

BOOK REVIEW

The Theatre Scene

One of the most unjust burdens which saddles community theatres is the 10% provincial amusement tax. This can often prove crippling for smaller groups. The company I am associated with, for example, the Halifax Independent Theatre, has a theatre seating a maximum of 50 people in the crypt of All Saints Cathedral. If we charged \$3.00 a ticket the maximum we could earn with a full house would be \$150.00. If you consider the other expenses such as royalties (sometimes as much as \$50.00 per performance), costumes, sets, properties, rental of lighting, etc., most of that is whittled away. We are fortunate that we can pay for our rental of the space by presenting one production a year in the cathedral (last Christmas the medieval *Second Shepherds' Play* was staged in the cathedral transept), but for groups which must either pay an extensive rental or make major upkeep payments on their own building the amusement tax is the last straw.

With active support from its member groups, the Nova Scotia Drama League has launched a campaign to exempt community theatres from this tax and a brief has already been submitted to the provincial government. The actual amount collected by the Amusement Regulations Board is a drop in the ocean of taxation, but it could make or break a small theatre company. Even if a group makes a modest profit after meeting all costs it will plough it back to provide more resources or equipment. At H.I.T., for example, after our successful production of *Little Eyolf* last summer, we were able to begin purchasing some of our own lighting equipment, which previously had to be rented.

The N.S.D.L. campaign is only one instance of the outstanding work of this pioneer among the cultural federations of Nova Scotia. Under its energetic executive director, Susan Renouf, the League, funded by the provincial Department of Recreation, provides extensive services to its members. It arranges regular workshops in all aspects of theatre arts in every corner of the Province. Currently Vivien Frow, an expert in costume-making and design, is conducting eight two-week costume workshops for individual

community groups. The League also supplies at a nominal loan complicated sets of lighting equipment which are sent all over the Province, and sells at its Scene Shop theatrical materials which are often difficult to obtain elsewhere.

The League will select one local entry for the Atlantic Drama Festival to be held in Gander, Newfoundland, in March. Eastern Provincial Airways is hosting and helping to fund this non-competitive showcase for some of the best community theatre groups in all the Atlantic Provinces. The Festival will also include workshops in theatre arts conducted by professional experts.

John Culjak's Seaweed Theatre in Halifax continues its policy of encouraging new work by dramatists in the Atlantic area. It recently ran into controversy, though, over Culjak's own play *The Rain Falls Harder*, based on an actual rape case in Halifax. Halifax Rape Relief issued a statement dissociating itself from the play which it felt misrepresented the psychological implications in matters of sexual assault. The company ran into problems of finding a suitable location for this play, and opinion generally suggested that while it was a laudable and seriously intended treatment of the theme, its public exposure was premature and that textual revisions and other changes should have been made before presentation.

John Neville has lived up to all expectations at the Neptune, starting off with a highly successful tour of Nova Scotia in an accomplished and vigorous production of *Othello*. The tragedy played to packed houses in Halifax, as did Hugh Leonard's farcical comedy *The Au Pair Man* over the Christmas holidays. The first lunchtime production, Pinter's *The Lover*, also fared well. It seems as if *Les Canadiens* will follow suit. Rick Salutin's historical and political survey of the Quebec situation in the context of a time-spanning hockey team was produced and performed with panache and expertise, and offered a diverting evening. I found myself uninvolved, however, in the curious hodgepodge of styles, neither straight play nor review, but I

was clearly in a minority among the enthusiastic audience on the night I went. A formidable line-up of acting talent for the next two plays, Chekhov's *The Seagull* and *Staircase* by Charles Dyer, promises an exciting close to the winter season.

An encouraging innovation this year is Neptune's collaboration with Theatre New Brunswick, which also has a new and dynamic director, Malcolm Black. *The Au Pair Man* has toured New Brunswick and a summer production of Graham Greene's *The Return of A.J. Raffles*, starring John Neville and directed by Malcolm Black, will be seen in both provinces. In April some of the Neptune players will also appear in T.N.B.'s *Macbeth* (a play which Saint Mary's students are daringly tackling in March). This cooperation makes artistic and financial sense, as both theatres can economize on expenses and players in the area can be given longer engagements. Neville is making great strides to reduce the enormous debt he inherited at the Neptune.

