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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Rex Deverell: Playwright-in-Residence

by

Jane A. L. Crowell

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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ENTITLED **Rex Deverell: Playwright-in-Residence**

SUBMITTED BY **Jane A. L. Crowell**

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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"Rex Deverell: Playwright-in-Residence" examines the thirteen year working relationship between Deverell and the Globe Theatre, Regina. Emphasis is placed on his plays for adults, produced by the Globe during his tenure as Canada's first permanent playwright-in-residence, 1975-1989.

Deverell wrote for both adults and children, dealing with such topics as regional history, politics, and issues of human interest, presented as comedies, musicals and docudramas. A summary of his works during the thirteen year period follows a brief history of the Globe. This leads to a critical analysis of seven plays for adults which best outlines Deverell's development as a playwright and his growing ability to blend personal concerns with public commitment. In this study the influence of the Globe's perceived mandate as a regional touring theatre and its in-the-round presentational style is made evident in Deverell's work.

Deverell's resignation from his position at the Globe in 1989 followed the Globe's gradual decline in popularity which began in the early 1980's.

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INTRODUCTION

Rex Deverell worked for thirteen years as playwright-in-residence at the Globe Theatre in Regina, Saskatchewan. During his tenure, 1975-1989, he wrote plays for the Globe's school tours and plays for the adult mainstage and touring productions. Although diverse in style and content, Deverell's adult plays follow a pattern tied inextricably to the Globe's mandate as a touring regional theatre.[1] As well, the close association of playwright and theatre - - concentrated within a specific time frame - - allows an unusual look at both the reliance of a theatre on one author and the development of that author guided by the mandate of a specific theatre. The Globe, more particularly than most Canadian regional theatres, tailored its programming to the specific needs and interests of its Saskatchewan audiences. By offering contemporary Canadian works, felt to be of special interest to the regional audience, the Globe stepped beyond the bounds of such larger, wealthier theatres as Edmonton's Citadel theatre which were unwilling to take the financial risks involved. Naming a writer-in-residence was, in part, a means to solidify the Globe's relationship with its audience: a promise of contemporary Canadian works aimed specifically at local audiences.

Deverell's adult drama has been divided by critics into the two general categories of public and personal plays. Those labelled "public" deal with issues deemed to be of primary interest to the Globe's general audiences, while the "private" plays are based on interests of concern to the playwright. Overall these works have dealt with issues of regional history, politics, religion and human interest, presented as documentary dramas, comedies, musicals and combinations of the above.

Deverell's writing style was influenced by the aim of the Globe to present material appealing to its immediate audiences, as well as by the Globe's presentational theatre-in-the-round style. The first chapter will look at the development of the Globe Theatre and its resident playwright during Deverell's tenure, acknowledging the influencing factors of such a close and lengthy association.

Chapter Two will examine four of Deverell's earlier adult works for the Globe which fit into the playwright's pattern of alternating personal and public plays. Boiler Room Suite (personal), a play of human interest, was Deverell's first play for the Globe's adult audiences. Medicare! (public) was the playwright's first authored production dealing with Saskatchewan history and politics, but derives from the collective docudrama tradition of No. 1 Hard on which he had worked previously for the Globe. Drift (personal) is a semi-autobiographical play which looks at private rather than

public history and Black Powder (public) is another form of docudrama, described by Deverell as a "one-man collective."

Chapter Three will focus on three of Deverell's later plays for the Globe Theatre. Beyond Batoche offers a personal look at one facet of Saskatchewan's public history, while Quartet for Three Actors allows a public glimpse into the private lives of actors. The last of Deverell's plays to be examined, Afternoon of the Big Game, is a Saskatchewan comedy dealing on a perscnal level with the public interests of politics and Roughriders football.

CHAPTER ONE

Rex Deverell was born in Toronto, Ontario in 1941, and raised in Orillia. He attended McMaster University, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts (General Arts and Pre-Divinity) in 1963, and a Bachelor of Divinity in 1966. He received his Master of Sacred Theology (Theatre and Theology) from Union Theological Seminary, New York City in 1967. The same year he married Rita Shelton and was named pastor of Edward Street Baptist Church, St. Thomas, Ontario where he remained until 1970. In 1971 Deverell was living with his wife in Toronto, where she worked as an actress with the Studio Lab Theatre, a group that was experimenting with participational as well as children's theatre. While she was there, Deverell collaborated on a play for children, Sam and the Tigers, with Ernie Schwarz of the Studio Lab. As Deverell explained, "that was my first exposure to children's theatre and the improvisational aspect of it. The next year, Rita got a job with the Globe Theatre school company . . . . and I followed her out."[2]

From 1972 to 1976 Deverell wrote mainly, but not exclusively, for the Globe school tours: Shortshrift (1972-73); The Copetown City Kite Crisis (1973-74); Power Trip and Sarah's Play (1974-75); Harry Oddstack and the Case of the Missing King (for the Globe's 1975 Christmas family production), The Shinbone General Store Caper and The Underground Lake (1975-76); The Up-Hill Revival (1976-77), as

well as Next Town: 9 Miles, for the Montreal Olympic Games. In addition he wrote For Land's Sake, commissioned by the Department of the Environment and later toured by the Globe.

The major advantage of this relationship for the Globe was that Deverell's plays were written with the theatre's playing style and aims in mind. Deverell wrote the material suitable for children's theatre performed in-the-round that the Globe school tours required, and of which, up until now, there had been only a limited supply available.

The Globe originated as a theatre for young people, incorporated in August, 1966, under the direction of [illegible] and Sue Kramer and funded in the main by the Saskatchewan Arts Board. The Globe did not offer a season of plays for adults until 1970. The Kramers had met while working with Brian Way's Theatre Centre Ltd. for children, in London, England. Embracing Way's philosophy of participatory theatre, the Kramers began their work in Regina with the intention of doing "children's theatre work, in the schools, in school time" and "to introduce participatory plays"[3] to the Saskatchewan school children. The Globe Theatre was formed as a limited company which the Kramers themselves owned. The theatre maintained chartered non-profit institution status through the Globe Theatre Society. In this way the Kramers became the permanent co-artistic directors, and the Globe established a board of directors responsible for such administrative problems as fundraising.

The touring company began with a programme of plays for specific school age groups, and followed the participatory tradition of Way's company, which included arena staging. The in-the-round style served a practical as well as a stylistic purpose. For a company touring a large number of schools with a variety of facilities, performing on the floor of gymnasiums avoided reliance on inadequate stages and equipment. The simplified playing style also avoided the use of complicated lighting and major sets which would need to be transported and re-assembled for every venue, and required only a minimum of props. The company would therefore put more emphasis on the audience's imagination and the ability of the playwright to make naturalistic trappings unnecessary for the performance to work successfully. The performance style would also make use of the physical closeness of the actors and their audience, emphasizing and encouraging the dynamics created by that relationship.

As a result of trying to make the best use of their theatrical opportunities, the Globe's offerings had hitherto consisted mainly of "plays by Brian Way or scenes from works on the curriculum such as the plays of Shakespeare."[4] Thus it was most advantageous for the Globe to have in Deverell a playwright close enough at hand to write to specific regional and stylistic needs. Deverell has acknowledged a difference between his plays and those of Way, in that "Brian Way writes plays around the participation. I tend to look first for

themes and situations that I think are relevant to the audience and then create spaces within the plays for participation."[5] Nonetheless, there was to be a specific framework in which Deverell was to work. The Globe theatre would require a certain style of performance and content, with interest and importance to its audience, while the writer would require the artistic freedom to express his ideas about topics which interested him. Deverell felt that the agreement was a beneficial one, as the Kramers "didn't want children's plays that trivialized children. So I started writing about themes that were important to me and put them into a Saskatchewan context. It was the beginning of a trend that has proved very successful."[6] Deverell's plays also acknowledge the Kramers' desire to do "nothing less than change the world",[7] as they had told Deverell upon first meeting the playwright.

A further advantage was Deverell's working knowledge of the company style, which meant that the plays were ready for performance in-the-round without the often-required adaptations, and his understanding of the audience meant that major revisions would probably be unnecessary. Many of Deverell's plays for children are set on the prairies, often in small towns, creating a "microcosm for serious social issues", resulting in "a series of whimsical issue-related pieces"[8] aimed specifically at Saskatchewan's mostly rural school population. These plays are concerned with a variety

of issues, from pollution and other environmental concerns (eg. The Copetown City Kite Crisis), to prejudice (The Underground Lake) and social issues (Melody Meets the Bag Lady). Many of the plays include major audience participation scenes (The Up-Hill Revival) or music (Superwheel, a full-length musical). Of The Up-Hill Revival (1976-77 season) the artistic directors claimed that its success "was in no small way related to his (Deverell's) intimate knowledge of the workings of our company and the audiences we play to."[9]

Over the years the Globe was gradually establishing a strong presence in both rural and urban Saskatchewan, partly due to its annual school tours. During its first tour, October to December of 1966, the Globe school company performed for over 15,000 children in 32 towns in Saskatchewan. The following season they visited over 100 communities, playing to more than 32,000 school children. The Globe school tour was becoming well established within the province, performing to tens of thousands of school children across Saskatchewan, by the time the Globe added theatre for adults to part of the touring programme in 1968-69. The first adult presentation was Bertolt Brecht's The Good Woman of Setzuan, funded by the Canada Council. According to E. Ross Stuart, later in 1969 the Globe set a Regina attendance record when a combined audience of over 1800 watched Saskatchewan native Frances Hyland perform in Five Evenings:

> This encouraged the Kramers to produce more plays aimed at adults. During the 1969-70 season, in cooperation with the Regina Public Library, they presented three contemporary plays . . . . first in Regina and then in several small Saskatchewan towns.[10]

By 1970 the Globe Repertory Theatre began to present adult theatre as a separate entity, "in which the Kramers formulated a programming policy of social and political grassroots appeal."[11] It became an important part of the Globe's mandate to present plays of social, historical and political relevance to its adult audiences. As a regional theatre, rather than an alternative theatre, the Globe tried to include enough variety in its programming to fulfill as many of its audience's needs as physically and financially possible.

Over the years the playbill usually included a work from the classics, usually a Shakespearean play, as well as providing a forum for recent or new Canadian works. The plays by Canadians included Next Year Country, by Carol Bolt[12] in collaboration with the Globe company (1970 - 71 season), Women in the Attic, (originally The Queen Street Scrolls) by Len Peterson (1971-72 season); Tales from a Prairie Drifter by Rod Langley, as well as a translation of Arnold Wesker's Roots from the Norfolk dialect by Ken Mitchell (1972-73 season); George Ryga's Ecstasy of Rita Joe, and Quebecker Robert Gurik's Mr. What's-His-Name, translated from the French (1973-74 season); Rod Langley's Bethune (a co-production with Centaur Theatre), and This Train and Heroes by Ken Mitchell,

presented as a double-bill (1974-75 season); Michael Cook's The Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance and Ken Mitchell's Davin: The Politician (1977-78); W.O. Mitchell's Back to Beulah and Rick Salutin's Les Canadiens (1978-79).

In 1971, as the Globe was beginning to find its adult audiences, and in order to offer a full season in Regina, the theatre took up residence in the smaller of the two theatres in the newly opened Centre for the Performing Arts. At this time the Globe maintained two separate companies, one for the school touring season and another for the full season of adult plays, although the school tours continued as the Globe's mainstay. During this 1971-72 season the Globe school company had a total audience of 72,974 children while the repertory theatre performed for 14,309.

