

The arts

Annual Art Fair

The Three-Aiders are sponsoring their annual Art Fair and Exhibition on behalf of Theatre 3, Mar. 31 through Apr. 3 at the Southgate Shopping Mall.

Proceeds from this Art Fair will go towards renovations to Theatre 3's new building, an exciting and unique theatre space scheduled to open next season.

Featuring the work of over 50 Canadian artists, this Exhibition and Sale will include paintings, pottery, photographs, prints, metal and ceramic sculpture, macrame, weaving and silver smithing. Artists from

Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia will be coming to Edmonton for this art extravaganza.

A special attraction is the Central Demonstration Area, this year featuring: Charles Hilton, well-known sculptor; Jerry Kasik, designing in metal; Peggy Losinski, sculpting; Mary Borgstrom, primitive pottery.

As the thousands of people who have attended past Art Fairs will attest, this colourful celebration is a must for the art lover. For further information, please contact Theatre 3 at 426-3394.



CULTURAL ASSISTANCE AWARDS FROM \$100 TO \$750



For Alberta residents active in the arts in 1976, financial assistance is available in varying amounts to \$750. These awards will be made for the purpose of improving the qualifications or skills of any administrator or participant in the literary, performing or visual arts.

All applications must be made by official form.

Deadlines for applications are:

Drama, Dance and Music — April 15, 1976

Creative Writing — April 30, 1976

Visual Arts & Crafts —

May 28, 1976

Alberta
CULTURE

To obtain application forms, clip and mail this coupon today.

TO: Alberta Culture
Cultural Assistance Awards
11th Floor, CN Tower
Edmonton, Alberta. T5J 0K5

PLEASE SEND ME _____ APPLICATION FORMS
(NUMBER)

FOR CULTURAL ASSISTANCE AWARDS IN THE ARTS,
1976.

NAME _____

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There's room at the top

ADRIFT

RANDAL HARKER

Harker, Randal *Adrift* Macmillan of Canada 1976, 247 pp. \$7.95. Finalist in the Search-for-a-New-Alberta-Novelist Competition.

It's a well-worn cliché to call the first novel of a young author "promising." But cliché or not, that's the best word to describe my reaction to Calgarian Randal Harker's first novel *Adrift*. It is a promising work - but falls well short of being a truly good novel.

One of the judges in the "Search" competition remarked, "I have not read for a long time language used so convincingly, so completely artistically. Here is a writer of truly great potential." I agree fully with the judge's remarks, but I think the emphasis in the statement must fall on the word "potential." For although Harker reveals an astoundingly natural use of language in *Adrift*, he offers little reader-involvement with the characters of the novel and few startling insights from the novel's theme.

Adrift is about a young man, Peter Jedison, who is bored with life - and especially with life in the city. He becomes heavily involved with the drug scene, becomes extremely depressed and detached from the real world and attempts suicide near the end of the novel, only to live to token reconciliation with his girlfriend and with the world.

The story becomes boring, I suppose, for a purpose. Peter is bored with life and we become bored with him. That's a little like reading a book detailing a year of a businessman's breakfasts to show the dull routine of his life. It may be true to life. It may be a statement of some importance about modern lifestyles. But is it art?

My opinion is that it is not. And yet because of the tone and quality of *Adrift*, I think it is obvious that Harker wanted to produce a work of art, not merely a documentary - not yet another look at psychedelic spins of fantasy.

The point where I find Harker fails most obviously to do justice to his potential is in his use of dialogue. Harker is one of the very few young

novelists I have read in the last couple of years who writes dialogue the way people actually talk. His passages of dialogue really make the novel come alive and in my opinion are the finest passages in *Adrift*. But the novel, incredibly enough, uses dialogue only sparsely, focussing instead on long-winded, repetitive descriptions to convey its "message."

Why? I think the answer is because it's easier to avoid explaining the complexities of emotional involvement by using descriptive prose than by having characters speak their own emotions, through dialogue. It's the easy way out, to my mind, and that's the way Harker does it.

Again, I think Harker probably did this consciously; he wanted his readers to join him inside the head of Peter Jedison, to explore his individual's psychological make-up. But in so doing, I believe he neglected the strongest point of his writing skills.

The end result of the novel

is, of course, an extremely thorough, knowledge of the novel's protagonist. Peter Harker has his protagonist say at one point, "I'm about as intellectual as a grasshopper," but that's just not true. Peter's descriptive and introverted passages, his explanations of acid trips, his conception of the world and especially of the repulsive city around him - are clearly those of an intellectual.

"I was being sucked dry by the city, by its deadness, which discolored every structure: pavement road, glass and steel buildings, cement parking lots for painted metal vehicles, silver tubes of parking meters, dull green tubes of lamp-posts, everywhere strings of telephone wire and trolley wire dissecting the sky." That is straight from the mouth of an intellectual.

Harker's descriptions are best when they knock the city - "The city spread around me dark and deceitful as Babel, not an arrogant tower reaching for heaven but a blind blank deadly indifferent layer of cement encrusting the earth inch by inch" - but he carries on a bit too long and the passages become a bit too redundant to have maximum impact.

By the conclusion of the novel, Peter is a well-formed character - even if a bit trite and boring - and we can readily accept and understand his final thoughts as he contemplates the river he attempted to commit suicide in a few short hours before: "The water leaped under the glare, a dazzling infinite parade of mirrors bouncing the sunlight along the river's rippling surface. I squinted; water rushed to my eyes but I didn't turn away. Climbing sun and travelling river: they had known all things from the beginning and would understand until the end, and if in his myopia the human idiot destroyed everything he thought he knew, tomorrow the sun and the river would continue undismayed and heedless of change."

If Harker had kept that up for the whole novel, it would have been more than "promising." If he can sustain a work to the level of his capabilities in his next attempt, it could be the most successful work of a young Canadian novelist since Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*.

by Kevin Gillespie

EDMONTON JAZZ SOCIETY (1975)
PRESENTS A

Jazz Week

9PM - THURSDAY - APRIL 1
A BASH WITH
BLIZZARD
EJS MEMBERS \$2.00 - HEAVY JAZZ - FUNK DANCE BAND - GUESTS \$3.00

9PM - FRIDAY - APRIL 2
DIRECT FROM NEW YORK - CTT RECORDING ARTIST - GUITARIST
GENE BERTONCINI TRIO
EJS MEMBERS \$3.00 GUESTS \$4.00

TICKETS FOR BOTH NIGHTS AVAILABLE IN ADVANCE
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