

PWR Newsletter



*I self-published
poetry!*



Margaret Atwood

(November 18, 1939 –)



PUBLISHED WRITERS OF ROSSMOOR



PUBLISHED WRITERS OF ROSSMOOR



A Club to Celebrate and Support Aspiring and Published Authors



August 4, 2018

Volume VII, Issue 8

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Author Events: Karl Livengood
Social Coordinator: Pat Teschner
Fall Bazaar: Lee Gale Gruen

President Emeritus: Duke Robinson

Newsletter Editor: Paul Weisser

Coming up!

PWR's Monthly Meeting
This Saturday, August 4, 2018
From 9:45 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.
In the Fairway Room at Creekside Clubhouse

Come early and enjoy complimentary coffee or tea!

Printed courtesy of



PWR to Show Film on Writing Comedy

BY PATRICIA TESCHNER



Patricia Teschner

At our meeting on Saturday, August 4, PWR will show the film *Now That's Funny: The Art and Craft of Writing Comedy*, which can be enjoyed by writers and non-writers alike. All that's needed is curiosity about how comedy writers begin the process that eventually winds up making people laugh.

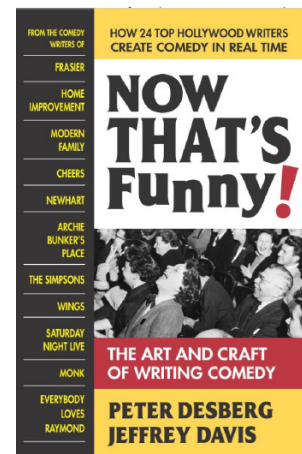
Peter Desberg and Jeffrey Davis, who are themselves comedy writers, interview some of the best-known practitioners of their genre in Hollywood. In the process, the film deepens our understanding of the processes used to create television shows and movies as we meet the writers behind such hits as *Maude*, *The Cosby Show*, *Home Improvement*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *The Paper Chase*, and *Legally Blonde*.

Each of the interviewed writers is provided with the same premise and

told there are no rules, no boundaries, and no limits. We then get to witness these creative individuals at work as they explain and twist the original premise into something hilarious.

Peter and Jeffrey ask writers how they build the conflict and develop the characters using various devices, character traits, and brain-storming sessions. Some writers work alone, others in teams.

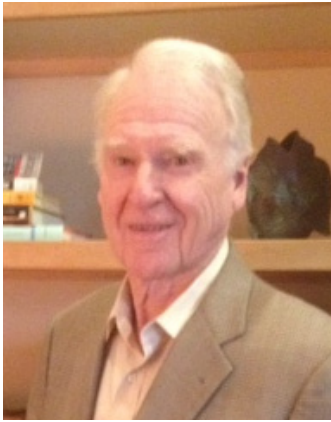
Now That's Funny makes for an enjoyable and laugh-filled 55 minutes. The book version can be purchased through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other outlets. □



Margaret Atwood

The President's Page

BY RON WREN



Ron Wren

Our Meeting on August 4

How do the pros develop characters and situations for top TV shows? How can PWR members apply those techniques to their writing? A special 55-minute film, *Now That's Funny: The Art and Craft of Writing Comedy*, will be shown at the club's meeting on Saturday, August 4.

In the film, writers Peter Desberg and Jeffrey Davis will interview some of Hollywood's best-known comedy writers.

While "comedy" is the film's theme, character and story development are similar in any genre of writing. Who is the lead character? What makes her or him unusual or interesting? Given the lead's personality, what problems can occur? Who does the lead character play off? Why?

The film will demonstrate how these comedy writers use brainstorming sessions, personal experiences, and

friends and family to build conflicts, tensions, and resolutions—liberally laced with laughs.

What the Coordinators Do

Julie Blade, Membership

(julieblade@gmail.com):

Enrolls new members, publishes membership roster, tracks member attendance, supervises dues payments.

Joanna Kraus, Channel 28

(tjkraushouse@hotmail.com):

Arranges author interviews on Rossmoor's TV Channel 28; provides interview guidelines to prepare for interviews.

