

W.D. Valgardson



Photo: [Winnipeg International Writers' Festival](#)

A favourite W.D. Valgardson short story is "A Matter of Balance." The plot is seen through the eyes of a flawed narrator, traumatized by the violent death of his wife and strongly motivated to protect his children.

Balance works on many levels in this short work. Nasty bikers threaten Harold, who is hiking alone in a park (I imagine it as Lighthouse Park, in West Vancouver.) The toughs have neither the skill nor the experience that Harold has on the mountain trail and they begin to lose their balance.

How should Harold balance his crucial decision? When they call on him to help them, he must weigh and balance the possible consequences. The bikers may be unbalanced in more ways than one, and could once more be a threat to Harold if he helps them.

But is Harold's own mind unbalanced? And where is the balance in a society that produces such people, such dilemmas? After balancing his options, Harold makes a decision. Will the reader agree with his choice? The story raises a lot of questions, and the plot, language and symbolism are beautifully handled.

Born in 1939 in an Icelandic Canadian village, [W.D. Valgardson](#) was interested in the effects of isolation. Many of his stories deal with this theme.

Along with some excellent short stories, Valgardson wrote novels. [The Girl with the Botticelli Face](#) (D & M 1993) takes place in Victoria, where the author was working as a Creative Writing professor at [UVic](#). It was written in the early hours, said Valgardson, when it flowed out easily, day after day.

When he was profiled by [John Burns](#) in *Quill and Quire* in 1997, Valgardson had completed "Garbage Creek" and other children's stories. Like the novel mentioned above, *Thor*, another children's book, flowed into his mind easily and quickly.

His interest in writing for children, his own grandkids in particular, appears to have balanced the darker side of some of his earlier prose.