

arts

Tears bring mixed emotions

by Notoy Alkith

Cruel Tears a country opera, began its three-day run at Edmonton's SUB Theatre last Thursday night. The work was written by Saskatchewanian Ken Mitchell (novelist, poet, actor, and currently an English prof. at the U of S) along with members of the Dumptrucks, (formerly Humphrey and the Dumptrucks), a Saskatoon bluegrass band.

The play is a commentary on, and an insight into, a certain aspect of the Canadian experience. It is at once assertive and satirical, and, for the most part, an entertaining look at a group of truckers and their associates. In the enactment of this microcosm Mitchell, the Dumptrucks, the set designers and directors unfold a collage of presentational media which includes music, dance, mime and dialogue. These presentational qualities are often very effective.

The music performed by Dumptrucks Michael Millar, Michael Taylor and guest Bob Evans was well played and colored the action appropriately. In a prelude to the *Wedding Song* dealing with protagonist Johnny Roychuck's lonely trucker syndrome, Bob Evans leads the chorus through a call and response sequence. Deliberately bad, it is reminiscent of the worst of the lonesome cowboy classics. That the Dumptrucks have only one solo contribution, *Catalogue Blues* is in part an indication of their assumption of the retiring posture required of them in that setting. That they can accept it without qualms is evident throughout — they are unobtrusive and professional.

The dance and mime are well choreographed and



A vengeful Jack Deal (Alex Diakun) causes problems for Johnny Roychuck (Winston Rekert).

the mime especially added to the performance. Props are minimal and the use of mimists works to convey settings, images, and functions. The mimists lend a human quality to various cultural artifacts and contribute some levity. Perhaps the best example is the human refrigerator constantly responding humanly to slammed doors and other inconsiderate acts.

The operatic dialogue, as can be expected, parallels the music. Performances range from the brash *Talking Blues* to softness of *Willow Song* by the leading lady Kathy Roychuck. With the exception of Johnny Roychuck the performances contribute to understanding and faithful character development. Roychuck's spoken lines too are thus afflicted and again the problem is not shared by the other characters.

Roychuck's character development is spotty and



Kathy Roychuck (Anne Wright) plays host to Flora Deal (Janet Wright).

hurried. The murder of his bride towards the end of the third act seems out of character and cheapens the performance as a whole. It is unfortunate that Roychuck didn't either receive more attention from the writers or was permitted to break away from the Shakespearean mold.

The writers chose Shakespeare's *Othello* as a basis for plot and characterization. Beyond these two facets of the work, any semblance to *Othello* becomes strained. In terms of the work as a whole, it seems more to the point to take *Cruel Tears* for what it is rather than trying to evaluate it in terms of the Shakespearean classic. Indeed, if *Cruel Tears* can be faulted it is because it isn't free to be itself. It is a play which despite its freshness and spontaneity is deterministically directed towards a goal to which it doesn't particularly lend itself towards.

Dialectics and You



by Thaddeus "Bongo" Watkins

(A column, the frequency of which is directly proportionate to its appearance of frequency. The author refuses to accept responsibility for any damaged or stolen property resultant.)

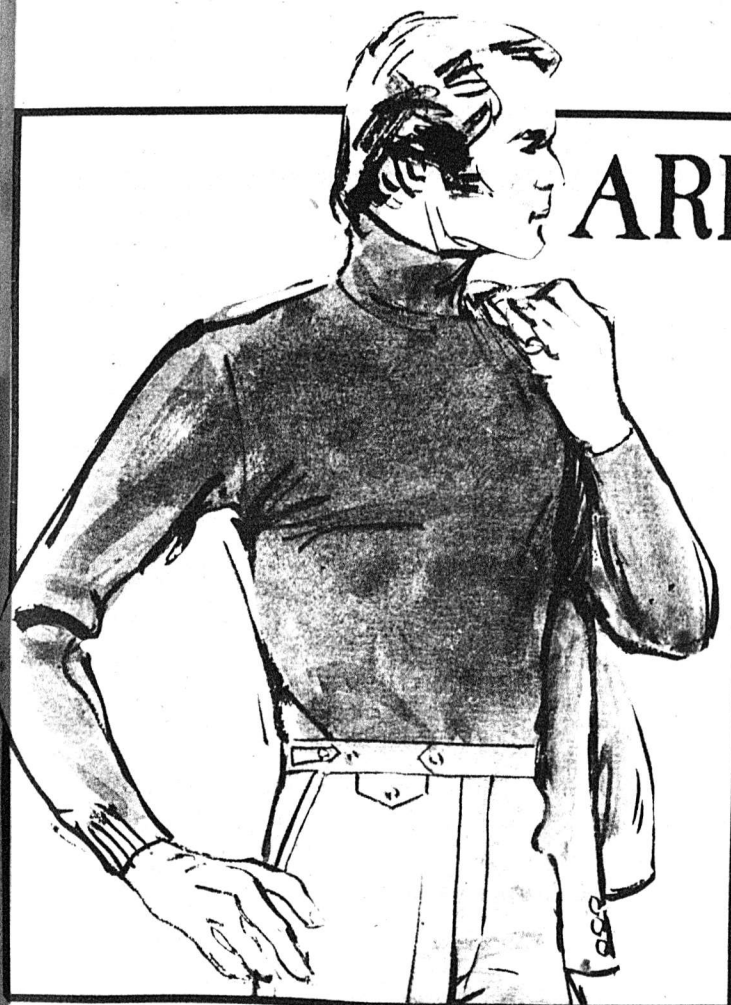
As the sun was setting last week, we were contemplating sitting cats. But the sun has risen (it had to; that's how I see it) and I must ask you if you have ever been alone enough to taste brass. Well? The experience, depending on how athletic you were in junior high school, can come to resemble the arbitrary precipitation of cigarette machine parts in Friday's on Thursday afternoons after having resolved to devote considerable energy to the propagation of fruit flies in the card catalogues of the Education library. Grey ones with bent legs and clutched armrests.

So what. So what if the goggle eyed spinster sitting behind you in number 63 pulls a flamethrower from under her blouse and proceeds to exterminate the wood mites clinging tenaciously to your jacket's collar button? So what if Wayne Mushroom, the kid from Pierce Lake, Saskatchewan, who, at the trembling age of fifteen, decided that his vocation lay in the priesthood, who wet his pants during the Chem 30 exam, who drinks pepsi-cola, so what if he's fallen asleep while the bespectacled, bearded gerbil's briefcase smoulders? Onto into of Love So what (!!***??#††!?!?) you say, you involuntarily twisted glazed polished coffee coupon!

It is evident that you have not been reading your *Complete Book of Garden Magic and Indian Lore*. Within its slippery covers you will find not only Nancy's profile which illustrates one good use for an achievement battery based on twenty-five items, but also the following poem:

You you you you you you you you you you you
you you you you you
you you you you you you
you you you you you
time and up.

To me this appears the most satisfactory interpretation of the present state of life on the surface of the planet Dirt; despite a regrettable recrudescence of lawn shampooing and nationalism which, impressive though it may be, and disastrous in its effect on our private post-bomb lives, seems to have no scientific importance in the overall process: for the reason that any human tendency toward fragmentation, regardless of its size, shape and smell, is clearly of an order of magnitude inferior to the cosmic forces (geographic, demographic, economic, psychic, and bubonic) whose constantly and naturally emerging pressure must sooner or later compel us, bottoms-up, to unite in some form of human whole organized on the basis of human solidarity, brothers and sisters.



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