In 1973 the decision was taken to sign a five-year lease on what had originally been the Merchants Bank of Canada. In order to maintain the artistic directors' preferred style, the ground floor was "converted into a charming theatre-in-the-round seating 196 persons on tiered, padded benches rising on four sides of the playing area".[13] The acquisition of their own building was a breakthrough for the Globe as the Kramers explained, "we can schedule performances at the most convenient time for us, we can rehearse in the space we play in, we can extend the run of a particularly successful show and we can add many activities simply because we have space available."[14]

The 1973-74 season opened in their new theatre in November with Ryga's Ecstacy of Rita Joe, in keeping with the Globe's decision to christen their new home with a Canadian play, although they were self-admittedly opposed in principle to a quota system on Canadian content. The Globe, however, practiced the "three C" policy, programming a combination of contemporary, classic and Canadian plays, which was accepted by many regional theatres across the country.[15] This policy of providing a forum for Canadian playwrights was part of the Globe's mandate of perceived relevancy to its audiences, as Sue Kramer noted in an interview:

> we've discovered that people here like plays which deal with intellectual or emotional ideas or with big moral issues . . . . it's a matter of pride that the people of Regina and the province consider the Globe to be "their" theatre and that it is important and relevant to their lives.[16]

It was partly to fulfill this mandate, more immediately in terms of children's rather than adult theatre, that the Globe named Rex Deverell as their writer-in-residence during the 1975-76 season. It was felt that a closer and lengthier relationship between the playwright and the theatre company would be of great assistance, allowing them the possibility of ongoing projects rather than standard finite work. Changes to the plays were made continually throughout the touring seasons with playwright, director and company working together to improve the performances. This sort of arrangement provides

an enviable position for a playwright. According to author Ken Mitchell: ". . . it's been a great disappointment to me that I haven't been able to develop a relationship with a theatre like the Globe . . . because I think that's how the best plays are written."[17]

During his first season of residency, four of Deverell's plays were produced; as well, he conducted workshops for the Saskatchewan Drama Festival and delivered lectures in Calgary and Edmonton. This productive first year of Deverell's tenure at the Globe was funded by the Canada Council and the Saskatchewan Arts Board. The Globe continued to grow, and during the 1975-76 season the school tours provided a record number of performances to a total audience of 80,894 (equalling 36 per cent of the province's school population) in 142 communities across Saskatchewan. In the Globe's Annual Report of this 1975-76 season (pp. 3-4) the artistic directors reaffirmed their commitment to participatory theatre for children: "the philosophy of the school company has always been based on the work that Ken and Sue and Jim [Brewer, part of the artistic management team] did at Theatre Centre with Mr. Way." The Adult Company performed 123 times to a total attendance of 19,148 (averaging 78 per cent of theatre capacity).

Although the Globe was meeting with success, the cost of maintaining two companies, especially the school touring company, resulted in continual financial difficulties.

Directorial decisions had to be a constant compromise of money, available talent, the expectations of the audience and the artistic leanings of the director(s). In a similar situation, Janet Amos, artistic director of Theatre New Brunswick has explained: "We are being asked, as a regional theatre, to be all things to all people, and we don't have the money to do it."[18]

The Globe was expected to meet the needs of audiences who often had no alternate theatre choices. The repertory company, as well as the school company, toured to the smaller cities of Weyburn, Yorkton, Swift Current, Moose Jaw, and Estevan, which had little else to offer in the way of professional theatre. In this respect the Globe was a typically Canadian regional theatre, attempting to deliver as much as possible, as cheaply as possible. Compounding the logistical problems, the Globe continued to operate an atypical touring schedule (similar to Theatre New Brunswick). Because it was the only theatre in Saskatchewan covering so much theatrical and geographical ground, Stuart expressed his opinion that "the Globe Theatre is too valuable to Saskatchewan to be allowed to fail; however, it operates largely on personal sacrifice."[19] The school company, for example, spent many exhausting weeks on the road touring across the province, often in the winter travelling in bad weather, and living out of suitcases in a series of small hotels. With the high costs of a touring company covering

such a large territory in this way, Deverell's position as playwright-in-residence was financially possible as a result of a continuing government grant for the purpose.

It was in this tenured position, with a number of years of experience writing for the school tours behind him, that Deverell began to write for Saskatchewan's adult audiences. As he commented in an interview, when setting up the position of playwright-in-residence, "I made it one of my conditions that I would have a slot in the main season for an adult play."[20] Deverell had already developed a sense of rapport with Saskatchewan's left-wing population, as he noted in a letter to Don Perkins: " . . . I had been writing for their sons and daughters for four or five years. I had become aware of the province as an intensely political place."[21] Deverell's interest in Saskatchewan's politics was to develop throughout his tenure at the Globe, encouraged by the Globe's political concerns which surfaced in their theatre for children as well as for adults. As Deverell has revealed, over the years his personal plays:

> took on a political edge and the documentaries no longer used Saskatchewan as a setting but rather as a topic . . . I felt there was a pact between the audience and me. If I could reflect both the concerns and the jokes of the community then the community would allow me to share my own particular questions and explorations.[22]

It is a further explanation of the relationship between the playwright and his community that Deverell had much earlier

commented that he stayed at the Globe because "I write where people are interested in my material and want it and pay me for it."[23]

The first of Deverell's plays written for the Globe's mainstage, Boiler Room Suite, premièred on January 21, 1977. The two-act play was directed by Ken Kramer, starring Susan Kramer (Aggie Rose), François Regis Klanfer (Sprugg) and Stanley Coles (Pete). Written at least partly in reaction to experiences which Deverell had while working in a half-way house for alcoholics one summer during his student years in Ontario, Boiler Room Suite is one of his more introspective plays. Deverell did, however, keep his theatre, audience and available talent in mind. The play deals with homeless alcoholics, an issue of social concern, in keeping with the Globe's tradition of remaining socially and politically current. It is not meant, however, to be a primarily issue-conscious work, as Deverell has noted, "Having Aggie and Sprugg drink wine throughout the play was a way of lubricating their fantasies... they're experiencing on a grander, alcohol-blurred level what I think humanity wants to experience: being able to deal with what oppresses them, trying to find wonder."[24] The work is set in a prairie city like Regina, giving it immediacy to the Globe's specific audiences, and as Deverell has explained, the role of Aggie Rose was written in part for Sue Kramer. "I really set out to write a kind of virtuoso part that could exploit what I had seen in her, her

talent for flights of feeling, of pathos and discipline."[25] Boiler Room Suite was performed more than a dozen times in Regina to a combined audience of 3,100 and was chosen by both the Citadel Theatre of Edmonton and Theatre Calgary for their 1977-78 programmes. Notably, it also won the 1978 Canadian Authors Award for Drama.

As far as the Globe Theatre was concerned, having a writer-in-residence was a success. The Globe Theatre's Annual Report for 1976-77 (p. 3) notes the resident season as "the best ever for the Globe Adult Company. The quality of the productions was consistently high and audience demand was staggering. . . . The highlight of the season for us was the premiere of BOILER ROOM SUITE."

Following Boiler Room Suite, Deverell continued to write for the Globe School Tours, but more and more importance was placed on his plays for adults. Meanwhile, the Globe continued to be faced with financial problems as the grant from the Canada Council which had paid for Deverell's tenure was not to be continued for the 1977-78 season and the Saskatchewan Arts Board grant was frozen for the second year in a row. However, the Globe's directors made the decision to include Rex Deverell's salary as a permanent part of the theatre's budget, as his presence in the company was felt to be of great importance to their work as a regional theatre. With a writer-in-residence, plays could be commissioned by the theatre to directly address issues considered to be of

importance to the community.

Subscribing to this mandate of relevancy, Deverell's next project was as writer for a documentary drama about the Saskatchewan grain industry. During the 1976-77 season the Globe received funding from the Explorations Branch of the Canada Council and from Canada Works to begin this project which was to become No. 1 Hard. The result was a study in collectivity for the Globe, making use of Deverell as writer, Geoffrey Ursell as composer, Robert Bryanton as music director and accompanist, Ken Kramer as director, and various members of the company as researchers who had not only access to, but considerable influence over the "script".

By the nature of its subject matter, as well as by its documentary style, No. 1 Hard continues in the Globe tradition in terms of commitment to the community. Indeed, the community was asked to play an active role in the on-going creation of No. 1 Hard. At the end of each show, the audience was asked to stay and criticize the play, which was then changed in accordance with the ensuing discussions. They were also invited to evaluate and criticize the issues raised during the performance. The play deals mainly with the many difficulties encountered by Saskatchewan grain farmers in their battle against the big companies who controlled the price of grain; the politics behind the big companies; and the institution of the Wheat Pool which the farmers themselves had originally created. To maintain documentary authenticity most

of the lines are direct quotations from the politicians and grain company management, interspersed with songs and one created scene. Reviewer Bob Cosbey described the production as a "funny, hard-hitting, fast-paced dramatic and musical satire of the prairie grain industry" which created "theatre the way theatre ought to be, with theatrical talents used in the service of meaning, and performers and audience talking together, and the play growing from that interchange."[26] In these terms, the production had achieved the Globe's aim of making their theatre directly appealing to an involved community.

The Kramers had been exposed to this type of documentary theatre in England when they saw the work of Peter Cheeseman, Victoria Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent. One of the Victoria Theatre's aims was to hold a "significant place in the community",[27] according to an interview with Cheeseman in a local student newspaper. The Victoria, like the Globe in later years, was trying to establish its identity as a theatre serving its community, presenting works of special interest to its particular audience. As of 1962 the Victoria was the only permanent theatre-in-the-round in England. It specialized in musical documentaries, and experimented with both collective and semi-collective productions which were based on considerable research including interviews (sometimes recorded on tape), newspaper articles, etc. In this way Cheeseman and his company tried to let the documented material speak for

itself rather than trying to interpret and re-create the evidence which they had researched. Their emphasis was on the authenticity of the presented material.

Although making use of the collective style, Cheeseman also found it useful to keep at least one writer as a member of the theatre company, claiming that it provides,

> an essential factor in the creative potency of the group . . . . working together over long periods tends to create a simple and healthy respect for each others' abilities, a sensible awareness of shortcomings . . . .[28]

Influenced by Cheeseman's pioneering work, the Globe experimented with many of the same variables: musicals, documentaries, collectives and semi-collectives, while maintaining authenticity. The Globe's grain industry documentary was directed by Ken Kramer, whose artistic policies, according to Alan Filewod, had long reflected his left-wing perspective, and in this case " . . . . adhered rigorously to the rule of primacy of authentic evidence."[29]

It was partly following the Victoria's example of providing documentary theatre on issues related to its own audience that the Globe made its decision to try a project exploring Saskatchewan's grain industry, making use of similar research methods and musical accompaniment, as well as performance in-the-round.

No. 1 Hard was given a one-week trial run in Regina during February and March, and then toured for five weeks

during the summer months of 1978 under the sponsorship of The National Farmers Union. It was given 26 performances across Saskatchewan and two in Alberta, with total attendance reported at 5,600. A self-congratulatory description of the tour in the Globe's 1978-79 Annual Report marked it has having been "devastatingly successful."

During the 1977 - 78 season which saw the trial-run of No. 1 Hard, the school tours presented Deverell's Superwheel, songs and lyrics by Geoffrey Ursell. There was a drop in attendance from the previous year's tour, apparently because of a five-day blizzard which cancelled performances. Winter weather creates an ongoing element of chance for a touring company in the prairies, even if the schedule is carefully planned. Stuart notes the existence of "endless enthralling tales that every Globe alumnus has to tell about the trials and rewards of touring for months at a time to the small towns of rural Saskatchewan in winter. Actors had to demonstrate endurance as well as talent to survive."[30]

To even numbers somewhat, at the Globe's mainstage average paid attendance showed a growth of fourteen per cent over the 1976-77 season to a total of 23,109 persons. No doubt the audiences were encouraged by the playbill which included two Canadian plays, The Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance by Michael Cook and Davin: The Politician by Ken Mitchell, as well as the two classics Pygmalion and A Midsummer Night's Dream. For their twelfth year in a row the

Globe remained deficit-free in spite of the odds.

