

books

moore novel
shows social
perception

Brian Moore's new novel, "The Emperor of Ice Cream" (McClelland & Stewart, 1965) might well have been called "Catcher in the Rye 'round Wartime Dublin", for like "Catcher in the Rye" it deals mainly with the unsure (but sensitive adolescent who wanders through the cesspools of society, to find in the end his way in the world.

Seventeen-year-old Gavin Burke, bored and disenchanted, joins the ill-reputed Air Raid Precautions corps, essentially an organization of drunks and idlers.

Dedicated to carrying stretchers and administering first aid, this organization of "society's noblest" allows Gavin to explore a world very much unlike that of his parents. It is here that he meets such men as the Captain, noble at heart but limited in vocabulary to "Thanks very much. I'll have another pint". And Craig ("Shut yourse dirty beak"), the unhinged leader of the group. And of course Freddy, the independent Marxist, petty philosopher and reader of modern poetry; diamond in the rough, who becomes Gavin's best friend and introduces him yet further into the world of social deprivation.

These characters become the sub-society contrasting with the average acceptable life which bores Gavin at home.

There, his parents and his friends (particularly his girl Sally) are shown as mere human blobs, puppets at the end of moral restraining lines. Thus Moore paints the characters involved in Air Raid Precautions in the bright tones of the living, while for the family setting he uses half-tones of dull gray.

This, then is the outstanding feature of Mr. Moore's novel: unlike "Catcher . . .", which simply takes a youth on his journey to manhood, "The Emperor of Ice Cream" uses the youth's journey to display two sides of a society and their relative value to the overall culture.

It is only at this stage that the accolades may finally come Mr. Moore's way, for until this point of comparison is realized, we have only a highly-competent copy of "Catcher . . ." Of course, the individuality and progress of the youth Gavin are also of great importance. Through him, the efforts that the two societies have on the individual are revealed; we are able to see which society in the end molds the character of Gavin to make him a man.

In general, Mr. Moore has once again shown himself a novelist with exceptional awareness of the true nature of societies and the individuals within them.

—N. Riebeck

books

who
killed
canada

"Lament for a Nation" is a book that could only have been written in Canada. It is an attempt to solve that old conundrum of the Canadian intellectual: What is Canada? The answer usually given is that Canada is a nation in search of its soul, the implication being obvious.

The difference in this book lies in the fact that unlike the morbidly introspective effusions of others, George Grant believes that Canada was different, and that Canada's past needs no apology. His thesis is that of the "Red Tory".

The term "Red Tory" is experiencing a mild vogue at present but has not been defined with any great clarity or precision. Stated briefly, the "Red Tory" is a conservative who believes in an organic society, one that rejects individualism (that individualistic philosophy deriving from Locke and culminating in modern liberalism). Grant's conservatism is not the right-wing radicalism of the Buckley-Goldwater stripe, which is basically 19th century buccaneer capitalism. Canadian conservatism was essentially the doctrine that public order and tradition, in contrast to freedom and experiment, were central to the Good Life. It is a philosophy based upon virtue (archaic word), of which a technological society has no need.

The relevance of Grant's book is the fact that in John Diefenbaker he sees the last champion of this ideal. Grant accepts Diefenbaker's own estimate of himself as the protector of the "little man" against the Establishment—the omnipresent "they" of Diefenbaker rhetoric.

The Establishment consists, according to Grant, of the Liberal Party, Montreal-Toronto corporate capitalism, and the higher echelons of the Civil Service. The common factor of all of these, is that basically they are anti-national. In varying degrees, all of them have made Canada a second-rate U.S.A.—an economic, political, and cultural satellite of the American world-empire.

The Liberal Party has historically been the agent of continentalism. As late as the 1940s Mackenzie King could see in the British the main threat to Canadian independence. But the dangers of the southern colossus he was neither unable or unwilling to see. Grant regards the '40s as the turning point in the history of Canada. In those years the seeds of political and economic domination of the U.S. were planted and today are blossoming.

Canadian nationalism could only be a desperate and losing rearguard action. In the future, an historian may sum up the process by entitling his history, "From Colony to Banana Republic".

Grant's diagnosis seems correct, but his prognosis can be wrong; the funeral oration may be somewhat premature. Canada will survive if Canadians want it to and if they are willing to make the requisite sacrifices. It is a matter of virtue.

