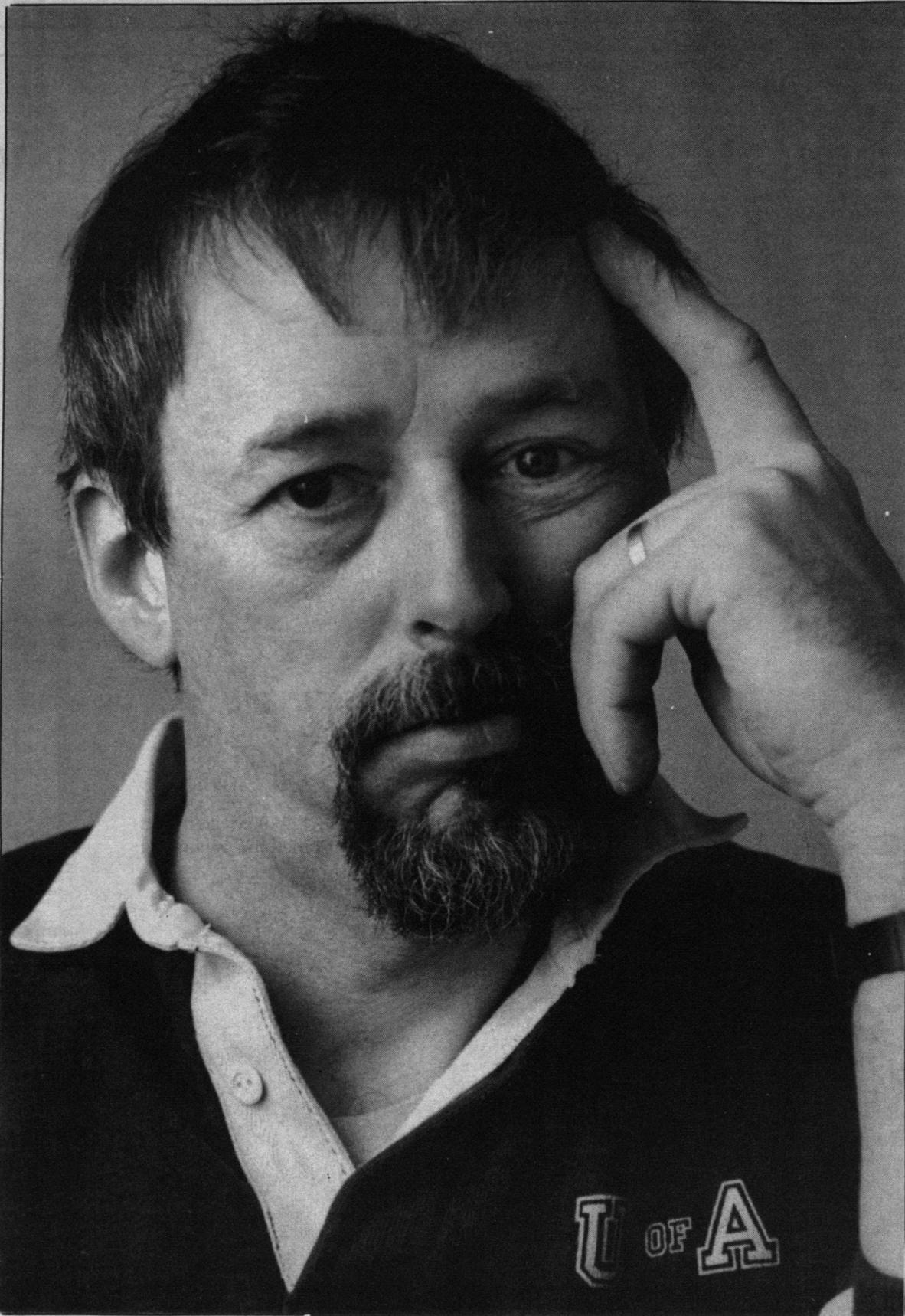


Writer in Residence Ray Smith



Ray Smith, author of *Lord Nelson Tavern and Century*, is the University of Alberta's Writer in Residence for 1987. He is available to students who would like to talk about writing or to a writer. He spoke with *The Gateway*.

by Suzanne Lundrigan

"Hey," shrugs writer in residence Ray Smith, "I'm user friendly." A glance around the office reveals no barbaric tools of torture.

"Great office," he grins, "it was part of the deal. I said get me an office with a river view and I'll be there."

A certain slide on the 'e' gives lie to Smith's Cape Breton roots. Sweated, bearded, and corduroyed, he leans back in his chair and discourses.

"Right now I'm on staff at Dawson College in Montreal. Compared to there, working at the University of Alberta is like living in Eldorado." He has definite feelings on the cutbacks. "You should see what it's like in Quebec."

Smith gestures at the spacious office and fondles his ghetto blaster. "In a space this big in Quebec we'd have four people." He smiles wryly. "Actually in my office at home there is only me... but that's because everybody else was let go because of cutbacks."

He looks over, "You know what fat is? Fat is having four typists downstairs; in Quebec we've got one. You know what fat is? Fat is sending people to weekend conferences in Syracuse on, on..." he hesitates, "George Eliot."

He settles into his chair nodding, "The University of Alberta is a rich and wealthy school."

Smith moves easily into a discussion of *franglais*: child of the marriage between the French and Eng-

From "The Continental" — the Novella which forms the collection *Century*.

As *Mademoiselle Fifi* moved the curling tongs to the spirit lamp, then applied them to the tissue, she glanced from under her long lashes at the reflective most bizarre creature. In her nearly three years with her she had known many curious men, and indeed comprehensible beings driven by desires which might mate the stars in their distant courses, so fore because they were all strange, the particularities of matter of indifference to her, and thus Madame ordered odder ones to Fifi.

"Fifi is my curator," Madame would say. "As in care of the rare ones."

So Fifi had learned to disport herself in furs and feathers; she had developed the theatricality to *Persian houri*, a nun, a sailor; she could counterfeit flowers, incense and cigars. Of course, there was vice strictly monitored within the precincts of the house; there had been a nasty incident with a milord some years ago, a sweaty Belgian rich from the Congo who had managed to bring a snake had been treated most frostily.

"But Madame, I myself would supply the creature; I would administer the soporific. Be assured, Madame."

"You may be assured, Monsieur, that this is a permanent. I may call it a museum in jest, but it is no zoological garden. Begone!"

"An artificial snake?" in desperation.

"Hamid! Monsieur will be leaving now."

I imagined I'd always have four or five people sitting around my desk arguing about whether D.H. Lawrence is a male chauvinist pig or not.