The 1978-79 season had a tragic beginning with the sudden death of co-artistic director Sue Kramer. In her place Kim McCaw and Linda Huffman were named Associate Directors (James Brewer had resigned the Summer of 1978). During this season the mainstage produced the third of Deverell's productions for the adult company, entitled The Mark on the Corner of Scarth and Eleventh (1978-79). It was described in the theatre's press advance as "a clever satire about Love and Marriage"[31] and was toured, as were the other mainstage offerings of the season, to Estevan, Weyburn and Moose Jaw (for two nights). Deverell contributed one new play and one revision (with added songs by Geoffrey Ursell) to the school touring programme.

Deverell's 1979-80 season as writer-in-residence saw him working with his wife, Rita, as she was a member of the adult company, as she had been in 1976-77 and 1977-78. Rita Deverell was one of the performers in the première of Medicare! The Globe Theatre Annual Report: 1979-80, p. 7, sums up Deverell's contribution to the season as follows:

> He wrote The Gadget and edited A Midsummer Night's Dream for the School Tour, wrote Medicare! for the Adult Season, and wrote DRIFT for the Playwrights' Workshop. In addition he acted as a member of the artistic management team.

The report omits Deverell's work for children The Copetown City Kite Crisis.

Medicare!, Deverell's mainstage contribution for the season, is another documentary-style drama, which explores the dramatic complications encountered by Saskatchewan's then--Premier Tommy Douglas, of the NDP provincial government. As with No. 1 Hard there was a considerable amount of research done before the play was written and many lines are direct quotations from those who were involved in the issue. Unlike No. 1 Hard, however, Medicare!, except for the research, was not a collective effort, but a community-relevant play that Deverell himself wrote. In this way Deverell's work as a writer had developed beyond collaboration in the effort to recreate an historical event for the Globe's audience. He had moved into the position of playwright responsible for his own version of an historical truth. As Deverell himself explained of the decision to write Medicare! in the docudrama style with literary freedom:

> I wanted to preserve the authority of using literal documents as dialogue and add the flexibility and texture that comes in the creation of new characters and scenes from the imagination . . . . I regard my responsibility in this play . . . to the event and its people, rather than to my own imagination.[32]

Alan Filewod has noted that, although Ken Kramer felt that the documentaries No. 1 Hard and Medicare! were among the Globe's best works, he realized that they were limited by their regionalism. Ken Kramer further notes however, that, "we think particularization for specific audiences can only

enhance that audience's self image and renew ourselves to ourselves."[33] This seems to have been a fairly accurate assessment of the audience's needs, as the Annual Report records 104 per cent capacity houses for the Globe's production of Medicare!

It was during this 1979-80 season that the Globe hosted the Playwrights' Workshop during which Deverell wrote Drift. Sponsored by the Saskatchewan Sports Trust Fund, works were also commissioned from Michael Cook, Len Peterson and Geoffrey Ursell. The Globe management, meanwhile, was engaged in a battle with the city over their building, which they were to vacate in spite of the fact that an alternate space was not ready. Plans were underway to relocate to a new theatre to be incorporated in a city project to renovate the old city hall/post office.

As preparations for the 1980-81 season began, delays in completion of the new theatre continued to plague the Globe. The school company had to rehearse in Regina's Trianon Ballroom, Drift rehearsals moved from the Trianon to the University and it then went on tour while the new theatre was still under construction. Directed by Pamela Hawthorn, the play toured in October of 1980 before opening in the new Globe Theatre location later in the month. It was an important decision for the Globe to finally open its new theatre with a new Deverell play. Always a financial gamble to produce a Canadian play it was a commitment to their

writer-in-residence, as well as a public acknowledgement of their faith in him, to celebrate the new Globe and the tenth anniversary of their resident company with Drift.

Drift was continuing Deverell's pattern of alternating public and introspective plays. A semi-autobiographical play, Deverell has described Drift as being very personal. Therefore, it must surely have been an unwelcome surprise for him to overhear the comment, "well, it's good to see a local play; too bad it's set down East",[34] suggesting that perhaps Deverell and his audience did not yet share the strong rapport for which he had hoped. Nonetheless, the première of Drift was a celebration in spite of such comments, and in spite of such complications as Kramer described in the 1980-81 Annual Report:

> The last seat was installed at 4:30, the last workmen left at 5:00 and the cleaners cleaned until the audience began to arrive at 7:30 . . . . After so many years of uncertainty and battling, the opening performance of DRIFT was a definite "occasion". (p. 2)

When finally completed, the new theatre was a 1.3 million dollar project of the City of Regina as part of the restored city hall/post office. The new Globe was again created as an in-the-round operation, but with double the seating capacity of the old theatre. Jamie Portman explained part of the deal: "the Globe held a lease on its former city owned property until Jan. 1984, but had agreed it would not block proposed re-development of the site provided the city kept its promise

of a new space in the city hall restoration."[35] The lease agreement was transferred from the old theatre to the new, ensuring an annual rent of one dollar until 1984.

The 1980-81 season also saw the school tour production of Deverell's musical The High School Show, the result of a summer drama programme which involved Deverell, Kim McCaw, Peter Gallagher, Rob Bryanton and about 30 high school students. The atmosphere was positive as the Globe was maintaining a deficit-free status, there was a 20 per cent increase in attendance over the 1979-80 season and Swift Current was added to the tour list of Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Estevan and Weyburn.

The 1981-82 season premièred Deverell's Black Powder on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the Estevan riot. The play was previewed in Estevan before opening in Saskatoon, going on tour and then moving to the Globe. Commissioned music and lyrics, funded by a grant from the DuMaurier Council for the Performing Arts, were provided by Geoffrey Ursell. As with Deverell's previous documentary-style works the play is obviously for a specific audience, making use of fast-paced scenes with few actors, performing in-the-round, backed up with music and with a script which follows carefully the researched evidence in what was becoming the traditional Globe style.

Black Powder follows the documentary tradition of Medicare! in its research style of using newspapers and

interviews, and its adherance to verbatim reporting, but it is a more emotional play. Although the strike and riot were of interest to Deverell, especially because of the fiftieth anniversary of the historical events, he was equally interested in the idea that feelings stirred up during the Estevan strike and riot 50 years earlier were still running strong within the community. As he has stated, "the real theatricality of Black Powder . . . . was the night we put it on in Estevan . . . . People were there who were in the riot . . . . that was a case of the theatre *coming* to events and then *sharing creating a further event* that adds to that."[36] As with performances of Medicare! some members of the audience were watching themselves, or watching other people watch themselves.

The Globe's mainstage premièred Deverell's Righteousness during the 1982-83 season. One of Deverell's more personal plays, it deals with the life of the historical figure St. Augustine. Obviously the play was not written for the specific Globe theatre audience for which Deverell's more public plays were written. Righteousness was written as a means for him to explore, theatrically, issues of personal interest to himself which St. Augustine had spent his life questioning centuries ago.

Clearly the play was a form of self-exploration which Deverell felt important enough to share with the public, even though St. Augustine's views on religion and politics may not

have been an issue of any great concern with the Globe's general public. As he commented to Mick Burrs, writing plays allowed Deverell the opportunity to "open doors to a new world - - first of all, to myself, and then I hope for the audience."[37] While Deverell had been writing specifically for his public with his documentary plays, Righteousness seems to be his attempt to make the exchange of concerns a two-way agreement. The play is notable, however, for its use of multiple characterization, as Righteousness depends upon transformational acting. Deverell had written many plays in which a small number of actors played a larger number of characters, but Righteousness takes it one step further as the transformations of the actors from one character to another take place onstage as part of the performance. The result is a more complicated piece which emphasizes its performance style.

It was during this season that Brian Way, under whom the Kramers had studied in London, was appointed associate director at the Globe to replace Kim McCaw who moved to the newly formed Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg as artistic director. Withdrawal of tour funding (from the province's lottery revenue) caused the cancellation of mainstage productions in Yorkton and Moose Jaw, in one of the first signs of the Globe's decline. According to Margaret Hryniuk, the Globe's audience increased 49 per cent between 1981 and 1983, while money was becoming "harder to find as a result of

rising costs, frozen grants, and a province which was faced with a poor economy."[38] Political and social change within the province, within Regina and among the audiences was beginning to take its toll on the Globe's financial situation as well. According to Peter Brown, the Globe's "financial and audience position improved every year from 1970 to 1982 and have worsened every year since 1982."[39] He further points out that this coincides with the political changeover to the Conservative party in 1982.

Chronologically, Righteousness was followed by the Globe production of Mandarin Oranges (1983-84), a musical comedy, music and lyrics by Rob Bryanton. Although obviously very different from Deverell's docudramas, Mandarin Oranges is another of his public plays, written specifically for the Saskatchewan audience for whom it would be performed. The revue offers a satirical look at the civil service on both municipal and provincial levels, focussing on a young man who becomes a member of City Council and then decides to try for a seat in the Legislature. Various public issues are addressed in this extended version of the well-received musical revue, The City Hall Show, which Deverell and Bryanton had written for the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, Regina Regional Group in 1982.

In an article following the Globe's presentation of Mandarin Oranges, Mark Czarnecki wrote that, "many Canadian theatres try to reflect and analyze the concerns of the

community they serve, but few succeed with audiences and critics as well as Regina's Globe Theatre."[40] With Mandarin Oranges Deverell was zeroing in on his audiences' political interest; as Reg Silvester had pointed out in 1976, "given Saskatchewan's political history, and the fact that Regina is capital city in a province with a social democratic government, theatrical didacticism doesn't present risk-taking -- it's good business."[41] Although the government may have changed hands between the time Silvester wrote those words and Deverell wrote his play, the civil service body would have remained much the same and Regina, as a civil service town, is a clear target for local political satire. In his position of playwright-in-residence, part of Deverell's responsibility would continue to be trying to fulfill the communities' needs and wishes in respect to Globe productions. However, Deverell's comment to Czarnecki that "we have shaped our audiences as much as they have shaped us," was overly optimistic, as the Globe's declining situation would increasingly prove.

The touring of the mainstage productions was temporarily reinstated by the granting of funds by the Saskatchewan Arts Board. The school tours continued, reaching approximately 75,000 students (over one-third of the school population) in 193 Saskatchewan communities during the 1983-84 season. Deverell was involved in two collective projects during the year, If We Call This The Girlie Show Will You Find It

Offensive? which was produced at the Globe, and The Good Life for the school tours. The first was the Globe's second attempt at creating a collective play dealing with feminist issues. (An apparently unsuccessful collective concerned with similar issues had been tried several months earlier by a group including Ken Kramer.) The dilemma was to remain entertaining while looking at the documentary material which the researchers had turned up concerning such issues as pornography and abortion. Under the premise of a scientific lab having created a perfect woman, much like a Frankenstein project, the issues are distanced somewhat from the audience. Unlike No. 1 Hard, which presents a re-creation of the documented evidence, If We Call This The Girlie Show presents the material as stories of their personal past told by the female characters in the play. The exception is the android, whose current job it is to please others, until she is freed by her friends. However, her on-stage experiences are somewhat distanced from the audience by the understanding that she is an android. This deliberate distancing of the audience is unusual for Deverell and for the Globe and shows the influence not only of the others involved in the collective but the potentially overwhelming emotional aspects of this contemporary issues. Involved in the project with Deverell were David Miller, who had also worked on No. 1 Hard; Denise Ball as researcher; and Lorna Crozier, a poet.

In April 1985 the Globe premièred Deverell's Beyond Batoche, directed by Ken Kramer, which deals with the historical figure of Louis Riel and with the social legacy of the Métis. The alternating trend of public and personal plays seems to have come to an end by this point, and in Beyond Batoche Deverell has come to terms with the merging of public and private interests. Although Beyond Batoche deals with historical figures and momentous events in the history of Saskatchewan there is equal importance placed on the effect which this history has had on comtemporary times. Social injustice in terms of the Métis in Saskatchewan today is weighed and measured against the historical injustice imposed on the Métis of Riel's time. Deverell has managed to present a view of history which includes a history-in-the-making aspect, showing the audience that they are part of Saskatchewan's on-going social history and thereby making it their personal concern.