I am hoping gradually to give more information of this kind of enterprise which is keeping Atlantic theatre alive and active. The Mermaid Theatre, for example, has drawn on Micmac folklore for its productions of *The Wabenaki* and *The Brothers*, using their customary combination of mime, puppets and masks, and on local history for the story of the Nova Scotia giantess Anna Swan in *Giant Anna*.

In lighter vein the constantly active Kipawo Showboat Company will be offering a Canadian play for children, *Nuts and Bolts and Rusty Things*, as well as the traditional musicals *The Fantasticks* and *The King and I*. In Dartmouth, Jim Spurway has launched his Grassroots Youth Theatre, which is preparing a play about Jewish children in a concentration camp, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. The active participation of young children in drama encourages the hope that interest in live theatre will grow and flourish in the area.

Richard Perkyns
Saint Mary's University

The Essential Al Pittman

Al Pittman, *Once When I Was Drowning*, Breakwater, 1978, 79 Pages, Paper, \$4.95.

Take Al Pittman off your list of promising young poets and promote him. With the publication of *Once When I Was Drowning*, his fourth book of poems, Pittman has arrived. Even the physical appearance of the book suggests a confidence that the writer will be taken seriously, and for this Pittman should thank his co-conspirators at Breakwater Books.

Pittman has, of course, always been an important element in the celebrated Newfoundland Renaissance. He is perhaps the most versatile of the younger writers, and has turned his hand to prose, as well as to drama, folksong, children's verse, and of course to adult poetry.

In his early poems, Pittman leaned a bit heavily on influential sources, sometimes mirroring the folksy perceptiveness of Alden Nowlan, sometimes the epigrammatic wit of Irving Layton. In the present volume he seems to have moved into a deeper, more considered, and more individual perspective. He writes increasingly now about old age, about death, and about those crystallizing

moments in life and in art that give one at least an illusion of permanence, perfection, or absolute value.

In "Driftwood", for instance, he draws us very effectively into the inanimate world, and invites us to share in the relative permanence to be found there:

Imagine us someday standing here beyond the long tide's ingenious reach observing our own finality. A grey portion of bone ignored perfectly by insects. Oblivious perfectly to the heat of the sun. The shift of sand. The grip of ice. Rain. Wind. Time. Imagine us cast up here in perfect communion with this driftwood. How we'd stand amazed in awe of our own completion. How we'd stand. Amazed. In awe. Of our own immutable and indescribable perfection.

Readers will enjoy meeting this new and more philosophic Pittman, but those familiar with his earlier works will be equally happy to discover some vintage Pittman in the collection as well. If there has been a poem written in Canada which depicts domestic sensuality more adeptly than

"Homecoming", I have not seen it:

Not wanting to wake you out of
Whatever warm world you breathe in,
I slide as slow as a glacier into bed,
wrap myself in the most familiar,
most welcome of all the spaces
I so bravely, so cautiously inhabit.

And no domesticated male will resist sneaking a glance at Pittman's alluring "Bicycle Girl" as she (rides) forever out of reach down young summer's swift and hazardous highway.

In a word, Pittman is on the verge of becoming mandatory reading. A number of his poems, "Driftwood", "Homecoming", and "Bicycle Girl" included, inform the imagination and help the reader to communicate with himself. One can now legitimately comment to Pittman, as Pittman does to artist Gerry Squires, "with your artist's arrogance / you alter my world."

Robert L. Campbell
University of Prince Edward Island.

For Children—A Colourful Potpourri With A Regional Flavour

Ahoy, An Atlantic Magazine for Children, Published by the Junior League of Halifax, Inc.

Ahoy is a colourful potpourri crammed with all the things that fascinate children: stories, comics, food descriptions, animals, games, and puzzles. For someone who grew up reading books and magazines published for other markets, and with no local flavour at all, reading *Ahoy* is especially fun. An article about feeding birds in the winter in the latest issue of the magazine clearly illustrates this regional feeling. A page of bird-feeder designs is followed by pictures, descriptions and eating habits of the types of birds you really are likely to find in your own backyard in Atlantic Canada . . . bluejays, juncos, grosbeaks, starlings and sparrows. Maybe articles like this can spare another generation of children the frustration of not finding a cardinal among the "birds of winter" in their own neighbourhoods!

