1992

The Year That Was

Alan Lawson
Margery Fee
Alamgir Hashmi

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi

Recommended Citation
Lawson, Alan; Fee, Margery; and Hashmi, Alamgir, The Year That Was, Kunapipi, 14(2), 1992.
Available at:https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol14/iss2/20

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
The Year That Was

Abstract
AUSTRALIA, CANADA, PAKISTAN

This serial is available in Kunapipi: https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol14/iss2/20
The Year That Was

AUSTRALIA

After the publishing frenzy of the Bicentennial Year or three (it was really 1987 to 1989), 1991 was a conservative year in most respects. Few new reputations were made but a lot of consolidation went on: some of it had been going on for quite a while. It was a year of re-issues, Selecteds and Collecteds, and biography; it was not a year for short fiction or drama.

In criticism, only Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra’s *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (Allen & Unwin) exhibited contemporary critical modes. Not without some problems of its own making, *Dark Side* sets out to make more visible the Aboriginal presence in Australian literature; tendentiously pioneeering in its rhetoric, it nevertheless does valuable service in undoing what it calls ‘Aboriginalism’ (the parallel is with Said’s ‘Orientalism’) – though the coinage is new, the notion is not, as readers of Goldie (*Fear and Temptation*), Healy (Jack and Chris), Shoemaker, Gelder, Muecke will know. John Docker’s *The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1980s* (Oxford) is familiar territory worked afresh, though also less attentive than it might be to other recent work; using Bakhtin, Docker finds the ‘90s to be a diverse period in theme, form, genre, sociology, culture. Familiar discourses are given some textual teeth in Stephen Alomes and Catherine Jones’ *Australian Nationalism: A Documentary History* (A&R).

Following John Barnes’s 1990 biography of Furphy, that cornerstone of the tradition was given a new slap of mortar by two excellent books. The long-awaited *Annotated Such Is Life* (Oxford) edited by Frances Devlin-Glass, Robin Eaden, G.W. Turner, and Lois Hoffmann was greeted with real enthusiasm by those who find the novel difficult and those who love its difficulty. Julian Croft’s *The Life and Opinions of Tom Collins* (UQP) is the best critical writing yet on Furphy.

It was the year of the biography. David Marr’s *Patrick White* (Random) scooped the prizes and sold extraordinarily well – after a British reviewer suggested that it wouldn’t really have a market here. Although most reviewers reviewed White rather than While, they greeted it very warmly. Massively documented from an amazing array of personal, epistolary and published sources, it is a lively read and a fascinating account of White’s life, career, milieu, friendships, and his sustaining relationship with his partner Manoly Lascaris. Julie Lewis’s *Olga Masters* (UQP) makes only a small attempt to link the life and the work; Nancy Phelan manages to evoke both in *The Romantic Lives of Louise Mack* (UQP).

Two biographies of Ada Cambridge (Margaret Bradstock and Louise Wakeling, *Rattling the Orthodoxies*, Penguin; and Audrey Tate, *Ada Cambridge*, Melbourne UP) were accompanied by a re-issue of *Sisters* (1904), and Michael Griffith attempted the difficult task of rolling out with tact the life of Francis Webb in *God’s Fool* (A&R). Griffith combined with James McGlade to edit *Cap and Bells*, a complete Webb for the first time: what is needed now is a good Selected Webb with the annotation his difficult work deserves (and requires). Bruce Bennett’s *Spirit in Exile* (OUP) is a critical biography of Peter Porter in which the closeness of the life and work become part of Bennett’s method as well as his theme – biographical information is often taken from the poetry – but it’s a candid account of a fine poet and an interesting life. Several other
biographies are on the way: curious in an age that has turned a disdainful back on the singular subject and author-centred studies.

Old-fashioned and cranky in the best sense was Dorothy Green whose death in 1991 deprived us of one of the most articulate voices of our conscience; her essays, Writer Reader Critic (Primavera) leave us something of real value. Her former colleagues, Bob Brissenden and Manning Clarke outlived her by only a few months.

