

## York poet/painter sees courage in creative process

By PAUL O'DONNELL

"I see all poetry and painting as a celebration," says York English Professor Barry Argyle. "Everyone has been given words or paint and paper and this is worth celebrating."

Professor Argyle, a native of Liverpool England, began writing at a very early age. As a child he says he was considered stupid, and to assure himself that he wasn't he began talking to himself and writing. At 17, he was thrown out of school and emigrated to Australia to become farmer.

During this time he kept up his writing through note and "ugly poems to beautiful girls." He then taught primary school for three-and-a-half years, and began to have work published in small magazines.

After teaching, Argyle returned to England, writing articles for *Punch*, the prestigious satire magazine. He also continued to write poetry, but didn't have much published because he "wasn't satisfied."

Then, at the age of 28, Argyle enrolled at Leeds University, where he formed a writing trio with poets Geoffrey Hill and John Silkin. The presence of other writers inspired him to continue.

During his university years, Argyle had published a good deal of academic work, including a book on Australian writer Patrick White.

Since 1969, Argyle has been teaching at York, following stints at the University of Geneva and the University of Sheffield.

He feels that environment has a lot to do with writing. "At York there are people writing and talking about it, and thinking it's important."

It was at York in 1971 that Argyle discovered painting: he currently exhibits his work at the Nancy Poole Gallery in Yorkville. "I tend to be an abstract painter," he says. "Inspiration comes from the paint itself."

Three years ago Argyle published a book of poetry called *Mr. and Mrs. Adam and Eve*. He published it privately: "I couldn't be bothered applying for grants or searching out publishers. And besides, I was paid fairly handsomely at York and younger poets than I need that type of help."

Argyle feels the creative act is much the same as making love. "I don't know why you do it, you just do." He feels that, as a result of creating a poem, you become different. Art is praising the fact that you are aware of yourself in that changing condition. Words and paint are the means with which you transcribe yourself. "It takes courage to perform the action of writing or painting. You might not want to show it to Mum

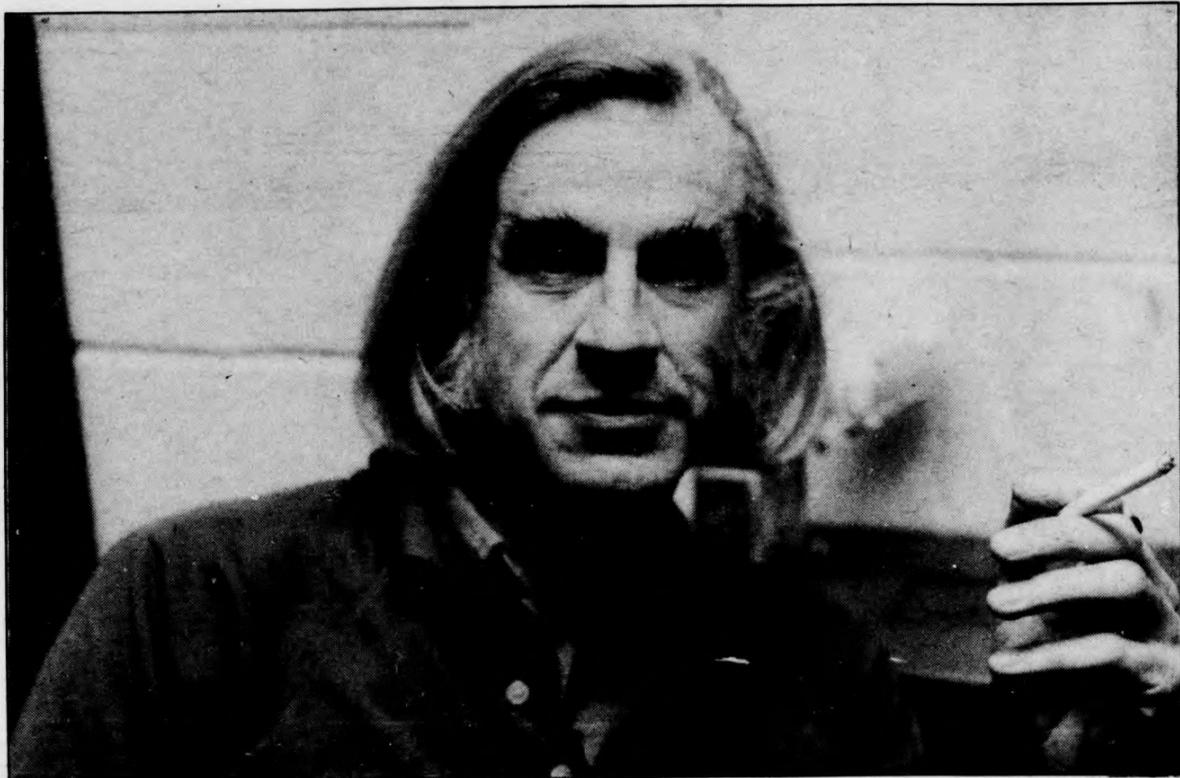


Photo: STUART MOSCOE

York professor Barry Argyle, who will read Tuesday in the McLaughlin Senior Common Room, has paid his writing dues: "I don't know why you do, you just do."

when you've finished—but the courage to express yourself has been developed."