Perhaps it was because they were about the Atlantic provinces that I liked the nature articles best. Each issue contained several nature items, about rocks, insects, icebergs, reptiles and birds. Children enjoy finding out more about the world around them, and *Ahoy* can really help them do that.

Each issue of the magazine contains a blend of

stories, artwork, and articles by both children and adults. The stories written by children are excellent, full of adventure and suspense. The stories by adults are also about themes popular with children—pets, friendship, and growing up.

Although the magazine seems to be aimed at a slightly older reader, my six-year-old daughter loves *Ahoy*, and thoroughly enjoyed the stories, especially those by children, but she could not read them herself. She also enjoyed the puzzles, games and riddles a great deal, although, again, many of them were too difficult for her to do alone. With French taught in our schools from the beginning of primary, she also enjoyed the regular feature "Qu'est-ce que c'est?"

"Climb Aboard *Ahoy*" is a showcase of poems, drawings and prints by children of a wide variety of ages, from about eight to early teens. Both my daughter and I enjoyed this section a great deal, and she seemed to appreciate the fact that the material had been produced by children not much older than herself.

The only thing she could read herself was "The Bionic Mouse", a couple of pages of comics in each issue, created by Mary Mahew. It's great, and here again the local flavour, combined with incredible, popular, space-age gadgetry and bionics, is just wonderful. When the Bionic

Mouse sets out on an adventure from the Dockyard it's certainly something local children can understand!

The magazine also carries "Bosun Bill's Book-Log", book reviews for younger readers, a column which suggests the age group that would most enjoy the books reviewed. This is a valuable resource for parents as well, when they are visiting a library or shopping for children's books.

For recipes kids can try, some of them provided by children, there's "I'm Hungry" . . . recipes accompanied by a little nutritional information about food. The winter issue also features a recipe contest for those who want to get into the act.

I wouldn't hesitate to recommend *Ahoy* to children of any age above five. There are lots of things parents can do with younger children, as well as things older ones can do on their own. In an area where so much of our own and our children's reading material comes from "away", it is a pleasure to see *Ahoy*. It is distributed regionally by H.H. Marshall, and when I picked up the most recent copy at the corner drugstore there were still lots there.

Janet Guildford
Halifax, N.S.

Skies Of Couple-Colour

sunblue by Margaret Avison, Lancelot Press Limited, 1978, 105 Pages, Paper, \$3.95.

Just before Christmas, Lancelot Press had quite a surprise for us. The long-awaited new group of poems from Margaret Avison surfaced through this small Nova Scotia press. It seems that Margaret Avison simply offered the book to Bill Pope out of the blue—*sunblue* for Lancelot.

Much of this new poetry is quite specifically religious, and it was with some trepidation that I approached the new volume, having been an admirer of Avison's intellectually tough and sinuous earlier poetry. I am happy to report that there is nothing soft or sentimental about the religious poetry which makes up about half of *sunblue*. If anything, it is even more intelligent and complex, so much so that I confess to being baffled by some of it. There are some simple and lovely poems like "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth!" with its rhyming stanzas:

We didn't know you, Jesus.
You came out in the night
And poked around the side streets
To bring us to Your light.

and other mind-twisters like "Contest", which is built around various applications of the verb "to know" to the idea of original sin. In subject matter and point of view there is a wide range, the religious poetry being interspersed with poems on everything from astronauts to speleologists.

A poem on the comet Kahoutek provides a good example of one intriguing aspect of Avison's work; it contains the stanza:

In the traffic-flow
a frozen lump
from a jolting fender

spins meteor-black
towards the midwinter bus-stop where I
stand
under the tall curved night.

This metaphysical imagery which finds in a microcosmic world metaphors for large ideas is a hallmark of Avison poetry. Here, the splash of slush upon the black pavement damps down to manageable proportions the cosmic sense of intrusion which Avison sees Kahoutek as engendering: "we solar-system people flinch as at a doom-sign" she says, just as the pedestrian flinches unnecessarily at the sudden approach of the frozen lump, a "veering wierd-brightness from somewhere else". The graphic design produced on the pavement by a lump of slush falling from a speeding fender is an exact replica of a comet, and the metathesis of "tall curved night" for "light" very cleverly flings a bridge from the microcosm to the macrocosm. This is very intelligent poetry.

