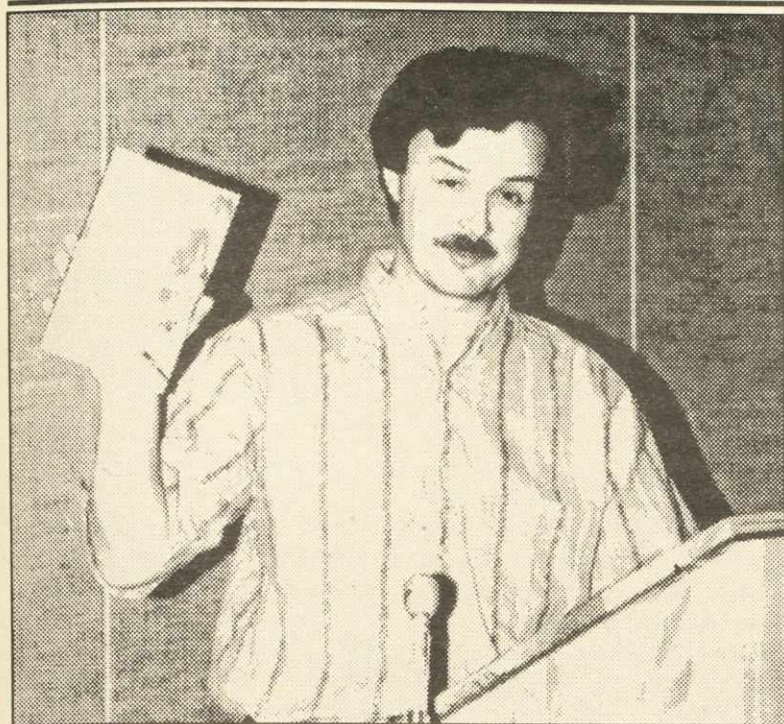


arts



Brian Bartlett presents his new book

DALPHOTO: PAUL LESLIE

Five in a room

by Leslie J Furlong

"We'll each read for ten minutes with two minutes in between with a short break in the middle. Is that okay with everyone?" John Weier posed the question to the audience as well as the poets on Friday night. This set the democratic tone for the evening as he along with the four other executive members from the League of Canadian Poets prepared to read their work to an intimate audience in the warm shadows of the Saint Mary's Art Gallery. The poems presented to those in attendance were very much the creations of five distinct voices, covering the range of human experiences from the powerful to the desperate, emotional to the intensely physical.

Mr. Weier, the League's First Vice President, adopted the role of the night's Master of Ceremonies while informing the audience about the League itself. Formed about thirty years ago, the League supports a number of programs and awards with the assistance of the Canada Council. The League's membership now totals approximately three hundred full and associate members, full members being those with a substantial body of published work.

The first reader was Brian Bartlett, professor of Literature and Creative Writing at Saint Mary's as well as the Atlantic Provinces representative to the League. He has published two books, *Planet Harbour* and *Underwater Carpentry*, the former having won the Malahat Review Award for a long poem. Bearing a strong resemblance to

Edgar Allan Poe, Brian read for us five "tales" that, in some instances, possessed the gothic sensibility of Poe along with humour and conflict that was more of his own.

Second up was Maria Jacobs, Past President of the League and former associate editor and editor of *Waves* and *Poetry Toronto*. Current President Blaine Marchand followed. Described as a "typical Ottawa bureaucrat", this CIDA employee proved to anything but, reading in his sibilant voice sometimes-erotic poems that focused on the conflict between the body and the spirit when they should be one.

After a short intermission, Second VP and Treasurer Bernice Lever took her turn. A teacher at Seneca College, she has a number of books to her credit, including *Singing* (1979), a collection of writings by women prison inmates. Lever's work was perhaps the most politically minded, the role of the woman in her poems shifting between knowing victim and the empowered.

Last up was John Weier, who read a collection of poems that took root in the words found in the journals of painter Emily Carr. This reading more than all the others took on the guise of a performance as the desperate energy in Weier's voice overshadowed the words on the page in front of him, at times taking on the sound structures of jazz.

About eighty minutes after it had started it was over, the poets now mingling with the friendly audience. Some went home, some joined the poets in the Gorsebrook Lounge for a drink.

Indigena: evoking emotions

by Emily Macnaughton

On the five-hundredth anniversary of the 'Discovery of the New World', Native Canadian curators, writers and artists threw their own defiant party

ART SHOW
Indigena
Dalhousie Art Gallery
September 14 - November 14

That was Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives, an enormous touring exhibition reevaluating the legacy of Columbus and colonialism's subsequent devastation of native culture, spirituality and land. Paintings, sculptures and videos featured in the show were for the most part commissioned.

A year after the opening at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, the show challenges Halifax with the train-collision impact of its message.

The works of Indigena's eighteen artists cause mixed reactions at the Dalhousie Art gallery. "People are finding it very hard," says gallery director Mern O'Brien. "This particular group has provoked people to think very deeply about the issues raised".

Visitors find it too sad or angry; some have been brought to tears by more disturbing pieces.

At the exhibit opening on Sep-

tember 14th, however, one student expressed emphatically, "In my four years at NSCAD, this is the most alive I've ever seen the gallery".

"Alive" has many meanings. Certain works seethe with a horribly aware anger, with a lucid recognition of all the pain, hypocrisy and betrayal they suffer in being alive.