It was a pretty quiet year for theatre publishing. Jimmie Chi’s Bran Nue Dae (Currency and Magabala) was a ground-breaker. The first Aboriginal musical, with music by Chi’s band, Kuckles, is an exhilarating theatrical experience that toured Australia in 1991. It’s a witty topical narrative of dispossession, mistaken identity, hypocrisy, and reconciliation: polemical entertainment of a distinctive kind. The text is a generous one with about seventy-five photos, words and music of all the songs, glossary, and an Introduction by Peter Bibby. Stephen Sewell’s Sisters (Currency/Playbox) is an emotional play about a reunion between two sisters who’ve been apart for sixteen years (it’s not one of his best); Janis Balodis’s Wet and Dry (Currency) was premiered in 1986 and had a less enthusiastic reception than either Too Young for Ghosts or No Going Back (1992).

The major piece of theatre-publishing was Currency’s massive, lavish Entertaining Australia, the reference book that also looks good on your coffee table. Massively researched by just about every theatre researcher in Australia, lavishly illustrated and documented, it’s a beautiful, readable and reliable documentary history of the entertainment arts in Australia.

Veronica Brady’s Playing Catholic (Currency) is a study of four plays about the ubiquitous 1970s theme of Catholic boyhoods; where there seems to be apologia rather than rigorous attention to form, it stands out because Brady is normally much sharper than this. And the plays about Catholic boyhoods? I guess you really just had to be there. Peter Fitzpatrick’s Stephen Sewell: Playwright as Revolutionary (Currency) is a major study of the most demanding of the important contemporary playwrights. Unlike some of his predecessors in this series (formerly Methuen Australian Drama), he takes up the theatrical and textual issues, but there’s more about playwrighting than the revolution.

There was some energetic movement at the periodical station in 1991. There were Special Issues of a number of journals. Both Australian Studies (5) and Australian Literary Studies (15.2) focussed on Europe and Australia, with the ALS number being especially strong. Edited by Giovanna Capone, Bruce Clunies Ross, and Werner Senn, it contains major essays by, among others, Martin Leer, Horst Pressnitz, Hena Maes-Jelinek, and Dieter Riemenschneider. Southerly’s Memory issue (51.3) also appeared as an A&R book; edited by Ivor Indyk and Elizabeth Webby and splendidly produced, but a few items seemed to gesture only a little factitiously towards the topic. There are fine items by Archie Weller, Gwen Harwood, Jackie Huggins, and Fay Zwicky. Australian Cultural History 10’s topic was ‘Travellers, Journeys, Tourists’ and had some interestingly varied things to offer from a range of inter- and multi-disciplinary perspectives including splendid essays by David Goodman, Sue Rowley, and Anne McGrath. Hecate (17.1) gathered most of the papers from the highly successful ‘Women/Australia/Theory’ Conference in a large Special Issue of that name: Jill Roe on Miles Franklin, Joan Newman on Mollie Skinner, Kay Schaffer on Eliza Fraser, Bronwen Levy on Mainstreaming are among the most interesting. David Carter edited selected essays from an HRC Conference on periodicals and periodical culture, Outside the Book (Local Consumption). A couple of new journals stepped into the increasingly expensive waters of periodical distribution – Aurealis (Melbourne), a new sci-fi magazine, Papers (Perth) devoting itself to children’s literature, Mean Streets (Bondi), a magazine for crime and mystery buffs, and a quarterly review from the National Library, Voices.

The major periodical event, Meanjin’s celebration of its half-century as Australia’s major cultural magazine, was marked by a generous, periodised selection, edited by
Jenny Lee, Philip Mead, and Gerald Murnane, *The Temperament of Generations* (Meanjin/Melbourne UP): it is anthology as cultural history and a fine one at that.

Peter Carey’s *The Tax Inspector* (UQP) and Tim Winton’s *Cloudstreet* (McPhee Gribble) look like the biggest fiction events of the year. A shorter novel than the Booker-winning *Oscar and Lucinda*, *The Tax Inspector* disappointed some reviewers who wanted another blockbuster but it’s got bits of Carey at his vintage best in a tighter tale of contemporary fiscal and familial moralities in a Sydney car yard. *Cloudstreet* is also classic Winton, only more so: a saga of two odd families who share a ramshackle, slightly gothic old house; a Wintonesque innocent narrator; physical and moral disorder and a resolution under quite powerful, if potentially sentimental, forces of love and acceptance.

