

Old gypsies keep getting younger

by P.J. Wilson

Last Friday night at the Cohn auditorium a select audience was in attendance for a concert by a man billed as the legendary master of the flamenco guitar.

That legend was begun in Spain some 36 years ago when an Andalusian Gypsy named Carlos Montoya virtually invented the art of concert flamenco guitar. Until then, the role of the guitar in flamenco music had been solely that of accompaniment for flamenco singing and dancing, long considered the more spectacular expression.

Carlos Montoya
- a concert of flamenco guitar

After initiating his series of solo concerts, however, Montoya was soon appearing before accumulating audiences, increasing acclaim, and eventually to worldwide fame. Alas, now at age 81, Montoya is not only very famous—he is also very old.

Age was an important element in Friday night's concert for several reasons. Undoubtedly (and inevitably), the old master had lost some of his technical virtuosity to the ravages of time. This was translated into a handful of mis-sounded notes and an intermittently harsh tone. Moreover, and tellingly, throughout the concert Mr. Montoya used a capo to depress

his guitar's strings at the second fret, presumably to shorten the scale of the instrument, thereby facilitating the movement of his left hand—but at the cost of some of the guitar's tonal possibilities.

Ultimately, though, age added more to Mr. Montoya's concert than it detracted. The old Gypsy played with a fierceness and an intensity that denied his years and provided a profoundly dramatic and moving contrast for the audience: that of the artist's inner vitality with this apparent physical age. Moreover, something in his facial expression as he played—the look of absolute concentration in his eyes—contained that element of undeniable, enduring youth present in the faces of so many great artists. All this gave the concert an emotional depth that simultaneously complimented and yet went beyond the stirring flamenco music.

The flamenco itself was evocative of the suffering, alienation, and loneliness of the Gypsy people. Even the lighter pieces such as the "Aires de Genil," which Montoya played towards the middle of the program, expressed an element of sadness.

Many pieces echoed the sounds of the flamenco dancer's heel and toe variations as Mr. Montoya tapped out the rhythm on the body of his guitar. Many pieces—and it is well-known that Mr. Montoya improvises to a large extent—ended in a blaze of

fireworks at the guitarist's right hand that caused the audience to burst into spontaneous applause. This the guitarist accepted by saluting endearingly and offering embracing gestures to all sides, occasionally standing briefly during and extended ovation, raising his arms and holding up his guitar to receive some of the audience's appreciation.

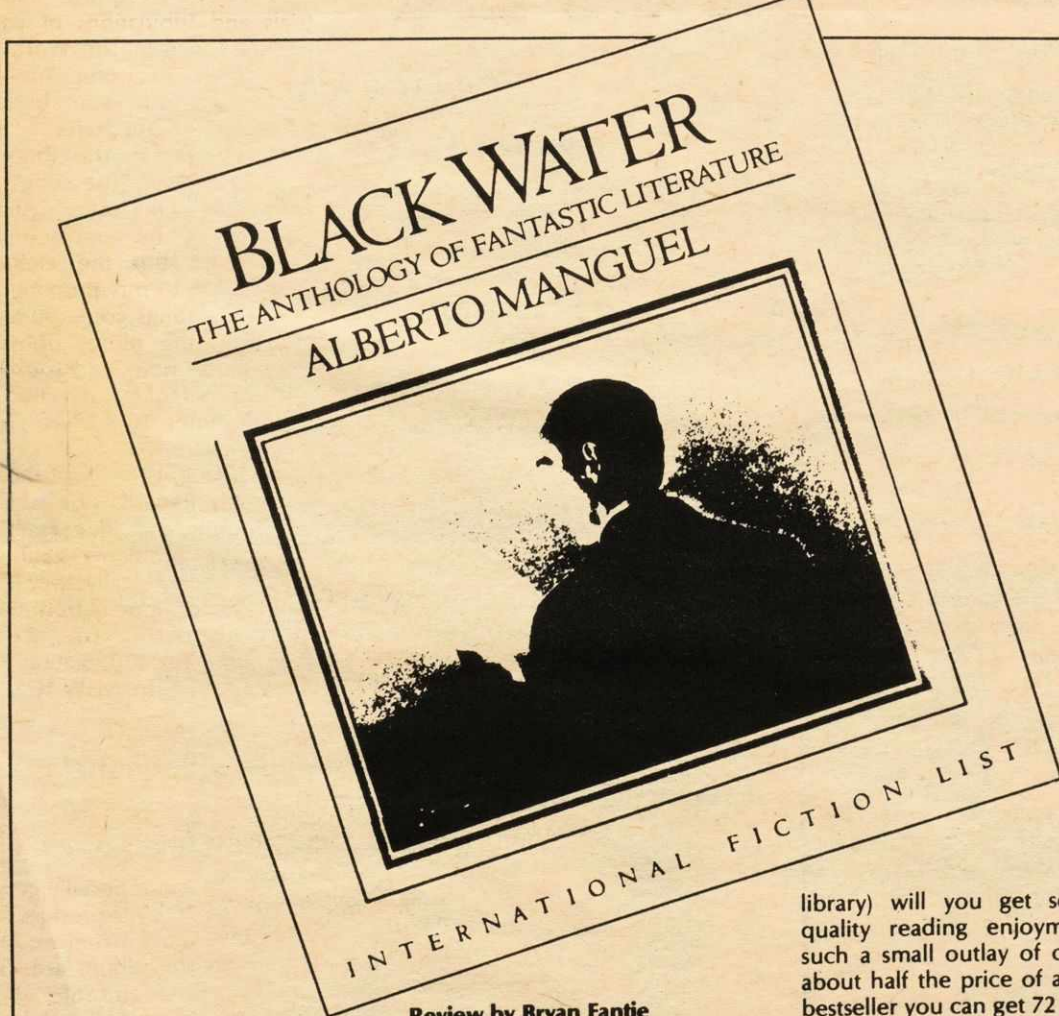
The concert lasted approximately an hour and a half with two brief intermissions. At the conclusion of the printed portion of the program, Mr. Montoya returned for a single encore, which happened to be the most moving piece of the evening.

