

# The duchess house review



book review by bill holder

Take highway 49 from the school and head towards Harrisburg.. About a mile down the road, just a hot skip and jump from Gus's, on the left side of the road is an old weather-beaten two storied farmhouse. There's a handpainted sign in the yard that unpretentiously announces "Duchess House."

Here lives a rag-a-muffin bunch of literary orphans straight out of Faulkner. Maybe it is a commune, or a new type of dorm, or just a farmhouse. Who gives a shit? It is whatever you want it to be.

But the Duchess House family along with their "contributors and lovers" is a hotbed of literary talent, and their second volume of work THE DUCHESS HOUSE REVIEW immediately destroys any ideas one holds about the death of Southern Renaissance writing. It is alive and well in the Duchess House.

Beginning the volume are two short works by Margaret Pierce. Margaret takes simple characters and ideas, throws them together and comes up with some fantastic results. It is almost impossible to put a label on her approach to writing.

Aggie and the Cows and It Takes Two To Tango Baby, her works in this volume, are home-spun mythology presented in an exciting way. Margaret is a jet-age Homer that leaves all the bullshit behind and provides some damn good reading.

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I have a vision of Julia Willis sitting up late at night in a room lit only by the flickering fire in the fireplace moving her fingers across a ouija board communicating with Flannery O'Connor. For there is a strong feeling of O'Connor in "Tho There May Be Grey Skies" although Julia's story is much lighter and less moralistic.

"...Grey Skies" is a beautiful story full of subtle wit and insights. Mama Chippin and Birnam Chippin, her son, are the two characters in the story and we immediately feel at home with them. Mama as the overprotective mother and Birnam as the twenty-three year old derranged son that still sits on her lap are unforgettable.

The subject is given a backwood humor treatment by Julia, she does not delve into black humor as one would expect, but rather contents herself with taking a few well aimed blows at The institution of motherhood.

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There are three poems by Robert Grey in the volume. "Night Storm" vividly recreates a childhood impression of the thunder storm and it reminds us of a fantasy world that is all too soon forgotten. GGrey's power of images builds an emotional intensity in "Night Storm" that is not maintained in the other two poems.

His works in Eleven Charlotte Poets were markedly better, especially "The Chopping Block", but still Grey's power of language makes up somewhat for the strained emotion.

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Marilyn Shira has some beautiful ideas in her work, "Evenly Over the Surface" but there is an inconsistency of images that greatly mars it.

There are gaps in the story that appear to stem more from an inexperience with structure than from deliberate vagueness. I got the feeling, 'well what was the whole point?' There are some fine phrases like; "The beard was a silky stubble. When I touched it I thought I heard an echo.", but there is just too much bullshit holding them together.

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In a day when the army story almost invariably tends to focus on Vietnam war propaganda, Richard Abernathy's story "So I says To Him I Says..." about a misfit G.I. is touching and hits home hard.

It has a special emphasis for all those that face the draft. Richard has written a simple straightforward story that is bare of any color but with a dry emotion that paints a vivid picture of an army machine that tries to strip its men of any personality.

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Patricia Stuuat throws images at you in "Pony Deep" that point out her completely liberated style of writing. She produces Joycean monologue on a layman's level that is free and easy. Patricia's relation of the childhood fear of the toilet is a minor masterpiece. From "Pony Deep":

"Baptists can be hazardous to your health his wit is getting more American with every church he ignores and tells me of course we eat a good breakfast before we open the presents are you some kind of lazy american kid, no actually I'm cute."

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This is the first time I've seen anything by Julie Suk since ELEVEN CHARLOTTE POETS. Pity is dear readers that Julie hasn't improved any. She is still pounding away at themes that leave one bored and yawning (McKuen where are you?). And the themes are handled in a way that make one realize what are you? And the themes are handled in a way that make one realize what are you? And the themes are handled in a way that make one realize what are you? And the themes are handled in a way that make one realize what are you?

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Dick Roberts has one story in the Review, "Just To Sweeten My Tea", and it has to be one of the best short stories written in a long time anywhere. Dick has taken a Gothic setting and created pornographic characters that are bound to be classic some day.