It seems to me that Margaret Avison's poetry is successful to the degree to which it is rooted in this kind of metaphysical imagery. I do not care for some of the poetry on religious themes, such as "The Circuit (Phil: 2, 5-11)", which bandies about terms like "Glory", "Being-in-Light", "celebrates", "glorifies" and "Father and Son", and does little more with them than set them in clever conceptual relationships:

this circuit celebrates the Father of Lights
who glorifies this Son and All that He
in glory sows
of Light.

This is not a happy development in Margaret Avison's poetry. But one thing which has not changed is her uncanny blend of accuracy and originality when her eye is on nature and the concrete world. Margaret Avison is not one of the many for whom there passes away a glory from

the world. The wonder of her poetry is that here is an exquisite sensitivity which has not dissipated with the years but has intensified into religious awe, producing, for the most part, a delicately sophisticated art reminiscent of Gerard Manley Hopkins. It is a Hopkinsian inventiveness with words that accounts for the title of the book; this is the last stanza of "Released Flow", a poem about springtime:

Across snowmush and sunstriped maples
honeyed woodsmoke curls and scrolls.
Sunblue and bud and shoot wait to unlatch
all lookings-forth, at the implicit touch.

On the whole, *sunblue* is difficult poetry to read, in the sense that some very good music is difficult to play. If you are not an accomplished reader, you may not enjoy the experience, but the effort of analyzing these tightly orchestrated ideas can be rewarding.

My favourite poem of the new group is "Let Be". Again, the echo of Hopkins is audible. The poem suggests the presence of a mountain, invisible through rainmurk but somehow felt as massively shouldering near. It concludes:

Let there be
splashing, shouts,
dogs gnawing, oarlocks,
or people's random opinions
on a battery radio,
or the precise other inevitable
alternative—as will be plain—
to give ballast in daylight
to the unseen mountain's
no-sounding soundness.

That is what these poems are—ballast in daylight to the unseen mountain of God.

Andrew Seaman
Saint Mary's University

A Rising Interest in "Ordinary Ancestors"

Terrence M. Punch, *Genealogical Research in Nova Scotia*, Petheric Press, 1978, Halifax, 132 Pages, Paper, \$5.50.

The subject of genealogical research may appear rather esoteric and perhaps of no particular usefulness to all except the devoted genealogist and, perhaps, the Mormons. The necessity for keeping accurate genealogical records has in the past largely been recognized only by royalty and the landed aristocracy, that is, by those families in which descent was a matter of importance and the reversion of titles or property was possible through various fairly complicated family relationships. With the decrease in the importance of the hereditary aristocracy, the simplification and limitation of the laws of inheritance, and the growing recognition that merely by going back a few generations just about everybody can lay claim to some noted or notorious ancestor, it would seem that the interest in genealogical research should be on the decline, particularly in an area like Nova Scotia where, for most of the population, ancestors of any general importance are likely to be found only in the somewhat remote past, and in any case were important only in the context of another country, not this one. But, as the author himself points out, the reverse, if anything, is true and ordinary people are developing an interest in their ordinary ancestors. This phenomenon he attempts to explain in terms of the twentieth century, as a reaction against the "rootlessness" that is often the result of twentieth-century modes of living. The consequence for genealogy has in one respect at least been most desirable, since the pseudo-snobbery associated with aristocratic families has largely disappeared, and "genealogy is seen for what it always has been, or should have been: the means by which the individual family can find its past and its share in forming the heritage of the community in which it lives or used to live".

