

"ARTSY TALK"

By KWAME DAWES

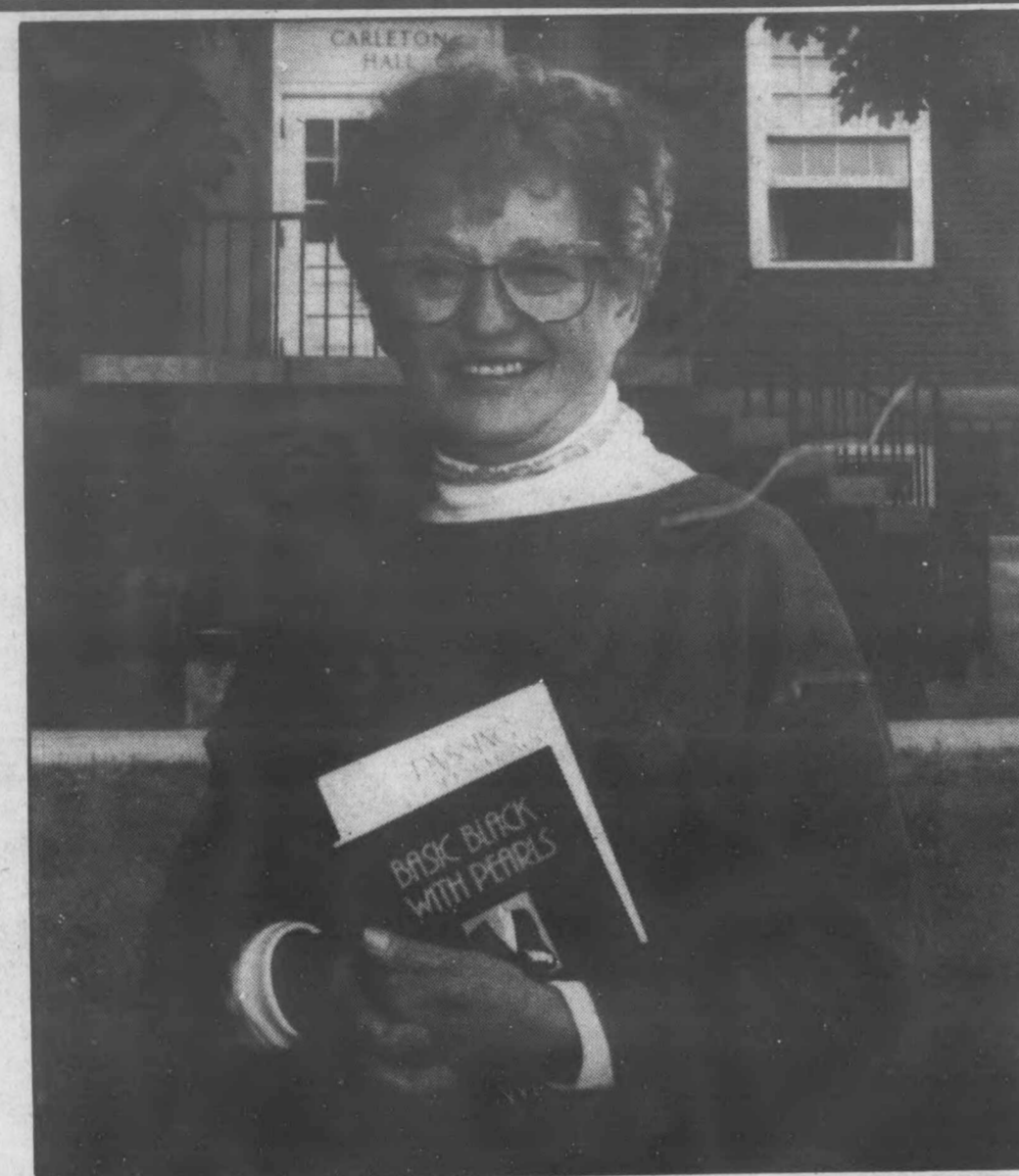
Many of us lament the fact that there is no active theatre company on this campus and that entertainment in the university among students is generally relegated to the few rock bands that hit the SUB on weekend and the "very popular" films shown by the active Campus Entertainment committee with their big budget and super-slick promotional material. Well, give the people what they want, they say. Still, it seems to be a reflection of a kind of artistic anemia that grips this university. Folks (students that is) rarely turn out for the really "artsy" stuff like the lunch-hour concert series hosted by the Creative Arts Committee or to any of the other "classic" events that are held throughout the year.

Some may argue that this is just what students of the eighties are like, but the argument has problems because just up the road, at St. Thomas, there is a very active and talented theatre company made up primarily of students. They put on productions regularly each year. So it has little to do with being a student and more to do with the fact that there seems to be no one willing to re-start the once active UNB Theatre Society. I gather there is hope for this happening soon, and I expect that the Student Union and other organizations will encourage this development through financial and moral support.

But, there is the Red 'n Black, a revue that comes closest to a consistent student run theatre event in this university. This year the line up of acts looks interesting enough. Apart from the usual kickline, cabaret type stuff, there will be a number of singing acts, some drama and a reggae band. Ecclectic! I encourage folks to make it out to the Red 'n Black this year. It is something positive, after all.

READING

Helen Weinzwieg will be reading from her work on October 27, (Friday) at 7:30 pm in the Studio Lounge, Memorial Hall.



