

An uncomfortable formula

by David Deaton

The Power Plays
George F. Walker
(Coach House Press, 184 pp.)

Drama depends on character the way television depends on electricity. In this trilogy of full-length plays, Canadian playwright George F. Walker has given us a character who lives.

Meet Tyrone Power: journalist, detective, lonesome loser. In the great tradition of *film noir* gumshoes, Power gets his man but never his woman. He no longer even tries:

MARGARET: You promised me we'd spend some time alone together, Tyrone. In a relationship a person has the right to make certain demands.

POWER: We don't have a relationship.

MARGARET: Yes we do! Just because we don't go to bed together doesn't mean we don't have a relationship.

POWER: It does to me!

MARGARET: Just because I don't love you doesn't mean that you can't love me.

POWER: They call that unrequited love, Margaret. It's a disease. People wither away from it. They move into rooming houses and die, staring at the little triangles on the linoleum floors. Get out of my life.

Power is a surly, snarling smart-ass and we love him for it, running up as he does against society snobs, *femmes fatales*, and crazed generals. "Excuse me for living," is his motto.

Wherever Power goes, a host of corpses is sure to follow. In two of the plays, *Gossip* and *Filthy Rich*, our hero is called upon to solve the case or face being hauled off as the prime suspect.

If you're thinking all this sounds like a private eye show, well, you're right. Especially when read together, the Power Plays reveal an uncomfortably formulaic quality, as if they were conceived for a television series.

In two of the plays, Power gets involved because his best friend has been knocked off by the bad guys. Not bad for a self-proclaimed misanthrope.

These devices wouldn't be so noticeable if the formula only worked. It doesn't.

The plots are ludicrously, impossibly complicated. Contrived, not constructed, they always climax in Power looking at the wrong end of a gun.

Let me spoil it for you by revealing that our hard-bitten hero never does get plugged and so will be available for further sequels — er, volumes.

As for Walker's other characters, most would be raised to higher levels of meaning if they could even be perceived as stereotypes. Their background is so confusingly sketchy, we don't know what they've done, much

less care why they did it.

And yet we enjoy Power's confrontation with these shady, shadowy figures — usually representatives of Canada's corporate elite. Power's sarcasm bubbles over whenever he faces the rich,

the powerful, the voluptuous:

"Life is a conspiracy by people like you to turn the simple into the complex, the obvious into the mysterious, and the mentally healthy into those funny old people who scratch around in public

trash cans."

Saving Power from such a fate is his working class sidekick, Jamie MacLean, who is even more cynical and inconveniently loudmouthed. His philosophy is, "No sense being a cynic unless you got the energy to use it against everything that made you one." He's a trip.

If the first two plays are convoluted murder-mysteries, play number three purports to be a meditation on the relation between art and war, might and morality, some damn thing.

The Art of War has a more portentous setting but it's the same old schlock. This time Power crosses swords with an unhinged Canadian general, due to become deputy minister of culture. That's the extent of the title's significance.