Three other novels evoked more puzzled and contradictory responses, especially for their problematic representation of gender. Brian Castro’s long-awaited *Double-Wolf* (Allen & Unwin) reworks a notorious case of Freud’s in a tricksome re-signing of textuality and sexuality. David Foster’s *Mates of Mars* (Penguin) is an unapologetic book about male aggression and, with Foster’s typically challenging combination of seriousness and satire, metaphor, arcana and naturalism, it debunks male posturing while celebrating some kind of primal male instinct; Rod Jones’s *Prince of Lilies* (McPhee Gribble), whose *Julia Paradise* also troubled critics in 1986, is a complex mythopoetic tale of psychic and intellectual mentorship.

At the lighter end of the reading scale, Peter Corris gave us one of his very best with *Wet Graves* (Bantam), a Cliff Hardy mystery centred on (or rather under) the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the troubled history of its construction.

The most interesting new novelist in 1991 was Gillian Mears, whose *The Mint Lawn* (Allen & Unwin) took out the Vogel Prize; fast developing a reputation as a stylish short-fiction writer with a quirky imagination that has won her several prizes already, Mears is worth looking out for. *The Mint Lawn* is a slow, crackling, decadent tale of memory and the present (‘everything reminds Clementine of everything these days’) in a country town.

The new novel by Rodney Hall, now Chair of the Australia Council, is the first in the trilogy of which the third was *Captivity Captive* (1988). *The Second Bridegroom* (McPhee Gribble) is set in the 1830s, a meticulous fable of early Euro-Australian history, it follows a transported Manx forger, Ash, on his escape into the Australian bush that comes to represent savagery and the unknown other of Europe’s ordered society. He is supported and inducted into the wilderness by mysterious ‘guardians’. The tale of indigenisation is not new, but this is a powerful version of it: it is a consciously major novel.

But the most exciting fiction of 1991 was Mudrooroo’s *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* (A&R-Collins). It’s about contact, too, but from ‘the other side’. A magic-realist dealing with history, sexuality, religious beliefs of many origins (Cockney missionary, Aboriginal shaman, Ashanti); its displacements are spiritual, physical, moral and formal-generic.

Few new poetic reputations were made in 1991, but an extraordinary number were consolidated or celebrated. Two ‘new’ poets, better known to readers of *Kunapipi* as excellent critics, produced superb volumes. Julian Croft’s *Confessions of a Corinthian* (A&R) confirms that a slow-building career has been worth the wait; Croft really does have the verbal control, wit, and poetic range to bring together his interests in memory, place, writing and painting, and a pressing emotional life. Syd Harrex’s *Inside Out* (Wakefield) is also poised, personal, and potent.

Angus & Robertson issued Selected Editions of David Malouf, Geoff Page, Peter Goldsworthy (*This Goes With That*), and Collected Editions of Rosemary Dobson and Les Murray (who are each, fortunately, still writing); UQP issued Selecteds of Robert Adamson and Bruce Beaver (with some welcome New Poems as well); Fremantle Arts
Centre Press contributed a Selected Dorothy Hewett. They're all fine poets and fine selections. What more can one say? It is worth being reminded that Hewett and Malouf, who have deservedly-high reputations in other genres, have always been among our best poets; it's certainly worth having a new selection of Bruce Beaver, whose *Letters to Live Poets* is, in my view, the best post-war volume of Australian poetry.

A.D. Hope's *Orpheus* (A&R), published in his eighty-fourth year, is again about poetry and poetics, about sexuality and creativity, sensitive to formality but with that personability that he only seems to suppress. The title poem, 'The Song of Songs' and 'The Tongues' will all take their place in a future Selected Hope. Though these are not all recent poems, they are gathered in a volume for the first time.

Vincent Buckley's *Last Poems* (McPhee Gribble) was the most regretted title of the year. Buckley's death in 1988 ended a long poetic career that kept getting better. *Last Poems* has an emotional finesse and what, in one of these poems, he calls 'carnal clarity'.