The book is principally directed, therefore, at

individuals of Nova Scotian descent who are interested in tracing the history of their own families, and also to Nova Scotian teachers who may plan to run genealogical projects in their classes. The author has assumed that these readers have little, if any, previous knowledge of the techniques of genealogical research and also that they are largely limited in their own researches to locally available sources. The result of the latter consideration is a decision on the author's part to restrict his discussion to sources available in Nova Scotia itself, apart from a few Acadian sources in Moncton. The result of the former is a discussion of some of the most elementary principles of genealogical research, although always in specific relation to Nova Scotian genealogy, and occasionally a discussion of points that may be called ordinary common sense. For example, teachers are warned not to give personal genealogical projects to pupils whose families may be irritated, at the least, by the revelation of recent scandal, or to prepare their pupils adequately before attacking the Public Archives or other institutions in force. It should be stated unequivocally that neither of these characteristics detracts from the work; they both may rather be said to enhance it, since they establish what is essentially a scholarly work upon a basis of reasonable practicality and common sense. The ordinary, or inexperienced, user of the book may well be saved, at least from embarrassment, by this firm and eminently rational feature; there is no evidence that any scholar has ever been hurt by a descent to the level of common sense, or by a discussion of academic pursuits within their real and practical contexts.

The merits of the book are almost too numerous to be listed and will be apparent to any discerning reader. Despite the limitations mentioned above, there is no indication that the author has been anything but thorough within his designated field. Not only are the various types of genealogical sources carefully described, but the

author also indicates where such sources are easily available, where and for what reasons they may be difficult or even impossible to obtain, and gives guidelines concerning their use and reliability. Within its various chapters the work contains an extensive and meticulous bibliography of published and printed sources in Nova Scotia, and of a large number of manuscript sources, frequently with information concerning the location and availability of the works described. In addition, there are clear descriptions of the operations and resources of the Nova Scotia Public Archives and other institutions. What this results in is a guide to resources in Nova Scotia that is not merely invaluable to anyone entering upon genealogical research in the province but is also likely to be of great use to those interested in local history. In any district the tracing of the history of individual families is obviously useful in tracing the development of the community itself; in an area where many communities have been so small that they have consisted of little more than the various branches of one family, or of a few interrelated families, it may well be said that local history and genealogy are almost synonymous.

The book is generally very pleasantly written, and is always clear and direct. I think that it cannot be recommended too highly.

Margaret Harry
Ketch Harbour, N.S.

Atlantic Books Festival

April 6-7, 1979
at the Hotel Nova Scotian, Halifax

A conference and celebration of special interest to teachers, parents, school trustees, librarians, curriculum planners and administrators, writers, publishers and booksellers.

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SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS INCLUDE

Patsy Aldana, President, Association of Canadian Publishers, Toronto.

Colin Freeman, Chief Librarian, National Library of Australia.

Norman Horrocks, Director, School of Library Service, Dalhousie University, Halifax.

George Melnyk, Editor, NeWest Review, Edmonton.

Paul Robinson, Senior Research Associate, Atlantic Institute of Education, Halifax.

Clyde Rose, President, Atlantic Publishers Association, St. John's.

Susan Walker, Editor, Quill & Quire, Toronto.

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

Friday, April 6

2:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Registration & Book Displays

7:30

Welcome: Hon. Terry Donahoe

7:45

Keynote Address: Paul Robinson

Topic: Regional Publishing & Learning Materials in the Atlantic Provinces

9:30 p.m.

Reception & Cash Bar

1979 ATLANTIC CANADA INSTITUTE SUMMER SCHOOL



WEEK ONE (July 9-13) focuses on the recognition of our heritage with programmes on Maritime artists, church architecture, historic houses, old St. John's, Nfld., genealogy, and a cultural tour of P.E.I.

WEEK TWO (July 16-21) concentrates on the restoration of our heritage. Programmes on: Acadian historic villages, Acadian folklore, P.E.I. folklore, restorations of Maritime art and antiques, restorations at our historic sites, and a Saturday field trip to New Brunswick.

WEEK THREE (July 23-27) "People and Places". Antique cars, Ships and the sea, and Railways focus on transportation traditions. Also programmes on the Nova Scotia and P.E.I. Scots, and 5 Louisbourg lectures, plus a finale: an optional weekend field trip to Cape Breton.

Regular programmes in the mornings. For supplementary programmes and U.P.E.I. accommodation details write for brochure. One-week fees: \$45.00 (single); \$60.00 (family); registration, \$5.00. Contact:

THE DIRECTOR,
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Continued on next page

Our Earliest Poetry And Fiction

Narrative Verse Satire in Maritime Canada, 1779-1814, edited with an introduction by Thomas B. Vincent, Tecumseh Press, 1978, 194 Pages, Paper, \$2.95.

