

Margaret Atwood

Ms. Atwood was born in 1939 in and is described on the [British Council](#) literature site as "one of the world's leading woman novelists."

I'm doubt she'd appreciate being called the "Other Margaret," but she *is* younger than the other "Other Margaret." When [Laurence](#) died in 1987, Atwood was just hitting her stride. Her *Selected Poems II* appeared that year, and she also had three collections of short fiction under her belt.

In addition, she had published five novels, including the sensationally dystopic *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985, Houghton Mifflin, Cape). The [movie](#) based on this novel would come out in 1990 and prove controversial, with people trying to boycott the theatres where it was being shown. It's still making news, as demonstrated by this recent [article](#) reprinted from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

In 1987, Margaret Atwood's [Cat's Eye](#), which would appear in 1989 and be nominated for the GG and the Booker Prize, was already in the works. She had also produced two children's books and three works of literary criticism, as well as editing a book of short stories, one of poetry and the [CanLit Foodbook](#) (Totem, 1987), two television scripts, a radio script and several audio recordings.

Since then Atwood has enlarged her repertoire in every genre. In 2007, she published a play called *The Penelopiad*, (Faber and Faber). This was produced the same year and is currently under production by the Arts Club Theatre in Vancouver. Called by the Province the 'original desperate housewife story,' [The Penelopiad](#) opened yesterday at the Stanley Theatre.

Like *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* (McClelland and Stewart, Bloomsbury, Doubleday 2003), Atwood's latest opus, *The Year of the Flood* (same publishers as *Oryx & Crake*), portrays an unpleasant future. When it appeared in 2009, it was described by Jeanette Winterson in the [New York Times](#) as "strangely lonely." Yet, says book blogger [Jessica Klassen](#), Atwood "finds a way to make readers feel at home" as they struggle with perennial human issues.

Though I'm not sure it's a label she enjoys, Margaret Atwood deserves to be called the Mother of CanLit, and not only because of her large brood of literary children. In addition to raising a variety of clever literary offspring, she has written extensively *about* CanLit and brought odd bits of Canadian history alive. (Think [Alias Grace](#), a novel based on an infamous 19th century Ontario murder case.)

A moving target, this writer is ever willing to experiment and grow. And though she is busy with readings and related events, Margaret Atwood has a [blog](#) and can now be found on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). To see a crossword featuring her, check [here](#).

Hat's off to CanLit's Mum!