ALAN LAWSON

CANADA

Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* (McClelland and Stewart; from now on M&S) has won the Governor General's Award for Fiction in English, 1991, the Smithbooks/Books in Canada First Novel Award, and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Fiction, 1992. Crammed with idiosyncratic characters and fascinating detail, this novel has as much in common with Dickens as with Rushdie. Through his loyalty to a friend, Gustad Noble, a Parsi bank clerk, is drawn into a plot set in motion by Indira Gandhi during the 1971 war with Pakistan. His situation comes to symbolize how the pressures of modernization, urban decay and pollution, mounting political corruption and war are closing in on modern India and on the possibility for anyone, however moral (or Noble), to lead a good life.

The title of Margaret Atwood's *Wilderness Tips* (M&S) may make readers think of the bush in *Surfacing*, but the wilderness in these witty and wicked stories is that of the postmodern city, or perhaps that of the 1980s yuppie heart. Robertson Davies' *Murther and Walking Spirits* (M&S) is the account of a journalist accidentally murdered by his wife's lover when he walks in on them in bed together. Instead of having his past life flash before him, he is treated to a film of his family's past, intermixed with clips of his anxious and increasingly dishevelled rival. The result, although a comic tour de force, is too quirky and fragmented to have the impact or sustained interest of some of his other novels. Katherine Govier's *Hearts of Flame* (Viking Penguin) about a rock group and Daniel Richter's *Kicking Tomorrow* (M&S) are both readable accounts of the aftermath of the 1960s that, perhaps with the 'boomer' reader in mind, swerve towards the popular. Rita Donavan's *Daisy Circus* (Cormorant) perhaps swerves a little too far in the opposite direction, since both e.e. cummings and Samuel de Champlain are resurrected in a story about a brother and sister. Nonetheless, Donavan is a talent to watch. Alberto Manguel's *News from a Foreign Country Came* (Random House) is beautifully written, but lost its force for me once I guessed the ending. Similarly, Mark Frutkin's *Invading Tibet* manages to convey a powerful mood through poetic language, but lacks involving characters or plot. Norman Levine's *Something Happened Here* (Penguin) is his first new collection in 12 years, an occasion of rejoicing for those who admire his austere, minimalist pieces. (I am one of them, although a friend commented that she would have called the book *Nothing Happened Here.*) Somehow he manages without beautiful language or plot, nor can his characters be described as colourful. Some powerful new
voices are Rachna Mara’s in *Of Customs and Excise* (Second Story), interconnected short stories set partly in India and partly in Canada; Native writer Lee Maracle’s in *Sojourner’s Truth and Other Stories* (Press Gang) and Hugh Brody’s in *Means of Escape* (Douglas and McIntyre). Other readable collections include Carol Malony’s *The Edge of the World* (Mercury), M.A.C Farrant’s *Sick Pigeon* (Thistledown), Helen Fogwill Porter’s *A Long and Lonely Ride* (Breakwater), Rosemary Nixon’s *Mostly Country* (NeWest) and Patricia Stone’s *Close Calls* (Cormorant). Herb Curtis’ *The Last Tasmanian* (Goose Lane) provides a gentle, humorous and nostalgic look at the landscape of Brennan’s Siding and the adolescent heroes, Shadrack and Dryfly. Marlene Nourbese Phillip’s *Looking for Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence* (Mercury) explores interesting generic territory, fusing the styles of French feminist theoretical writing, postmodern science fiction, travel writing, and poetry; perhaps intentionally, the quest for Livingstone itself lacks interest, which unfortunately makes the book somewhat static. Michael Kenyon’s *Kleinburg* (Olican) experiments with narrative and point of view.

Some well-known poets have added to their oeuvre in 1991. Margaret Avison, twice winner of the Governor General’s Award for Poetry has published *Selected Poems* (Oxford UP), which includes 10 previously unpublished poems, most new. Earle Birney’s *Last Makings* (M&S) appeared with an introduction by Al Purdy. Don Coles’s *Little Bird: Last Letter to My Father* (1897–1986) (Véhicule) is a poem of 296 quatrains, an elegiac monologue. A corrected reissue of Louis Dudek’s *Europe* (1954) is out from Porcupine’s Quill. Daphne Marlatt’s *Salvage* (Red Deer College Press) is precisely that, a salvaging of her earlier work from her current perspective. Patricia Young manages again in *Those Were the Mermaid Days* (Ragweed) to make ordinary life live passionately. Some of the collections nominated for the 1992 Governor General’s Award for Poetry were published in 1991: Laura Lush’s *Hometown* (Véhicule), Steve McCaffery’s *Theory of Sediment* (Talonbooks) and Kathleen McCracken’s *Blue Light, Bay and College* (Penumbra).

