

Earl's pearls

Opposite sex

Vivian Bercovici

When it was suggested that her work might be "different" were she of the opposite sex, American film-maker Claudia Weill managed a polite smile. "I don't know," she said, then added, "I've never been a man."

Weill, whose new film "It's My Turn", opened in Toronto recently, is wary of the "symptomatic...ghetto" of the "feminist label." She is, foremost, a director.

Asked about financial constraints, Weill reminded us of her parlance of a \$10,000 grant into the \$500,000 feature film "Girlfriends" in '78. "We tend to romanticize the independent situation of the film-maker more than is warranted, the idea of the starving artist. It's really not true."

Weill attributes the stunning character portrayals in her new film to a "type of shorthand that developed between me and Jill

(Clayburgh). Charles (Grodin - who plays Kate Gunzinger's, alias, Clayburgh, lofty, divorced lover) is enough of a mind-fuck, anyway. I mean, what else would you cast him as?"

Clayburgh, Douglas and Grodin were all Weill's "first choices", as was Eleanor Bergstein, whose screenplay presents the stale seventies cynicism freshly wrapped in cellophane.

Weill's insights and shorthands allowed the screenplay to survive the transition to film intact.

These "privileged people who want everything out of life are tricky characters," Weill continues, "however, they are much more true to life in terms of the people I know."

Did Weill deliberately develop character over plot? "I did it in spite of myself."

Not really, though, because it all comes together, probably on purpose.



The new Hollywood kiss

Michael Monastyrskij

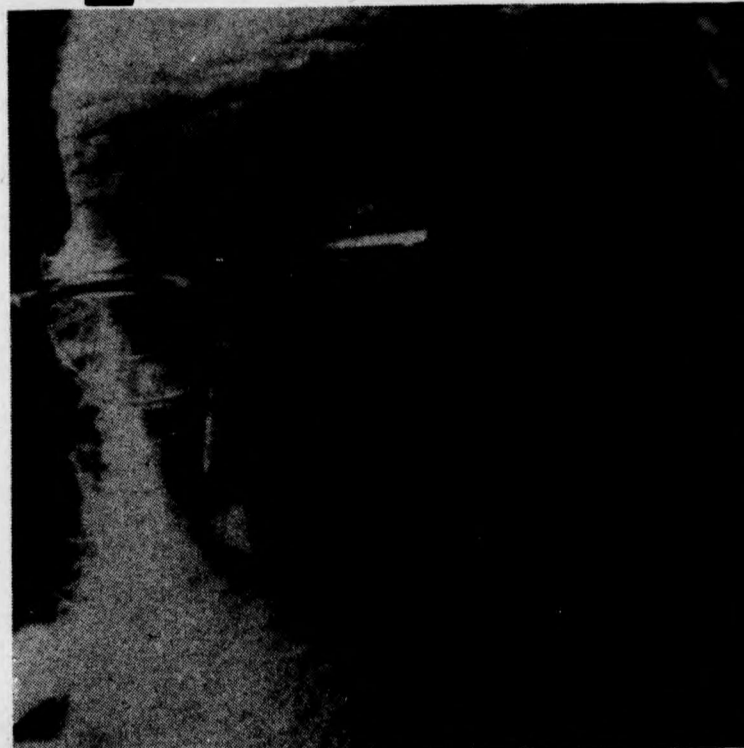
Last weekend, Stong College played host to the Earle Birney Symposium, during which speaker after lecturer after speaker lauded the work of the Calgary-born poet. Finally, Birney, who was present throughout the conference, stated, "Sometimes, I feel I'm already dead, but it's a nice way to be dead."

If Earle Birney has died, he is the most animated corpse you will ever see. Reading some of his poetry to cap off the symposium, he gave a very enjoyable performance.

As an important supporter and contributor to CanLit, it was appropriate that he began with "The Canadian Train Poem". Poking fun at Canada's obsession with its own identity, Birney started off by saying that the work was "written in Canadian" and "just loaded with Canadian content." Consisting largely of single syllables this poem pleasantly imitated the rhythms and sounds of a train ride.

"Deer Hunt" describes an Indian pow-wow that Birney attended. He said that it "springs out of a memory from when I was five or six...when Indians were less Hollywoodish." Recited as a chant, it presents the deer-hunting ceremony from the point of view of a small child.

The audience heard a number of the artist's other poems, among which "Under Adam's Peak" stands out. Describing a real incident where a university instructor discovered the bloated bodies of two of his students floating in the river, this work recreates the ugliness of a period in Sri Lanka's history.



Although Birney's recital of his own poetry was the highlight of the weekend, the Symposium offered much more.

Birney is best known as a poet, but he once made a living by writing dramatic scripts for the C.B.C. Birney wrote these works between 1946 and 1957 and thus made a great contribution to the Golden Age of Canadian Radio. Some of these dramas, such as the "Damnation of Vancouver" now form an important part of Canadian literature. Howard Fink spoke for an hour on this aspect of Birney's career.

