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Edited by Coral Ann Howells
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The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood's international celebrity has given a new visibility to Canadian literature in English. This *Companion* provides a comprehensive critical account of Atwood's writing across the wide range of genres within which she has worked for the past forty years, while paying attention to her Canadian cultural context and the multiple dimensions of her celebrity. The main concern is with Atwood the writer, but there is also Atwood the media star and public performer, cultural critic, environmentalist and human rights spokeswoman, social and political satirist, and mythmaker. This immensely varied profile is addressed in a series of chapters which cover biographical, textual, and contextual issues. The contributors consider recurrent topics, for what emerges through the multiplicity of Atwood's voices, personas, and formal experiments are the continuities in her work across decades and across genres. The Introduction contains an analysis of dominant trends in Atwood criticism since the 1970s, while the essays by twelve leading international Atwood critics represent the wide range of different perspectives in current Atwood scholarship.

CORAL ANN HOWELLS is Professor of English and Canadian Literature at the University of Reading. Her books include *Private and Fictional Words*, *Margaret Atwood* (winner of the Margaret Atwood Society Best Book Award in 1997), *Alice Munro*, and *Contemporary Canadian Women's Fiction: Refiguring Identities*. She is co-editor of *Margaret Atwood: The Shape-Shifter* and editor of *Where are the Voices Coming From? Canadian Culture and the Legacies of History*. She is former President of the British Association of Canadian Studies and has been associate editor of the *International Journal of Canadian Studies*. She has lectured extensively on Margaret Atwood and Canadian women's fiction in the UK, Europe, Australia, Canada, USA, and India.

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MARTA DVORAK is Professor of Canadian and Postcolonial Literatures and co-director of the Centre for Canadian Studies at the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris. She is the author of *Ernest Buckler: Rediscovery and Reassessment* (2001) and *Vision/Division: l'oeuvre de Nancy Huston* (2004), and editor of several books including *Lire Margaret Atwood: "The Handmaid's Tale"* (1999) and *Thanks for Listening: Stories and Short Fictions by Ernest Buckler* (2004). A book on Carol Shields is forthcoming. She is currently editor of *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*.

BRANKO GORJUP is the chief editor of the Peter Paul Bilingual series of Contemporary Canadian Poetry (English/Italian), which includes a volume on Margaret Atwood (2000). He has also edited several anthologies of short fiction by Canadian authors and a book of essays by Northrop Frye, *Mythologizing Canada* (1997), as well as a special issue of *Nuovi Argomenti* (2003) featuring Canadian contemporary writing in English. His most recent edited collection is *White Gloves of the Doorman: The Works of Leon Rooke* (2004). He has taught Canadian literature at universities in Canada and Italy, and currently lives in Los Angeles and Toronto.

SHANNON HENGEN is Professor of English at Laurentian University, Canada. In addition to numerous articles on Atwood, comedy, Canadian theatre, and *Beowulf*, she is the author of *Margaret Atwood's Power* (1993), editor of *Performing Gender and Comedy: Theories, Texts, Contexts* (1998),

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and co-editor of *Approaches to Teaching Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" and Other Works* (1996). From 1999 to 2001 she was President of the Margaret Atwood Society.

REINGARD M. NISCHIK is Professor of American Literature at the University of Constance, Germany. She has published numerous essays and is the author and editor of twenty books on Canadian, American, and comparative literature. Since 1992 she has been Managing Editor of the interdisciplinary journal *Zeitschrift fuer Kanada-Studien*, and since 1996 editor of the book series *European Studies in American Literature and Culture* for Camden House, New York. Her edited collection *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (2000) received the Best Book Award of the Margaret Atwood Society.

ELEONORA RAO is Associate Professor of English at the University of Salerno. She is the author of *Strategies for Identity: The Fiction of Margaret Atwood* (1994) and *Heart of a Stranger: Contemporary Women Writers and the Metaphor of Exile* (2002). She has published numerous essays on contemporary women writers and has co-edited *Letteratura e femminismi*, an anthology of Anglo-American feminist theories in translation (2000).

PILAR SOMACARRERA teaches English and Canadian literature in the Department of English at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. She has translated Margaret Atwood's *Power Politics* into Spanish (2000) and is the author of a book in Spanish on the topic of power, *Margaret Atwood: Poder y Feminismo* (2000), as well as numerous articles on other Canadian women writers.

DAVID STAINES is Professor of English at the University of Ottawa. He is the editor of the *Journal of Canadian Poetry* and of the *New Canadian Library*. His books include *The Forty-Ninth and Other Parallels: Contemporary Canadian Perspectives* (1986), *Beyond the Provinces: Literary Canada at Century's End* (1995), *Northrop Frye on Canada* (with Jean O'Grady, 2003), and *Marshall McLuhan: Understanding Me* (with Stephanie McLuhan, 2003). In 1998, he received the Lorne Pierce Medal for distinguished service to Canadian literature from the Royal Society of Canada.

