



“The Wheel of Time” Amazon Prime Series Portends Wokism Invading Everywhere

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I’m a nerd. Since I first read the opening words “In the hole in the ground there lived a hobbit...”, I’ve been a fantasy bibliophile. My guess is I’m only one of a handful of people in the world who owns and has read all 38 J.R.R. Tolkien books (many edited by his son, Christopher). I saw all six of “The Hobbit” and “The Lord of the Rings” movies right when they came out. I own extended versions of those movies, which my kids and I annually watch over the holidays (19.5 hours long, baby;-). Thankfully, unlike the producers of “The Wheel of Time” series on Amazon Prime, Peter Jackson largely remained faithful to Tolkien’s story (I have a few quibbles, but I’ll spare you).

It was a different time, I suppose, all those years ago in the early 2000s when wokism didn’t rule the world (cue eye roll).

As a fan of Robert Jordan’s “The Wheel of Time” books, I waited for the release of the series on Amazon Prime with great anticipation. Like Tolkien and George R.R. Martin, Jordan crafted his fantasy world with enormous details, so reading his books allows readers to vividly imagine every aspect of the world fairly easily. I assumed the framework of a television series (versus a movie) would permit the producers to stay faithful to the books and wow viewers unfamiliar with the books with Jordan’s epic creation.

Instead, six episodes in, the series so far is a huge disappointment. It feels like wokism run amok.

It isn’t just that the casting feels like a United Colors of Benetton ad – white (check), black (check), Asian (check), Indian (check) – which doesn’t undermine the book as much as distract viewers who have seen the artwork from the books. Rand al’Thor isn’t small. Egwene al’Vere and her tavern/innkeeper family aren’t Indian. Nynaeve al’Meara isn’t black. Aes Sedai Moiraine Damodred isn’t tall. An al’Lan Mandragoran isn’t Asian. As the series starts, veterans of the book have to check their knowledge, which took a little getting used to. Other than for politically correct reasons, I’m not sure why the casting didn’t match the books.

Contrast this approach with Steven Spielberg’s mandate for his film “West Side Story” in which he has commented, “That was a mandate that I put down to Cindy Tolan who cast the movie, that I wasn’t going to entertain any auditions that aren’t [descended from] parents or

grandparents or [are] themselves from Latinx countries." Apparently, discrimination based on race and national origin only goes one way.

More problematic, key moments in the first book are cut short or completely left out and replaced by woke events that never took place. The gripping chapter when Rand and his dad are attacked by trollocs on their farm and Rand receives his father's mysterious, but biographically important, sword was significantly shortened. A couple of characters are given short shrift or show-up at odds moments. Rand's and Mat Cauthon's long and arduous journey to Caemlyn is largely curtailed. The backstories to why Mat is becoming moody and violent and Perrin Aybara's relationship with wolves are mostly ignored. These details matter.

In place of those important stories are completely made up woke stories. There is a whole scene in which large numbers of Aes Sedai (sorceresses) are gathered in the woods on their way to deliver the "False Dragon" to Tar Valon (home of the Aei Sedai). During the scene, the producers inject homosexuality and three-somes into the story. Specifically, each Aes Sedai is "bonded" with a Warder (Navy Seal) who protects her. In the gathering scene, we learn that an Aes Sedai has two Warders who heavily hint they are gay and the three of them engage in sex together. I frankly don't care other than how far from the book that theme strays and what elements are cut-out so it could be added.

Next, the producers develop an entire new storyline about an Aes Sedai who dies and her Warder, Stepin (played by Peter Franzen who last appeared brilliantly in "The Vikings" series as Harald Finehair). Once again, in a discussion on whether he will bond with the Aes Sedai who already has two Warders, Stepin ponders sexually being with a man and doing a four-some. Again, my frustration is what is left out of the series in order to squeeze this wholly irrelevant storyline in, especially given how much time this storyline swallows in two of the episodes.

Then, Egwene and Perrin get rescued by a group of pacifist Tuatha'an, otherwise known as Tinkers (like Travelers from Ireland). In the book, after some time learning about the Tinkers, the two characters move on towards the city where they hope to reunite with Rand and the rest of the gang. Instead of adhering to the book, the producers create a big scene where the Tinkers defend the two characters from the religiously zealous (i.e., conservative) Children of the Light (they oppose the Dark One and all who channel the magical One Power), also known as Whitecloaks. During this scene, we are treated to a lecture on why pacifism is superior to the use of physical violence, followed by the Children of the Light demonstrating their cruelty when they strike down the arm-to-arm linked Tinkers. There didn't appear to be any real point to the scene other than the lecture and gratuitous violence by the right-wing MAGA, whoops, I mean Whitecloaks.

Lastly, though Jordan referred to "pillow friends" (Aes Sedai who as young girls comfort and explore each other) very sporadically in his books and only in reference to young girls, virtually the entire sixth episode revolves around Moiraine's and the Amyrlin Seat's (head sorceress) clearly adult interracial lesbian relationship. This episode culminates in a shared secret touch between the two as the Amyrlin Seat bans Moiraine from Tar Valon, a plan they hatched up the

night before during a final lovemaking scene. None of this actually happens in the books. In fact, the gang of characters never even make it to Tar Valon. Thus, precious screen-time is used on made up scenes while other more important scenes are cut or minimized.

To boot, the acting is just bad and it appears the producers went uber cheap on the use of Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI). Rosamund Pike's Moiraine has no depth. Even her speaking style is flat. Josha Stradowski's Rand doesn't come across as a strong farm boy who can handle massive trollocs. He is more like a lanky geek you'd see writing code at Starbucks. Given the details Jordan poured into the books, a CGI team should have had a field day with this series. Instead, we get repeat shots of the same woods and a few plywood cityscapes.

Why does this matter, you ask?

Because Amazon Prime also is producing an entire series on the Tolkien material that pre-dates "The Hobbit." Thus, I am worried they will wokenize Tolkien's material, too. It isn't hard to do a wokeless series based on books that remains faithful to the work. Netflix's production of "The Witcher" series is crushing it with audiences (one of most in-demand shows in U.S.) due to its consistency with the Andrzej Sapkowski books and generous use of CGI.

On a more serious note, the wokeness of "The Wheel of Time" series just feels like another area of life in which progressives insert their view of the world. We watch shows so we can escape the daily grind of life, including the wokism forced down our throats in politics, sports, corporate America, and the education system. When it comes to bringing books to the screen, however, it would be nice if producers left their politics at the studio door and just recreated visually and honestly what Jordan spent his life's work creating.

Is that asking too much?