

arts

Margaret Atwood: the audible woman

When Matthew Arnold referred to "the best of what is known and thought", he must have been thinking of a reason to be at the Rebecca Cohn on Thursday, September 16. Canadian culture buffs will converge on the Cohn at 7:30 pm to hear Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson read from their latest works. In this exclusive interview, Margaret Atwood, whose each and every book refrains a pageantry of literary genius, speaks with CKDU's Liz Van Berkel about her work and headspace surrounding her latest book, *Robber Bride*.

Liz: In reading the *Robber Bride*, I read you and the narrator mostly into Tony, I'm just wondering how accurate I am.
Margaret: Well, I suppose it depends on whether you think that a novel is only believable if you can identify the person narrating it with the author. I'm not in the book.
L: Would you say that Tony's voice most closely aligns the narrator?
M: Tony is the narrator of the book, but Tony is not me.

L: When you write do you begin with a tangible idea or a burning message or does everything evolve with the writing of the book?
M: I would say that everything evolves with the writing of the book. I usually begin with a scene or a voice or an

"I think it's a fantasy that everybody can keep up with everything that's being written"

episode or an image or even an object. The object that actually kicked off this book is one that is no longer in the book: it vanished. It was an ash tray, but it just got written out. And it was an ash tray that had been made by Zenea that no longer makes ash trays in the version that we have. It was an ash tray that broke after her death, which as you know, that's not in the book anymore. But that was the first scene.
L: How long ago was it that the *Robber Bride* began?

M: It depends how you count. You could say that it began about four years ago when I wrote a poem with a voice of a female Military Historian, or you could say it began about two and a half years ago when I wrote the first scene, or you could say it began thirty years ago when I read *MacBeth*. It's very hard to dig up the real roots of anything.

L: Can you describe for me your typical writing day?

M: My typical writing day is not typical: it does not exist. I will describe for you my imaginary, preferred, typical writing day, which never actually happens. This is the writing day I would like: I would like to get up in the morning and start writing about nine-nine-thirty; be fully awake at that hour; be quite alert; have no interruptions; the phone doesn't ring; nobody comes to the door; nobody wants anything; nothing breaks; no emergencies occur; and I write until about three-thirty. That has never actually happened in my entire life. In other words, if you live in the real world there's going to be unforeseen circumstances.

L: Where are the writers of most interest to you writing from now, what perspective or what place?

M: Most of them are dead. So you might say that they're writing from the great beyond.

L: Which writers are you interested in?
M: Right at this very minute even as we speak?

L: Yeah.

M: I think it's a fantasy that everybody can keep up with everything that's being written. There's piles of things being written that are probably vastly

"If you have no ego you're going to be steam-rollered pretty soon by everyone else"

interesting and I just haven't heard about them. I noticed that three people sent me clippings about when they did a survey of English universities recently, to see what percentage of them were teaching what, the three

people at the top of the list; one of them is dead: Angela Carter; the second one is me; and the third one is Toni Morrison. And Toni Morrison is certainly somebody I follow, review and admire. Angela Carter was a friend, but as you can see she's no longer writing. I just finished a book that I liked very much by an Italian man who is dead, it's a book called *Kaputt*, and it's by a man called Curzio Malaparte. He was an Italian journalist who wrote this book during the Second World War, secretly, and smuggled it here and there in his shoes and sewed into his coat because if he had been discovered writing it he would have been shot. It's a look at the war from behind the German lines where he was; he was in Finland, he was in Poland, he was in Ukraine, he was in Yugoslavia - which is a very interesting chapter. But I am not saying that there aren't lots of people writing now that I find of great interest: I do, I'm just not reading them at the moment.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



Camp & Rake
 Dal life in all her glory.

Well Rake, We're all registered!
 Yep! No more long lines.

The hallowed halls of Dal await!
 Yep! Lots of halls...

All & all, I'm pretty excited!
 Yeah, uh, how long is Frosh week, anyways?

Shut up.



Personal Pagers.
 Because life isn't black and white.

MT&T Mobility
 PAGING

As well as being fun, cool and affordable, an MT&T Mobility pager is more reliable than your roommate for taking messages. Incredible! Avoid finding your messages under an old pizza box days later. The Motorola numeric pager comes with a silent vibration message alert so you can receive messages while attending lectures or when you're out with your friends, and nobody else needs to know.

Whether you're trying to schedule your social life, find out when your next part-time shift is, or coordinate your ride home, an MT&T Mobility pager is just the ticket. **Special student promotion till September 30, 1993.**

Pagers are available: Dalhousie University Commerce Building 1228 Seymour St. Saint Mary's University Student Association Office 5th Floor, Student Centre