

MARGARET ATWOOD

*Six Poems with an Essay*

Introduced by Rosella Mamoli Zorzi

We are indeed very grateful to Margaret Atwood for allowing us to publish these poems and this essay, considering the world-wide request for publication of her works. The occasion for asking Margaret Atwood to give us one or more unpublished texts for our journal rose during Margaret Atwood's stay in Venice, where she closed the series of lectures of the first "Canadian May in Venice", organized by the Dipartimento di Studi Anglo-Americani e Ibero-Americani of the University of Venice in May 1997.

We would like to thank also the Italian Association for Canadian Studies, at the time governed by prof. Alfredo Rizzardi, and its former president, prof. Caterina Ricciardi, who generously agreed as regards this publishing project. Margaret Atwood's visit to Venice would not have been possible without the help of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura of Toronto, whose Director, dott. Francesca Valente, was our first contact and main helper in the effort to bring the famous Canadian writer to Venice.

Atwood needs no presentation: she is no doubt one of the best-known Canadian writers, and her novels, stories, poems, and critical essays are too numerous to be listed here. Her voice represents contemporary writing at its best, with a specific edge as regards women: certainly never idealized, but still presented mostly with great sympathy, or at least in the light of social and historical exploitation, that does not justify but partly explains revolt or possibly murder, as in the case of the protagonist of her latest novel, *Alias Grace* (1995). Atwood's irony can be cutting, but it never obliterates the sharper wounds society and history inflict on women.

A feminist reading of Atwood's novels and stories is insufficient, but Atwood *has* contributed to the delineation of wonderful portraits of women, of all types, and above all she has deflated many male clichés in writing. These poems and this essay on the fairy tale are further proofs of the intensity of her artistic expression and of the variety of her interests.