*Pale as Real Ladies: Poems for Pauline Johnson*, Joan Crate’s collection from Brick about the well-known Native poet, is prefaced, revealingly, with the words ‘I re-invent you. It is not your words I want ... it is the sound of your voice’, which the subsequent poems, written in the first person, proceed to construct. Marie Anneharte Baker’s *Being on the Moon* (Polestar) has a response: ‘Wannabees take a lot of time to joke. We buffalo all their attempts to be our nichimooses. Maybe in my last days ... I will be taken for an old white lady on a vacation, having proven my blood by climbing to Macchu Piccu for the view.’ Jeannette Armstrong’s *Breath Tracks* (Williams-Wallace/Thetys) moves easily from lyricism to activist anger, from a personal voice to the distinctive, stubborn, compelling voices of the Native people she writes of. *Whylah Falls* (Polestar) by George Elliott Clarke is set in a mythic Black Nova Scotian community filled with philandering and exuberance. Ahdri Zhina Mandiela’s *Dark Diaspora ... in Dub* (Sister Vision) uses essays, script, and photographs to make this oral form accessible to the print-oriented. Kim Morissey’s *For Men Who Dream of Lolita* (Coteau), written from Lolita’s point of view, deals compellingly not only with the loaded topic of child abuse, but also with the issue of artistic morality. Two anthologies collect poems from past years. *The New Long Poem Anthology*, edited by Sharon Thesen, includes 16 poems, each accompanied by a discussion with the author, and bio-bibliographical information. It includes poems by Robin Blaser, George Bowering, Dionne Brand, Christopher Dewdney, Louis Dudek, Diana Hartog, Roy Kiyooka, Robert Kroetsch, Daphne Marlatt, David McFadden, Barry McKinney, bp Nichol, Michael Ondaatje, Lola Lemire Tostevin, Fred Wah and Phyllis Webb. Rhea Tregelov edits *Sudden Miracles: Eight Women Poets* (Second Story) (Susan Glickman, Elisabeth Harvor, Roo Borson, Anne Michaels, Bronwen Wallace, Erin Mouré, Claire Harris, Paulette Giles). New voices appear in George Elliott Clarke’s collection, *Fire on the Water: An Anthology of Black Nova Scotia Writing* (Pottersfield), Agnes Grant’s
Our Bit of Truth: An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature (Pemmican), Bennett Lee and Jim Wong-Chu’s Many-Mouthed Birds: Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians (Douglas and McIntyre) and Makeda Silvera’s Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Colour Anthology (Sister Vision).

Plays published this year include Wendy Lill’s Sisters (Talonbooks), written from the perspective of nuns running a Native residential school, Robin Fulford’s Steel Kiss (Blizzard) about gay-bashing, and Sally Clark’s The Trial of Judith K. (Playwrights’ Coop), an adaptation of Kafka with a woman banker as the central character. Native playwright Drew Hayden Taylor cheerfully admits that he intended to write a play about Native people that has no redeeming political value: The Bootlegger Blues (Fifth House) is the funny result. Monique Mojica’s Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots (Women’s Press), manages to be both funny and political, as she deconstructs the stereotype of the Indian princess in 13 ‘transformations’ or scenes set in different periods. David Fennario’s Joe Beef (Talonbooks), is based on a real character; the play gives the history of Pointe Saint Charles from a working class perspective. Again, some plays nominated for the 1992 Governor General’s Award for Drama (English) were published in 1991: Daniel Brooks’ and Guillermo Verdecchia’s The Noam Chomsky Lectures (Coach House), Dave Carley’s Writing with Our Feet (Blizzard) and John Mighton’s Possible Worlds and A Short History of Night (Playwrights Canada) – Mighton won the award in this category.