A combination of a Henry Miller story and a Fellini film might come closest to Dick's masterpiece but there is a uniqueness that grabs you by the balls and refuses to let go. The comedy and black humor are professionally coupled with a pace that is fast, dirty, and highly entertaining.

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There is nothing very exciting about "But Comforting To Know", by Diana Roberts. It is a fair piece of fiction but seems glaringly out of place in this volume.

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The last work in the volume is a story by Lloyd Rose, "The Head of a Pin" and it alone is worth the price of the book. It is the best thing that I've read in a long time.

The themes of homosexuality, fantasy, and art are treated in a manner that display a powerful talent in Lloyd's writing. She tells a love story without becoming ensnared in mush or sensation and her realistic handling of her themes make one aware of her insight and understanding. Lloyd does not succumb to playing judge when touchy issues, present themselves but rather she treats them as natural occurrences.

There is an artist feeling about her work that points out a meticulous care with detail and an emotional involvement that places her way out of the realm of amateur writing. She is professional from start to finish and the reader is so thoroughly entertained in the interval that he is hardly aware of its passage.

Lloyd's poem in the last issue of Sanskrit (Vol. 3 no. 2) "The Cripple's Waltz" proved her mastery of form and genius in the use of fantasy. "Head of a Pin" is a natural extension of that art. Lloyd entwines fantasy and reality so skillfully that "Head of a Pin" becomes a variation of light and dark and one never quite knows whether he has stepped into a zone of real or unreal.

She veers away from the fantasy tale attitude of Lovecraft and instead creates more of a Cocteau type of presentation that leaves one slightly amazed. You will not forget the story for a long time.

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THE DUCHESS HOUSE REVIEW as a whole is a fantastic collection of stories, poems and impression. It reminds me of the old RED CLAY READER but without the glossy magazine bullshit. It transcends what one would expect from a bunch of college students. The intellectual musings and references to a college education crap are bypassed in favor of home-spun humor and subtle wit. Buy this book, steal it, or kill for it. It's the best damn thing this reviewer has seen in a long while. (available at bookstore or Bertha Harris' office, 75c)

# Mafioso ride again

by Lloyd rose

The Godfather Dir: Frances Ford Coppola Starring: Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Robert Duvall

## a review

The Godfather is not a great movie, it's just a very good movie: well-made, well-acted, well-scripted, with everything milked out of the material and nothing extraneous shoved into it. There is certainly a place in the world for movies with nothing more to them than good, solid entertainment value, and it's a delight to see one. The Godfather doesn't preach to you or awe you or impress you with its technique; it settles for keeping your attention and never letting you down.

The film fits solidly into the gangster genre but with several interesting new twists, all of which are derived from the novel. The old gangster movies of the thirties and forties were rather like The Untouchables--the gangster was a menace to society, and the view of him, always from the side of 'law and order' was rather sociological at best and condemning at worst. The Godfather tells its story from the inside of the gangsters' world, and what one gets is a chilling picture of a close-knit, fiercely loyal, rather sentimental, principled (by their own standards) family who happen to run a business that is illegal and involves killing people. One could draw a parallel with Big Business and Vietnam, but why bother? Puzo (the author) and Coppola see the Five Families as a sort of nation within the nation of the U.S.,

with their own rules, hierarchy and wars.

The book is a potboiler, pure and simple. What Coppola has done is taken the bones of the potboiler and fleshed them out, giving the movie great richness. Two sequences are especially remarkable: the Godfather's daughter's wedding with its August sun, gay crowds, bright dresses and happy luxury, during which, inside the house, the Godfather calmly makes arrangements to 'do favors' for people; the Baptism sequence, in which Michael, in the massive cathedral, renounces Satan for his godchild. (he has succeeded his father) while outside in the city his thugs kill off his rivals. The last sequence, especially, is potentially heavy-handed, but Coppola carries it off, largely by tying in the cuts from Michael in the cathedral to the bloody killings with Bach's organ music, which is at once reverent for the

baptism and frightening for the killings and serves admirably as the background for both.