Julia Catherine Beckwith, *St. Ursula's Convent of the Nun of Canada*, edited with an introduction by Douglas G. Lochhead, Maritimes Literature Reprint Series No. 2, R.P. Bell Library, Mount Allison University, Sackville, N.B., 208 Pages, Paper.

In his *ABC of Reading*, Ezra Pound advised budding critics to look for the earliest work in a given tradition as a prelude to understanding the place of later writing in that tradition. The recent publication of *Narrative Verse Satire in Maritime Canada, 1779-1814* and the reprint of *St. Ursula's Convent* provides the historian and critic of Canadian literature in general and Maritime literature in particular with ready access to some of the earliest texts in our poetry and fiction. Because these texts have been previously available only in archives, we now have more opportunity to enlarge our historical perspective on Canadian literature.

Our graduate schools have been notorious for producing literary academics with a strictly literary-critical bent. As a result, the burgeoning field of Canadian literature criticism has been relatively deprived of the historical-scholarly perspective. At last, with Tom Vincent's *Narrative Verse Satire*, we have a landmark publication because it combines literary-critical ability with a thoroughness of research and scholarship that is unique in Canadian literature studies. In this volume, Dr. Vincent has edited with considerable expertise some of the earliest poets in what is now Canada: Jacob Bailey, Jonathan Odell, Alexander Croke, and other narrative satirists. These poets are hardly Canadians, or Maritimers, in any modern sense of the term. But, born either in England or New England, and writing out of a peculiarly Maritime political and cultural involvement in the British-vs.-American and Imperial-vs.-colonial tensions or conflicts of the late 18th century, they are important writers for us today.

Their importance derives not only from the fact that these were significant men writing about significant themes in the development of our regional and national culture. Their importance is technical as well. This may seem like a strange assertion when one considers that of all the poems and pieces of poems reprinted here only Alexander Croke's "The Inquisition" approaches high literary art—and even it, masterfully written in Popean heroic couplets in 1805, certainly shows no innovation in poetic idiom for its time. Be that as it may, and recalling another Ezra Pound distinction between "the inventors, the masters, and the diluters" of a given poetic idiom, we must counter balance the absolute severity of the judgement that Dr. Vincent's book fails to provide us with evidence that Maritimers were in the vanguard of the romantic movement in the 1779-1815 period by pointing to obvious judgements made in other contexts. If Croke's verse is not innovative in a radical sense, it is still of considerable technical interest because, as T.S. Eliot said of the verse of Goldsmith and Johnson,

being original with the *minimum* of alteration of an established verse idiom is "sometimes more distinguished than to be original with the *maximum* of alteration":

Goldsmith and Johnson deserve fame because they used the form of Pope beautifully, without ever being mere imitators. And from the point of view of the artisan of verse, their kind of originality is as remarkable as any other. . . .

Perhaps more apt than a comparison with English poets is a comparison with 18th-century English-born American architects, men like Peter Harrison or William Buckland: their work has a technical sophistication reflecting their familiarity with the best British work of their time. They did not single-handedly create a revolution in their art, as did Wren or Pope, Adam or Wordsworth. But they did, like Croke, and to some extent the other poets reprinted by Dr. Vincent, do a masterful job in solving the technical problems posed by a public which made unique demands upon the artist. In late 18th-century North America, both poet and architect had to satisfy exacting contemporaries whose taste had been developed in response to the best British models but at the same time required a production made from the local North American materials. A final point: while the spirit of the 1798 "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads" was crucial for young poets of the first decade of the 19th century, poets of the older generations (Odell was born in 1737, Croke 1758), whether in Europe or America, did not and could not feel the need to move away radically from the forms of Pope: for them such forms not only were suited to them, they were essential in forming their sensibility and lay at the basis of their motivation to write.