In Beyond Batoche, although there is obvious interest in the public issues, they do not override those matters of personal concern to the playwright. Clearly, although the play deals with an historical issue, it does so on a personal, rather than a documentary basis. In Beyond Batoche, Deverell is questioning the ethical position of those who purport to present historical facts as truth, rather than as merely one version of an historical "truth." The work is a successful transition from "personal" and "public" plays to "personal and

public" within one work. Beyond Batoche reached a larger audience than most Globe performances, as the play toured the province before then being produced at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. As a Globe mainstage production it was toured to Yorkton and Moose Jaw, funded by the Saskatchewan government. The school tour for this 1984-85 season included a play by Deverell entitled Fallout.

Resuscitation of a Dying Mouse, a musical written by Deverell, with music and lyrics by Rob Bryanton, premièred during the Globe's 1985-86 season. The two-act play finds an ordinary man trying to find a reason to carry on after having lost everything which he feels worthwhile: his family, his business, and his self-respect. The protagonist finds false security when he joins the The School for Aggressive Survival, which turns out to be an organization of neo-facists, and he is then forced to find his own strengths. The Globe, however, was facing a more negative situation. This season the theatre tried working with a permanent company of actors in an attempt to cut costs. Because of further financial problems, the tour of the adult season went only to Yorkton. In an effort to bring more people to the theatre the mainstage offered five comedies and a Shakespearean play. It was, in spite of the management's efforts, the Globe's first year in a deficit position. The school tours, however, continued to reach thousands of children with a playbill which included Deverell's Switching Places.

Deverell's two-act Quartet for Three Actors was produced at the Globe during the 1986-87 mainstage season, making fine use of performance style for theatre-in-the-round, and was directed by Pamela Hawthorne. As in most of Deverell's non-historical plays there are a limited number of characters (three, as the title promises) and props and set are minimal. In both style and content it is a play well suited to its theatre, an interesting study focussing on three actors and the worlds in which they live. The play co-starred Ken Kramer in his first appearance in a Deverell play.

The 1987-88 school tour programme included two of Deverell's plays for children, Weird Kid and The Grey Owl Masquerade. His mainstage première, Afternoon of the Big Game, satirizes Saskatchewan politics and football. The play continues in the political vein of the first Mandarin Oranges, and is once again aimed at the Globe's regional audience. As it had been part of the theatre's mandate to remain not only a touring regional theatre, but a political theatre as well, Afternoon of the Big Game is very much a Globe play.

The Kramers' left-wing stance had always been clear through their choice of plays and style of presentation. Although this may have served them well during the government's NDP years it may also have had some negative effect on the provincial support they received in later years, as some critics have suggested. But there were obviously factors other than politics at work as well. Peter Brow

describes a seemingly drastic change in audience attitude:

> in the Globe's third season, Waiting for Godot was a smash; in 1988 Globe's production of Endgame brought a rain of angry phone calls, as outraged patrons swore they would never attend the theatre again. The climate has become conservative in the most powerful sense.[42]

Deverell's last play written for the Globe's adult theatre was Mandarin Oranges II, a sequel to the 1983-84 production. As with the original, Mandarin Oranges II includes music by Rob Bryanton, songs co-written by Bryanton and Deverell. Critically, it did not fare as well as the first Mandarin Oranges, but according to Bernard Pilon the political spoof was saved by "nifty choreography, strong acting and superb singing by most of the seven-member cast."[43] About the time that Mandarin Oranges II went into production, Deverell publicly announced his resignation from the position of playwright-in-residence at the Globe. His wife, Rita, had accepted work with Vision TV in Toronto and Deverell had decided to try writing for a new and different audience. After seventeen years with the Globe the decision must have been a difficult one. But the Globe, like the province, had reached a crossroads.

Artistic director Ken Kramer, too, had resigned in the Fall of 1989, after twenty-three years at the Globe. As Peter Brown explained, when Ken Kramer began to feel that he was losing touch with the community he was admitting a sort of

defeat. A most important aim of the Globe had always been to remain relevant in a local sense, and Kramer had stated that, "I don't know what they want now . . . . The city that I knew, I don't think exists anymore."[44] In reference to his own resignation, closely following that of Kramer, Deverell admitted, "I didn't want the new Artistic Director (Susan Ferley) to be saddled with anything . . . . Besides, it's hard to justify holding on to a residency without being resident."[45] It was almost inevitable at this time of change that Deverell should leave the Globe, although he admitted that it had been, "comfortable having your next project already commissioned and actors waiting at the end of the road for your script."[46]

For almost fourteen years Deverell had worked for a virtually guaranteed audience, and with extremely supportive artistic directors especially in the person of Ken Kramer. However, the Globe audience was changing and Kramer had already announced his departure. The Globe's mandate as a touring regional theatre "in-touch" with its audience was becoming less of a reality and more of a cliché. The social and political concerns of the Globe management, including Deverell, had not much changed over the years, but the social and political concerns of the general populace had apparently become more conservative. Deverell's Afternoon of the Big Game seems to address this sort of situation, perhaps with more optimism than was apparently due. The Globe's left-wing,

regional theatre style had certainly begun to lose both its popularity with the audience and its financial backing from the government.

So, while Deverell was developing his ability as a playwright to combine personal and public concerns, the theatre for which he was writing was losing touch with what its public wanted from the theatre. Therefore, in his last two or three years at the Globe, the theatre's predicament became Deverell's. The theatre was losing patronage, losing financial support, and losing its understanding of the audience by not changing with the audience's interests and with the socio-political situation. Deverell, in his official capacity as playwright-in-residence, was commissioned to face the dilemma of a theatre team who wanted to remain politically relevant and committed as a theatre of the people, while at the same time pleasing the audiences which the Globe needed for financial survival.

Despite the efforts of Kramer and Deverell on behalf of the Globe, their strategy to attract a greater audience by offering more comedy was not effective enough. Following their departure, Regina's Globe Theatre was facing major difficulties. A November 1990 article blamed the worst of the Globe's financial problems on "failing attendance, reduced federal and provincial grants and increased occupancy costs."[47] No matter where the blame is placed, the Globe in 1990 faced a $143,000 debt and the absence of its longtime

professionals Rex Deverell and Ken Kramer.

CHAPTER TWO

From the time that Rex Deverell began working with the Globe Theatre until his resignation from the position of playwright-in-residence the basic mandate of the Globe as a regional, touring theatre did not change. The school company continued to tour throughout the province presenting participational theatre-in-the-round for children, while the Globe's repertory company produced material deemed appropriate for its adult audiences.

Throughout these years Deverell continued to write children's theatre for performance in-the-round, as well as broadening his scope to include plays for adults, as the Globe depended more and more upon the material which they commissioned from their resident playwright. Within the Globe's stylistic framework Deverell experimented with comedies, histories, documentaries, musicals and mixtures of these elements. In his earlier days at the Globe Deverell's plays clearly alternated between private and public interests: Boiler Room Suite followed by No. 1 Hard; Medicare! followed by Drift followed by Black Powder, etc.

Deverell's works show a strong interest in performance and audience, and the relationship between the two. Working with the Globe, and always using performance-in-the-round, which narrows the physical gap between performer and on-looker, allowed Deverell to try a number of variables

within a specific style. In such plays as Boiler Room Suite and Quartet for Three Actors, Deverell is playing with the concept of performance and the relationship which develops between those within and those without the performance space. In Drift and Beyond Batoche, he is examining the relationship between writer and subject(s), as well as the writer's awareness of his impact on an intended audience. Although Medicare! and Black Powder are docudramas, stylistic emphasis is still on the strength of performance and the relationship thus built between the actors and their audience. Afternoon of the Big Game is the closest to naturalistic that Deverell gets with his Globe plays, emphasizing the relationships between the characters rather than the relationship between the players/characters and the audience. However, it is not a naturalistic play and the central character, Ogie, initially bridges the gap between actor and spectator by directly addressing the audience.

Within the Globe's basic stylistic boundaries Deverell was free to experiment, and in this way he was able to develop certain ideas further than he would perhaps have otherwise been able. For instance the documentary style play first presented in No. 1 Hard as a collective allowed Deverell the experience and knowledge to move to Medicare!, a "one-man collective," and from there to Black Powder. Without having held his long-term position as playwright-in-residence at the Globe it would have been almost impossible for Deverell to

have made this kind of progression within one theatre and with one audience.

Boiler Room Suite (1977), Deverell's first play written for the Globe's adult audiences, is set in the furnace room of the once splendid, though now abandoned, fictional "Provincial Hotel". Having become the hide-away of an alcoholic bag-lady named Aggie Rose, the basement is described in Deverell's notes as a "fantastic place." Like the prairie hotel in which they have found refuge, the characters of Aggie Rose and Sprugg have seen better days. They are, as described by Deverell in the play notes, "tramps with airs." The play develops around action between Aggie and her guest, Sprugg, and the initially unseen janitor, Pete. Sprugg's inspirational magic succeeds in working not only on Aggie but also on Pete, their audience.

Like his host, Sprugg is a social outcast, a man of indeterminate middle-age and background whose initial charm, as far as Aggie is concerned, is his willingness to share his bottle of wine. Holed up in Aggie's nest, the two share not only the wine (and the two wine glasses which Sprugg carries with him in the pockets of his overcoat), but the strength of their imaginations.

Although society and its institutions have given up on them, these two characters have never completely given up on themselves. For them a bearable blend of fantasy and reality is much more important than an unbearable truth. Under

Sprugg's guidance truth becomes nebulous, something which can be created and re-created. As Aggie questions in Act Two, "if you can't have what you want, then you can pretend. But if you can't pretend either, what is there?"[48] The implied answer is "nothing."

As Don Perkins has pointed out, "Before they became what they are, Aggie was an aspiring actress who could not find an audience, and Sprugg was a poet who could not make his voice heard."[49] Through the magic of Sprugg's poetics, Aggie is provided with three levels of audience: Sprugg, of whom Aggie is aware and for whom (as well as for herself) she is performing; Pete, of whom she is unaware but who holds a great power over her; and the audience in the theatre outside the performance space.

Powerless as members of the real world outside the furnace room, in their fantastical arena their imaginative strengths are enough to reach the rather hardened character of Pete. This custodian of the hellish furnace room watches Aggie and Sprugg as an unseen but not unheard presence somewhere on the fringe of reality. That Aggie and Sprugg are able to awaken Pete's interest and his imagination is a tribute not only to their individual talents but to the universal need to believe in more than that which is ordinary.

Aggie and Sprugg are artists within art, trying to change a basic ugliness in the real world which insists on coming unbidden into their own world. Therefore, they find the

ability within themselves to alter their reality and make it more acceptable. As Michael Scholar points out, "Art can also be, then, an elegantly ordered model of reality . . . . It can create, thereby, a world in which change is still possible. For once the patterns of life are apprehended by the work of art, they may be modified and improved..."[50]

There is, in this play within a play, a message for the audience without, as well as for Pete in his role as the audience within. Change is needed within our social systems and within ourselves. There is always the need for more understanding and for less prejudice. Aggie and Sprugg, as homeless alcoholics, are members of a fringe society considered unworthy of human dignity. The boys who threw pennies in the mud for Aggie to scramble after, and Pete's disregard for Aggie's memories/mementos are examples of how social outcasts are treated by those who stay within the safety of the social norm. As Deverell has commented in a recent interview, "Looking back, though, I guess there is one theme a lot of my plays hinge on: the tension between community and the individual."[51] It is this tension which provides Aggie and Sprugg with their forum.

It is an integral part of Deverell's message to the audience that Aggie and Sprugg are able to rise above their situation, at least in their creative minds. And it is Aggie and Sprugg who have the grace to share this gift with Pete, who is in some ways less fortunate than themselves. As

Deverell himself has explained, "There is a kind of theology behind what I write. Intellectually, I'm concerned with the question of ultimate importance: this whole personhood thing - that there are forces that grind us down and make us less human."[52] Indeed, Aggie and Sprugg are examples of those who have been ground down and for whom the human condition has meant being treated less than humanely. In this sense their situation is a social rather than a regional one and the prairie setting thus becomes circumstantial, although not unimportant. Anyone who has experienced a cold winter evening on the prairies would readily accept Aggie's attraction to a basement furnace room.

