



EDITORIAL ■ *from the editor*

Kathy Jones | BY BONNIE DWYER

I met Kathy Jones in the midst of a novel shortly after her missionary husband went missing. The setting was 1965 on the island of Mindanao, and I was with Skip Sands, an American CIA operative.

The fact that Kathy was a fictional character did not diminish my pleasure in making her acquaintance. It heightened it, because it is not often that I have the pleasure of happening upon a fellow Seventh-day Adventist in contemporary fiction. Suddenly, the book took on a new reality. I wanted to play the Adventist name game with her or author Denis Johnson. Surely, we must know someone in common. Curiosity about how she would be used propelled me forward. She was, after all, named as the hero of the book in the *New York Times* review.

I jumped to the end of the saga, read her final thoughts. Her universalistic spirit pleased me and made me want to introduce her to Fritz Guy. Then I wanted to discuss her and the book's war themes with those Adventist peaceniks Doug Morgan or Ron Osborn.

"War is 90 percent myth anyway, isn't it?" wrote Johnson. "In order to prosecute our own wars we raise them to the level of human sacrifice, don't we, and we constantly invoke our God. It's got to be about something bigger than dying, or we'd all turn deserter."

Another one of the novel's characters then suggests, "I think we need to be much more conscious of that. I think we need to be invoking the other fellow's gods too. And his devils, his aswang. He's more scared of his gods and his devils and his aswang than he'll ever be of us."

So this was the idea that Johnson would explore, explode, exploit as he moved through twenty years of American history beginning with the death of John F. Kennedy.

In this issue of *Spectrum*, we explore the world

through books and movies and the people who create them.

We use them as the jumping-off point for thoughts on how we shape our present world, how we view our past, how we read our Bible, how we turn our own lives into narratives.

We are delighted to have novelists Ray Garton and Steve Spruill grace our pages. Ray has told interviewers in the past that his interest in writing horror stories began with his reaction to the beasts of biblical prophecy. The Adventist fear factor. We're glad that his humor also has Adventist origins. Learning to laugh at ourselves is such a relief.

Among the quotes on the back of the book jacket for *Tree of Smoke*, the Denis Johnson novel in which I met Kathy Jones, was one from Jonathan Franzen: "The God I want to believe in has a voice and a sense of humor like Denis Johnson's."

Would that anyone meeting my God, our God, would say the same. ■

