

# ARTS

## Poets not writing poetry?

Past Poets in Residence Reading  
Lecture Hall 3, Humanities  
Friday November 14, 1982

by Gunnar Blodgett

Last Friday the Humanities lecture hall was packed to hear the readings of four past poets-in-residence of the University of Alberta.

Gary Geddes (1976-77, the first), Tom Wayman (1978-79), Phyllis Webb (1979-80) and Pat Lane (1980-81) read from works composed during their years here.

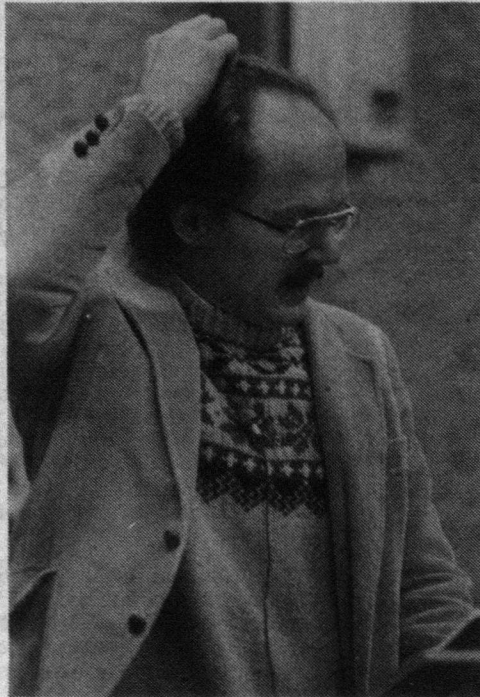
Pat Lane, last year's poet in residence, gave the first reading. His ability at poetry reading has improved over the last year; his voice now resonates through the room. The problem is in inflection and the setting of mood, qualities difficult to achieve while speaking quickly and conversationally as Mr. Lane does.

As well, there's a small problem with what Lane calls his poetry. It's prose. Any imagery that tries to establish itself in his long narratives seems to be stifled in the interests of continuing his story. He tells us what he thinks we should be getting out of his observations about the world, rather than letting us observe and appreciate a moment of poetic creation.

Phyllis Webb, on the other hand, is a poet of moments. She takes an image as a cut gem and holds it to the light, allowing us to see the facets and nuances that make it what it is. She gives us the world in an oddly Zen-ish cast, sitting in a room watching the maturation of pears ("just you turning into the universe"), or reading "a field guide to snow crystals."

Her quiet English voice is used to its fullest extent, establishing tone and mood very well over a range of different themes. Unfortunately that voice broke a few times during the reading, but the sympathetic reaction of the audience indicated her popularity among her readers.

When it comes to the use of voice and rhythm in oratorical expression, Gary Geddes is a joy to hear. His poems bring to mind Carroll's satirical narratives, and his speech rings clear and strong in the manner of a Shakespearean soliloquy. Yet behind this metrical and oratorical game playing is a very ironic theme.



Patrick Lane



Phyllis Webb

With surprising bitterness, Geddes writes of death and hate, genocide and politics from a perspective that can best be described as the inside of madness. On reading his book *The Acid Test* one feels again and again the blows of injustice and confused anger that earmark Geddes' work. In many respects he is a very remarkable poet.

Finally, Tom Wayman spoke. There's a single word I think would describe him succinctly, but he threatened legal action if I did. Suffice to say, he's effervescent. Whether discussing car problems, the growing of spring and green as you pass from Alberta to B.C. in May, or military rule, he sounds implacably cheery.

This is your last warning. The third and final West Watch concert, with Office, Psyche and The Mods, is this Sunday at the Krieg 10147 - 104 St.

It is rare when one gets the opportunity to hear some local music which is the slightest bit uncommercial, so take a chance.

"We've got two things going against us," says promoter Steven Honeyman, "Sunday nights and no liquor. We're budgeted for 250 people a show, at the last one (West Watch I) we had about ninety, this time (West Watch II) we have 125....we're a couple thousand dollars behind."

Office has received some good press and apparently, as the name would suggest, The Mods are a must for Who fans. Even if the bands are terrible you can just relax over a Coke and soak up the atmosphere.

Be there or be square.

Furthermore, unlike Geddes and Webb, he's just discussing these things. Wayman's not a poet; he's a dramatist and a skilled performer, but never a poet. His readings remind one most of improvisations in a public speaking class. They make you laugh and sigh, but if this defines poetry, then ET is poetry.

Which is not to say that I wasn't entertained by the readings. One listens to poetry to say that I wasn't entertained by the readings. One listens to poetry often as they would listen to music; the synthesis of both human voice and artistic patterns of observation. It's pleasing to see the work that these former poets-in-residence have produced. Why, however, some of them insist on calling it poetry I don't know.

## Jump Cuts

by Jack Vermees

I had a hard time coming up with a topic this week, primarily because I kept trying to work in a scathing critique of Walsh and company's letter-to-the-editor of November 9. (You know the one. Perhaps this will jog your memory: "We selfish, narrow-minded, money-grubbing capitalists are unable to see the need for a social conscience of any kind primarily because it won't benefit us in the cold, hard, (cash) way that we like. Consequently, artsies are communists and inferior beings, and should be despised, and should be made to shovel sidewalks in winter." Well, something like that anyways.) But I was unable to come up with a way to criticize their political attitudes in the context of a film column. Instead, I settled on a brief consideration of the somewhat twisted life and work of director Roman Polanski.

