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OBITUARIES

MAURICE SHADBOLT

Prolific writer of novels and short stories who dominated the literary life of his native New Zealand

IN A WRITING career spanning more than four decades Maurice Shadbolt made a major and lasting contribution to New Zealand literature, to New Zealanders' understanding of themselves, to others' understanding of New Zealand and its people, and to New Zealand's literary and artistic community.

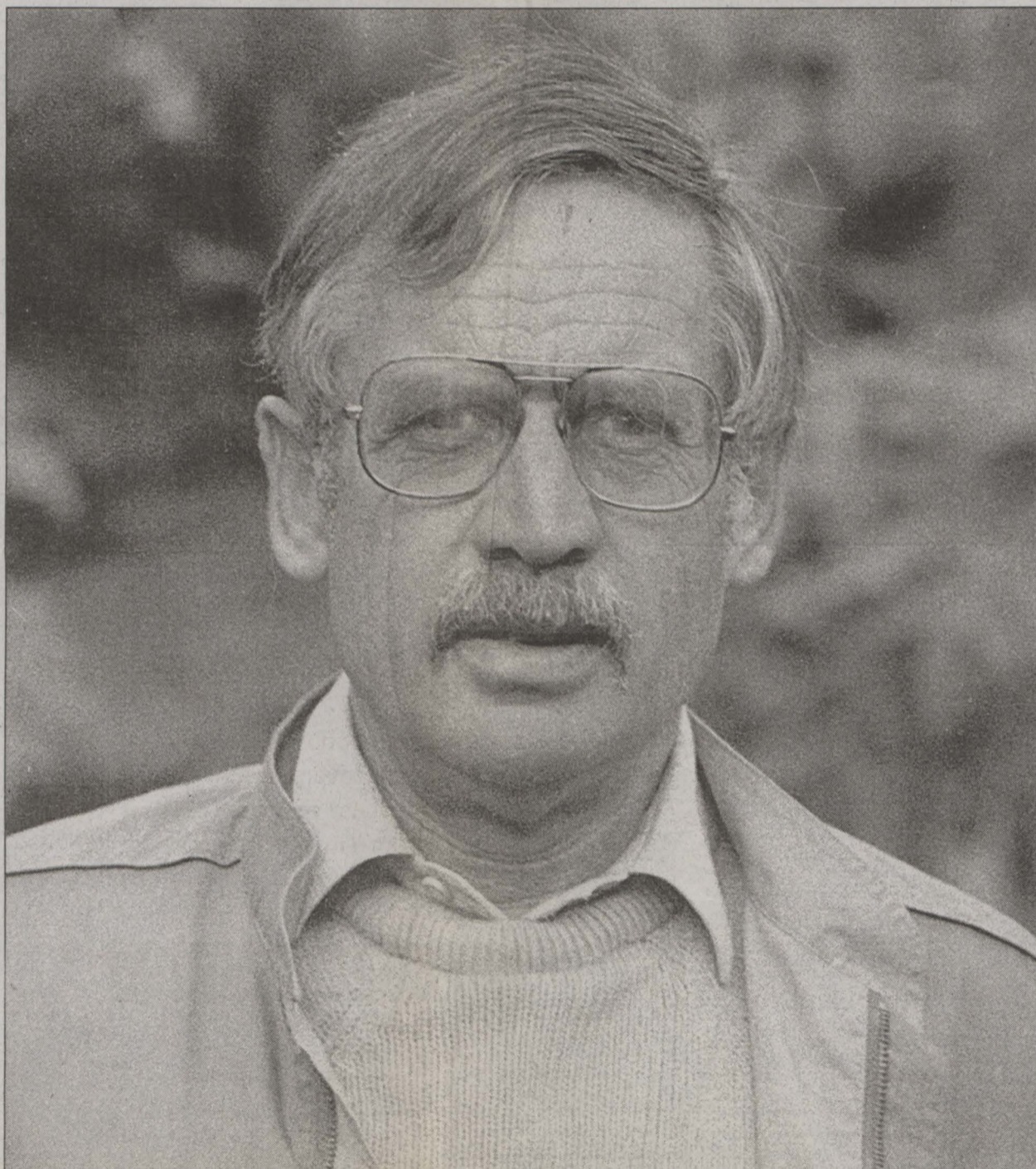
A documentary film director in the 1950s, also an award-winning short story writer, Shadbolt completed his first book of stories, *The New Zealanders*, while living in London in 1959. Publication in London was soon followed by American, German and Italian editions. Critical acclaim was immediate: *The Times Literary Supplement* described him as "a figure to be spoken of in the same breath as Patrick White of Australia".