This he introduced briefly through his heavy Spanish accent (the only point at which he spoke directly to the audience) as a very special piece involving the sounds of the horn and the drum. The number's dirge-like quality was poignantly executed by Mr. Montoya, especially the sounds of the drum, which he accomplished by bending the sixth string into contact with the fifth, holding this position while tapping out the sad rhythm of the snare drum.

Upon the completion of Mr. Montoya's encore, the audience stood for their final ovation, both in acknowledgment of a wonderful performance and no doubt also (and just as deservedly) in acknowledgment of the distinguished career and important achievement of this great Gypsy guitarist.



Feminist singer-songwriter Holly Near will be singing songs from her *Journeys* album and other releases at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, Wednesday, April 11, at 8 pm. The performance will be interpreted for the hearing-impaired by Susan Freundlich. Tickets are \$9 on sale at the Cohn box office or Red Herring Co-op Books.



Review by Bryan Fantie

If there is such a thing as a literary consumer advocate they would, most likely, be delighted to recommend the truly "wonder-full" anthology of fantastic literature edited by Alberto Manguel titled **Black Water**.

Nowhere (outside the public

library) will you get so much quality reading enjoyment for such a small outlay of cash. For about half the price of a current bestseller you can get 72 specially selected stories from authors like Hermann Hesse, H.G. Wells, Henry James, and Vladimir Nabokov.

The collection does include some standard 'anthology' fare such as Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*, W.W. Jacobs' *The Monkey's*

Paw, and the ubiquitous *The Rockinghorse Winner* by D.H. Lawrence. Manguel, however, has made some novel and exciting departures from tradition: *Laura* by Saki (instead of *Tobermory* or *Sredni Vishtar*); Bradbury's nightmarish *The Playground* (rather than *The Flying Machine*); and O. Henry's *The Dream* (over *The Gifts of the Magi*).

Black Water: The Anthology of Fantastic Literature
- a book edited by Alberto Manguel
Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd.
966 pages \$12.95

Black Water also includes the first English translations of seven stories, including works by Jules Verne, Jean Cocteau, and Jorge Luis Borge. Manguel performed most of the translations himself and provided a brief introduction to each selection. Apparently Marguerite Yourcenar was so pleased with the treatment of her *How Wang-Fo Was Saved* that she has requested that Manguel also translate her new book, *Oriental Tales*.

Born in Buenos Aires in 1948, Alberto Manguel learned English and German from his nanny while spending the first years of his life in Israel with his ambassador father. After he returned to Argentina he met and was influ-

enced by Borges who turned Manguel onto Kipling. By the ripe old age of 18, Manguel began to travel and has lived in France, Italy, England, Spain, and Tahiti before settling in Canada.

Don't make any mistake, **Black Water** is not sword and sorcery fantasy, even though there are offerings by Lord Dunsany and Ursula K. LeGuin. The title comes from Wallace Stevens' description of that intangible stuff with which fantastic literature deals; "the impossible seeping into the possible" like "black water breaking into reality".

Manguel writes:

"Fantastic literature never really explains everything. Like the ghost train at the fair, it takes us through the darkness of a real world, from terror to laughable terror, diving into the walls that swing away at the very last minute, racing under eerie nothings that touch us with cobweb fingers, suddenly slowing down and lengthening that last encounter (with what? with what?), using our expectancy of horror more effectively than horror itself."

Black Water is a book to be read aloud at night by candlelight while huddling under a down-comforter in winter or against the backdrop of a thunderstorm in summer. I recommend it without reservation.