"My work was made on the heels of the Oka Crisis," artist Joe David confided during a panel discussion at the Halifax opening. "It was in the heat of a trial, for me a period of great anger and fear." David's piece depicts two enclosed images: one of the Champlain massacre of the Iroquois, the other the Canadian Army at the site of the Oka conflict.

"Anger has given me a lot of energy," added artist Joane Cardinal-Schubert. Her work "This is the House That Joe Built" testifies to personal history of struggle within a racist system whose laws define what it is to be Native. Blackboards scrawled with poems and empowering quotations frame altars strewn with beer bottles, eagles feathers, blackened memorabilia — nooses hang in the background. Amid a overwhelmingly unhappy scene, a viewer may discover it hard to extract signs of hope.

Indeed, the more confrontational, political pieces don't concentrate on hopeful endings. Rick Rivet's paintings depict sheer carnage; Bob Boyer

and Luke Simon's works show bleeding crosses, skulls, daggers. In Jim Logan's dayglo scenes of the Yukon, a dead hanging boy swings on the swingsets behind the hockey rink.

But a more studied look reveals a persistent message. The painting which encapsulates the essence of Indigena is the centre-piece of George Longfish's "The End of Innocence". Between two paintings rises a spirit, part dragon, dog and horse, and surrounding it the words "Spiritual-Land-1-Warrior-Information". Spirituality, political activism, and a connection with the land will unify Aboriginal Nations, reestablishing an order which reigned before Columbus.

Although the most part of Indigena's content is political, the exhibit also contains works of a purely aesthetic nature. Nick Sikkurak's delightful sculptures of spirits relieve visitors the harrowing Cardinal-Schubert piece. Kenny and Rebecca Baird's "Heartlands" is a magical contemplation of voyage and spiritual discovery.

Whether one expects to learn more about a culture or to wonder at the art's horrifying and poignant shocks, instructs and ultimately satisfies. The messages and mediums vary, but its strength never wavers.

Who needs one of those?

by Leigha White

Everything was going along perfectly until Pauline decided she was missing one of those.

Pauline, one of the primary characters in Susan Swan's *The Wives Of Bath*, would prefer to be a man. A religious devotee of King Kong, s/he is determined to transcend her biology and change genders — to the point of pretending to be her own older brother.

Through the viewpoint of Mouse Bradford, an early teenaged student at an Anglican boarding school, we come to see how gender roles of the Kennedy era were defined and how people within them might have attempted to break through those designations.

As Mouse is slowly sucked into Pauline's masculine cult, with Mouse herself beginning the initiation, one finds oneself questioning not only the gender roles and their qualifications,

but at what point a woman could find herself transformed into a real, live, MALE. Is it the genitalia that becomes a consideration, the behavioral characteristics, or a combination of both? Where are the weights assigned? Is the metaphor of Kong a suitable representation of the essence of masculinity, or rather a stereotyped, idealised model admired by a female who disrespects her own gendermates?

The process of questioning, however, is sullied by a *Heathers*-like batch of secondary plotlines involving Mouse's family, a pair of of lesbian school officials, and the occasional appearance of ghosts hither and thither. Rather than maintaining the focus on the Kong-cult, the development of the two girls' respective sexual and gender orientations, or the restrictive environment of a private religious institution, one finds the book lumping all of this and more together and rendering

the result, while interesting and captivating, something of a confused and unsatisfying attempt to fuse three short novels into a larger one.

Perhaps the characterization of Mouse, the narrator, as someone with a tendency to change subjects (called "tendrilling") all the time makes life terribly confusing. We start focusing with the character of Pauline and end up having to deal with everything up to Mouse's intelligent hunchback and a series of letters from Mouse to President Kennedy.

The Wives Of Bath, while entertaining and certainly worthy of further analysis, ends up not communicating its purpose entirely because of these confusing side plots. Even if it does help with the characterization of one particular primary character, it interferes with what should have been the main focus: the issue of transgenderism.

<p>presenting:</p> <p>by: Colin, Jason, & little ol' Garth.</p> <p>NOTE: WE, THE CREATORS, THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO INTRO SOME OF THE CHARACTERS. ACCORDINGLY, HERE THEY ARE:</p>	<p>THIS IS CAMPY, A FROSH AT DAL. SHE IS ATTENDING SCHOOL ON A SCHOLARSHIP.</p>	<p>THIS IS RAKE, CAMPY'S BROTHER. HE IS ATTENDING ON A WING & A PRAYER.</p>	<p>THIS IS LISA. SHE IS SMART, WITTY & ATTRACTIVE. SHE IS ALSO A LESBIAN (THIS IS THE GAZETTE, AFTER ALL).</p>
	<p>THIS IS PASCAL, A RETURNING STUDENT. HE HOPES TO UPGRADE HIS SMA ENGINEERING DEGREE INTO A DAL PHILOSOPHY DEGREE.</p>	<p>THIS IS ANGUS MACFINSTER, A DAL GROUNDSKEEPER. NOTHING GETS HIS 'DEPENDS' IN A KNOT QUICKER THAN FROSH IN HIS FLOWERS.</p>	<p>THIS IS POKEY, ANGUS' DOG. HE IS HERE BECAUSE WE HAD AN EXTRA PANEL.</p>