", set in the Mormon community, generated much discussion and controversy, both academically and on social media. More recently "The Handmaid's Tale", adapted from the famous novel by Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, also contributed to the topic. All three dramas feature the plight of women caught in a polygamy system and are particularly popular with female audiences. Using Foucault's theory of power, visual anthropology, and feminist perspective this paper aims at analyzing the treatment of this sensitive topic in the media and its reception. From the seemingly happy sister wives in "Big Love", to the fiercely competitive concubines in "The Legend of Zhen Huan" and the tragically coerced handmaids in "The Handmaid's Tale", the lives of women in a polygamy system are inspiring to modern audiences. This paper's objective is to understand how the treatment of polygamy is relevant to these audiences.

Keywords : polygamy, michel foucault, feminism, visual anthropology

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