

Books

The Honorary Patron hits home

The Honorary Patron
by Jack Hodgins
McClelland and Stewart

review by James Blake

Jack Hodgins newest book, *The Honorary Patron*, is a humorous work of fiction that takes the reader to the beautiful shores of Vancouver Island. It addresses ageing, love and friendship as well as terrorism, evil, and death. This proves to be the perfect mix for a comedy that presents many of the issues of life with which people often concern themselves, and although the Canadian characters are stereotypical, they are also amusing, and possess recognizable traits. The novel also contains many references to art and literature.

The Honorary Patron is the story of Jeffrey Crane. He is a former Canadian, art historian and teacher who for the past forty years has lived in Europe, becoming famous because of a televised art program. He is now happily retired in Zurich and quickly growing old. Every day he visits the same little rooftop cafe and sits at the same table and orders the same glass of wine. He is a respected gentleman who has become accustomed to the company of his housekeeper and a few friends. His life is a cocoon of comfort and he does not wish to be disturbed.

Enter Elizabeth Argent: Canadian on tour and Crane's nearly forgotten lover of forty years past. She convinces Crane to come home to Vancouver Island to be the honorary patron of an arts festival. She hopes that his presence will lend the festival credibility and draw tourists to a town that is desperately in need of funds.

Against his better judgement Crane returns home and encounters one hilarious episode after another. He becomes involved

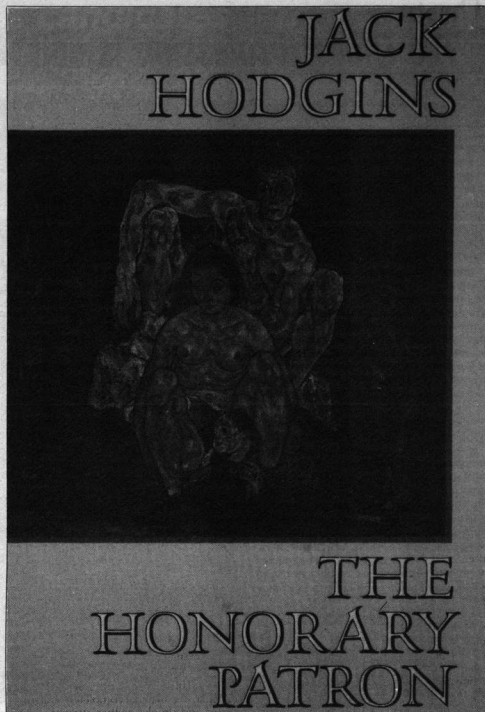
with a bunch of amateur actors, nudists, naturalists, hippies, dope smokers, criminals, a beautiful young woman, and a host of former friends and enemies who all clamour for his attention. With skeletons falling out of the closet everywhere he turns, Crane is forced to face the mistakes of his past and somehow make amends to his friends and relatives.

Crane falls in love with Anna-marie Blackstone, a young, beautiful free-spirited (and married) woman who leads him on a romantic but futile chase for most of the novel. As Crane pursues her all over the Island, he becomes an embarrassment to Anna-marie, her family, the town, himself, and most especially, to the staid founders of the arts festival. At times this humour seems cruel and biting, but it is entertaining.

This novel also shows that old age quickly creeps up on those who allow it. When Crane reluctantly returns to Canada, his life receives a much needed boost of energy and he begins to feel alive again. He learns to feel just again, and in the process, rediscovers his emotions.

Hodgins grew up on Vancouver Island and he uses this experience as the well of ideas from which he draws his novels. The Canadian manner of speaking, the west coast attitude and activities, and the spectacular scenery of the Island are portrayed perfectly in *The Honorary Patron*. The portrayal of the arts community, a corrupt businessman, and the bored but destructive teenagers of the Island are right on the mark. Hodgins has successfully captured the essence of the people and life on Vancouver Island.

Even though the novel is a little too long, it is quite funny. *The Honorary Patron* is the book to read if you are interested in reading an intelligently written comedy that deals with some important human feelings.



The Honorary Patron is an intelligent comedy dealing with important feelings.

WRITING COMPETENCE PETITIONS: NOTICE TO STUDENTS

This notice is intended for students who have not met the University's writing competence requirement and whose deadline for meeting that requirement occurs on or before September 1, 1988.

If your deadline is May 1 or July 1 and you plan to register in the Spring or Summer Session Term or in a subsequent session, you may be able to petition the GFC Writing Competence Petitions Committee (WCPC) in March provided that you are currently registered and have written the writing competence test at least once.

If your deadline is September 1 and you plan to register in the Fall term, you may petition the WCPC in March for an extension of your deadline provided that you are currently registered and have written the writing competence test at least once.

Students are urged to seek advice on preparing their writing competence petitions. Such advice can be sought from the **Student Adviser's Office** (300 Athabasca Hall) which is offering information seminars on preparing petitions; call **432-4145** for dates and times or for an information pamphlet. Also, advice can be sought from the **Student Ombudsmen**, (Room 278, Students' Union Building 432-4689).

The regulations and procedures used by the WCWC are available in either of the above-noted offices.

Petitions must be **received** in the University Secretariat, 2-5 University Hall, by **Thursday, March 17, 1988, 4:30 p.m.**

University of Alberta THE \$5000 PETER LOUGHEED SCHOLARSHIPS

Eligibility: A candidate must:

- be entering the final two undergraduate years of the following Faculties:

Arts, Education, Science, Agriculture & Forestry, Home Economics, Physical Education and Recreation, Faculte St. Jean, School of Native Studies, Engineering, Business, Medicine, Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences, Rehabilitation Medicine (BSc in Med. Lab Science), Law and Nursing (BScN)

- have a minimum GPA of 7.5 or be in the top 10% of the class

Selection Criteria:

The Selection Committee will base its decision on academic standing *and* community leadership qualities as demonstrated by participation in university or community organizations, sports activities or cultural activities, etc.

Applications are available from the Office of Student Awards, 252 Athabasca Hall, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2E8. Telephone: 432-3221.

Application Deadline:

APRIL 5, 1988