Eleven novels, a volume of novellas, three more collections of stories, a play, two volumes of autobiography and a number of works of non-fiction followed. Every work of fiction has been published in New Zealand and the UK, most have also been published in the US and many have been translated, especially into Italian and German. His triptych of revisionist-historical novels — *Season of the Jew* (1986), *Monday's Warriors* (1990), *House of Strife* (1993) — form perhaps the most important work of historical fiction by a New Zealand writer. All have received considerable popular and critical acclaim, with *The New York Times* describing *Season of the Jew* as one of the top books for 1987. Shadbolt's drama (*Once on Chunuk Bair*) and non-fiction (especially *Voices of Gallipoli*) continued his focus on New Zealand's post-colonial identity.

Maurice Francis Richard Shadbolt was born in Auckland on June 4, 1932, and educated at Avondale College and Auckland University College. He started work as a journalist before becoming a scriptwriter and documentary filmmaker with the National Film Unit. He went to Europe in 1957, and it was in Britain, two years later, that his first collection of stories was published.

He continued to mine the seam of contemporary New Zealand for some 20 years with another collection of short stories and four novels, of which *Strangers and Journeys* (1972) was widely greeted as "the great New Zealand novel". By the late 1970s he was began to turn his attention to history and the country's past, starting with *The Love-lock Version* (1980).

Shadbolt won numerous fellowships and almost every big New Zealand literary prize, some more than once: he is the only New Zealander to win the Katherine Mansfield Memorial Award three times, in 1963, 1967 and 1995. He also won the New Zealand Book Award in 1981 and a Montana New Zealand Fiction Honour Award in 1996. In 1989 he was appointed CBE for his services to New Zealand literature; in 1990 he re-



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ceived the Commemoration Medal for services to New Zealand; and in 1997 he was appointed an honorary doctor of literature at the University of Auckland. In the same year, which also saw the publication of his last novel, *Dove on the Waters*, he announced that he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

In his prime he was a key figure and advocate for the recognition and promotion of New Zealand literature, and he

lobbied for better terms and conditions for writers. In addition to serving on the executive and as president of PEN, he was active in his support of other writers; where he was convinced of the merit of someone's work he would offer concrete advice and assistance.

He was clever, vibrant, opinionated and larger than life. He always had a delicious sense of irony, a great kitbag of stories — many mocking himself — and lit-

erary gossip, although his closest friends were as likely to be painters and potters as they were fellow writers.

Shadbolt was married four times: to Gillian Heming, Barbara Magner, Bridget Armstrong, and Elspeth Sandys. He had five children.

Maurice Shadbolt, CBE, writer, was born on June 4, 1932, and died on October 10, 2004, aged 72.

JOHN MACK

Psychiatrist who baited orthodoxy by embracing accounts of abduction by extraterrestrials

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SUSAN WALSH/AP



John Mack: his quest for self-knowledge took many forms

JOHN MACK was an unconventional American academic who applied his expertise in psychiatry to the many aspects of civilisation he found intriguing or wanting. He won the Pulitzer prize for his biography of the soldier and author T.E. Lawrence; for many years he taught as a Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard. His research into what he regarded as the spiritual or transformational effects of claimed alien encounters led him to be seen as a proponent of extraterrestrial life. This and his acceptance of alien abduction won him fame and notoriety in equal measure.

John Edward Mack was born into a prosperous New York German-Jewish family in 1929. His parents were academics. His father was a pointedly secular intellectual who, Mack remembered, would read the Bible to John and his sister "not as the word of God, but as a document of great literary importance for our culture and personal education". One uncle was a Holocaust survivor who later became an expert in group process and psychotherapy; another was mentally ill and eventually lobotomised — something Mack described as crucial to his own decision to go into psychiatry.