—Roger Davies

watson (i)
unfunny,
senseless

Perhaps it is a mark of dedication that on a Saturday night one forgoes an exciting and crucial Edmonton-Calgary football game to go to the Yardbird Suite to see Wilfred Watson's new play "Fannie Hill Meets Tom Jones At the Yardbird Suite."

Perhaps it is an insult to that dedication to be forced to listen to an indeterminate lecture on involvement in the theatre and in Edmonton (e.g. "I know this is squaresville but somehow I keep coming back—and I don't know why—I mean—who am I?") Whisper in the audience: "You're a square."; then to listen to someone who calls himself a folk-singer chopping a much abused instrument ("I don't like Bob Dylan, but everybody likes Bob

Dylan, so I just play what everybody likes"—and nobody in the audience reached for a revolver); then to watch a play which was crude, disorganized, unfunny and virtually meaningless. The play is not about anything in particular.

There is little reason for the characters to be together in the same play.

Though the actors and actresses did an excellent job, it could amount to nothing but a better presentation of the sound and the fury; the failure was the dramatist's.

The play was crude, though not in the usual sense of the word.

It was a matter of incompetence, not of obscenity.

One is reminded of a certain play in which an American county was trying to prosecute an author and ban his books for obscenity.

They got what they thought was an expert witness for their cause—a critic from New York.

He took the stand and testified that the book was bad, was horrible in fact, and an insult to any reader.

Then the defense asked why.

It was in poor taste, he said; the writer couldn't write and it was a badly written book.

The play reminded one of a child taking liberties with the authorities that rule it.

Again we have civic corruption, the North-Bank Sunday School, the forces of censorship; but these elements are represented in such an overt and unintegrated fashion that the result is poor taste.

Watson's last play did have Madame Garbage, but she was a figure, a symbol that was totally integrated into the play's meaning.

In fact, "Chez Vous Comfortable Pew" had the beginnings of a valid statement, the makings of a fine play.

The figures as symbols created meaning.

The deaf-mute, as perhaps art, could only speak through the hapless salesman-artist to express love to a beautiful woman.

Through this combination love was possible.

Finally, thanks to big business and Madame Garbage, the deaf-mute is killed; the lovers break up, for though they have the vehicle of communication, there is nothing more to communicate.

So here is a valid statement on the function of art, its value, and the danger of those forces that could result in its strangulation.

But alas, this last play lacked these architectonics. It didn't even rise to the level of humor.

The lovely Antonia was a mis-cast character—she rather deserved to be a heroine in some other play.

The lubricious Fanny and Tom acted well, but why get the product secondhand? As for Samuel and Rebecca, though acted well, their situation is trite.

As for the attraction of the characters for each other, they are presented as being universal; they are not felt to be so.

So next Saturday night, one might do well to see some "second-hand" theatre in Edmonton.

Which is unfortunate. But it is better to say that the emperor has no clothes than to pretend the situation is as one would want it to be, with local dramatists discovering meaning in local experience.

The Eskimos also lost the game.

—Howard Chayal

watson (ii)
fascinating
tragic farce

Well!
I arrived at the Gateway office at peace with the world, only to

find the above unsolicited review waiting for me.

Let me make it quite clear that I was delighted; one of the things we most sorely need is more good knock-down argument about such features of the cultural scene as Dr. Watson's new play.

And Mr. Chayal's contribution to this argument deserves serious consideration, even if he does get a few things mixed up. (I think Madame Garbage should be Mother Garbage.)

I should begin by agreeing with Mr. Chayal: "Chez Vous . . ." was a much more satisfying entertainment than "Tom Jones . . ."

The cast, in both plays, did an extremely good job; but one feels, watching the latter play, that the cast is to a large extent making bricks without straw for long stretches of the time.

But Mr. Chayal is surely wrong to imply that the difference between the two plays is a difference of construction, that TJ has less untidy and organization than CV.

His interesting plot summary-interpretation actually covers only one of the subplots of CV.

What relation there was between the deaf-mute subplot and the Trans-Canada Ditch subplot, or the Rubber Canada subplot, or the Mother Garbage subplot was largely the product of the audience's predictable desire for order.

In both plays Watson's method is to write subplots and let the plot (consisting of the functioning together of the subplots) look after itself.