Jack David, who played an important role in organizing the Symposium, described the problems of writing a biography

of a living figure, Birney. David's talk was laced with funny stories and encouraged some comments from the writer.

Beryl Rowland delivered a paper entitled "Birney's Chaucer Criticism." Birney, it seems, is also highly regarded as a critic of the medieval English poet.

Louis K. MacKendrick's "Gleewords and Old Discretions; Birney's Benefactions" was a very technical paper, but it was enlivened by excerpts from Birney's funniest stories.

The Symposium was a fitting and fascinating tribute to one of the great craftsmen and innovators in the world of literature.

Lubovitch times four

Ann Daly

The Lar Lubovitch Dance Company won itself a host of new fans during its premiere Toronto performance last week as it initiated the DANCE series at Ryerson Theatre.

The first of six international companies to perform now until June, the Lubovitch Company presented our dances from its repertoire, including the Canadian premiere of "Cavalcade." All four pieces were choreographed by Lubovitch, although he did not perform.

Each piece breathed vitality; the dancers smiled (outwardly and inwardly) nearly non-stop. And visually, the dances were rich. The diffuse variety of constant movements reminds one of Jackson Pollock's all-over paintings.

The Lubovitch choreography worked with a variety of music from Mozart to Glass to Stravinsky. His works were marked by intriguing ensemble work, intensive solos, the interspersal of lifts of virtuoso balance, and that extra dimension of drama—neon-like streamers ending "Cavalcade" and the operatic singing accompaniment to "Exultate Jubilate." His movement tends toward loose, fluid shoulders.

"North Star," set to a Glass electronic score, was comprised of two quartets, two solos and two ensemble sections. Each was a constellation of its own character—whether the puppeteer strength/rag doll looseness of one quartet or Laura Gate's spasmodic solo expression of angst.

Her solo in "Exultate Jubilate" was also a deeply expressive one, revelling in earthly pleasures. And in the Adagio for four, the choreography was compelling in its singleness of tableau movement and direction and its variety of gestural variations.

Christine Wright and Charles Martin worked brilliantly together in "The Time Before the Time After (After the Time Before)". The piece depicts the couple's schizophrenic, compulsive sexual relationship. Violence, passion, derision, pursuit, humiliation and hurt are all cemented between them, so they see nothing else to do but to cling to each other.

The exuberance of "Cavalcade" mesmerized the audience; it was a spectacle. The dancing, as well as the choreography, was nothing short of exquisite. Rob Besserer was especially free in his command of space. Dwarfing the stage, he just couldn't seem to get enough space.

Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal will perform next in the series Jan. 14-17. For tickets and information, call 598-3258.

Rock it ain't

Ronald Ramage

It was a celebration, a welcome back, a testament of faith in happy endings. It was Trichy Sankaran's first concert following his return to York after a history of troubled times.

When John Higgins, up from Wesleyan University to sing at the performance, called the concert "a celebration of Trichy Sankaran's re-appointment" the audience broke into loud sustained applause.

Assisted by Gail Goldberg on tanpuna and Fiona Connally on sruti box, Higgins and Sankaran performed eight pieces. The audience showed its affection at

many points, especially following Sankaran's prolonged improvised solo on the third last song, and with a standing ovation at the end of this victory concert. Good guys can be winners.

Terror tripping

Lloyd Wasser

"A trip to a haunted house?" I asked, in response to a dare from some friends one recent dark night. "Not on your life!"

But several hours later I found myself standing in front of the open door of an old, weathered farmhouse.

After cautiously creeping inside, my first reaction was one of total and uncompromising terror as a rotting, spectral hand groped at my arm and a corpse plummeted from a niche in the wall.

Running from room to room in search of an exit I was confronted by a sinister figure with a blood-drenched shovel who chased me down to the basement. There I came face to face with the stuff of my wildest nightmares: in the center of the room was a large, open coffin. When its occupant got up to greet me I realized I'd overstayed my welcome and made a quick exit through the nearest window.

Most visitors to the Thirteen Rooms of Terror at the corner of Steeles and Warden return for a second tour. That's part of the fun. You see, this haunted house is a tourist attraction.

Run by businessman Bob Gibbs, who's been running such houses for 19 years, the place is a total sensory experience, involving spectator participation on a grand scale.

Gibbs acquired the old farmhouse last June, hired a group of students to staff his chamber of horrors, and rigged up the house to provide the ultimate in scary effects. In addition to the terrors I've mentioned, numerous other bizarre manifestations confront you in the darkness of this strange house—things we sometimes see only in our darkest nightmares.

While waiting in the large line-up outside, loud-speakers allow you to hear the screams from those poor unfortunates inside the house as they confront assorted horrors and ghouls. Only two or three visitors are allowed in at any one time to make the experience more realistic and to increase the house's effectiveness.

The Thirteen Rooms of Terror is open nightly until November 1, from dusk until midnight, at 3900 Steeles Ave. E. On Hallowe'en, the house will run through the night. Gamble three dollars, scholars.

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