Mack did an undergraduate degree at Oberlin College, Ohio and went on to Harvard Medical School. He married Sally Stahl in 1959 and spent two years in Japan as an Air Force psychiatrist, then completed advanced training at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute. He was certified as a child analyst in 1969. He returned to Harvard and became a professor of psychiatry in 1972.

His biography of T.E. Lawrence, *A Prince of Our Disorder* (1977), for which he received the Pulitzer prize, was an example of the wide scope of his interests, his dedication to detail and his willingness to draw on every aspect of his training to produce original accessible scholarship. He interviewed a number of people connected with Lawrence, who, before the publication of Mack's book, had been described as a woman-hater, asexual and even homosexual. Mack discovered in an interview with the adventurer's sister-in-law, Janet Laurie that Lawrence had in fact had his heart broken at the age of 21 and never recovered. Lawrence had suddenly and unexpectedly proposed to the beautiful family friend, Miss Laurie, who rejected him for his more dashing older brother.

Mack did not shy away from his own search for self-knowledge, which he

realised through less traditional methods as well as through his rigorous academic training. For instance, he practised holotropic breathwork, a technique developed by Stanislav Grof, a pioneer of psychedelic therapy in the 1970s, to bring about a deeper state of consciousness through breathing exercises and evocative music.

This search for self-knowledge led Mack into controversy. He took an active interest in contemporary Middle Eastern politics; he even flew to Lebanon during its civil war to meet Yassir Arafat. He was deeply concerned with the effect of nuclear weapons, and he studied how the fear of a nuclear holocaust affected children. In 1986 he and his family were arrested at the military test site in Nevada, where they were protesting against underground detonations.

Mack believed that there was "an extraordinary planetary crisis because of

our inability to understand what native peoples all over the world understand, which is that there is a very delicate web of life, and that web of life is being destroyed by this species".

This view underpinned the ideas for which he will — perhaps wrongly — be most widely remembered. Mack broke from the academic mainstream when he published *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens* (1994), in which he detailed 13 case histories of those who claimed they had been kidnapped and seduced by aliens.

The book was not well received by his peers at Harvard; it precipitated what he called a "15-month ordeal" in which his methods were investigated. Mack felt that if he had simply reported a new "psychiatric syndrome of unknown aetiology" all would have been well. But he was calling for a different interpretation of reality, in effect a broader definition

of reality which would accommodate the integration of indigenous peoples' ideas and the consequences of the claimed experience of alien abduction, which he took very seriously.

"I'm not trying to prove this with physical evidence," he said. "These abduction accounts are so congruent among healthy people, from all over the United States — people who are not in touch with each other, who have nothing to gain and everything to lose by telling their stories. The only thing I know that behaves like that is real experience, and I am going to continue to try to deepen my understanding."

Although Mack was open and caring with his patients, his courting of the media was perhaps one reason behind his colleagues' hostility. *Abduction* and the follow up, *Passport to the Cosmos: Human Transformation and Alien Encounters* (1999), were works of "popular" science; he appeared on TV and on radio talk shows and gave interviews in the tabloid press. In February 2003 the film *Touched* appeared — a documentary about his work with those who claimed to have had alien encounters.

Despite the loss of academic credibility, Mack claimed that he was engaged on the most exciting work of his career. He founded the Department of Psychiatry at Cambridge Hospital in Boston and in 1983 he co-founded the Centre of Psychology and Social Change, which was renamed in his honour this year. The centre's declared aim was to apply the new knowledge emerging from exploration of the way in which "perceptions and beliefs about reality shape the human condition to pressing psychological, spiritual and cultural issues."

Mack was an assistant editor of the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* and was on the editorial board of the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*. He wrote or co-wrote ten books, including the classic psychiatric text *Nightmares and Human Conflict*, as well as writing 150 scholarly articles.

His interest in Lawrence remained, and it was after speaking at a T.E. Lawrence Society Symposium in Oxford that he was struck by a car and killed. He and his wife were divorced in 1995. His three sons survive him.

John Mack, psychiatrist, was born on October 4, 1929. He died on September 27, 2004, aged 74.