The concept of performance as a central element of the play, and the obvious awareness of audience to which it is inextricably tied, are common traits in Deverell's work. Further, with performance in-the-round, as the actors move physically and psychologically closer to the audience it becomes of great importance to the playwright to recognize that there is the opportunity to accept performance as an end in itself, or take maximum advantage of its importance.

Deverell, with his experience in children's participatory theatre-in-the-round and collectives for adults, was greatly aware of the strength of performance and its impact on the audience. Evidence of this is found in all of Deverell's plays in differing degrees, and is also a further example of the effect on his writing brought about by being

playwright-in-residence at the Globe where closeness with the audience was considered to be of central importance. In terms of set and style, Deverell had to work within the Globe's constraints. The play would be performed in-the-round, with a set that would rely heavily on suggestion. The actors would need enough physical mobility on the set that the entire audience might follow the action. Performance in-the-round, the traditional Globe style, therefore provides both freedom and restraint for the playwright and the actors. It lends itself to theatricality rather than to a naturalistic style, it brings itself closer to the audience and it travels well. As well as the stylistic limitations, Deverell has admitted to having the impression that the Globe audience was somewhat of a constraint upon the style/content of his play: "the Saskatchewan audience tends to be a little puritan; bits of self-indulgence that might turn on people in large urban areas don't turn the Saskatchewan audience on . . . In a way that's a limitation; I can't just write in any direction that I choose."[53]

In this way, Deverell's perception of the audience may have had some direct influence over the play and its style. Boiler Room Suite is not the grim, naturalistic play it could have been about the homeless. Rather, it is almost dreamlike in its sequence of performance pieces which rely on the creativity and imaginative revenge of the characters who move the theatrical reality outside of the everyday. Instead of

portraying the outcasts as simply downtrodden, Deverell has given them creative gifts which help them to rise above their situation.

Boiler Room Suite grew out of a play written for children entitled Power Trip[54] and it is perhaps because of these roots that the play is able to retain such an exciting element of fantasy. As Deverell explained in an interview for The Work:

> Children are a joy to write for because they can be turned on by theatricality. Adult audiences are sometimes embarrassed by theatricality or just not willing to accept the magic of it.[55]

Deverell has deliberately left a child-like "let's pretend" quality in Boiler Room Suite that serves to emphasize the fact that fantasy can be as important as reality, and that sometimes it is not only difficult but unnecessary to find the line between the two. Several years after writing Boiler Room Suite, Deverell wrote a play for children, Melody Meets the Bag Lady, published in Eight Plays for Young People, ed., Joyce Doolittle, (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), which deals with a similar topic. In this play a little girl discovers that it is the bag lady's ability to be different which makes her both special and happy. The child realizes that, "you should never take away the thing that makes a person special . . . . Everybody is a little odd and there's nothing wrong with that" (p. 221). It is these "forces" which the bag lady, Aggie and Sprugg fight with their creativity and their

undeniable "differentness."

In 1989 Boiler Room Suite was presented as an opera, music by Quenten Doolittle, libretto by Rex Deverell. The opera had been workshopped at the Banff Centre in 1987, with a workshop presentation in 1988. It was officially premièred at the Banff Centre, Alberta before touring to four cities in Britain.

One example of Deverell's public plays is Medicare! (1979-80), billed as a one-man collective, which examines the events leading up to the physicians strike in Saskatchewan in 1962 and the ensuing legislation which introduced Canada's first provincial medicare plan. Medicare! picks up on the performance style and awareness of audience apparent in such collectives as No. 1 Hard. At the same time it allows Deverell authorial control in this, his first solo leap into Saskatchewan history/politics. However, as with the Globe's docudrama No. 1 Hard, a number of people were involved in researching the material which became Medicare![56]

Collective effort, even for an authored play, is quite typical of the Globe style of involving the maximum number of people in the creative process of play-making. This seems to show an element of compromise on Deverell's part, as he opted to control the material and the rhetorical style while trying to maintain objectivity. In this way Deverell was able to emphasize the importance and influence of public rhetoric and indulge in his personal interest in the use of rhetoric.

Deverell explained his views on documentary dramas in a 1983 interview with Filewod: "Documentary theatre in a strict sense would be a rhetorical theatre, because the only access to the event is through the rhetoric of it. No. 1 Hard was the collective exploitation of rhetoric. In Medicare! rhetoric itself is revelatory, rather than the acting."[57]

Medicare! continues the adherence to the Cheeseman tradition of accurate evidence, but permits Deverell some literary leeway in his creation of characters and presentation of the documented facts. Alan Filewod suggests that the play (as well as Black Powder, 1981-82) "counterpoints documentary actuality with clearly indicated invented scenes depicting typical characters."[58] Whether typical or not, Deverell has created two fictional doctors in political opposition to one another, which both simplifies and personalizes the medicare debate. Through these characters Deverell tries to compress the personal opinions of those on either side of the political/social fence in an unprejudiced account of the controversy. However, there is no doubting the author's personal opinion on the issue. Deverell has admitted: "My problem was first to isolate my prejudices. I could appreciate the desire for socialized medicine far more than the attitude of the medical profession."[59] To some extent Medicare! does show Deverell's personal bias, and that of his theatre and audience. He has also expressed his opinion that Medicare! "represents a struggle between my creative ego and

the dramatic power of history."[60] As a result, the play is an example of compromise: the requirements placed upon a playwright-in-residence and the needs of an author to create as well as re-create. It is in this respect that the invented characters of the doctors serve a dual purpose: to simplify the views of the opposing factions in the struggle and to permit Deverell some literary freedom.

The topic chosen was certainly of great importance to the Regina audiences as, historically, many of the major events surrounding the medicare issues occured in that city. As well, the play was produced at a time when health system user-fees were an issue of public concern. As part of this ongoing situation, Medicare! was presented to those who were not only interested in the current situation but many of whom not only remembered but were involved in the province's fight to introduce the first universal health care system in Canada. Regina remains a civil service city which ensures its political as well as social interest in the provincial health care system.

Again, the play shows the working results of compromise between playwright, theatre and audience. Deverell had by this time been associated with the Globe for seven years, four of those as writer-in-residence. Medicare! was Deverell's fourth play for the Globe's residence season (counting his involvement in the collective No. 1 Hard), assumedly written in full knowledge of the type of cast (size and talent)

available, the restrictions and advantages of performance in-the-round, the financial restraints on the theatre, the artistic style of its directors and, to some extent, the interests and expectations of its specific audience. Typical of the Globe style, and conducive to an in-the-round production, Medicare! is a fast-paced play with little reliance on set. A highly-charged docudrama, it goes beyond a recitation of the rhetoric surrounding the medicare controversy, even though many parts are verbatim reporting.

Diane Bessai describes Medicare! as a "chronological, essentially naturalistic reconstruction of character, language, and events which reflect and dramatize their own documentary sources from official records, media archives, and personal interviews."[61] As Bessai has pointed out, Medicare! emphasizes the historical significance of the healthcare policy and the ensuing struggle between powerful political and social groups. It is the battle of rhetoric between the factions which provides Medicare! with its dramatic strength. Between the doctors unused to public speaking, the troublesome Père Murray and the professional rhetoricians Tommy Douglas and Ross Thatcher, the historical issues were almost buried in a sea of words. As Deverell has noted, "Speech is for something. Words are not uttered without goal or motive. They always seek. Usually they seek power."[62] Although Deverell was able to unfold the story in

a large amount of documented evidence, he chose to keep the play moving on two levels. As Deverell has commented, Medicare! is presented in two time-frames: the historical events, as they happened and as the past remembered. Typical of Globe productions a small cast played the many, relying on the actors' talents to bring alive the rhetoric of power politics and the people who used it to advantage.

In its adherence to recorded and remembered dialogue, Medicare! was able to present images of audience members to themselves. Especially in Regina, where many of the meetings had taken place in the Globe's temporary quarters (the Trianon Ballroom), audience members who had attended those meetings were invited to re-live them. Indeed, as Deverell pointed out, "during more than one performance the audience could watch the real participants watching themselves portrayed on stage."[63] Thus, as well as adhering to the Globe's mandate as a theatre relevant to its audience, the production extended Deverell's interest in performance right into the audience. This heightened theatricality further served to close the gap between the actors and the audience, drawing the audience closer to the drama. As a further comic element the audience was entertained by the disparity between those being portrayed and those doing the portraying, especially in the case of Linda Huffman playing politician Ross Thatcher. In obvious proof of the play's popularity, the Globe records an audience [illegible] totalling an attendance of 3,476 at seventeen

performances. Medicare! was a hit with the Saskatchewan audiences and the Globe management was pleased:

> but was it a play, a living newspaper, a talking document or ?????? Whatever it was, its like has never been seen before and we are very proud of it.[64]

Critical reaction was again mixed, as in Dennis Gruending's opinion that the play "succeeds more as textbook than as theatre."[65] However, Jamie Portman calls Medicare! "an incisive look at the passions that prevailed that summer of 1962" in a play which "reflects the special populism that has made the Globe one of the most interesting theatres in Canada within the context of relationships with an audience."[66] With Medicare! Deverell was completely immersed in a play which meant to examine, not change, an issue of importance to the Globe's regional audience. Deverell's re-creation of the issue is not a controversial one, it was the issue which had created controversy. Medicare! in style and content was a good choice in terms of the Globe's mandate of relevancy. Although an historical issue, it remains a political one in face of continual health care problems. As the director of the Globe's production of Medicare!, Kim McCaw was to state in 1989 that the play's purpose "was not so much to advance the argument in a new direction, but rather to examine a past event in order to better understand who we were then and what we may have become as a result."[67]

Deverell's contribution to the Globe's 1980-81 season was

Drift, a major success for the Globe in spite of the theatre's construction difficulties as discussed in Chapter One. The play concerns the immigration of a young Barbadian woman to Canada, and the difficulties which she encounters, especially following her marriage to a young Canadian man. The play was billed as the "portrait of a remarkable woman . . . . and the people who populate her life . . . ." Now generally categorized as one of Deverell's more personal plays, it received favourable reviews and has since been produced by Winnipeg's Prairie Theatre Exchange as well as by Ontario's Blyth Festival. Published by Playwright's Canada in 1981, it is in the author's introduction to Drift that Deverell acknowledges that the "play is not precisely about my parents - - but about people like them - - their generation. And mine." However, in an interview with Robert Wallace, Deverell takes the comparison further:

> I had real life models for those characters. Stevie, especially since she's such a specific character, a person who came to Canada from the West Indies in the early part of the Thirties and stayed, married a Canadian boy . . . .[68]

Deverell goes on to explain that the play allowed him to expurgate some of the grief he had felt when his own father passed away, and how in some ways it led him to a better understanding of his parents.

The play is perhaps somewhat self-indulgent as a result of the playwright's personal concern in the characters, but

the story is strong enough to maintain interest without dipping into sentimentality. The style of presentation, in which an author is discussing his work-in-progress with his characters who have come alive, allows Deverell to play with time, history and reality. Past and present overlap, truth and fiction become fused somewhere along the way, and the notion of history becomes little more than a question mark. As Deverell noted in an interview with Janice Neil, the fact that the play was workshopped before its production allowed him "to try new dramatic techniques such as the fusion between imagination and creation, fantasy and reality . . . and not worry where it would fit in the theatre's season."[69]

There is a strong emphasis on performance and theatricality, as in Boiler Room Suite. The play invites the audience to suspend disbelief and join the character of the author in the awakening, in turn, of his created characters. As with Boiler Room Suite, therefore, Deverell is making us aware of two audiences, one within and one without the performance space. Again the theatre in-the-round performance style brings these two audiences together as closely as possible. Deverell is therefore working on three levels throughout Drift: the audience, the writer (as audience and creator); and the writer's characters. These three groups move closer together as the play shifts its focus from the author to his creations and back again. Drift, like Boiler Room Suite then, offers a fantasy within a fantasy and in so

doing moves in a circle. The character of Stevie, who comes alive for the author at the outset of the play, becomes as plausible for the audience as is the author throughout most of the play, until the author once again assumes control of the situation at the play's conclusion. It is in the middle of the play that the audience is taken back in time by Stevie, leaving the author behind. It is in this remembered, more naturalistic, "past" that most of the play takes place and where the other characters come alive. In effect, the author provides a means of transition from present to past and back again.