Peter Li, Publicity

(peterli10@yahoo.com):

Writes and places publicity articles with the *Rossmoor News* regarding PWR meetings and author events. Writes the *Newsletter* articles on the speaker at the monthly PWR meeting and the Featured Author of the month in the Library.

Bob Tunnell, Room Setup

(bobtunnell@sbcglobal.net):

Stages the meeting room to accommodate guest speakers and arranges for sound and projection systems as required.

John Braggio, Website Manager

(johntbs@msn.com):

Develops and maintains PWR's website.

Karl Livengood, Author Events

(karllivengood@comcast.net):

Assists authors with room rentals, publicity, and staging book launches.

Pat Teschner, Social Coordinator

(eastbaypit@gmail.com)

Works with authors in presenting and publicizing their books at book signings and at Rossmoor Library. Arranges for refreshments at monthly meetings and organizes periodic PWR social functions.

Lee Gale Gruen, Fall Bazaar

(gowergulch@yahoo.com):

Provides authors with guidelines and support for presenting their books at the Fall Bazaar, which is held at the Gateway Clubhouse each November. □

(PWR is dedicated to supporting aspiring as well as accomplished authors in publishing and promoting their books. All residents of Rossmoor are welcome to attend its programs. For more information on the club, visit its website at www.Rossmoor-writers.com or contact Ron at ronwren@aol.com)

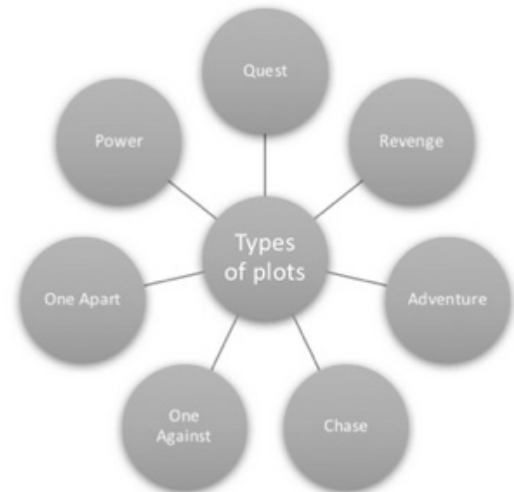


Structuring a Story

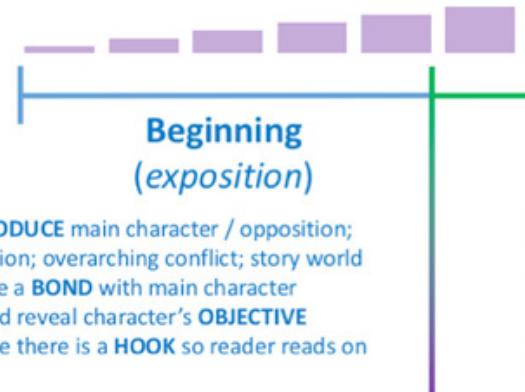
BY RICHARD MCLEAN



Richard McLean



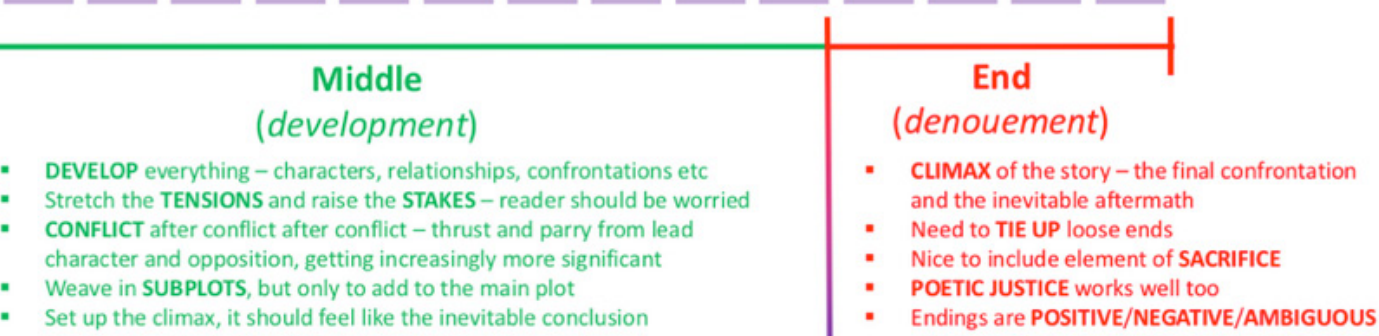
STRUCTURE



- Dramatic Question** — The overarching point of the story; the question that drives the plot forward; the element of a character's journey that leads to a conclusion
- Premise** — Should be linked to the dramatic question; And should be interesting; wants to know what happens

