

Fall Special Lecture Report:

"Margaret Atwood's Literary Exploration of Environmental Issues"

Professor Ayaka Sato, Professor Emeritus,
Meiji Gakuin University

The Fall Special Lecture for the Graduate School of World Englishes in the British and American Cultural Studies Program was held on December 19th, 2017. Professor Ayaka Sato, Professor Emeritus at Meiji Gakuin University, a translator and specialist in Canadian literature, gave a fascinating talk on one of Canada's most prominent writers and public intellectuals, Margaret Atwood. In her talk, Professor Sato covered Atwood's career, the Canadian background to her life and work, her political activities and her most recent work in the genre of dystopian speculative fiction.

Margaret Atwood, Professor Sato insists, is a writer whose work is sensitive to the issues and ethos of our times. After writing feminist novels, historical novels and psychological novels, Atwood made a remarkable artistic turn in the 21st century toward an interest in the environment, a shift that can be seen in her MaddAddam Trilogy, comprised of *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013). All set in the near future, these works manifest a sharp awareness of the

environmental dangers currently confronting humanity. While exploring issues around environment and technology in the trilogy, Professor Sato also referred to a number of other recent works, including Atwood's *Payback*, her 2008 Massey Lectures on the nature of debt, which Professor Sato recently translated into Japanese, as well as Atwood's three-part graphic novel series *Angel Catbird*. Atwood has also drawn the attention of North American television viewers with the recent adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*, her exploration of a dystopian theocracy in the United States. Such varied accomplishments in the fields of literature, media and public life have made Atwood one of the most important and well respected voices in these changing times.

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