Mr. Chayal admits that this method worked for CV; I admit it doesn't work so well in TJ.

But I would urge that the trouble is not authorial constructional incompetence but a certain failure of inventiveness on Watson's part.

TJ is made up of three almost painfully distinct subplots; each subplot involves a male and female character.

First, there is the title-relationship, which Watson uses to satirize the cult of youth.

Then there is the Jonathan-Rebecah tug-of-war, which comes out straight Blondie and Dagwood.

Now both of these subplots concern relationships much more private than those treated in CV.

And this movement away from the marketplace affects the final, "public" subplot of TJ as well: the languorous battle between Antonia, chief of police, and Clarence, guardian of the Yardbird Suite in Bud D'Amur's resonant absence.

The matriarchal figure in Watson plays is always more-or-less mad; but whereas Mother Garbage's madness was thoroughly public (the Quest for Power), Antonia was played by Armgard Conradi as a very fascinating case-study of a cross between Miss Julie and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek.

And it is the Strindbergian elements that predominate, except that Watson can never bring himself to allow his characters to become rounded.

In other words, the accent in "power-neurosis" has shifted from power to neurosis, and suddenly things aren't so funny any more.

Then the question arises: how intentional is this?

I think Mr. Chayal would have enjoyed himself much more if he had come prepared to see "Tom Jones Meets Fanny Hill at the Yardbird Suite: a Tragic Farce".

The high spirits of VC have evaporated; Bud D'Amur is in prison; some unexplained disaster has occurred at the Embers, as mysterious as the indiscretion committed by Earwicker in "Finnigans' Wake" (by the way, I've often heard complaints about the in-jokes in Watson's plays, but surely it is best not to know the "point" of most of the illusions; what happened at the Embers was that CV flopped there, and how dull that is!)

On this view, the distinct drabness of invention in TJ as compared to VC is entirely deliberate.

Nobody told Mr. Chayal that he was watching a tragic farce in which (in true twentieth-century style) nullity replaces nobility as the tragic characteristics.

Nobody told Bud D'Amur (in his capacity as director as opposed to his off-stage role in the play) either; and the performance suffers because everyone is worried at the paucity of laughs.

But once one accepts the "bricks without straw" feeling as having been foreseen and intended, TJ becomes rather a good play, certainly worth the buck fifty it costs.

The emperor may have good reasons for wearing only a loin-cloth.

—J. O. Thompson

new jmc
season
announced

Four recitals will compose the 1965-66 season of the Jeunesses Musicales du Canada. On Nov. 3, Christian Larde and Marie-Claire Jamet will appear in a program of flute and harp music.

The next recital (Dec. 1) will feature Lethbridge pianist Dale Bartlett, Grand Prize winner of the 1964 JMC National Music Competition.

Then on Feb. 2, Les Petits Chanteurs du Mont Royal will appear. This choral group is composed of 35 boys between the ages of 11 and 16, and will present a program of sacred and secular vocal music.

The last concert in the series takes place on Feb. 16, and will present the brilliant young French cellist Guy Fallot.

To judge by past performance, the new JMC season will be an anxiously-to-be-awaited event, so any sane and reasonable music lover will purchase his membership immediately at the Allied Arts Box Office in the Bay.

The recitals will take place in Alberta College Auditorium, and will begin at 8 p.m.

fine arts
calendar

Simon Preston, organist—Friday—All Saints' Cathedral (10035-103 St.)—8:30 p.m.

Anna Russell, comedienne—Friday—Jubilee—8:30 p.m.

"Tom Jones Meets Fanny Hill"—Friday through Sunday—Yardbird Suite—9:30 p.m.

"Adventures in Music"—Symphony Concert—Saturday—Jubilee—2:30 p.m. (tickets at door only)

ARMTA concert: Music of the 16th Century—Sunday—Heintzman Hall (upstairs at Heintzman's)—2:30 p.m.

CIL Collection of Canadian Paintings—to Thursday—Edmonton Art Gallery

Michael Ayrton Drawings—to Oct. 29—Fine Arts Gallery (9021-112 St.)—7-9 p.m.

"La Boheme" (film of actual performance)—Oct. 20-21—Odeon Theatre—Evenings 8:30 p.m., Matinees 2 p.m.