Brando is a great actor, so he does a great job. His Don Corleone, the Godfather, is soft-voiced, calm, wary and quietly malignant. It's not a performance which will knock you out of your seat; it's a quiet, powerful piece of acting. Robert Duvall, as Brando's adopted son and lawyer, is a nice portrait of a clever, efficient, amoral man, and Al Pacino, as Michael, does a magnificent transition from a young man who wants nothing to do with his father's business to a cole-blooded, highly efficient Don Corleone the second.

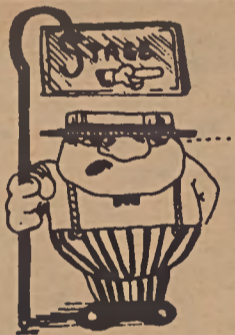
It seems worth putting in that Coppola got his start working for Roger Corman (the man behind all those Vincent Price-Poe movies), as did Peter Bogdanovich, the director of The Last Picture Show, as did Jack Nicholson.



review

# Hedda gabler

by ken dye



As a realist it is certain that Henrik Ibsen had some sympathy for the position of women in his time. It is doubtful, however, that he anticipated Womens Lib. His original intention was not to portray Hedda as a female inhibited by sex but as a female human being destroyed by those things that eventually get us all. Hedda Gabler is not, however, a period piece or a propaganda vehicle. It is a great play and as such lends itself to many variations and interpretations. Considering the tenor of the times, director James Hindman chose an interesting and fertile vehicle full of possibilities. The performance did not exploit these possibilities.

The drama departments production did not bore the audience with mediocrity as much as it left them disappointed. All of the actors gave accurate performances but none, with the possible exception of Jennifer Justice as Aunt Julie, managed to impress the audience with a sense of possibility. It was only in the closing - moments of the fourth act that the cast managed to pull

itself together and pull off a very difficult scene with style.

Diane Hoff almost did an excellent job in the title role but she lacked the subtle dominance of a really good Hedda. Instead Hedda seemed as petty as Aunth Julia and Thea Elvsted. As a result it was almost a relief to see the bitch shoot herself.

The other character who should elicit sympathy from the audience is Eilert Loevborg. David Prybylo seemed more agitated than impassioned. As in the case of Hedda, Prybylo's Loevborg mar'e George Tesman (Spencer Lucas) and Judge Brack (Greg Cagle) less and less ludicrous. The key was that both Hedda and Loevborg lacked the element of tragedy that makes the play.

Spencer Lucas was a good George Tesman but again some of his force was destroyed by the failure of Prybylo as Loevborg. Lucas did have trouble with his "eh's" and at times it seemed he was reciting Haiku, or preparing to sing an aria. But all in all he seemed to be a perfectly inept, impotent George. The worst performance of the play was the portrayal of Judge Brack by Greg Cagle. It is hard to fault Cagle, however. In an effort to update the play, director Hindman exaggerated the lecherous qualities of the judge. Unfortunately it made Judge Brack seem like a character from an adult novel of the fifties rather than the personification of male ego.

The final two characters Aunt Juliana Tesman done by Jennifer Justice and Thea Elvsted done by Heather Thompson, were quite good. One could hate Miss Justice's Aunt Julie with ease if we could only have liked Hedda a little better. Miss Thompson's Thea



Elvsted was not quite helpless enough or perhaps we did not have anything to contrast against.

One facet of the play would be impossible to improve upon. The set design of William Rackley was perfection. He made Secretary Falks Townhouse seem elegant, tasteful and immeasurably depressing. The costume design and makeup done by Peggy Hutson and Chris MacKay were also excellent as was the lighting design by James Teal. The Music Arrangement, although relatively unimportant, was out of balance. Perhaps had the play seemed more tragic the music, arranged by Deborah Osborne and Michael Fisher, would have been more appropriate.

In the final analysis it is the portrayals of Hedda and Eilert Loevborg around which the play revolves. It is Hedda who, in contrast to Thea and Aunth Julia, demonstrates the utter hopelessness that an intelligent woman faces. It is Loevborg who feels the same hopelessness and capitulates first. Had these parts been a little stronger the disappointment would not be so keen.

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