COOMI S. VEVAINA is Professor of English at the University of Mumbai, India. She is the author of *Re/Membering Selves: Alienation and Survival in the Novels of Margaret Atwood and in the Manawaka Novels of Margaret Laurence* (1996). She has written numerous articles on Canadian writing and is co-editor of several essay collections, including *Intersexions: Issues of Race and Gender in Canadian Women's Writing* (1996), and *Margaret*

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Atwood: The Shape-Shifter (1998). In 2004, she received the Award of Merit from the Indian Association of Canadian Studies.

LORRAINE YORK teaches Canadian literature at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. She is the author of a book about photography and Canadian fiction, *The Other Side of Dailiness* (1988) and of *Front Lines: The Fiction of Timothy Findley* (2002). She has also edited *Various Atwoods: Essays on the Later Poems, Short Fiction and Novels* (1995) and *Rethinking Women's Collaborative Writing* (2002). She is currently writing a book on Canadian literary celebrity.

SHARON R. WILSON is Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Northern Colorado and founding co-President of the Margaret Atwood Society. In addition to articles on Atwood, Doris Lessing, Jean Rhys, Samuel Beckett, and other writers, she is the author of *Margaret Atwood's Fairy-Tale Sexual Politics* (1993), co-editor of *Approaches to Teaching Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" and Other Works* (1996), and editor of *Margaret Atwood's Textual Assassinations: Recent Poetry and Fiction* (2003).

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NOTE ON EDITIONS USED

In quoting from Margaret Atwood's novels, poems, and short stories, contributors to this volume have used a variety of British, Canadian, and American editions, usually paperbacks when available. Details of editions used are included in the endnotes to every chapter.

ABBREVIATIONS

AG	<i>Alias Grace</i>
BA	<i>The Blind Assassin</i>
BE	<i>Bluebeard's Egg</i>
BH	<i>Bodily Harm</i>
CE	<i>Cat's Eye</i>
DG	<i>Dancing Girls</i>
EW	<i>The Edible Woman</i>
GB	<i>Good Bones</i>
HT	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
JSM	<i>The Journals of Susanna Moodie</i>
LBM	<i>Life Before Man</i>
LO	<i>Lady Oracle</i>
MBH	<i>Morning in the Burned House</i>
MD	<i>Murder in the Dark</i>
NWD	<i>Negotiating with the Dead</i>
O&C	<i>Oryx and Crake</i>
PP	<i>Power Politics</i>
PU	<i>Procedures for Underground</i>
RB	<i>The Robber Bride</i>
S	<i>Surfacing</i>
SP	<i>Selected Poems</i>
SPII	<i>Selected Poems II</i>
ST	<i>Strange Things</i>
SW	<i>Second Words</i>
THP	<i>Two-Headed Poems</i>
WT	<i>Wilderness Tips</i>
YAH	<i>You Are Happy</i>

MARGARET ATWOOD CHRONOLOGY

- 1939 Margaret Eleanor Atwood born 18 November, in Ottawa, Canada.
- 1940–45 Family based in Ottawa, but spends long periods every year in the bush of northern Ontario and Quebec, as her father an entomologist; they live in Sault Ste. Marie (1945).
- 1946 Family moves to Toronto, though summers spent up north, and Atwood only begins attending school regularly in 1951.
- 1952–57 Attends Leaside High School, where she writes a column for school newspaper; at 16 she “becomes a poet”; works as summer camp counsellor.
- 1957–61 Attends Victoria College, University of Toronto; publishes stories and poems in college literary journal and designs posters and programmes for college drama society; first poem accepted by *The Canadian Forum*; begins reading her poems at the Bohemian Embassy Coffeehouse; graduates (1961) with honors degree in English, and wins Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to Radcliffe College (later part of Harvard University).
- 1961 *Double Persephone* (privately published chapbook) wins University of Toronto E. J. Pratt Medal.
- 1961–63 Attends Radcliffe College, where she gains MA and begins doctoral studies at Harvard University.
- 1963–64 Returns to Toronto, where she works at market research company; begins her first novel (unpublished); first trip to England and France in summer, 1964.
- 1964–65 Moves to Vancouver, to lecture in English at the University of British Columbia; drafts *The Edible Woman* and writes fourteen short stories and over fifty poems.
- 1965 Returns to Harvard to continue PhD research (thesis not completed).

