

# Margaret Atwood visits York for Gerstein lecture

By DIEDRA CLAYTON  
 "Women are responsible for the original sin — that's what I learned in school," declared Margaret Atwood, Canadian poet and novelist at a lecture Tuesday to a standing-room-only audience in at Moot Court, Osgoode Hall.

Margaret Atwood gave the first lecture of the 14th Annual Gerstein Lecture Series, sponsored by the Frank Gerstein Charitable Foundation and York University in honour of International Women's Year.

"My plea is for absolute equality," she said. "Individuality and human imperfections should be allowed and recognized equally in both men and women."

Although the lecture was enjoyably witty, the humour did not mask the message Atwood was trying to get across: that females in the literary field have suffered

"innate female masochism."

Women have never been authorities on women; men have. Women have furnished "good role models" designed by men and they either conformed or did not get by. Atwood claims she never was a "good role model".

Specifically, Atwood discussed the way females have been portrayed in literature. Women did not occupy successful heroine roles, and their attempts portrayed them as freaky and suspicious characters.

"Women poets always have a ferret look about them," she said. "They know they are invading male territory."

There are reasons for the typical female stereotypes, she contends. These are women who do not have motives and do not make decisions; they are like stones: "good ones are purely

good, bad ones, purely bad."

That success for a woman is usually gained at the expense of femininity, was the thesis Atwood expounded upon throughout the lecture. In Atwood's case, however, this theory doesn't hold.

She is a humanist, rather than a feminist, writer.

"A quiet Mata Hari", "Wonder Woman of Canadian Literature" are only a couple of the titles linked with Atwood. The mark she has made on Canadian literature both as a writer and a woman is extraordinary, much more than "a toe mark of a boot" as she described it at a poetry festival at Hart House last week.

Born in Ottawa in 1939, Atwood received her B.A. from the U. of T. in 1961, and her M.A. from Radcliffe in 1962. She is currently working on her doctorate at Har-



The "wonder woman of Canadian literature" — Margaret Atwood at York.

vard. She has held teaching positions at the University of British Columbia, Sir George Williams, the University of Alberta and York. She was writer-in-residence at the U. of T. in 1972-73.

Among her credits are the Governor General's Award in 1966, first prize, Centennial Poetry Competition in 1968 and the Union

Poetry Prize in 1969.

Lady Oracle, her third novel (The Edible Woman and Surfacing are the other two) will be released next spring. The title suggests that she will portray women capable of attaining authority and wisdom, a change from the identity crises and survival ploys characteristics of her other work.

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## 150 women charge that Ottawa has done nothing

OTTAWA (CUP) — During a two hour demonstration on October 25, about 150 women marched on Parliament Hill proclaiming that "It hasn't been done... Why not?" Participants were protesting lack of serious action by the government concerning women's rights in favour of an elaborate publicity campaign during International Women's Year.

Women and the Law Society representative Shirley Greenberg accused the government of extending women's responsibilities without removing their handicaps, and "as long as the law reflects prejudice against women, it influences attitudes. Advertising campaigns are useless."

Pat Hacler of Women's Career Counselling reminded the group that women are still inferior in the employment field, and are still without wages for work performed in the home. "It is unlikely that the private sector... will make any large overall effort to improve opportunities for women," she said, "until the government cleans the dirt from its own doorstep."

A large contingent from the Gay movement also participated in the demonstration, citing that Lesbians were oppressed both as women and as gay. They demanded inclusion of the term "sexual orientation" in the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The NDP party was involved in the demonstration as well. Ed Broadbent, the federal leader, pledged his alliance with "the women of Canada" in protesting government inaction, and MPP Mike Cassidy denounced the province of Ontario for equalling the federal government's inaction.

Although organisers were disappointed with the small turnout, they believed that the media helped to bring the message of the protest to the public — to dispell the misconception that the federal government was really doing anything constructive during International Women's Year.

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