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York professor discusses Trotsky

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find something of the relatively human and social truth about the Trotsky incident rather than making it into a farce.

EXCALIBUR: *How close is this production to the one you saw in your head?*

FOTHERGILL: I couldn't remember once I started hearing the actors speak. Everything now seems right. Even the set, which some people don't like. The funny thing is, I've been to the abandoned mining foundry where Trotsky was interred and the set resembles it exactly.

EXCALIBUR: *What has been the process of putting this play on stage?*

FOTHERGILL: I wrote a draft of the play in 1976-77. I had taken a year off from York and had a Canada Council grant awarded to me by a jury that included Urjo Kareda, who suggested I send the play to Stratford. I immediately thought I was in for instant international fame and fortune! After months, it was turned down. John Woods, at Theatre Neptune, was interested and then, after months, he turned it down. Then, after several months, the National Arts Centre turned it down. There was a long period during which nothing happened with it at all.

But then I went to Toronto Free Theatre's production of *The Changling* and saw that they had 16 people on stage and so I sent it there, and they had it for months. I finally phoned and asked for it back. They said, "But we're going to do a workshop with it. Didn't anyone let you know?" After that, Guy Sprung said to get it down to eight characters (from 13) and I rewrote it and changed the end and took out the six Nazi prisoners, including one soldier named Babinsky whose apathy earned mention in Trotsky's autobiography.

EXCALIBUR: *Several of the characters find themselves on the receiving end of Trotsky's philosophizing. Was it your intention to use the play as a vehicle for teaching about Trotsky's ideas?*

FOTHERGILL: Not really, but I'm surprised at how little people know. I had a Graduate English class a couple of years ago and happened to mention *The Sealed Train*. No one knew what I was talking about. I would have thought that it would have conjured up all sorts of images about Lenin on his way to the Finland station. They hadn't heard of it.

EXCALIBUR: *The play's episodic nature suggests that it would make a good film. Have you considered it?*

FOTHERGILL: I spent months last year working with a TV director who was very attached to Trotsky; he happened to be born on October 26th, Trotsky's birthday. We began writing a film script. It was enormous fun, and we liked each other, but in the end we had too many differences of opinion. Probably, it came down to the choices each of us would have made if either of us had been Whitmore, the Canadian soldier in charge of Trotsky. The Whitmore on stage represents the choices I would have made as a conscious-stricken young man about to enter World War I.

EXCALIBUR: *What would have happened if Trotsky hadn't been detained?*

FOTHERGILL: The more important difference would have been if they had kept him for six months. There's little doubt that Trotsky's part in the Bolshevik revolution was indispensible. There might not have been a Bolshevik revolution.

EXCALIBUR: *How do you think the play might be received in the Soviet Union?*

FOTHERGILL: I've sent a copy to Russia through a colleague. I have an idea that the Russians might be ready for a play about Trotsky, especially a play written by a Canadian set prior to the Revolution, and set outside the Soviet Union. They're beginning to talk about him again.

EXCALIBUR: *What's stopped discussion of Trotsky?*

FOTHERGILL: The whole Stalinist repression, Stalin's turning Trotsky into everything evil from Nazi collaborator, saboteur and the source of every possible enemy; he was simply obliterated from the history books. Eisenstein's film *October*, the epic of the Revolution, was released in 1927. It had been ready a year earlier, but between 1926 and 1927, every frame of the film was examined and Trotsky's image was cut or erased. So there is now a fuzzy empty place next to Lenin in some of the scenes. Trotsky was obliterated from history, from the Russian memory. Sooner or later they are going to have to find him and get him back in again. And I have this little notion that this play, about a Trotsky who hasn't got to Russia yet, might be something for which they're ready.

EXCALIBUR: *Do you think that people will see the play as a pro-communist statement?*

FOTHERGILL: It's certainly pro-socialist. But, the line "Believe this, the friend of Trotsky has nothing to fear!" is a complete irony. Every single friend of Trotsky was wiped out by Stalin. The play is highly partial to Trotsky and what he stood for then. And we'll never know what the Soviet Union might have been like if Trotsky had taken up the reins instead of Stalin. Anybody who reads Trotsky soon realizes that he was more sophisticated and humane and civilized and imaginative and everything that Stalin was not. It couldn't have been quite as terrible as it became under Stalin.

Morever, he would have stopped earlier. In the '30s, the whole dissention between Stalin and Trotsky was that Trotsky wanted to arm the German workers and foment civil war in Germany to deny the Nazis the chance to take power.

FOTHERGILL AND SONS: York prof Robert Fothergill accompanied by his two sons.

'60s rebels now mainstream

By LEN CLER—CUNNINGHAM

Wendy Roland Michener was a film critic, feminist, cultural nationalist, and one of the few bilingual journalist, writing in the '60s. She was, in the words of Robert Fulford "our first national critic, because she could speak for both our cultures." During her brief career, she wrote for *Maclean's*, *Saturday Night*, *The Toronto Star*, and at the time of her death was *The Globe and Mail*'s film and dance critic.

In honour of her contribution to Canadian cultural awareness, the first Wendy Michener Symposium was presented last week by the Faculty of Fine Arts in cooperation with Founders College.

The inaugural lecture, "Canadian Culture at the Crossroads: Film, Television and the Media in the 1960s," discussed the cultural and corresponding critical advances in the arts and media of the '60s. If the people collected in the room were any indication of those "once" active within film, television, and media, the years have been kind. Knitted wools, conservative greys and blues, oxfords, argyles, and the reek of credit cards was omnipresent. For a conference discussing the near mythical radicalism of the '60s, the lunch-club atmosphere belied the fact that these people who once damned the dominant aesthetic today define it. The Symposium resembled a support group for the chronically cultured.

The discussion was moderated by Mavor Moore—regular columnist for the *Globe and Mail*; and featured Doug Leiterman, journalist, producer, and director; Robert Daudlin, programmer, writer and leading authority on French-Canadian cinema; Peter Morris, a writer and critic who, it is rumoured, will soon be teaching at York; and June Callwood, activist/columnist. Visual artist Joyce Wieland, a staunch nationalist and feminist long before either were explicitly fashionable, screened a short clip from her unfinished film *Wendy and Joyce*.

Each of the speakers used Wendy Michener as an example to support their personal theories or beliefs. Doug Leiterman argued for journalists assuming a confrontational approach regardless of their position (i.e. even if they're highly successful producers like Leiterman).

Robert Daudelin and Peter Morris discussed the explosive growth of Canadian cinema during Michener's time. Daudelin addressed the proliferation of Quebec cinema while Morris discussed the critical juncture which occurred during the '60s, when a new style of film required new critical approaches.

It was at this point that another critical juncture occurred. When asked, "What of criticism in the '80s," Morris' non-answer was indicative of the symposium's failure to address the inability of the '60s to live up to its promise; a promise which should have been realized by the 1980s. The failure of the '60s was the failure of a generation—their generation.

The exception to the rule was June Callwood, who asked: "Who took the promise of the '60s and gave us the guilt of the '80s?" Every aspect of Callwood's polemic was directed towards the here and now. Callwood used Michener as an example of the "sixth estate," making an impassioned plea for a female voice within the media, "which obeys a different imperative," one of empathy and compassion.