

## Convocation

The wearing of formal academic dress on this occasion serves as a reminder of our union with an academic heritage whose ceremonial tradition dates from the medieval university. The varied patterns of cut and color in the dress of faculty members indicate the level of their degrees, their academic disciplines and the universities which granted their degrees.

(Photos by Kim Leland)

## Professor Studies Post-Modernist

"Those who have a serious interest in the writing of James Joyce or T.S. Eliot will find in Thomas Pynchon's writings many things of interest," says Prof. Carl Bennett of the English faculty at St. Andrews Presbyterian College.

Typical of other post-modernists, which Bennett describes as writers of the 60s and 70s, Pynchon moves easily from gross farcical comedy to poignancy in a single paragraph.

Bennett studied Pynchon during eight weeks this summer as he participated in a seminar on "Contemporary Literature in its Cultural Context" at the City University of New York, where Dr. Morris Dickstein directed a select group of literature professors in "the problems and pleasures associated with the reading and teaching of contemporary literature."

### Intense Study

Because of many administrative duties, Bennett explains, his reading in contemporary writing was behind, and he welcomed the summer concentration on this era. The class read two works each week, he gave two reports to the seminar on Pynchon, they toured museums, visited art galleries, attended plays, and had current writers meeting with them for discussions.

Bennett terms post-modernist writing as having very abrupt transitions without a logical chronological base, and might be termed more a kaleidoscopic view of the world. "It is a fragmentary approach to telling a story," adds Bennett, "but in it there is something for everyone, something to baffle and perplex everyone."

Bennett actually began his post-modernist study in 1977 when he was a Lilly scholar at Duke University for the summer.

### Recluse Author

In Pynchon he found a highly sophisticated intellect writing excellent works, but deliberately maintaining a

very low profile. Pynchon is sometimes seen in New York, but refuses to be interviewed, and his home address is a closely held matter.

His first novel in 1963 was entitled "V." (yes, the period is a part of the title). His second work in 1966 was "The Crying of Lot 49," something which Bennett says is difficult to comprehend, and which he has found colleagues unable to understand.

But, Bennett is high in praise of "Gravity's Rainbow," Pynchon's latest work which is based much on the V-2 rockets which troubled London in late 1944. Werner von Braun is one of the principal characters.

Like James Joyce's "Ulysses," it is difficult reading, requiring close attention and concentration. It has also been compared in style with Herman Melville's writing.

"Gravity" fits into a classification called "encyclopedic narrative," in which the writer exhibits remarkable facility with several languages, an interesting off beat view of history, and a tremendous knowledge of modern scientific investigation and discovery.

"If you like to be kept off-balance by a writer, never knowing which way he will turn, but at the same time

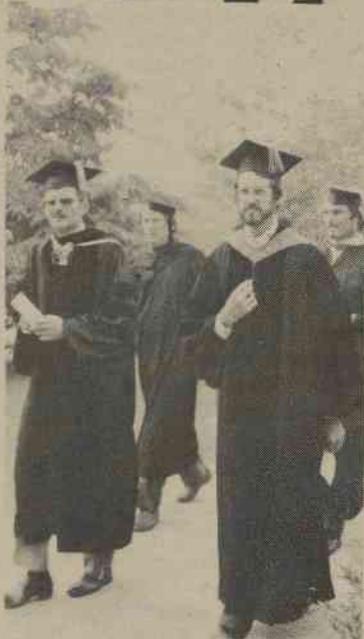
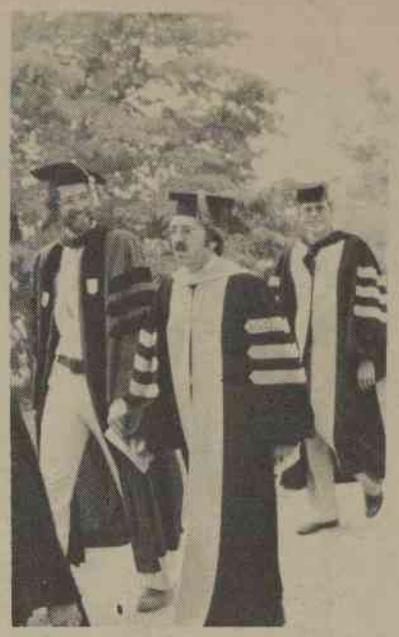
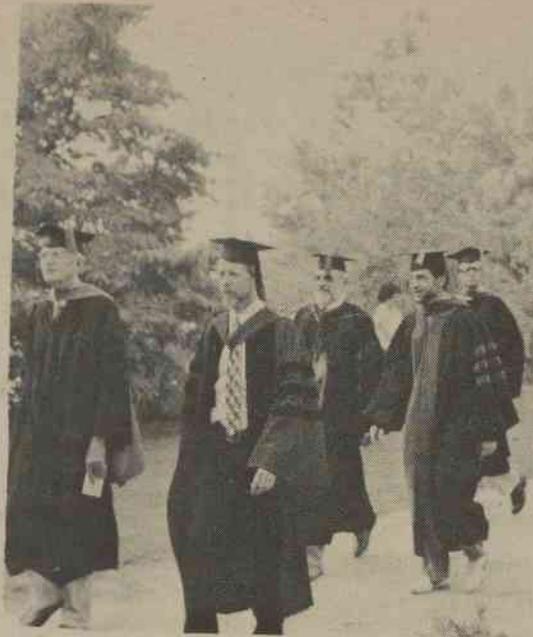
being entertained and instructed, then you'll like Pynchon," says Bennett, who is anxiously awaiting the next novel of this post-modernist.

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