By the end of Drift the problematic process of writing another person's history is so involved with issues such as perceived truth and personal motive, that one has almost forgotten the author's intent. In this play Deverell proposes that what is one person's truth is not necessarily the same as another's. History can be personal or impersonal, singular or plural, shaped by past and present and is almost inevitably from a selected perspective. The author within the play, like his own creator, is questioning the notion of authenticity in such a way as to bring attention to the process. The fact that the author provides the framework of the play draws attention to the idea that the play is documenting a discovery at the level of an individual, that the author's performance is opening up the investigation of a personal issue. At the outset of the play the author is seated at his typewriter,

having decided to write about his mother in order to better understand the decisions she has made in her life. His imagination, to his delight, conjures up first her voice then her entire being. For some time the characters take over the telling of the tale while the writer watches, occasionally asking questions. In the last scene the author and his mother realize that his need to write her story is an expression of his need to understand himself. The author can neither remove himself from his parents' personal history, nor can he remove them from his, but he is better able to see the ties that bind.

By letting the audience in on the problems of writing such a play, Deverell is not trying to bring about major social change, or instill the idea that personal histories are

management is clear. As he has admitted, "I tried to say something good about them, but in the context I was dealing with I couldn't . . . ."[74] Therefore, there is re-creation through emotion in the black and white style of agitprop, rather than simply through accuracy of verbatim reporting. Deverell too is indulging in the art of persuasion and the finetuning of historical data. The rhetoric of the original event is continued in its re-creation. The audience included more workers than management, however, and the blue-collar bias of the play was not unappreciated. As with Medicare! the theatricality of the performance spills over into the audience because of their closeness to the historical events. Deverell had used his knowledge of the local audience to tap into the intimacy that they felt for such an emotional event as the miners' strike and riot. The play is for a specific audience, especially in a geographic sense.

In spite of its political bent, the play was written for a limited audience and would hold small appeal for productions outside its province of origin. This fact does not detract from the play's importance to its intended theatre and audience; however, it makes evident another limitation of Deverell's residency at the Globe. Where another playwright might write for an intended national or international audience, Deverell chose to write specifically for small Saskatchewan audiences served by a regional theatre. He has claimed that there is "a sense that history is much more

recent. You can still talk to people who have been associated with major events in the history of Saskatchewan."[75] Certainly Deverell was filling a need, writing about historical events important to the provincial population but which had been virtually untapped by the theatrical world.

Black Powder reached a large number of Saskatchewan's people, playing to small towns across the province as well as in Saskatoon and Regina. The play met with mixed critical success but was in general well received by its audiences, especially to those to whom it meant the most in terms of personal history. In Regina the play broke box office records, an obvious vote of approval from the public, although reviewers tempered the play's acclaim by commenting that, "Black Powder can be recommended as a documentary overview of a moving event in Saskatchewan and Canadian history. But unfortunately that event has not been turned into a moving work of art."[76] Mark Czarnecki, who reviewed the production for Maclean's magazine called it a "sterotyped agitprop" and a "failure." Deverell is quoted as having responded with, "well, when have people seen a good agit-prop recently..."[77]

In defense of Black Powder, Stan Hanson's review described the docudrama as "emotional, interesting, and factual."[78] Ustan Reinhart wrote that Black Powder was "the most controversial play at the Canadian Theatre Today Conference."[79] Certainly, this shows a mixed critical response to the play which was not so evident among the

general public. Indeed, as the play was aimed at Saskatchewan's "everyman," whether a member of the audience in the Globe Theatre or in a crowded school auditorium in Esteven, it served its purpose. In terms of audience reaction, Black Powder was a success, as John Miner notes, "the audience responded enthusiastically, giving (the) Globe Theatre an extended standing ovation."[80]

Black Powder is a celebration of Saskatchewan history, an examination of a tragic but politically meaningful situation which has had considerable influence on modern mining in the province. The play not only describes the unfair treatment of the miners of Estevan and Bienfait, but makes a point of showing how far wrong things had to go before improvements were made, and how unnecessary that should have been. The issues of mining safety and fair dealing with the management are, in themselves, not limited historically to the 1930s or to Saskatchewan.

As well, the play deals with the tensions resulting from the riot tragedy which have never faded. Deverell begins the play in the cemetery as the dead miners' tombstone is once again being defaced in order to erase its condemnation of the Mounted Police's involvement in the deaths of the three men. In this way Deverell introduces the episode in the present: the tombstone exists today as a visible reminder of the past. He has explained that it was this headstone which captured his attention and his imagination when he discovered that decades

after the strike the attempts to erase the accusation continue. The epitaph, reading "murdered by the R.C.M.P." has in fact been repeatedly vandalized over the years.

With the play beginning in such a way, the audience is at once to realize that histories, like most stories, can have at least two sides and do not necessarily end when the newspapers are finished with the issue. As far as Deverell is concerned history is a version of accepted reality which he and the audience still have the right, if not the moral obligation, to question. The effectiveness of the attempt remains a question of criticism. Reviewer Lee Anne Block wrote that "the audience is manipulated into accepting a simple option: "Black Powder's" villains are purely villains, its heroes are simply heroic" and "the structure fails to elucidate the issue."[81] With such a well-documented issue as the healthcare system in Medicare! the emotional side is important not overwhelming. That is perhaps the downfall of Black Powder as far as the critics are concerned. While many of the speeches are verbatim reporting the play rides on emotionalism.

In many of Deverell's plays past and present not only overlap but merge, moving beyond the standard definition of history. Deverell manipulates what must be a sense of *déjà-vu* for many among his audiences, as well as deliberately questioning the standard text-book presentation of the facts. Deverell's plays continue to question the kind of mass-market versions of the *truths*, historical and otherwise, which

pervade our society. One way in which he does this is to show the personal side of the public history. In Black Powder Deverell introduces an imaginary, though emotional, private scene which takes place in the home of one of the strikers who will later be killed during the riot. By so doing Deverell focuses on history at the level of the individual, the tragedy of a family.

The style of presentation, which uses vignettes similar to those in the collectives on which Deverell worked for the Globe, well suits performances in-the-round. There is little reliance on sets or on featured performers. A few people represent the many and the actors play more than one role. Black Powder is fast and emotional in its exploration of "Black Tuesday," a style particularly in keeping with Globe tradition. The typically docudrama direction of the play is intended to mean much to a designated few.

Black Powder marks the end of Deverell's docudramas for the Globe, and the end of the clearly defined categories of personal and private plays. From this point on Deverell's plays for the Globe theatre merge his personal and public interests in varying combinations. However, it does not mark the end of his interest in Saskatchewan's history or politics, rather, his later plays employ different styles of presentation as well as differing emphasis on concerns of a social or a political nature.

Black Powder is the last of Deverell's "public" plays, as its predecessor, Drift, was the last of his "personal" plays. These two plays form the final stage of Deverell's career in which his public and personal concerns remained mutually exclusive.

CHAPTER THREE

Having left the docudrama style behind him, Deverell began to examine history on a more individual level. He had already experimented with different ways in which to present verbatim coverage of an historical event, with the mandate of accuracy at almost any cost, and had then begun to question the authenticity of such documented history. He began to express his interest in the differing perceptions of historical fact on both public and individual levels, and the overall influence of public rhetoric. His interest in the audience and in performance also continued throughout Deverell's years of residency at the Globe, and certain constraints remained constant as influencing factors on his writing. Among these constants were the Globe's presentational style, and of course, the regional audience.

Deverell's final foray into Saskatchewan's history was Beyond Batoche, written at least in part to mark the centennial of the Northwest Rebellion. As part of Saskatchewan's heritage celebrations the play was toured across the province before moving on to a production at the National Arts Centre. Beyond Batoche provides a good example of the merging of Deverell's public and individual concerns, showing his development as a playwright. He has once again drawn on an historical event of great interest to his intended audience, and as with his docudramas, Beyond Batoche stems

from controversial events in Saskatchewan's past. However, it is not a documentary and its presentational style is very different from that of Medicare! or Black Powder.

Rather than re-examining the Riel trial or the Métis uprising from a purely historical perspective, the play tries to look at the public's current view of the Métis. As well, the character of Riel and his opponent John A. Macdonald are reviewed in terms of modern prejudices and misconceptions. Don Kerr points out that, "the play is also of interest because it questions the basis of documentary theatre, which Deverell had practiced in earlier plays, and of history itself."[83]

The play does not rely on the accurate reporting of words spoken around the historical events, but questions the ability, objectivity, and visions of those who purport to recreate the past accurately. Whereas Drift questioned the authenticity of a recreated personal history, Beyond Batoche examines the notion of public history and its mass-marketability. As suggested by Kerr, it is not a straightforward presentation of the facts as in Deverell's previously produced history plays. Although the material has been well researched, the text does not rely solely on documented material as in Medicare! or Black Powder. The history of Riel steps aside from the textual evidence to explore the effects of Riel and the Northwest Rebellion on modern Saskatchewan.

The play is based on the fictional premise that a group of people has been assembled to film a movie about Riel and the Northwest Rebellion. Among them are Matt, the writer; Shane, the actor (sometimes as Riel); Yvonne, the Métis advisor; Burns, the producer; and Kelly, Matt's wife. The drama of the play develops through the relationships of these people, both with each other and with the historical characters whom they are trying to re-create.

Unlike the historical figures in Deverell's docudramas the modern characters are developed onstage without the audience having any previous knowledge of them as "people." Matt is simply a character, not an historical personage with a public history. In this way character development becomes an integral part of an historical play. The emphasis is on the cast as characters not as recreations of famous people, except when role-playing. Deverell uses an historical figure in the case of Riel, but it is the actor Shane as Riel.

In Beyond Batoche Deverell takes the questioning of history, and the public's perceptions of it, at least one step further than he does in Drift or in Black Powder. Beyond Batoche is thus a more complex play than Deverell's previous histories, public or private. That history is being presented as a less than reliable source of facts is made very clear to the audience when the film producer instructs the writer to make sure that the film is unoffensive to Eastern tastes (meaning the Eastern Canadian money behind the project).

There is to be no blackening of John A. Macdonald's political decisions concerning his treatment of Riel or of the Métis, no questioning of his motives, no matter what the facts may suggest or even prove. Matt, the writer, responds to these instructions by simply quoting Macdonald and avoiding commentary, much like a writer of a docudrama. Deverell is clearly re-examining the docudrama style in which he himself has participated, knowing full well that verbatim reporting leaves great leeway for personal bias and perspective.

To further clarify his point, Deverell allows that everyone involved in the film project wants to present a different perspective of Riel to best suit his/her own personal needs or goals. Matt, the central character, learns to question not only the historical version of the facts but his own motives in wanting to re-organize the historical facts from the perspective that best suits him. Matt is brought to this self-questioning through his awkward working relationship with Yvonne, the young Métis woman who has been asked to provide a modern Métis perspective for the project. The "official" version of institutional history is represented by the character of the tour guide who does not want interference from tourists, especially Métis tourists.

Yvonne wants to further the cause of the Métis but she is not sure how she herself feels about being Métis. She wants Riel to be a hero for her people because there is need for such a hero. The actor (Shane), who is to play Riel in the

film, wants to be a movie hero, therefore he wants the historical Riel to be a hero, and preferably a rebel hero. Failing that, Shane is more than willing to play another historical figure in the story (for instance Gabriel Dumont) who has the makings of a radical hero. The film producer, Burns, is only concerned about the ability of the film to sell. If the finances look bad he is no longer interested in Riel, hero or no.