Some interesting works of general criticism have appeared this year, among them Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value, edited by Robert Lecker (U of Toronto P), Margin/Alias: Language and Colonization in Canadian and Québécois Fiction by Sylvia Söderlind (U of Toronto P), On the Edge of Genre: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem by Smaro Kamboureli (U of Toronto P), Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing, edited by Joseph Pivato (Guernica) and Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Ironies by Linda Hutcheon (Oxford UP). Hartrmut Lutz has put out a book of interviews that provides some much-needed background information on newly-flourishing Native writers: Contemporary Challenges: Conversations with Canadian Native Authors (Fifth House).

MARGERY FEE

PAKISTAN

As of first indication, there is nothing very naughty about these Nineties. The writers have been working in relative freedom of late, producing with poker-faced concentration such works as will appear ‘relevant’ and, certainly, hold attention for some time. One would be harder put to say if the quantity is larger than last year’s, the work finer, the spirit brighter – or, indeed, if it is any the worse for not being all that.

The new decade commenced with a sizeable harvest of English work, and the largest sheafs consisted of poetry. A number of first books, selections, and anthologies made the lists. Saad Ashraf’s Fifty Autumn Leaves (Leo Books, Islamabad) and Shadab Zeest Ali Khan’s Swan-song (Privately published, Peshawar) are in the romantic vein and published without much editorial help. The heftier volumes, all first books again, were by Shahryar Rashed, G.F. Riaz, and M. Athar Tahir. Rashed’s Hybrid (Almaab Printers, Lahore) contains the poems of a poet who explicitly acknowledges the symbiotic character of the creative process, as its sources are both in Pakistani and Western traditions. The book has a number of poems of interest. M. Athar Tahir’s Just Beyond the Physical (Poems) (Sang-e-Meel, Lahore) contains thirty-seven poems on various personal, social,
and spiritual/historical themes, though the title stresses the ‘touch’ of the Beyond. Accomplishment varies from poem to poem; the most successful ones being ‘In the Plantation’, ‘Border Lines’, ‘Afternoon’, and ‘Words’. Shade in Passing and Other Poems (Sang-e-Meel, Lahore) by C.F. Riaz consists of seven sections of nine poems each on a variety of topics approached by someone acquainted with loneliness, loss, and humane concerns. The writing is variable and only a small portion of the book is worthwhile. Among the poems achieved with greater control are ‘Cantius Torresi’ (which I should not want anyone to miss), ‘The Cry’, ‘Shade in Passing’, and ‘Trophies’. Tariq Latif’s first book, Skimming the Soul (Littlewood Arc, Todmorden, Lancashire), is also his first poetry collection but quite different in its choice of imagery as well as treatment. The most obvious reason for this is that Latif, who was born in a village outside Lahore, migrated to England as a child and grew up there. As such, his needs and concerns, as well as the technique, have evolved under a different set of circumstances. He writes of England and Pakistan, himself and his family, and his loves and larger social concerns. ‘Igloos and Hammocks’, Raspberries’, ‘My Choice at 13+’, ‘November’, ‘An Asylum Made of Fog’, ‘Snow’, and ‘The Outsiders’, apart from ‘Skimming the Soul’, are poems to read, not to skim through.

Zulfikar Ghose brought out his Selected Poems (Oxford University Press, Karachi), chosen from his previous four collections and an earlier New and Selected Poems. Alamgir Hashmi published work in Contemporary Review (London), The Bombay Literary Review, Sapriphage (France), Pen International (London), Span (Australia), The Toronto South Asian Review (Canada), and The Epistolary Form and the Letter as Artifact, edited by Jim Villani et al. (USA).

In fiction, a welcome new feature is stories for children and young people: e.g., Kamal K. Jabbar’s Defunct (MNJ Communications, Karachi) and Parveen Talpur’s Mystery of the Three-Headed Bull (Ferozsons, Lahore). Farhana Sheikh, who was born in Lahore and has been a long-time resident of London, has also written a first novel – about the Pakistani youth in England and the challenge of growing up in a society with culture walls. The Red Box (The Women’s Press, London) explores a limited socio-psychological area but will interest a diverse audience keen to be acquainted with ‘mixed’ societies. Its observations of Pakistan are also stimulating, and not altogether fictional. Bapsi Sidhwa, Aamer Hussein, and Zulfikar Ghose published short stories in magazines and anthologies. The U.S. edition of Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice-Candy-Man (1988) was published in Minnesota with a rather sensational title, Cracking India (Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis). Tariq Rahman brought out his second collection of short stories, Work and Other Short Stories (Sang-e-Meel, Lahore), continuing with his social and political concerns in an easy-going style, which may win a wide readership if not critical approval. ‘Hore’, ‘Bingo’, ‘The Dance of the Beards’, ‘Moustache’, and ‘Rain’ are all fairly representative of Rahman’s storytelling and themes; and, like African pulp, have the potential to become popular. The same may be said of M. Athar Tahir’s short stories in connection with the South Asian readership.

