

The arts

Alberta government and the elements of fiction

Pratt, Larry *The Tar Sands: Syncrude And the Politics of Oil* Hurtig Publishers 1976 187 pp. \$3.95 paper/\$8.95 cloth

A two billion dollar poker game involving the vast oil reserves of the Athabasca Tar Sands; a consortium of four, then three of the world's largest and most powerful multinational corporations; a provincial and a federal government set one against another and forced by circumstance into cooperation; and the intrigues and mysteries of a pulp thriller, all set within the boundaries of our native land. Wow! Great fiction, right?

Wrong.

Well, if we all hadn't lived through the last five years of the tar sands development controversy in this province, then we might well imagine it was the plot line of another topical and fictional bestseller. But there's no need for this book to have a fictional story line - the facts are strange enough in themselves.

Of course, this has always been the problem in the energy controversies which have raged in the last ten years - what are the facts? At times it seems that no one knows, and it is certainly very rewarding to be provided with a book of this sort which gives an unacademic, yet surprisingly thorough assessment of such a recent obscure controversy.

The problem, of course, in regards to such things as oil field production capacity and projected energy consumption estimates is that there are none. That's not exactly true - there are no reliable facts, would be more true. As a result, Pratt avoids the type of boring, comparative analysis that a strict economic treatise might lean towards and tends instead to judge the political ramifications of the various intricate maneuverings of an immense economic operation.

The result is an excellent over-view, with a well-researched base, and any projections made are consequently taken seriously by nature of the logic and organization used.

Pratt's basic contention is that Lougheed's government has acted in a manner consistent with Canada's historical resource exploitation - that is, they have sold out an exhaustible natural resource following a form of economic/political blackmail from the Syncrude cartel.

Certainly the evidence Pratt uses is not new ... neither is it invalid. The main blocks of the evidence are (1) a document prepared by the provincial civil service calling for gradual Canadian exploitation of the tar sands, and (2) documents listing the types of concessions which the Lougheed government granted Syncrude, but only under extreme pressure.

The truly interesting facet of these two blocks of evidence is that both were considered confidential and 'unsuitable' for public distribution. Unsuitable, that is, until people such as Mel Hurtig and Larry Pratt were

shown the documents and decided on their own discretion to reveal them to the public. As most know, when the facts were revealed the ensuing uproar was enough to convince anyone of their validity... and perhaps what they reveal is enough to convince anyone that the conclusions Pratt draws are both reasonable and of consequence to all of us.

Similar to James L'axer's *The Energy Poker Game* (although more geographically topical), this book is a must for anyone who wants an overview of the complex energy resource situation. Like previous Hurtig releases such as Harold Cardinal's *The Unjust Society* and Adams, et al *The Real Poverty Report*, this book should shortly become a national bestseller. It deserves to.

Kevin Gillese

Out of the closet

And onto the stage

by Kevin Gillese

Michel Tremblay is Canada's finest playwright.

What a boon it is for English-speaking Canada that his forceful drama can still be had in translation. And what a boon it is to English-speaking Edmonton that this city's professional theatre group has the guts and capabilities to perform his works in translation - and perform them well.

Last year on Citadel's main stage it was *Forever Yours Marie-Lou* - a penetrating analysis of a lower-class Montreal family torn apart by internal strife.

This year on Citadel's experimental stage, Citadel Too, it's *Hosanna* - a relentless dissection of a homosexual relationship in which the two characters are confused and torn by their own identity struggles.

The play itself is super - the acting and directing extremely good.

But that is not to say that one enjoys the play ... for it involves the audience in a situation which is both confusing and disturbing.

The situation follows a Halloween party that Hosanna (Patrick Christopher) attends 'in drag' - as, Elizabeth Taylor in

Cleopatra. This has been Hosanna's dream for ten years, but when 'she' turns up at the party she is crushed to discover that all the other 'queens' have duplicated the Cleopatra image and done it much better than she.

Hosanna discovers that her 'husband' Cuirette (Jean-Pierre Fournier) has been in cohorts with the queens; the play then deals with their confrontation - and Hosanna's confrontation with herself.

The roles homosexuals play in a love-relationship and the roles people play in relation to one another - love or not; - these two questions are inextricably intertwined with Tremblay's theme. That theme explores the discarding of masks, artificial roles, and the disguises we all wear - all this over and above any of the more direct roles implicit in a homosexual relationship. Throughout the play, clothes and other physical effects are discarded, which neatly parallels the stripping away of the characters' psyches.

Thus one discovers that the play really is a minor classic, complete with its beginning, middle, and end. And at the end

of the play, there is still hope ... as Hosanna stands naked before Cuirette and declares, "I am a man." The characters are stripped mentally and physically and the final physical embrace is only an extension of the mental one.

Christopher plays Hosanna with natural flair and fabulous stage presence; he handles his difficult monologue and various postures with excellent ability. Fournier is not as strong as Christopher but a great deal of his apparent weakness is inherent to the role he plays: it is

Hosanna who is most sensitive to human emotion; Cuirette the cyclist is shown as the slower, lazier of the two - as the one who makes a mistake first and considers its consequences afterwards.

Both actors have some trouble manifesting a consistent French accent throughout the recitation of their English lines, but Fournier's appears to be the more natural (although Christopher's are perhaps more difficult, requiring, as they do, a quieter and more delicate intonation).

All said, this is a play which reflects Tremblay's fine artistry and the Citadel's (with John Neville) professional status. It has a great deal to offer; everything, except comfort and complacency.

It's all in the future now

Record review: Richard and Linda Thompson, *Pour Down Like Silver*

The third album by this happily-married couple, and Richard's fourth under his name since he left Fairport Convention, *Pour Down Like Silver* is probably the most well thought-out effort of Richard's done since his masterful solo album *Henry The Human Fly*.

At a recent Richard and Linda concert in England, an enthusiastic fan shouted out a request for *Crazy Man Michael*, a Thompson composition from the golden era of Fairport. To this, Thompson replied, "Sorry, but that's all water under the bridge now." This is indicative of Thompson's reluctance to pay homage to his past; a past which established him as the most reactive folk-rock guitarist of our time. All his work since Fairport has been of a new style which is constantly being

maneuvered and developed. Since he married Linda, (nee Peters) and rescued her from rotting away as a backup vocalist for Sandy Denny, he

has written songs especially for Linda's voice. Very admirable, but sad for guitar fans, because it has done little in the way of instrumental demonstrations of his brilliant abilities.

That is, though, until *Pour Down Like Silver*. Richard has written some long songs that serve to illustrate his marvellous laid-back guitar work. The blending

of Linda's vocals with her husband's sombre guitar, a trademark of their music, achieves unparalleled heights on this new album, and the presence of six-to-eight-minute

songs gives both musicians a chance to shine. Richard himself also handles some singing, which is probably the only semblance to the past

Richard allows himself. His usual scratchy, straining, but fitting voice adds character to his compositions, and renders them uniquely Thompsonesque. Thompson stands musically, making the album a must for both Fairport and Thompson fans. Richard's refusal to capitalize on past successes is an example that should be observed by other musicians.

Gordon Turtle

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