STRUCTURING A STORY – THE KEY POINTS TO SHAPE A NARRATIVE

- Conflict does not need to be against an external force – can be **INTERNAL CONFLICT**
- Give the character two things he desperately wants, and make him **CHOOSE** between them (e.g. love vs power)
- Character and opposition need to be **EVENLY MATCHED** and **BONDED TOGETHER** – no option to just walk away
- You want to constantly **ESCALATE** conflicts, the climax is the target and the rest of the story is the arrow's path

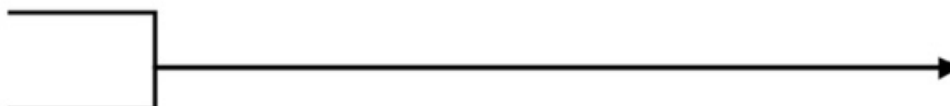


to new life – a
conflict
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DOORWAY 2

- Character **THRUST** forward again into final conflict – the climax
- Usually a major setback or crisis – which sets up a potential **FINAL SOLUTION**

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the protagonist's objective
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the answer is



Book Launch

By JOANNA H. KRAUS



Joanna H. Kraus

A book launch for my latest book, *Bravo, Benny*, will be held on Saturday, September 8, from 4:00 to 5:30 P.M., in the Vista Room, Hillside Clubhouse.

Bravo, Benny explores what happens when Benny, a beagle, ruins Granny Lil's picnic, almost destroying Nina's hope of ever owning a dog. Readers will wonder if Nina's eight years of birthday cake wishes can ever come true.

Mariana Dragomirova's colorful artwork enhances the intergenerational story, which is geared to readers between the ages of 4 and 9. The book is ideal for grandparents and grandchildren to share, as well as dog lovers and wanna-be owners everywhere.

Books will be available at the launch for sale and signing, and light refreshments will be served. □

(Please RSVP to Joanna at:
tjkraushouse@hotmail.com
or (925) 939-3658)

About Joanna

Rossmoor resident Joanna Kraus is an award-winning playwright. *The Ice Wolf* (Dramatic Publishing) and *Remember My Name* (Samuel French) were both produced off-Broadway. Joanna is also the author of picture books: *Tall Boy's Journey* (Carolrhoda); *A Night of Tamales and Roses* (Shenanigan Books), which is listed in Bank Street's edition of Best Children's Books; *Blue Toboggan* (Mascot Books); and numerous media articles.

Joanna is Professor Emerita of Theatre and the former Coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Arts for the Children Program at the College at Brockport State University of New York.

A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, Joanna holds an M.A. from UCLA and an Ed.D. from Columbia University. For the past two decades, she has written a column of children's book reviews for the Bay Area News Group.

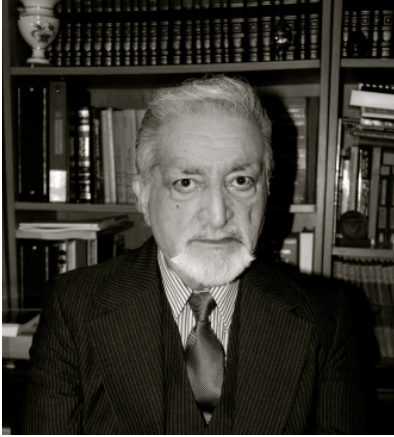
Learn more about Joanna's new children's books, *Blue Toboggan* and *Bravo, Benny*, by writing to Joanna at: tjkraushouse@hotmail.com





An Exceptional Reason Not to Publish

BY BEN ZIKRIA, M.D., FACS



Ben Zikria

Klemens Von Metternich, an Austrian nobleman, is considered by many historians to be the most important diplomat of all time. After Napoleon devastated Europe with his conquests, Metternich, who was the foreign minister of the Austrian Empire, gathered all the emperors, kings, and foreign ministers of Europe in Vienna between 1814 and 1815 to reestablish the balance of power and initiate a lasting peace in Europe.