Argyle measures success within the context of all he's done and read. It is the development of writing that is important.

"When you think of fame, just look at a volume of Shakespeare on the shelf and you'll see how far you've got to go. It puts you in your place."

Argyle regards his poems as discoveries. "Anything at all is amenable to poetry. If you're a creator, that's the challenge; making it work. Some, like the Victorians, believe some things aren't suitable for poetry. I don't." With this philosophy poetry can be found anywhere at anytime.

Argyle will give a reading of his work at noon Tuesday, in the McLaughlin Senior Common Room.



One of seven puppets starring in Vanier College's production of Fred Thury's fantasy play . . . and on the Eighth Day.

## Apocalyptic puppet preview

By HELEN HINKLE  
and JUDY LASZLO

Hope for the future of mankind lies in the hands of a group of life-size puppets, as Vanier College Productions in association with Lampton Puppet Theatre presents . . . and on the Eighth Day, a musical drama opening Tuesday which was written and directed by Fredrick H. Thury.

Thury, an established playwright, has been working for Vanier College since 1972. The play concerns the evolution of a new society after global destruction. Thury hopes to illustrate society's dependence upon myth which is itself a manifestation of hope. The play will show hope as a constructive emotional life force, acting as a catalyst for progress.

Thury is quick to point out that the play does not pretend to offer any solutions to society's myth dependence. At best, it jolts us into awareness of it. "Think of the necessity of hope today," Thury said. "When we have the chance to play (a button-pushing) God." *8th Day* will

take us outside of our subjective selves, and we will be able to see the evolution of humanity and society based on a myth, as two interdependent concepts.

The play is a feast for the eyes—seven life-sized puppets created by Johan Vondergun. Although the play was originally not written for puppets, Thury decided that since the plot concerns itself with an archetypal situation, using the puppets as archetypes would be more appropriate, because "If it's not human, it can go beyond itself."

These seven puppets are much more than just lifeless forms that get pushed about on stage. Each one of them was carefully studied as an instructive, emotional, and social being.

Each puppet requires four manipulators. Because one movement of a puppet requires the synchronized co-ordination of four people, it takes about half an hour to rehearse one minute of puppet time.

*8th day* will be running until next Saturday. Curtain time is 8 p.m.

## Nichol and Sokol's progressive performance

By GARY BARWIN

In many ways, what is explored in sound poetry and contemporary improvisation is similar. Both work with fragmenting and recombining the various levels of their language, using them in new contexts, as well as experimenting with the process of creation.

It is this relationship between these two arts that is the basis of the series MUSE/IC at the Music Gallery. This past Thursday the series featured by Nichol and Casey Sokol, both York professors in an evening of reading and improvisations. Sokol performs regularly at the Gallery as part of CCMC, an ensemble specializing in 'spontaneous collectively improvised music'. Nichol is a prominent Canadian poet and member of the Four Horsemen sound poetry group.

Experimentation does not necessarily preclude accessibility—the evening began in an abstract funky-bluesy groove. Sokol created beautiful Indonesian gamelon-like effects by 'preparing' his piano. (Preparing a piano means to place objects such as nails or paper on or under the strings to create distortions and percussive effects).

Throughout the performance, rhythms such as this were built on some musical motif, syllable or sound, and extending it, using it to generate the piece. For instance, reading Chain II from his *Martyrology Book V* Nichol speaks the word 'father' and then plays with just the 'ur' part repeating it and arriving eventually at 'were'. Similarly, he began making 's' sounds, then forming 'saint', an important symbol in the work, then working with just the 't'. What makes this kind of poetry

work is its musicality—sounds used as an expressive or musical pattern—and by manipulating the idea of words as sign. When is a word just a sound and when and how does it carry meaning and interrelate to other sounds/words?

Both performers alluded to other sources, Nichol at times imitating rap talk or rhythm and blues singers and Sokol making references to modern jazz and trite classical fragments. These allusions provided vocabulary to be played with. There was a marked difference in the nature of pieces in the first and second sets. The first relied on more structured interplay, and set poems, such as a poem that was a "translation" of another, replacing each individual word with its dictionary definition, thereby creating new meanings and making the individual words into patterns rather than sentences. The second set was comprised of freer improvisations that rose to greater intensity, incorporating repetitive percussive patterns (one using a squeaking toy), wails, groans, baby noises and nose sounds.

The most effective sections of the performance, those that cohered structurally and had a sense of deliberateness for the most part, comprised the first set. One unexplored area was the use of more complex rhythms by Nichol which would have created greater variation and possibilities for interaction with Sokol.

To the uninitiated this was an adventurous evening, however to those familiar with these contemporary idioms, though beautifully crafted, the performance was not as ambitious or experimental as could be hoped for.