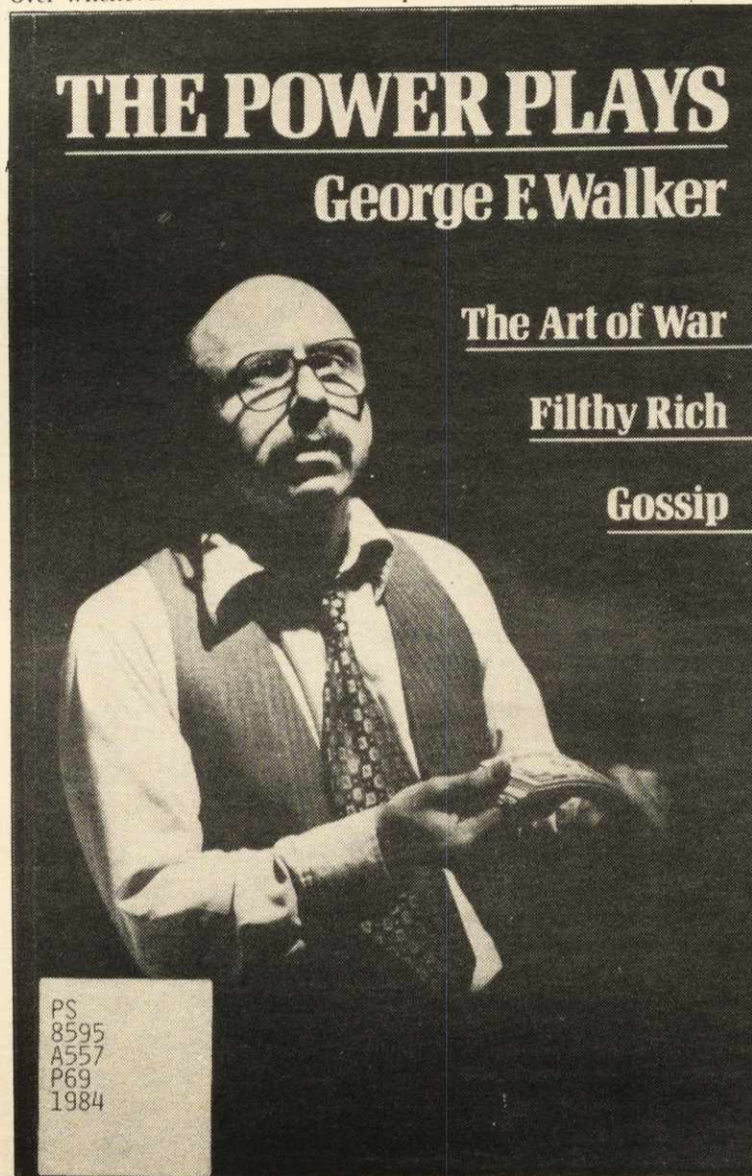
The general is naturally mixed up with terrorism and snobbery, and he too ends up pointing a gun at Power. But now that he's face to face with a real live fascist villain, we get to hear Power declare:

"General, I've been waiting all my life to say this to someone like you. Any asshole can get the trains running on time! But it takes something more to get people on the trains for any other reason than the fact that they're scared shitless of the asshole who got them running on time."

Well, sure.

In the introduction to this trilogy we are informed that the chief strength of the Power plays is "their ability to surprise an audience into new recognitions

Continued on page 14



A SMU CARIBBEAN STUDENTS SOCIETY PRODUCTION

Silhouette

Date: Saturday, Nov. 4, 1989
Time: 8:00 pm.
Venue: Multi-Purpose Rm., Loyala Bldg. SMU
Admission: \$6 Students
- \$8 Non-students

Sugar treats at the Pub

by Jordan Richards

In the world of modern reggae music, there are few musicians with such universal talent as Sugar Minott. Pub Flamingo was treated with his presence with the incredible Abasanti Band this past Mardi Gras weekend, four nights of charged sweet sounds, new and old, from the island of Jamaica.

BACK PAGES
Secondhand and Rare Books
Bought and Sold.
1520 Queen St., Halifax, N.S.
423-4750
10,000+ Books in stock.

Sugar Minott has been recording music since he was sixteen and has consistently been producing chart-smashing singles ever since. This experience led to a flawless performance with a tightness only shared among Jamaican performers. With Sugar's ability to involve the crowd in a two-hour non-stop set, everyone in the club sweated elbow to elbow to the very end.

To Sugar Minott's credit, his performance attempted to teach Halifax about the many different forms of reggae music. Within his set, roots, lovers rock, dance hall and reggamuffin styles were played, introducing many people to the countless forms of this increasingly popular Caribbean music. The most powerful point in the show was an incredible medley of "Herbman Hustling," "Indica" and "Mr. Cop."

There are very few criticisms to be made about the performance

itself, other than the commonly heard, "He didn't play..." But the atmosphere created by the club was lacking in continuance of the Jamaican theme. Immediately following Sugar Minott's encore, the room was blasted with top forty dance music which destroyed the 'high' reggae gives off. There was soon an influx of eager "dance club-aholics" who were happy to see the show end. The review ends there because, like most people there for the show, I left after Sugar left. This is not to take away from the enthusiasm that was present during the show; the Flamingo seemed to be aware that it was time to get some fresh business into the bar (intentionally or not).

I enjoyed the show and hope that Sugar Minott returns to Halifax. There are many other great performers coming to town soon, so keep in touch.