It is this recognition of the difficulty of the task of Croke and the other poets which is at the basis of Dr. Vincent's explanations of their technical successes and failures. If the style of "Hudibras" is the best form for Jacob Bailey in describing "the character of a trimmer" and the lack of character of his Methodist preacher, Jack Rumble, and if "The Rape of the Lock" is a precedent for "The Inquisition," then we must be careful first to see these poets as working consciously in a tradition rather than to fall into the temptation of seeing them only as derivative. The strength that arises from localism—the way that local materials forced originality on Croke—can be illustrated by a comparison of the version of "The Inquisition" which was circulated in Halifax (that is, the one reprinted here) with the version which Croke devised years later for a British edition of his verse. While Dr. Vincent was not able to reprint the later version, it is clear that the wit and verse of the original one depends upon our awareness of Lady Wentworth's Halifax (Raddall's biographical novel now gives us ready access to the social world of that time). No such knowledge is required for the later version and it suffers accordingly. At the same time one can exaggerate the degree of local knowledge needed for the poem: the descriptions contained in the poem work well with Dr. Vincent's notes to supply us with all we need to know to get a feel for the characters and their social atmosphere. Having at least some feel for Halifax in 1880, what we need

most is perhaps a knowledge of "society" (as then understood) rather than merely local knowledge. An exception to this rule perhaps affects our response to the key image of the poem: the divan. The court, where Bella the adulteress in the poem is tried, is satirically referred to as a "high Divan", the ambiguity of the term playfully alluding to the sofa which Prince William Henry gave Frances Wentworth. The image is crucial since it associates Lady Wentworth with Bella, a more challenging satiric target than Mrs. Belcher, the person referred to on the surface level of the narrative.

If none of the poets in *Narrative Verse Satire* was native born, Julia Catherine Beckwith was. The author of *St. Ursula's Convent* was the first Canadian to write a novel. It seems mainly on this account and on account of its rarity that the first of Julia Beckwith Hart's three novels has been finally reprinted after 154 years of neglect. Certainly we are interested in observing how a precocious 17-year-old New Brunswicker handled the popular fiction conventions of her time—she wrote the novel in Cornwallis and Fredericton in 1813 but did not get it published until 1824 after she had married George Hart, a Kingston, U.C., bookbinder. However, as Professor Lochhead is careful to note, "to make a case that *St. Ursula's Convent* is a newly discovered literary classic would be absurd." The author herself seems to have been aware of its limitations, at least by the time she published it. Indeed, because her "Preface" has fortunately been reprinted as well, we can observe in it that Mrs. Hart herself makes a good case for the value of publishing and reprinting a conventional romance that has little to distinguish it from many others of its time. She wisely points out that, for the eventual attainment of literary "eminence," Canadians "must cherish native genius in its humblest beginnings."

Douglas Lochhead is probably right when he classifies it tentatively as juvenile fiction. This is an interesting hypothesis, especially when one considers that Julia Beckwith Hart ran a boarding school for girls in the period (1822-24) immediately preceding the publication of the book. While it was the product of her own youth, its highly moral and moralistic character may have been judged by Mrs. Hart as preferable to more profane romances. Further, it was set in Canada and drew on the knowledge of French Canada which the author obtained from her French Canadian mother. It is perhaps this bicultural sensibility that distinguishes the Beckwith romance from others of its time. While Professor Lochhead carefully warns readers about her stilted language and the intricacies of her episodic plotting, he is yet careful to credit how "Julia Beckwith wrote without bias and with a strong sense of respect and equality for the two founding races." As in its publication last year of Douglas Huyghue's 1842 novel *Argimore*, the Bell Library at Mount Allison has made yet another good choice for a reprint. Librarians, collectors, scholars, and general readers look forward to reprint No. 3 in this series.

Kenneth MacKinnon
Saint Mary's University

Atlantic Books Festival

Saturday, April 7

9:00 a.m.

Panelists

Topic: Economic & Educational Perspectives on Atlantic Publishing

10:30 a.m.

Bear Pit Session

An Audience / Panelist Exchange about Materials & Related Regional Problems

1:30 p.m.

Wrap-Up & Discussion

What Should We Do? What Can We Do?

Suggested Solutions & Policy

Directions

3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Reception

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THE NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL—A major project of the Canada Council in co-operation with the Atlantic Institute of Education, Atlantic Provinces Library Association, Atlantic Publishers Association, Dalhousie University, Dramatists Co-op of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, Saint Mary's University, and Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

A registration fee of \$5.00 will cover attendance at all sessions, related materials, and lunch on April 7.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION WRITE OR PHONE:

Office of Part-Time Studies and Extension
Dalhousie University
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