

Atwood brings characters to life

By Andrew Robinson
Staff Reporter

"Bluebeard's Egg and Other Stories," Margaret Atwood (Fawcett Books)

For those of you out there who don't know (and there are far too many who don't), this is Women's Week, a week or so set aside to heighten awareness and celebrate what it means to be a woman. I am not a woman, so I am by necessity somewhat removed from the center of the week and its subject.

Author Review

Margaret Atwood has been called a feminist author for quite some time, and with good reason. No, this does not mean she is a lesbian or a man-hater (only boorish, paranoid homophobics generally equate the two). Without delving into the current state of chaotic juvenile attitudes concerning homosexuality, I want to tell you about Atwood and her

incredible books.

Atwood's most recent claim to popular fame, which turned her name into almost a household word, was "The Handmaid's Tale," which skyrocketed to the top of the best-seller lists a year or so ago. A novel of award-winning proportions, "The Handmaid's Tale" is a strong voice for the championship of feminism, portraying a world in the not-so-distant-or-removed future where patriarchal systems have totally undermined women's rights, to the point of slavery. In her engaging and often wittily sharp prose, Atwood points out attitudes in today's world which, blown up into the light of the world of "The Handmaid's Tale," we see as abominations.

Atwood is a Canadian whose writing career has included best-selling fiction and award-winning nonfiction and poetry. She's had about 20 books published. Anyone who writes great fiction and poetry is OK in my book (she recently published her second volume of poems). Her collection of shorter works, "Bluebeard's Egg and Other

Stories," recently went into paperback from Fawcett and is fascinating. I've always thought shorter works were ideal for a college student's reading time (pick the book up for a while and then put it down for a longer while), and when this format is written by a good author, I want to tell all my friends to grab it.

"Bluebeard's Egg" gives the reader a world of wonderfully alive characters, some women and some men, who almost jump off the page with the way Atwood portrays them. She gives them a human touch that borders on biography. It is as if these people were actually living and breathing, perhaps even as Atwood's friends.

This illusion is so real that whether the characters are drawn from life or from imagination fails to matter. What does matter is that, to the reader, they are alive and their lives call up things in our mind, questions which need to be asked about how we love and live today. What is the relationship between mother and



Atwood

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