MARGARET ATWOOD CHRONOLOGY

- 1966 *The Circle Game* published, which wins Governor-General's Award for Poetry (1967).
- 1967 Marries James Polk, an American postgraduate student at Harvard; they move to Montreal for a year, where Atwood lectures in English at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia).
- 1968 *The Animals in That Country*; moves to Edmonton, Alberta.
- 1969 *The Edible Woman*; teaches creative writing at University of Alberta.
- 1970 *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* and *Procedures for Underground*; Atwood and Polk spend the year in England and France.
- 1971 *Power Politics*; return to Toronto, where Atwood is Assistant Professor at York University; joins board of directors of House of Anansi Press (1971–73).
- 1972 *Surfacing* and *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*; Atwood is writer-in-residence at Massey College, Toronto (1972–73).
- 1973 Atwood and Polk are divorced; Atwood moves with Graeme Gibson to a farm in Alliston, Ontario; receives her first honorary doctoral degree from Trent University, Ontario.
- 1974 *You Are Happy*; TV script “The Servant Girl” for Canadian Broadcasting Commission; cartoon artist for *This Magazine*.
- 1976 *Selected Poems* (Oxford) and *Lady Oracle*; daughter Eleanor Jess is born.
- 1977 *Dancing Girls* and *Days of the Rebels: 1815–1840*; special Atwood issue of *The Malahat Review*, the first critical survey of her work.
- 1978 *Two-Headed Poems* and *Up in the Tree*; Atwood's first of many world book promotion tours (Paris, Afghanistan, India, Australia); family moves to Scotland, where Gibson is writer-in-residence at University of Edinburgh for three months.
- 1979 *Life Before Man*.
- 1980 *Anna's Pet*; family returns to Toronto; Atwood elected Vice-President of the Writers' Union of Canada.
- 1981 *Bodily Harm* and *True Stories*; wins Molson Prize and Guggenheim Fellowship; becomes a Companion of the Order of Canada; President of the Writers' Union.
- 1982 *Second Words: Collected Critical Prose*; *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English* (co-ed., with William Toye).

MARGARET ATWOOD CHRONOLOGY

- 1983 *Murder in the Dark: Short Fictions and Prose Poems* and *Bluebeard's Egg*; receives honorary doctorate from University of Toronto; family moves to Norfolk (November 83–March 84), then to West Berlin (March–May 84).
- 1984 *Interlunar*; return to Toronto (summer 84); elected President of PEN International, Canadian Centre (English-speaking) (1984–86).
- 1985 *The Handmaid's Tale*, which wins Governor-General's Award for Fiction (1986), Arthur C. Clarke Award for Best Science Fiction, Toronto Arts Award, *Los Angeles Times* Fiction Award; Atwood is Visiting Chair of Creative Writing at Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
- 1986 *Selected Poems II: Poems Selected and New, 1976–1986* (Oxford) and *The Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English* (co-ed., with Robert Weaver); Atwood holds Berg (Visiting) Chair at New York University.
- 1987 Edits *The CanLit Foodbook*, in aid of PEN International; elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada; writer-in-residence at Macquarie University, Sydney.
- 1988 *Cat's Eye*.
- 1989 *Selected Poems: 1966–1984* (Oxford) and *For the Birds*; wins Canadian Booksellers' Association Award; writer-in-residence at Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas.
- 1990 Attends Berlin Film Festival for premiere of Volker Schlöndorff's film of *The Handmaid's Tale*.
- 1991 *Wilderness Tips*; Clarendon Lectures at University of Oxford; family spends winter in France (1991–92).
- 1992 *Good Bones*.
- 1993 *The Robber Bride*; Atwood is named Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts and des Lettres by Government of France.
- 1995 *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*, *Morning in the Burned House*, and *Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut*; *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English* (co-ed., with Robert Weaver); series of radio interviews in French with Quebec writer Victor-Lévy Beaulieu.
- 1996 *Alias Grace*, which wins Giller Prize.
- 1997 *In Search of Alias Grace*.
- 1998 *Eating Fire: Selected Poetry 1965–1995* (Virago); receives honorary doctorate from University of Oxford.

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- 2000 *The Blind Assassin*, which wins Booker Prize; Empson Lectures at University of Cambridge; attends premiere in Copenhagen of Poul Ruders's opera *The Handmaid's Tale*.
- 2001 Receives honorary doctorate from University of Cambridge.
- 2002 *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing*.
- 2003 *Oryx and Crake* and *Rude Ramsay and the Roaring Radishes*; attends London premiere of *The Handmaid's Tale* opera.
- 2004 *Bottle* (Hay Festival Press) and *Moving Targets: Writing with Intent, 1982–2004*; “Margaret Atwood: The Open Eye” international symposium, University of Ottawa; Toronto premiere of *The Handmaid's Tale* opera; receives honorary doctorate from Harvard University.
- 2005 *Curious Pursuits: Occasional Writing, 1970–2005*; receives honorary doctorate from Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris; *The Penelopiad*.
- 2006 *The Tent*.

This chronology shows only a selection of Atwood's numerous national and international literary awards and of her many honorary doctoral degrees.