Metternich conducted that first peace conference of Europe with such skills of compromise, diplomacy, and intrigue that, after two centuries, books are still being written about his successes, including by our most prominent diplomat, Henry Kissinger. Most observers praise Metternich, but a few denigrate him as a cold, calm, imperturbable calculator—a Machiavelli, if you will.

Metternich was given the title of Prince by Austrian Emperor Francis I after he engineered a détente with France that included the marriage of Napoleon to the Austrian archduchess Marie Louise, which shielded Austria from Napoleon's further aggressions. During the process, he had a love affair with Napoleon's sister, Caroline Bonaparte.

Despite having a princess as his wife, Metternich continued to have mistresses in high places throughout his career, even as Chancellor of Austria. Nevertheless, as a staunch conservative he fought faithfully for the Habsburgs and nobility against liberals and nationalists.

Most important of all, Metternich brought into international politics the powerful concept of the “permanent neutrality” of Switzerland, which has stood the test of time for two centuries. Yet, surprisingly, he is not recognized for this most brilliant of all his ideas!

When Metternich first announced the concept, the Austrian Emperor blew up, worried that the idea might spread to other nations. The Emperor agreed that Switzerland, “this strategic mountainous country with passes to the entire continent,” should be neutralized, but without the dangerous, even subversive, concept of “perpetual neutrality” seeing the light of day.

Thus, Metternich placed neutralization of Switzerland at the very bottom of his agenda, having the proposal signed

(continued on page 11)

without any discussion, even by the Swiss delegates, and then promptly disbanded the Congress. He had won the day by avoiding publication! □



PWR Camaraderie

By JON FOYT



Jon Foyt

Writing in the *New York Times*, Tara Parker-Pope, in an article entitled “The Power of Positive People,” tells us that expressing positive thoughts about others contributes to happiness and longer life.

Clearly, such expressions among PWR members are supportive of our writing, which for many of us remains an isolated endeavor, for seldom do we have expressed to us support from fellow retirees who are not writers. So, when other PWR members express interest in our writing and offer their support and good wishes, their thoughtful words ratify our writing endeavor. Conversely, when the opposite happens, that hurts.

In my six years in PWR, I have experienced both support and rejection—warming to one and despairing at the other. But that’s the way life is, I’m told. Nevertheless, I totally endorse the concept of offering

sincere support for all my fellow writers in PWR. □



Grab Bag

Suggested Watching from Dick McLean:

If you have issues with aging, or would just like a good laugh, take a look at these two videos:

“Older Ladies Song” (3 minutes):

<https://biggeekdad.com/2014/06/older-ladies-song/>

“Wrinkled Ladies Song” (2:29 minutes):

<https://biggeekdad.com/2010/05/wrinkled-ladies/>



PWR Treasurer's Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2018

BY NAZLI MONAHAN



Nazli Monahan

During the fiscal year 2017–2018, PWR income from membership fees totaled \$1,963.00, and the main expenses (excluding the Website) totaled \$1,122.27.

The following table is a recap of PWR's 2017–2018 income and expenses as of June 30, 2018:

	<i>Main Acct</i>	<i>Web Acct</i>
Beginning Balance	\$2,015.50	\$909.23
Total Deposits	\$1,963.00	\$510.00
Total Expenses	\$1,122.27	\$0.00*
Ending Balance	\$2,856.23	\$1,419.23

*Paid for two years in 2017.

PWR's main expenses in 2017–2018 consisted of room rentals, audio-visual

equipment, refreshments for Saturday meetings, supplies, printing, book launches, speakers, insurance, and miscellaneous, which included our holiday and anniversary parties.