Among translations into English may be mentioned The Tale of the Old Fisherman: Contemporary Urdu Short Stories (Three Continents Press, Washington, DC) and The Colour of Nothingness: Modern Urdu Short Stories (Penguin, New Delhi), both edited by Muhammad Umar Memon; In the Last Days of Autumn: Selection of Poems of Amjad Islam Amjad, selected by Baidar Bakht and Leslie Lavigne (Sang-e-Meel, Lahore); Kishwar Naheed’s The Scream of an Illegitimate Voice, translated from Urdu by Baidar Bakht, Leslie Lavigne, and Derek M. Cohen (Sang-e-Meel, Lahore); and Shahabuddin Rahmatullah’s translation of his own ghazals, Angelic Whispers (Vantage Press, New York).

In non-fiction, also, the four-volume set for children, Doostan: A Book for My Children (Hamdard Foundation, Karachi) by Hakim Mohammad Said, is a type of publication to increase in the future. The biographies include Shaista Ikramullah’s Huseyn Shaheed
Suhrawardy (Oxford University Press, Karachi) and Syed Shabbir Hussain’s Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius (Jang Publishers, Lahore). Popular columnists’ writings have been collected in The Night Was Not Loveless (Rohtas Books, Lahore) by late Muhammad Idrees, and Private View (Sang-e-Meel, Lahore) by Khalid Hasan. More general books in this category are: Imran Khan’s Indus Journey: A Personal View of Pakistan (Chatto and Windus, London), Waqas Ahmad Khwaja’s Writers and Landscapes (Sang-e-Meel, Lahore), and Sher Ali Pataudi’s Ramblings of a Tiger (Syed Mobin Mahmud & Co., Lahore).

Serious criticism and scholarship about Pakistani English and Pakistani Literature in English are regularly published in Pakistani as well as foreign magazines and journals. Short studies published during the period mostly dealt with the following writers: Tariq Ali, Zulfikar Ghose, Alamgir Hashmi, Hanif Kureishi, Taufiq Rafat, M. Athar Tahir, and Adam Zameenzad.

The only book-length study published in the field was A History of Pakistani Literature in English (Vanguard, Lahore) by Tariq Rahman, and was no answer to the need for a history of or a critical guide to this literature. Evidently laboriously put together, it still fails in certain crucial aspects: in the matters of accuracy and documentation, in plan and method, in interpretation and evaluation, in its style — in short, in historiography.

The articles in the journals, however, have been pertinent and sound; notably Pakistani English: Some Phonological and Phonetic Features’ by Tariq Rahman, World Englishes (10:1); ‘The Use of Words in Pakistani English’ by Tariq Rahman, English Today (21); ‘Three Contemporary Poets: A Study of Their Use of Language’ by Shaista Sonnu Sirajuddin, Explorations (14:1); ‘Ahmed Ali and the Transition to a Postcolonial Mode in the Pakistani Novel in English’, Journal of Modern Literature (17:1), and ‘Pakistani Literature in English: Past, Present, and Future’, South Asia Bulletin (10:2), both by Alamgir Hashmi.

No, English is not always frowned upon in Pakistan. M. Athar Tahir won a National Book Council award for his Qadir Yar: A Critical Introduction (1988). The late Daud Kamal and Bapsi Sidhwa won the Presidential awards for writing (poetry and fiction, respectively); while the late Professor Urmila Sirajuddin won a Presidential decoration for her services in the area of English literary education.

ALAMGIR HASHMI

The Year That Was for South Africa, India, Singapore, and the Caribbean will appear in the next issue.