With Beyond Batoche Deverell has tried to explore not only the difficulties of reconciling two cultures, but the inherent complexities in such an attempt. As Matt comes to the realization that he is more like Sir John A. Macdonald than he would care to acknowledge, the audience is asked to face the possibility of similar self-realization. It is a fault in the play, however, that the questioning ends there. Matt discovers a prejudice of which he had been unaware and to which he is now able to admit. Most people have prejudices, the problem is how to deal with them.

Riel was a Métis, Yvonne is a Métis and the play deals only superficially with what that might mean, either to them or to non-Métis people. There is little or no movement beyond Batoche, simply the recognition of a series of events that has had tragic ramifications. No resolution is offered, but the audience is introduced to the idea that there are many possible points of view depending upon the perspective, perception and presentation of the "facts." However, Deverell

does present the idea that the individual is part of society, part of history, and that in this way every person has an effect on social history in the making.

There remain the questions of how closely Deverell and Matt are associated, and whether or not Beyond Batoche is indeed the film script that Matt has already written,[84] as suggested by Michael Scholar. In considering the first question, it is important to acknowledge Deverell's great interest in the character of the "writer" found in Drift and Beyond Batoche. Deverell weights these characters with newly-discovered moral responsibility and allows them to question in particular their moral positions as writers. As Scholar suggests, perhaps Deverell sees them (and therefore, by extension, himself) as voyeurs/manipulators/social reformers. Scholar quotes from a Mick Burr article published in the Spring of 1985 in which Deverell comments that, "the real drama for the stage will be how a person like me deals with this material".[85] This comment seems to imply a close relationship between Deverell and his character Matt. Indeed, if the play is a filmscript, play-within-a-play, then the central drama focuses on how Matt has dealt with the material.

Deverell had already done considerable research on Riel for a five-part radio programme produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The series, entitled "The Riel Commission: An Inquiry into the Survival of a People" began broadcasting in May, 1985 and won the Major Armstrong Award

for "creative use of the medium". A commission was formed that invited those interested to state their opinions about the Métis situation, past and present; Louis Riel, their leader; and the survival of a half-breed people. The producer invited submissions be they music, interviews, or dramatizations. As Rex Deverell explained, "we didn't want to tell the Métis story ourselves - - but rather to provide some kind of platform from which the people themselves could share their sense of history, their frustrations, their passions, their self-realizations."[86] This, if anything, points to the lack of Métis perspective in Beyond Batoche. Having presented the Métis angle in the radio series, and wanting to take a different approach for the play, Deverell tried presenting the picture from the perspective of a white, middle-class scriptwriter whose interest in the project becomes personal enough to make him question his own motives.

Deverell's interest in the topic was backed by Ken Kramer, who had also participated in the radio drama, providing the voice of Bishop Bourget. The Globe Theatre agreed with Deverell's decision to approach the project from another angle, as Ken Kramer explained in a Globe Theatre advance (released on April 1, 1985), they wanted to "relate the events of 1885 to the reality of the Métis among us today. That event still resonates, in ways that we tend to ignore." The venture was not overly successful with the critics who generally seemed to feel that the modern characters were

simply no match for the strength of Riel's historical figure. As Mary Blackstone commented:

> although the plot attempts to take us beyond Batoche and Riel, the most memorable moments in the play belong not to Yvonne or Matthew but to Riel. Even when standing still and silent in the opposite corner, Riel can upstage a scene going on in Matthew's office.[87]

It seems in the critical analysis of the play, that Deverell did indeed succeed in taking another approach to Batoche, but his detour was perhaps less successful than the direct approach might have been. As Audrey Ashley points out, "What we have here is an uneasy hybrid, neither one thing nor the other. . . it doesn't add up to a satisfying play."[88]

Deverell's Quartet for Three Actors, first produced at the Globe in January of 1987, moved away from history but further along the lines of performance which Deverell had explored in a number of his earlier plays. The play deals with the dilemma faced by three actors who arrive on stage to find no director, no audience and no exit. The three have been contracted to "Enter. Perform. Exit."[89] and although they finally settle on the idea that they are taking part in a performance piece, the actors discover there is no escape unless they act their way out.

In turn each actor is featured in a scene which he/she believes will be good enough to grant them an exit, but it is not until they work as a company, without starring roles, that the magic of theatre is realized. As Mary Blackstone

explained, the playwright, "presents this entrapment and the resulting isolation, vulnerability and insecurity as a metaphor for the situation that all actors find themselves in . . . "[90]

There are obvious parallels being drawn between theatre and religion, and in a lesser way theatre and magic. All three offer more than hard, measurable realities to the masses who need uplifting and encouraging. In this respect magicians, actors and clerics are all tools of a greater force, themselves measurable by whatever effects they may have on the people whom they try to inspire. In Quartet, however, the greatest importance is attached to the spiritual inspiration which solves the actors' dilemma. The play pushes forward the idea that theatre should offer more than the light entertainment of magic, even though the personal price paid by the actors (and perhaps by the playwright) is sometimes a high one.

The trio of actors reaches the conclusion that although their profession brings personal difficulties the effort is worthwhile in both a public and a private sense. They are not only awarded the public gratification of an audience transported, at least temporarily, to a world outside the normal borders of reality, but also the personal satisfaction of having given of themselves.

In Quartet there is a return to the type of performance found in Boiler Room Suite. The creation of such performance

art is an offering which, if freely given and received, as in the case of Aggie and Sprugg, can transcend the boundaries of everyday reality. In Quartet for Three Actors these boundaries become literal, as the confined space of the theatre, and only through the combined efforts of the three actors can their performance reach the audience and find both a solution and a conclusion to their entrapment.

Although individually they have ability, none of the three is self-reliant. Each actor must face the reality that he/she cannot move the mountain alone. In spite of their individual talents, and the sacrifices which they have each made to remain in the profession, these are not enough. Each of the actors has paid a high price for remaining in theatre, and each of them presents a "starring" performance which parallels their private fears that this price has been too high.

The first performance features Mickey, a comic actor in his thirties, who drinks too heavily and wonders if he, like the character he portrays, is simply "a comic who can't hack it" (p. 164). It is at the beginning of his performance that the actors first realize they are not necessarily alone, as they first believed. The lighting alters, a table and props materialize and background music and voices become apparent.

The comic's problem, like Mickey's has led to alcohol. During this act drinks are ordered and delivered, Mickey responds with, "Is this real?" while the script directions for

the actor read, "Brightening up" (p. 157). Alcohol is Mickey's reality, and the comic character's downfall. The character, Harvey Ledbetter, has lost it, both his talent and his faith in comedy. He is no longer funny, he can no longer entertain, and he himself has questioned whether or not it has been worth the effort. Mickey (as Harvey): "I used to think I could save the world - laughing - making them laugh . . . . Now...what? . . . . They laugh? So what. And sometimes they don't laugh" (p. 163). The performance piece, no matter how close to home for Mickey, does not find an exit for the three actors. However, it has touched a reality for Mickey, providing an insight into his darkest fears and somehow this confrontation moves the trio closer to the collective truth required of them.

Krull, played by Ken Kramer, is the veteran performer. He is from the "old school" of acting as he describes it, a classical actor in his mid to late fifties. He hates plays about actors and he hates experimental drama. Having started out with the statement, "If anybody thinks I'm going to stand around expostulating on reality and unreality all night, forget it" (p. 153), Krull becomes more than willing to attempt to rescue the group with his acting abilities, especially after Mickey's failure to draw the "experimental drama" to a close.

Like Mickey's role, Krull's is too personally related to be comfortable. In his starring scene Krull portrays an aging

actor who can no longer remember his lines and, more importantly, in having put so much effort into himself and the advancement of his career in line-remembering, he has lost his family. His wife is dead, he finds their son unacceptable, and their daughter has built her life on his fading career. Looking back he realizes that his life has been quite empty, and what remains is becoming increasingly lost to him, like so many of his more famous lines.

However moving, this performance has also failed to find the actors a way out. But there is again a sense of movement. Firstly, Mickey senses an audience and feels that he and his companions are actually performing for a reason. Secondly, Krull imitates Jimmy Durante singing "Inka Dinka Doo" and, although surprised at his display, Mickey and Fran willingly accept that this kind of hamming is not only a part of an actor's nature but in some cases it preserves sanity.

The fine line between illusion and reality, sanity and insanity is the obstacle tripping Fran. In her starring role the character is a patient in a mental hospital, no longer willing or able to distinguish the real from the imagined. As in the cases of Mickey and Krull, Fran's scene is an unnerving parallel to her own personal fears and most disturbing tendencies. Before beginning her performance Fran warms up with a humourous, though off-beat exercise which includes invocations to forces beyond reality, whether God or the Fates, or the Delphic oracle for whom she imagines she was

once a priestess in a former life.

Following Fran's scene the actors are still trapped. However, they feel they may have made another step forward, as expressed by Mickey: "The first two scenes were about acting, this one was about . . . about escaping from real life. There's a sort of connection" (p. 185). At this point they have progressed far enough to be willing to share their fears with one another. Krull: "I may have passed it, though. My peak" (p. 190). Mickey: I'm always getting offers. The sound of the phone used to set the heart a-thumping. Now, I don't want to go anymore, I don't want to do anymore" (p. 191). Fran: "I'd like to do something real, something for somebody" (p. 191). With this kind of openness prevailing, they decide that the only means to win their way off the stage is to do so as an ensemble, without stars.

During the final scene the three are forced to question their purpose and their faith, in themselves and in their profession. This is the scene in which Devereli moves the parallel lines of theatre and religion closer together. The performance is operating on a dual level as the actors hide from their unknown persecutors on a mountainside. Fran says, "This is a place where they would never dare to come. It's also a place where weird things happen. Nobody ever feels comfortable here" (p. 194). Their mountain, which must be climbed, is both a safe haven and a test. The searches for the essence of spirituality and the essence of theatre are

entwined, and the answers are likewise akin. There is more to being than is to be found in simple existence. The rewards are abstract, but the personal sacrifices are real enough, and as the trio discovers it is a worthy search.

Finally, as well as seeing their audience, they can see their purpose: ". . . it's like when we really faced the idea that there might be nothing there . . . Then somehow . . . we found there was - at least there could be - something" (p. 201). The lights come on at the entrance/exit and the actors are aware that their performance is over. They have succeeded in finding their way out, and in accepting their fate, and its rewards, as actors. They can only hope to have made a difference in the lives of others by the offerings they have made of themselves. In dedicating the play to actors Rex Deverell wrote in the programme notes for Quartet for Three Actors:

> They know the absurdity of their art, a creation that disappears at the end of every performance. . . . we ask actors . . . . to create a sound and fury that will lead us to a silence signifying everything.

This play returns to the creative playing style of Boiler Room Suite which allows the characters to lift both themselves (as actors and audience) and those outside the performance, to transcend the burden of daily realities. The local paper gave Quartet for Three Actors a favourable, if restrained review:

> It is refreshing to see Deverell return to his earlier form, although the earmarks of his work - a preoccupation with Saskatchewan politics and religious matters - are evident . . . . (the) audience, however, responded warmly to asides about socialism . . .[91]

Reviewer Michael Scholar has aptly described Quartet for Three Actors[92] as "a funny and oddly comforting play about unsettling ideas."