Our total budget for FY 2018–2019 is \$2,540, which will be paid for from the membership dues (\$20 for basic membership, \$30 for membership with the Author's Page on the PWR Website). If you have not had a chance to do so, you can pay your dues:

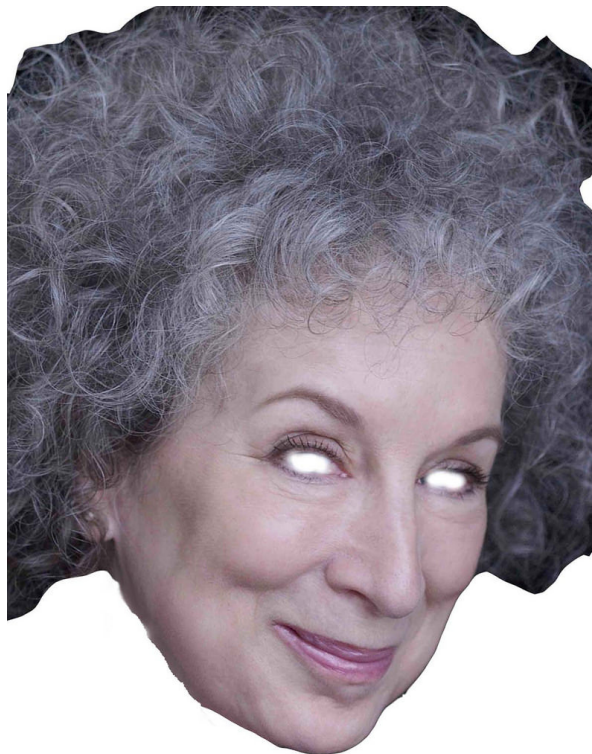
1. By handing over a check (or cash) during our meeting on Saturday, August 4.

2. By leaving the check in the PWR box at the Gateway Administration Offices.

3. By mailing it to: PWR, c/o Nazli Monahan, 4033 Terra Granada Dr. #7C, Walnut Creek, CA 94595.

If you have any questions or comments about PWR finances, please feel free to contact me at Monahan.nazli@gmail.com. □





PWR Writing & Publication Resources

By RON WREN



Ron Wren

The following PWR members are available for consultation on various aspects of writing and publication:

Art & Design

Polly Bernson: drpplot@pacbell.net

Children's Books

Joanna Kraus: tjkraushouse@hotmail.com

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Desktop Publishing

Polly Bernson: drpplot@pacbell.net

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Editing & Proofreading

Julie Blade: julieblade@gmail.com

Ellen Sarbone: editor@etraveller.com

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Fiction

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Ben Zikria: baz2@columbia.edu



Ghostwriting

Julie Blade: julieblade@gmail.com

Ellen Sarbone: editor@etraveller.com

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Grant Writing

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Memoir Assistance

Julie Blade: julieblade@gmail.com

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Nonfiction

Ellen Sarbone: editor@etraveller.com

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Ron Wren: ronwren@aol.com

Ben Zikria: baz2@columbia.edu

Playwriting

Joanna Kraus: tjkraushouse@hotmail.com

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Poetry

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Ben Zikria: baz2@columbia.edu

Promotion & Publicity

Ron Wren: ronwren@aol.com

Screenwriting

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com

Speeches & Dramatic Coaching

Paul Weisser: editinggg@gmail.com



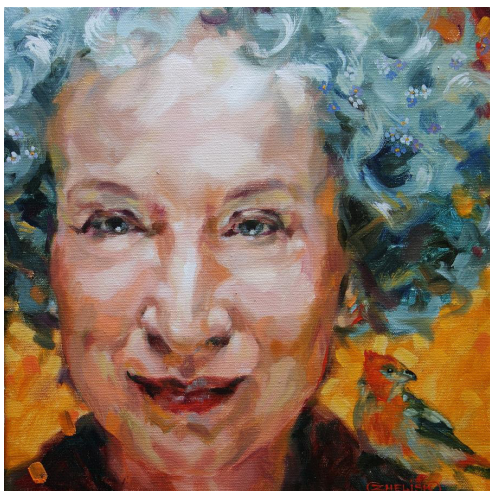
From the Editor



Paul Weisser

Margaret Atwood, Self-Publisher

Margaret Eleanor “Peggy” Atwood was born on November 18, 1939, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, just as World War II was beginning. She was the second of three children of native Nova Scotians—Margaret Killam Atwood, a dietitian and nutritionist, and Carl Edmund Atwood, a forest entomologist with the Canadian Department of Agriculture.



