Let me begin with 'the object itself'. This book is divided into three-page introductions by the editors; Part 1 of 215 pages (nine essays, plus 'A Very Partial Chronology') of five pages. Part 2, 'Reading for What', of 143 pages, introduced by Sohnya Sayres, with subsections 'Moments', 'Audience Considerations' and 'Reader Take'; the book concludes with 'A Lexicon of Folk-Styromology' by Ralph Larkin and Daniel Gross.

The editors' Introduction ends with the moment of the book's own context — the 'reaching of the stakes', the various rights with their particular moralities and the multiple Left's weak and defensible responses. The editors conclude that anyone who sees this book as 'an attempt to combine the affirmative with the critical, an attempt to salvage certain positions now under severe attack... But they also stress how 'reflecting the radical displacement in these years of homogeneity itself, we make no claim that ours is a complete account... We put this work before the reader in the form of an intervention, and we do so without apology.'

Part 2 frames (or, polemically, is a kind of frame up for Part 2, which consists of shorter, often extracted, writings. I shall resist the impulse to respond, conversationally, to much that is vibrant, sentimental, signifying differently in Part 2... I shall concentrate on the frame. But in this response I do so with the resources drawn from the one Great (Re)Discovery of the 60's, in so far as glue, words (later signs) fix and face us. Turning that onto the frame of Part 1, there is a murmur, as I am reading — who is speaking, so and so for whom? Was there love made and unmade, did people walk midnight streets or sit in sitting rooms rocking alone, talk for hours about their visions and their gastronomy... did people have bodies in the 60's? These thoughts are raised because Part 1 's frame-up tends to cop-in with a gentle (affirming?) but firm (critically) poking, heard (more than read) by problems with senses, adjectives, verbal flows, textual flashes.

Part 1 has nine essays, eight of them by men (including one of three) 'A 60's Movement in the 80's' which is an interview between the two-man Social Text 'collective' and David Apeter — and the exception, by Ellen Wills, is 'Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism'. In that regard, this is a pro-60s ensemble. Despite some attempts — notably the Apeter interview concerning the Nantes Airport movement in Japan; Golden Fields' 'French Macfinism'; Harmen Rappoport's 'Vietnami: The Thousand Plateaus', strong themes within Simon Frith's 'Rock and the Politics of Memory' and some features of Frederic Jameson's 'Perlelizing the 60s' — no internationalization the accounting, the US-centric view is very strong, it predominates in Stanley Aronowitz. 'When the New Left Was New', Ellen Wills' essay, Colin Greer's 'The Erotic Question' and, differently but significantly, in Jameson.

Let me focus further — a zooming-in on the opening Aronowitz and the closing Jameson texts as they are the bolts and bars of the frame. I find many of the other essays share their fragmentation, their box-in (much talk of legacies and consequences, little of resources and illusions) and a persisting tone (or drone) of the academy: a tidy-up, a final-wording. The two partial exceptions are the Apeter interview and Rappoport's 'Vietnam' (catching up threads from bothimming Home and Apocalypse Now). To all of these essays I want to affirm and abjure by saying, 'It's not that simple.'

Aronowitz and Jameson involve their writing with their more general agenda — I use the singular term deliberately, partly because of their association with, at least as a beginning sense, the 1940s and 1950s, plus the 1970s and half of the 1980s. Might not this be part of the problem we are all facing on success (what is it, how is it accomplished) in the wrong image-exploitation?

With Jameson there is also something different — a problem of tensions like the replay commentators on sports programs, he tends to write now (1983)84 that someone 'will do something in the 60s'. But the same papal infallibility is involved... postmodernism... no longer as all (N.B.) "oppositional..." indeed it constitutes the very dominant or hegemonic aesthetic of consumer society itself and significantly serves the latter's commodity production as a virtual laboratory of new forms and fashions (p. 196) Reely! Just like that! I have been arguing for some time that the real symptomatic issue here is the loss of the Authority of the Critic, or, better, making visible the claim to that Authority. Multiplicity, difference and varied
The 60s were both... and... but differently. The 60s undid a certain knot (which was also a Not of fatherly negation).

CAPITAL TALES by Brian Favcett
(Vancouver, Talonbooks, 1984)

While occasionally evocative of the free-floating sense of dread which accompanies Raymond Carver's heralded worlds, Brian Favcett's latest book, Capital Tales, is also reminiscent of earlySpringsteen lyrics: tableaux governed by random violence, chance and a vague displacement of absence at the heart of working class experience.

However, the BC logging towns, 4x4 trucks and the edgy desperation or caricacity of Favcett's characters are really only the realist tip of the much larger question his prose introduces: what is the relation between the world of the imagination and our lived experience; in what ways are the conventions of fiction inadequate as expressions of the realities of our everyday lives?

Though these are by no means new questions for Favcett, Favcett's remarkable achievement in this collection of short stories manages to do a number of things well. A process of subversion which undermines our responses as readers, is begun mid-way through the stories and actually challenges the relation between text and reader as it occurs, as we attempt to 'consume' literature and distance ourselves from the very real contradictions of the world around us. Favcett, without the usual didacticism, examines the role of literature and of any fictive convention under capitalism, its assumptions about our lives and the expectations we ourselves bring to a fictitious treatment of our world.

As the same time that our attention is slowly being drawn towards the process of interpretation we are involved in, Favcett conveys concise, accurate portraits of characters bound by class structures, structures whose hidden character only gains articulation in the seemingly unconnected actions, gestures and frustrations of those characters' lives. In these, Favcett manages to deal with work experience, a world defined by labour and social relations of production, without slipping into a mere 'socialist realism' which would ensure that all the ideological 'is's and 'isn'ts are crossed and dotted (usually painfully so) for a supposedly hapless and unintelligent collective reader. Here Favcett gives his readers the benefit of their, and his own, experience as the basis for interpretation.

Interestingly, throughout the stories, especially 'Balance of Nature', 'The Ghost' and 'The Brotherhood of Man', the world of men and manhood, the narrow limits of male identity which pervades the work is shown to be the only real obstacle to the larger economy and desires that define this world in the first place.

In this we come to one of the most surprising and unsettling elements in Favcett's collection: the deliberate friction between the worlds his text brings into play. This perhaps is the biggest, most clearly in one of the final stories, 'The Life of Robert Cormier'. Here the world of Favcett's stories is seen as a reflection of his experience and the world of dreams and the unconscious collide and interact in a way which ultimately reinforces each as the legitimate source of the story. In the transition from history to fiction, from the worlds of literature and the imagination to that of daily survival, Favcett moves effortlessly, only foregrounding the tension between these different worlds (often with why authorial cheek) to raise us above the narrow for an absorption of the text we are reading. This reflexivity reaches its height in 'A Personal Memoir of Thomas Carlyle' where the 'skipped' between worlds reveals not only the tensions in our expectations of literature, but wonderfully exposes the creativity and eroticistic freedom of Favcett's prose; the multiple voices, influences, Favcett's own coding, acting as the framework of a text as busy confronting itself as it is the collective reader to his purview, perhaps. As Favcett no doubt suggests, to confront the one is always in fact to confront the other. For a critical consciousness, enjoyable and absorbing read, Favcett's collection of stories is a discovery work making.