

It seems that it takes the Final Judgment for the three religions to meet on a common ground. All three, in slightly different ways, wove legends linking Jerusalem and the cataclysmic event. Thus, in a Jewish legend, bridges of iron and paper, bridges described as being thin as a hair and sharp as a sword in the Arabic version, will span the Mount of Olives and Mount Moriah over the Valley of Jehoshafat. The Almighty, according to the Jewish legend, will preside over the judgment from Mount Moriah, while in the Muslim legend, Muhammad the prophet will sit on a pillar and decide who will cross the bridge and who will fall into the valley. In a note, Vilnay adds, "Christian pilgrims of the Middle Ages told the same legend, substituting Jesus for Muhammad" (264-66). The author ends his collection on a hopeful note of universal harmony, quoting from a Midrash, in which Elijah the prophet proclaims: "Peace has come to the world" (307). The book is abundantly supplied with illustrations, including some maps, drawn from ancient and modern sources.

Ewing Campbell

*Madonna Maleva*

Fredericton: York Press, 1995. Cdn. \$9.95

Reviewed by John H. Irsfeld

There are at least three voices in this short novel, published in 1995 by York Press in Canada, in a series properly called "Innovative Fiction." One is the voice of Jack Hawker, aka the Night Hawk, broadcasting from XEAD, the 100,000-watt transmitter of which is located in Saltillo, Mexico. The Night Hawk himself does his broadcasts not from Saltillo, but from Laredo, just across the Rio Grande from the Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo. His wife Sissy Hawker—Sister Love—does her broadcasts from there as well, and hers is the second of the three voices. The third is further back toward the author and serves as the narrative staple; it is back away from the stance that Hawker takes and which comes on so strong, so refreshing, and so distinctive from the very first paragraph of this approximately 50,000 word-book. Curiously, the title character's is not one of those three.

Here is a sample of the first voice: "All right, you moonshiners, long haulers, insomniacs, road cruisers, hot-wire artists, and reuniacs, that was Thelonious Monk 'Round Midnight' going out to my friends on the Tex-Mex Express somewhere in the night and you're listening to XE *Anno Domini*. That's XEAD, your clear-channel, souped-up Hawk of the Night, coming to you on a hundred thousand kilowatts of electromagnetic tide, straight up the ether chute from Saltillo, Mexico, high in the Sierra Madre" (5).

This first voice uses the mnemonic medium of a voice like Wolfman Jack's to carry new content, to say things that Wolfman Jack or any of those like him could not say, and yet the voice recalls their voices, even as it expands and improves

upon them. The energy in this voice is almost overwhelming. One has to read this tightly compact book more than once to get the overflow of sheer information Ewing channels through the Hawk. For Ewing either is—or knows very well how to imitate—a polymath (and, as I have said, his is very close to being the third voice heard throughout the text). The things he knows that one does not expect the writer of fiction to know are amazing, particularly his grasp of science. His learning is not limited to the sciences, however, nor to human nature—which is more expected in a novelist—but cuts across many areas of human endeavor.

The second voice in the novel is Sister Love's. Although Sissy Hawker has been introduced already, just after the strong opening chapter, she doesn't get to perform, so to speak, until after Jack meets the title character, Madonna Maleva—who is clearly the latter (*Maleva*) if not the former (*Madonna*). Maleva Poniatowska is Madonna because she says she is, and because of her dress, which includes a wimple, religious beads, and a psalter. But she is indeed a *mal-eva*, and poor Jack Hawker bites big time, as the young folks might say. Ewing himself has said of Hawker that he "makes a fine mess of his life, which is not exemplary before he screws it up" (in a letter to the author of this review).

The story line of *Madonna Maleva* is almost incidental to the success of this imaginative utterance. That significant success lies more in *how* Ewing does what he does. As Maleva says as she casts Jack's horoscope, "It's all in the technique, you know. Good mechanics, good results" (22). She then turns on the radio to listen to Sister Love, whom she never misses. She continues with the horoscope as Sissy Love preaches the divine and redeeming nature of love, and as Sissy gets in deeper and deeper so does Jack Hawker. The last words of Sissy's sermon are, "Open your hearts and come. Come. Come to my open arms. Trust yourself with all you can muster. Come. Come to me.... Come for the first time in your life to a sensation that makes you quiver, that puts fire in your throat and makes you feel in ways you've never known. If you're alone, in despair, impotent, abandoned, unwanted, come to Sister Love. This is the time. Come, I beg you, please. Please, won't you come? Come, come" (31).

We can assume Jack does, for his next words—which end that section—are, "I plunged headlong into the abyss and was lost" (31). He is speaking of the beginning of his relationship with Madonna Maleva. By the time Hawker and Madonna have hooked up, the book is half over. The remainder of it works out in a more complicated and obviously plotted way, while at the same time being thinner, and far less intense than the first half. It provides, nonetheless, a satisfactorily complete—or semi-closed, at any rate—ending.

Jack, unable to sleep, lies in bed and listens to the sounds off in the distance of the 4:38 train from Mexico. But then he hears another sound, from above, which turns out to be the sound of an asteroid falling to earth nearby. He is

overcome. It would not do to disclose how the story ends; suffice it to say that it does so with both narrative and stylistic success.

*Madonna Maleva* is not about itself, nor is it about its creator, except in the most conventional and conventionally disguised way. It is *about* its characters on a narrative level designed to engage and hold a reader's attention in ways that the works of a great many serious modern and postmodern writers simply are not. It provides, in other words, a bit of the psychological pay-off that most of us look for when we read. It is designed for intelligent humans rather than for Vulcans. It is a story that leads us, but does not lull us, into Gardner's "fictive dream." It is an imaginative utterance with hand-holds and belaying pins, not a perpendicular slate face on the north wall, too difficult for even an advanced amateur to climb, and offering for most of us only a free fall into the abyss of another intellect. Good mechanics, good results.

Jane Urquhart

*Away*

Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995. Pp. 356. \$18.99

Reviewed by Nora Foster Stovel

*Away* lays claim to be considered a contender for The Great Canadian Novel Award on several counts. First, its historical and geographical scope range from the Irish Famine of 1845 to the Confederation of Canada via the coffin ships of the great wave of immigration. Second, its imagery is inspired and informed by both the Celtic and Canadian myths of nostalgia and progress. Third, the family saga intertwines generations of colorful fictional characters with vivid factual personalities like D'Arcy McGee. And finally, the lyric swell of style and language raises the novel to the level of folk art: like her own character, Urquhart is "cursed with the gift of eloquence" (6).

Urquhart employs a folkloric framework, as octogenarian Esther O'Malley Robertson, the last of the long line of women, recounts to herself a tale that was told to her as a child by her newly revealed grandmother: "Everything began in 1842, she remembers her grandmother Eileen telling her, on the island of Rathlin which lies off the most northern coast of Ireland ..." (4). The reader is seduced into reverie by Urquhart's mesmerizing storytelling.

An Irish triad provides the epigraph to *Away*: "The three most short-lived traces: the trace of a bird on a branch, the trace of a fish on a pool, and the trace of a man on a woman" (no page). These three images provide the title for each of the novel's three parts. Part I, "A Fish on a Pool," is appropriately titled, as the narrative begins with the shipwreck of the *Moira* off the coast of Antrim on its way from Belfast to Halifax. The fruits of the sea include cabbages, silver teapots,