Because of her father’s ongoing research on forest insects, Margaret spent much of her childhood in the backwoods of northern Quebec, which fostered in her a profound love of nature. “At the age of six months,” she has written, “I was carried into the woods in a packsack, and this landscape became my hometown.” Of other little girls, she once said that they had an “inability to pick up earthworms without wriggling all over and making mewling noises like a kitten.”



Margaret and her older brother, Harold (who today is a professor of physiology and zoology at the University of Toronto), had few children to play with, no movies or TV, and a radio that was unreliable and used mostly to learn what was happening in the war. Therefore, books naturally became a central focus, as did imaginative games. Their mother schooled them in the mornings; the rest of the day they had to themselves. Margaret did not attend full-time school until she was 8, in Toronto.



She has said of her parents' method of instruction: "They weren't very actively encouraging; I think their theory was to leave kids alone.... I call that encouraging. The idea of parents hovering over you the whole time, making you take lessons and occupying every minute of your time, I think is probably quite bad, because it means the child has no room to invent. I did have this older brother who was very instructive, who liked passing on to me whatever information he'd acquired; it meant we didn't play dollies a lot."



(Margaret also has a younger sister, Ruth, but she did not come along until 1951, when Margaret was 12.)

In any case, despite their hands-off approach, Margaret's parents were both voracious readers and modeled this for her, stimulating their pixieish, articulate daughter's intellect without suggesting any particular outlet for it. The young Margaret read comic books, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, Beatrix Potter classics, and the standard children's canon.



Later, she attacked heavier classics, among them Bible stories, James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes mysteries, Mark Twain's adventure novels, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. As a child of World War II, she also read histories of the war, as well as Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Winston Churchill's writings. But perhaps most of all, she was profoundly influenced by three dystopian novels, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*.

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Unlike her parents, Margaret became not only a voracious reader, but also a prolific writer, starting at the precocious age of 5, encouraged by her aunt, Ann Blades.

Margaret's writing was one of the many things she enjoyed in her "bush" time, away from school. At age 6, she was writing morality plays, poems, and comic books, and had started a novel.

Then, inexplicably, she put writing aside for a few years, until her mid-teens, when she began writing for her high school literary magazine. She has never stopped writing since.



Margaret claims to have realized in high school, while walking home across the football field, that she would be a writer: "I wrote a poem in my head and then I wrote it down, and after that writing was the only thing I wanted to do."

One of her female friends later wrote in their high school yearbook that "Peggy's ambition is to write the Great Canadian Novel."

Margaret's favorite writer as a teen was Edgar Allan Poe, who was famous for his dark mystery stories. Later, her literary models were still all male: Jean-Paul Sartre, Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, Eugène Ionesco, and Robert Graves.



Margaret's parents were horrified when she announced her intention to become a professional writer, because, in her own words, "nobody at that time in Canada could make any sort of living out of it. I thought—still a good thing to think—that I would have to have some other means of support, so I was quite prepared to have the day job and do the writing, which I did for years."

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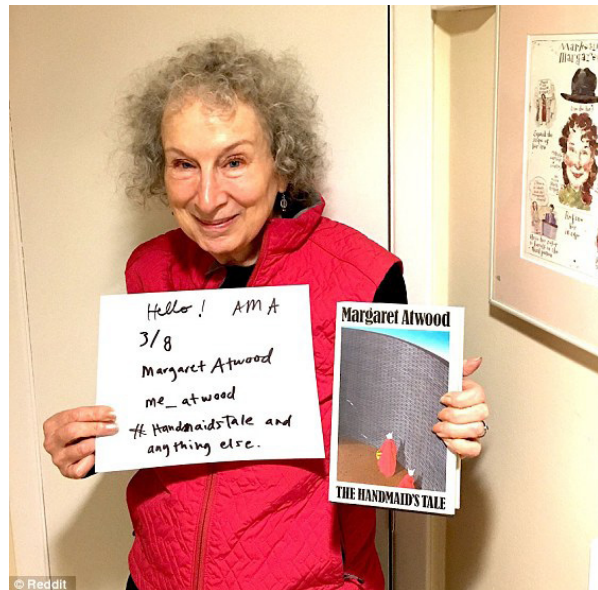
Nevertheless, in high school, Margaret “did take botany, zoology, chemistry. And yes, I’m afraid I was quite good at them!”