In the case of Roman Polanski the phrase "Art imitates life" takes on a scary and often tragic meaning. As a boy in Poland, Polanski lost his mother in the holocaust of World War II and was kicked out of the house (at his stepmother's insistence) when he was 14. Being a short, extremely outspoken, egocentric man/boy got Polanski into a lot of rough spots in the streets where he hung out. Eventually he enrolled in the Polish film school at Lodz (1954). Given to temperamental fits of violence and egotism and driven by a need to be the "big man" with women and his film peers, Polanski was not a popular guy. In fact he would probably be described as a complete asshole. But he had talent.

His first film, a two-minute short entitled *The Crime* was indicative of his later cinematic preoccupations and tragically ironic in light of the "cult" murder of his wife Sharon Tate by the Manson clan. *The Crime* consisted of a dark figure creeping into a sleeping man's room, opening up a knife, repeatedly stabbing the sleeping man, and exiting. The treatment was amoral; it was, simply, a murder witnessed by the audience. Certainly *The Crime* is a reverie of violence but it is the *watching* of this violence that interested Polanski.

Violence, Voyeurism, and madness were explored to greater extents in his later films especially *Repulsion*, *Cul-de-Sac*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Tenant*. Sexual humiliation and depravity also found its way into these and later Polanski films.

In 1977, Polanski's views and ideas about sex were brought to widespread public attention when he was accused of having sex with a thirteen-year-old girl. He admitted to the "rape" but fled to Europe rather than go to jail. This suspect type of sexual relationship is foreshadowed in *Chinatown* and repeated in *Tess*.

In *Chinatown* Faye Dunaway's father had raped her when she was a young girl and, in one scene, Jack Nicholson's camera reflects an illicit embrace between a young girl and an older man. In *Tess* Nastassia Kinski is gently "raped" by her future husband. These examples serve to illustrate that (as Polanski biographer Barbara Leaming said) "Polanski's cinema can't be separated from (Polanski himself)."

I guess the whole point of looking at Polanski the film-maker is contained in another quote from Leaming: "(Polanski has) a tendency to respond to the chaos and violence of his experience with cinematic mastery of them."

That is why Polanski is a fascinating subject. (Maybe if I'd found that quote before I started writing this...)

Anyways, go see these movies:

*The Wild Child* (1969) - Hey, it's Truffaut! Say no more. Nov. 18 (9:15 pm), Nov. 19 (7:30 pm) and Nov. 21 (9:00 pm) at the NFT.

*Wasn't That a Time* (1980) - a documentary film about The Weavers - a group of folkies led by Pete Seeger that inspired the folk poets of the 50's and 60's - and their reunion. Credits list Arlo Guthrie and Don McLean as appearing. Nov. 18 (7:00 pm), Nov. 19 (9:00 pm) and Nov. 20 (7:30 pm) at the Princess.

*What?* (1973) - a critical failure, this film nevertheless serves as a good example of the recurring dark themes in the films of Roman Polanski. And it's labeled a comedy. Nov. 24 (9:15 pm) at the NFT.

*The Wrong Man* (1957) - Hitchcock said that when he was very young his father sent him to the local jail with a note instructing the officer on duty to teach Alfred a lesson and lock him up. The officer did and Hitchcock attributed his lifelong fear of the police to this incident. This film, based on a true story of a man wrongly imprisoned, is Hitchcock's way of showing us that his fears were not groundless. Nov. 27 (7:00 pm) at the Princess.

*Citizen Kane* (1941) - What does one say about a film considered by many of filmdom's most esteemed critics to be the greatest film in the history of cinema? You tell me. Nov. 23 (7:00 pm) at the Princess.

## Up & Coming

What greater love bath a man, than to lay down his writing for his friends? My review and interview on the Spoons will be running next Tuesday. In the meantime, go and see them at Lucifer's on Monday, or better yet buy their new album Arias & Symphonies. Or don't. See if I care.

"New Music at the University of Alberta" will be presented in a program of music by the U of A's professors of composition, who are noted composers themselves: Dr. Alfred Fisher, Dr. Malcolm Forsyth, and Dr. Manus Sasonkin. The program will take place in Convocation Hall, Old Arts Building, Monday, November 22, at 8:00 pm.



Tickets are available from the SUB Box-Office (2nd Floor, SUB) and various club members.

DINWOODIE

2nd Floor SUB

Note: These events are open only to U of A students, staff, and guests. Absolutely no minors admitted!

**"HONKY TONK HEROES"**  
Thursday, November 18  
Sponsored by U of A Rodeo Club

**PRETTY ROUGH**  
Friday, November 19  
Sponsored by U of A Mineral

**THE MODS** with guests: **THE THIEVES**  
Friday, November 26  
Sponsored by U of A Rowing Club

**DARKROOM**  
Friday, December 3  
Sponsored by Bash-on-a-Budget Ski Club

**SLASH & THE BLEEDING HEARTS**  
Saturday, December 4  
Sponsored by Tae Kwon Do Club

**LIVE! NOVEMBER**