Helen Weinzwieg is the current Writer in Residence at UNB. She is a dedicated stylist, often working five to six years to achieve a particular style for a novel. Helen Weinzwieg has published short stories as well as two novels, *Passing Ceremony* and *Basic Black with Pearls*. She is at this time busy on yet another novel. Here, English graduate student Alice Faber speaks to her about her work.

Q: How do you feel about the description given of *Passing Ceremony* as a novel about a "vision of a world suspended in time, and uneasy territory of the soul which we all inhabit?"

A: The feeling that I tried to get in that book was the unaccommodated person who was not comfortable in life, something is not right. The characters all have an unease in life.

Q: Was it the ritual that interested you - how did you arrive at a wedding ceremony for a setting in *Passing Ceremony*?

A: It was actual. I was at a wedding of a young friend. I never saw such hostility and viciousness in my life all in one place. Nobody seemed to like the poor girl. It was as if they had just been waiting to clobber her with some disguised insult. Certainly among each other something was loose in that situation that stunned me and I examined it.

Q: I sense your fascination with melodrama in both *Passing Ceremony* and *Basic Black with Pearls*.

A: In my reading and my effort at writing with control I try to avoid melodrama per se, but my instinct is towards melodrama because I grew up with it. I use it, I hope, obliquely and not directly. That's why it takes so long for me to write a book because my first impulse is to write a Harlequin.

Then I have this intellectual literary pretension so that I have two things going on. I have an emotional background and at the same time I want that intellectual control. Making the two come together has been very important for me in my development as a human being so I don't want to falsify one or the other. At the same time, I don't want to write corny stuff.

Q: What devices have you discovered to contain melodrama?

A: Form, shape. The literary form, the style obviates melodrama. Finding a form is murder, sticking to it is murder.

Q: What was your experiment with form in *Passing Ceremony*?

A: I was telling a story with characters and plot and use of time chronology by omitting chronology and plot. By the time I started writing *Passing Ceremony* all my short stories were linear. I got very dissatisfied with that way of thinking and I thought there was something wrong with me and my writing that I got so impatient with what the next thing would be. So now I realize that I cannot, do not think in a straight line, my mind jumps around. At that time, I had been married to a composer who wrote dif-

"FINDING A FORM IS MURDER."

Interview with Helen Weinzwieg Writer-in-Residence



ferently, so that the shape of his writing infiltrated even before I started to write. I would be listening to what he wrote and then hearing it in concert where there would be a divertimento for flute when a solo flute went on, another part where the orchestra came in and out. That is the way my mind was working - all these people coming in the door and a bride and groom were being married. People were coming in, making their musical statements, their little motifs.

Q: Where do your ideas for a novel generally come from?

A: Reading. I can sit and read, turn pages and suddenly I realize that I haven't been reading at all. I can be reading something - a book of African literature, of a world totally different from mine - and suddenly my mind is off and my subconscious is dealing with words and I'll get an idea. So to prime the pump I'll often just sit and read.

Q: Do incidents from your past enter your stories?

A: Not directly - what comes through of the past is the emotional memory of some incidents. I might use the memory of the emotion and create another incident more interesting than the first.

Q: What are you trying to achieve stylistically in the novel you are currently working on?

A: Something quite different again - where there are controls, even more control than I've ever been able to have with my material. But the controls are spasmodically inserted and in between there's an almost idiomatic, uncontrolled, free flowing language. That again is not in a straight line. A paragraph without punctuation or a page without punctuation where there are two or three speakers, present and past tense. Every rule is broken. So I'm trying to do that and make it work.

Q: How is it working?

A: Well, I have found that if I can keep doing it it will work alright. It's very boring to have that kind of free flowing at you all the time. I find that it's a very interesting technique for about two pages and then the mind boggles. It wants something else. It's like having meals of chocolate pudding. I found a way of doing that free association thing. The language is idiomatic, not precise, but in between I have aphorisms, precise statement, third person observation. So, in other words, stylistically it is going to be a good piece, but in terms of rules it is all gone.

The writer in residence position at UNB is an integral part of the maintenance of a vibrant influence on students and faculty at this university. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the ready opportunity to talk to and learn from the established writers that are invited to work here at UNB. Helen Weinzwieg may be contacted through the English Department of this campus.

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Title: *Basic Black With Pearls*
Author: Helen Weinzwieg
Pub: House of Anansi Press Limited
Year: 1980

More insistent than the memory of such moments of happiness was the picture of myself at the age of ten on these sidewalks in a cruel November rain such as this, searching for my mother. Ever since, I have been in the habit of going out in a cold rain and letting water and tears pour down my face. You would not think that a single incident could lead to an addiction, but if shock and fear are terrible enough, as it was that afternoon, then - given the same time of year, the same time of day, the same weather conditions, unable to find the one person my life depends on - then, for the rest of my days, I will seek to feel again that strange elation brought on by terror.

Title: *Passing Ceremony*
Author: Helen Weinzwieg
Pub: House of Anansi Press Limited
Year: 1973

How can I forgive you for what I will never know again. On your knees you promised. Those endless kisses. I was drugged like any addict. Enveloped in your langour. Aware of nothing but your whispers in the night. Now I'm thrust into the light and my eyes hurt from the glare. I do not wish your happiness. After all. It suits me to appear drunk.

- Writers in Residence at UNB over the years.
- Norman Levine - 65-66
- Dorothy Livesay - 67-68
- Alden Nowlan - 68-83
- John Metcalf - 1970's
- David Adams Richard - 83-87
- Doug Glover - 87-88

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