After high school, Margaret studied at the University of Toronto, taking a B.A. in English, while getting involved in drama, journalism, and debating. She was also writing, “compulsively, badly, hopefully,” and began to read her poems at a coffeehouse in Toronto called the Bohemian Embassy, where the arty crowd hung out.



When she was 22, in 1961, Margaret self-published a book of poems, *Double Persephone*, which won the prestigious E. J. Pratt Medal in Poetry at the University of Toronto.

Her first non-self-published publication was also a book of poetry, *The Circle Game* (1964), which received the Governor General’s Literary Award for Poetry.



Since then, Margaret has gone on to win many awards and honors, including the Arthur C. Clarke Award and the Prince of Asturias Award for Literature. In addition, she has been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize (Britain’s highest literary award) five times, winning once (in 2000, for *The Blind Assassin*), and has been a finalist for the Governor General’s Award several times, winning twice. From universities that include Oxford and Cambridge, she has been awarded sixteen honorary degrees. In

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Canada, she is widely regarded by both the critics and the general public as the nation's preeminent contemporary novelist and poet. Her books are regularly bestsellers, both there and abroad.



When Margaret was still a student at the University of Toronto, one of her lecturers was the legendary Northrop Frye, who encouraged her to go to Harvard for postgraduate work, rather than pursue her writing career while starving in a garret. By this stage, she had had her first poems printed in some of the few literary magazines in Canada at the time. Years later, she recalled that “nothing has since matched the thrill of opening the [first] acceptance letter.”

Margaret took Frye's advice. Not long after self-publishing *Double Persephone*, she began graduate studies with a Woodrow Wilson fellowship at Radcliffe College, Harvard University, where she studied Puritan history and the literature of the American revolution.



About the latter, she later wrote: “That was very interesting too; because there wasn't any. We studied before and after; but during the revolution they were too busy revolting to write anything. For me, as a Canadian, at a time when we were thought not to have any literature, it was very interesting to go back to a time in American history when they were thought not to have any, and there were people going about building it, and the great masterpiece—*Moby-Dick*—appeared and was immediately sneered at and scoffed at and dismissed: it wasn't resurrected until the 1920s.”





Margaret earned her M.A. in English from Radcliffe in 1962 and pursued doctoral studies from 1962 to 1963, and from 1965 to 1967, but did not finish her dissertation, “The English Metaphysical Romance.”

In 1968, Atwood married Jim Polk, whom she had met at Harvard, but they divorced in 1973. Soon afterward, she formed a relationship with fellow novelist Graeme Gibson, and has a daughter with him, Eleanor “Jess” Atwood Gibson.



With Graeme

During her Harvard years, Margaret spent a year working in market research at Canadian Facts Marketing, which supplied the background for her first novel, *The Edible Woman* (1969), when she was 30.

The novel, which is about a woman who cannot eat and feels that she is being eaten, is a social satire of North American consumerism, which numerous critics have cited as an early example of the feminist concerns found in many of Atwood’s later works.



With “Jess”

Atwood herself, however, is not always entirely comfortable with the label of feminist. “I didn’t invent feminism and it certainly didn’t invent me,” she remarked in 1984. “But I’m naturally sympathetic to it.”

In 1977, at the age of 38, Atwood published her first short story collection, *Dancing Girls*.

Over the course of her career, Atwood has taught at a variety of colleges and universities in both Canada and the United States. However, she once

stated that “success for me meant no longer having to teach at university.” Nevertheless, she still lectures and gives public readings.



As for how prolific a writer Margaret is, she has published, according to one recent count, seventeen books of poetry, sixteen novels, ten books of nonfiction, eight collections of short fiction, eight children’s books, and one graphic novel, as well as a number of small press editions in poetry and fiction.



Atwood’s most famous novel, which gave her world-class status, is *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985), which sold over a million paperback copies in the United States alone, has been translated into twenty languages, and has been distributed in twenty-five countries. It also won her *Ms. Magazine*’s designation as Woman of the Year.

The book chronicles a puritanical, theocratic dystopia in which a select group of fertile women—a condition that has become a rarity—are made to bear children for corporate male overlords. Although the story depicts a nightmarishly imagined America of the future, Atwood was actually thinking of Iran and her memories of Kabul, which she had visited in 1978.



The Handmaid’s Tale (1985) has been adapted several times. A 1990 film, directed by Volker Schlöndorff, with a screenplay by Harold Pinter and a cast that included Natasha Richardson, Robert Duvall, and Faye Dunaway, received mixed reviews. A musical

(continued on page 25)

adaptation resulted in the 2000 opera, written by Poul Ruders, with a libretto by Paul Bentley. And, of course, a television series by Bruce Miller began airing on Hulu in 2017. Atwood appeared in a cameo in the first episode as one of the Aunts at the Red Center.



Many readers think of *The Handmaid's Tale* as science fiction, but Atwood prefers the term *speculative fiction*, for, as she has noted, “There’s a precedent in real life for everything in the book. I decided not to put anything in that somebody somewhere hadn’t already done.” As in all her most provocative novels and short stories, the focus is on themes of exploitation and victimization—especially of women by men.

Atwood has frequently written about writing. Her lectures *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* were published in 2002.

In addition to writing “serious” literature, Atwood has written comic books. In 2016, she published the comic book series *Angel Catbird*,

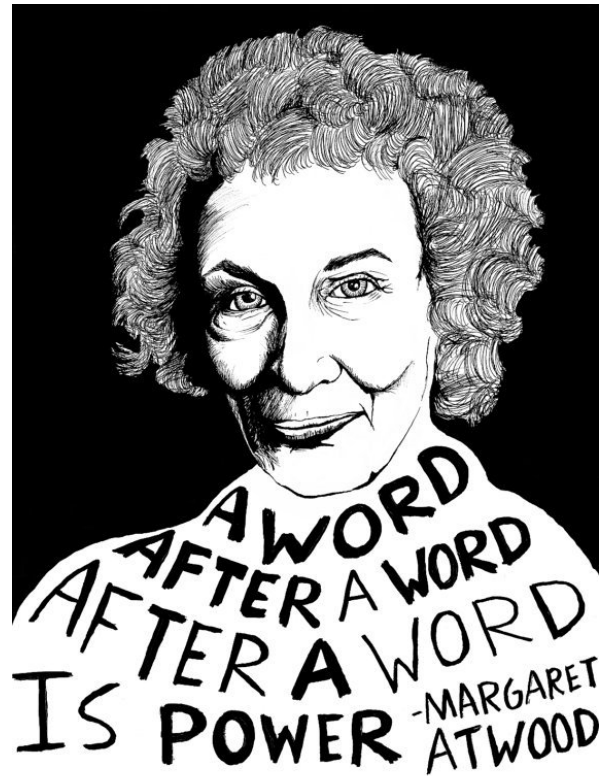
with co-creator and illustrator Johnnie Christmas, which profiles the super-heroic adventures of a genetic engineer who becomes part feline, part owl.

Beyond her literary talents, Margaret Atwood is also a talented photographer and watercolorist. Her paintings are clearly descriptive of her prose and poetry, and she has, on occasion, designed her own book covers.



Furthermore, like John Muir, Atwood is both an environmental activist and an inventor. Her most notable invention is the LongPen and associated technologies, which facilitate the remote robotic writing of documents. Atwood conceived the idea for the LongPen in 2004, while on the paperback tour in Denver for her novel *Oryx and Crake*. The LongPen enables the user to remotely write in ink anywhere in the world via tablet PC and the Internet. The inspiration for this device was the author’s desire to be able to conduct her book tours and sign books without having to be physically present! □





Thought for the Month

"Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them."

— Margaret Atwood



PWR Newsletter



*I self-published
poetry!*



Margaret Atwood

(November 18, 1939 –)



PUBLISHED WRITERS OF ROSSMOOR