Deverell's Afternoon of the Big Game was premièred at the Globe in January of 1988, directed by Ken Kramer, after being workshopped at the Blyth Festival in Ontario during the summer of 1987. The play is a satire of Saskatchewan politics and Roughriders football running in uneven and awkward opposition. The action/interaction revolves on two families spending the afternoon together to watch the Big Game on television, but falling into political discord. As Don Perkins points out, the satire "plays with the cliché of the political football, something most of the characters become in the course of the play, and something many in the audience may have felt like. . . . "[93]

The cast of seven includes an elderly ex-farmer who has never lost faith with the CCF but is well on his way to losing his memory. Ogie is the starting, ending, and in some ways, central character of the play. He is, perhaps, a personification of a well-meaning player who has fumbled the ball. His daughter, Diane, is a middle-aged ex-demonstrator who has long since given up the fight. Although her father

describes her as having been quite an activist in her youth she now seems very tame in her role as wife of a civil servant. Her second husband, Bill, is a toe-the-line government official whose job it is to fire other civil servants. Rounding out the host family is Diane's son, Kevin, an avid football fan with teenage worries just beginning to expand beyond himself. The visiting couple consists of Bill's right-wing boss, Floyd Stark, and his wife, Sharyl. It is Floyd's decision to spring the news of Bill's impending firing during the football game. The games people play continue as Floyd's quiet wife revolts after fifteen years of marriage in which Floyd has always carried the ball, so to speak. The seventh member of the cast remains unseen through the introduction of the other characters and while the scene is set. The stage directions then read: "There is a large sports press booth hanging over the stage. It has been scarcely noticeable but now suddenly it dominates the stage. Lights rise up on a CBC Television 'sports announcer'." This is the beginning of the dual play. The football commentary, and the mainly political dialogue in the rec room run concurrently.

There were mixed critical reactions as to the success of this dualism. Don Perkins maintains that the play "brings together in a witty and telling way the two most popular weekend pastimes in Saskatchewan: watching the Riders and arguing politics."[94] As well, in Margaret Gail Osachoff's opinion the play "combined satire against a specific and local

political situation with comedy that deals with some serious and universal themes."[95] In contrast, Kevin O'Connor described the "full-blown Saskatchewan satire . . . . as having some witty interplay but it's burdened by too much rhetoric and a plot that doesn't go anywhere."[96]

The theatrical device of co-ordinating a match between the Saskatchewan Roughriders and the Toronto Argonauts with a face off between left and right wing politics wears thin. Although the sports announcer manages to fit in some comments equally applicable to both "games" there is just not enough material to manage a two-act parallel. Unlike Rick Salutin's Les Canadiens, which paralleled Quebec's political situation with its hockey team, there is no perfectly timed political turn-around in Saskatchewan to live up to the sudden comeback play accorded to the Roughriders. Afternoon of the Big Game offers the audience a play of political hope, the suggestion that the game is not yet over and that there remains a chance of unexpected victory worthy of a good effort. Although the play is typically Globe, in terms of content and concern, there is an obvious problem with the set in dealing with an in-the-round presentation. Unlike most of Deverell's plays there is a stasis - - a setting which revolves around a stationary television set (whether actually present on stage or merely a focal point) and a sports announcer throughout the performance.

This greater reliance on set and props leans toward a more naturalistic style, but Afternoon of the Big Game is not a naturalistic play. The audience, led by Ogie's erratic memory, is shown exciting moments of the provinces's (and Ogie's personal) political past - - backdropped by the lively football game. The contrast between the vitality of these two "games" and the game being played in the rec room is emphasized by Ogie's reminders of the loss of personal vitality. He is sometimes aware that he is no longer in the game, that like his grandson he is a spectator. One is too old, and one too young. Kevin will soon become a player, given motivation. But Ogie cannot understand why Diane is no longer the vital, energetic woman he remembers. As spectator he develops a sort of respect for Floyd's wife as she rebels. Ogie understands fighting for what you believe in. He even offers understanding to his government-issue son-in-law: with the encouragement to "muddle on" (p. 272).

This play seems to be moving in a direction begun in Beyond Batoche. Instead of looking back on political concerns, such as the healthcare system or the miners' strike, Afternoon of the Big Game reaches out into modern realities. As with Beyond Batoche the play seems to demand some sort of action from the audience, even if only intellectually. Although the Globe has always taken a left-wing stance, with their Deverell plays it was always dealing with a past issue. Beyond Batoche and Afternoon of the Big Game seem to show

Deverell moving beyond the safety and distance of the historical concerns of a regional theatre. No doubt the plays are for and about the same audiences, but they go further than ever in making demands on their audience. They may, as well, be showing Deverell's growing need to try working outside the stylistic framework which had supported him for thirteen years. It is, however, a good demonstration of how well Saskatchewan's past and present inspired so many of the Globe-Deverell plays. Afternoon of the Big Game is a genuine attempt by the Globe, in collaboration with their playwright-in-residence, to create theatre of local meaning.

Throughout all Deverell's plays for the Globe there are clear messages of social awareness and attempts to awaken social consciences. With varying degrees of success Deverell's plays focus most of their attention on a variety of social problems and ensuing injustices. In general Deverell suggests that there is always room for improvement in our world, but more importantly, there is hope for such improvement.

The greatest irony in Deverell's relationship with the Globe seems to be that as he was developing his skills as a playwright, the Globe's popularity was on the wane. By the end of Deverell's tenure, the contract between the Globe and himself was creating a self-defeating cycle. The Globe was depending more and more upon Deverell's works, commissioning historical or comic plays to draw their specific regional

audiences, while Deverell's more creative plays were reaching a new level of sophistication and complexity. In spite of this apparent internal breakdown, Deverell's thirteen years as the Globe's playwright-in-residence were extremely productive. According to Stuart "the Kramers once stated that the Globe Theatre's goal was 'to produce the best and most appropriate material for as wide an audience as possible throughout the province. Professional theatre from birth to grave'."[97] Having accepted his role in such a partnership Deverell created a considerable double portfolio of works virtually unique in Canadian theatre history for its production by a regional theatre for a regional audience, often consisting of both parents and children.

Unlike many or the larger regional theatres, the Globe was not daunted by the financial risk in undertaking production of new Canadian plays. Rather, in its early decision to name a playwright-in-residence the Globe became one of the more innovative and successful of Canada's regional theatres. Because the theatre was so strongly regional the Globe was able to use its playwright-in-residence, as well as other Canadian dramatists (to a lesser extent) to tap into new audiences. The Globe-Deverell productions in particular brought Saskatchewan theatre to Saskatchewan's people in unprecedented numbers, setting an example for other Canadian regional theatres to follow. Although after thirteen years Deverell and the Globe had explored those interests of mutual

concern and decided to try new and separate directions, their work together has set a unique precedent in the history of Canadian theatre.

NOTES

1. According to Mark Czarnecki in Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions, Anton Wagner, ed., (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1985), pp. 35-36: there is "no formal or legal definition" of the term regional theatre, and "the distinction between regionals and several other large theatres has become increasingly blurred." However, he agrees that all of Canada's regional theatres conform to at least some of the specifics laid out in 1960-61 by the Canada Council: existing in sufficiently populous cities to financially support a theatre, mounting tours, providing children's theatre; and providing some training for young actors.

2. Doris Hillis, interview with Rex Deverell in Plainspeaking: Interviews with Saskatchewan Writers, (Regina: Coteau Books, 1988) pp. 71-72.

3. Jamie Portman, "Regina's Globe Toughs it Out", PAM, Summer 1975, pp. 33-34.

4. E. Ross Stuart, The History of Prairie Theatre, (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1984), pp. 198-199.

5. Robert Wallace and Cynthia Zimmerman, "Rex Deverell" in The Work: Conversations with English Canadian Playwrights, (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1982), p. 130.

6. Doris Hillis, Plainspeaking, p. 72.

7. Rex Deverell, "Kramer lived and breathed Globe Theatre 24 hours a day", Leader-Post, 25 May, 1985, Sec. A, p. 11.

8. Rex Deverell, in a letter to Don Perkins, ed. Deverell of the Globe, (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1989), p. 2.

9. Globe Theatre Annual Report: 1976-77, p. 2.

10. Stuart, The History of Prairie Theatre, p. 199.

11. Diane Bessai, "Drama in Saskatchewan", in Essays on Saskatchewan Writing, E.F. Dyck, ed., (Regina: Saskatchewan Writers' Guild, 1986), p. 224.

12. In a situation much like that of the Deverells in later years, Carol Bolt wrote for the Globe while her husband was a member of the company. Next Year Country later became Buffalo Jump when Bolt worked further on the play with Theatre Passe Muraille in 1972.

13. Portman, PAM, p. 34.

14. Stuart, p. 202.

15. Czarnecki "The Regional Theatre System", Contemporary Canadian Theatre, p. 37.

16. Portman, pp. 33-34.

17. Doris Hillis, interview with Ken Mitchell in Voices & Visions: Interviews with Saskatchewan Writers, (Moose Jaw: Coteau Books, 1985), p. 199.

18. Janet Amos, participant in "Panel: The Next Decade", in The Proceedings of the Theatre in Atlantic Canada Symposium, Mount Allison University, (Sackville: Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison University, 1988), p. 245.

19. Stuart, p. 203.

20. The Work, p. 132.

21. Deverell of the Globe, p. 2.

22. Deverell of the Globe, pp. 2-3.

23. The Work, p. 138.

24. The Work, p. 133.

25. The Work, p. 135.

26. Bob Cosbey, "Number One Hard: A theatrical, musical look at the hard facts of the grain industry", next year country, April/May, 1978, pp. 30-31.

27. "Theatre in the Round", an interview with Peter Cheeseman, Leicester Student University Newspaper, May 12, 1966, p. 5, quoted from Gilette A. Elvgren, jr.'s article "Documentary Theatre at Stoke-on-Trent," Educational Theatre Journal, March 1974, 26, no. 1, p. 91.

28. Peter Cheeseman, introduction to The Knotty, text by the Victoria Theatre Company (1970), (London: Methuen, 1970), ix.

29. Alan Filewod, Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 81.

30. Stuart, p. 196.

31. The Mark on the Corner of Scarth and Eleventh was the only one of Deverell's scripts of which I was unable to obtain a copy.

32. Rex Deverell, "Medicare! As a one man collective," in Showing West: Three Prairie Docu-Dramas, eds. Diane Bessai and Don Kerr (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), p. 177.

33. Globe Theatre Annual Report: 1979-80, p. 4.

34. The Work, p. 139.

35. Jamie Portman, "Arts scene", Edmonton Journal, 21 January, 1980, Sec. F, p. 8.

36. Mick Burrs, "Spiritual Explorations of a Rooted Playwright: In Place", Canadian Theatre Review, 42 (Spring 1985), p. 47.

37. As above, p. 45.

38. Margaret Hryniuk, "The Globe Theatre: A Story of Perseverance and Pluck," Performing Arts (June 1987), p. 25.

39. Peter Brown, "The Great Globe Itself," NeWest Review, 15, no. 3, (February/March 1990), p. 45.

40. Mark Czarnecki, "The fertility of Prairie Drama," Maclean's, 16 April, 1984, p. 74.

41. Reg Silvester, "Prairie Profiles: The Globe," Canadian Theatre Review, 11, (Summer 1976), p. 127.

42. Brown, p. 45.

Bernard Pilon, "Globe Trying a Sequel," Leader-Post, 25 January, 1990, Sec. B, p. 8.

44. Brown, p. 45.

45. "Comfort zone was tough to leave," Leader-Post, 25 January, 1990, Sec. B, p. 8.

46. As above.

47. Jamie Portman, "Regina's Globe Theatre looking for bailout," Edmonton Journal, 9 November, 1990, Sec. D, p. 7.

48. All references to the text of "Boiler Room Suite" will use the Deverell of the Globe: Selected Plays by Rex Deverell ed. Don Perkins, (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1989), p. 60.

49. Don Perkins, ed., Deverell of the Globe, p. 4.

50. Michael Scholar, "Beyond Batoche: The Playwright in Mid-Career," Canadian Drama/L'Art dramatique canadien, 11, no. 2, 1985, p. 337.

51. Plainspeaking, p. 78.

52. Joe Sornberger, "Accent's still on the Word for ex-pastor," Edmonton Journal, 3 December, 1977, Sec. H, p. 1.

53. The Work, p. 129.

54. Power Trip was written by Deverell for the Globe School Tours and was performed for high school audiences during the 1974-75 season. Deverell has described it as a look at the literature of power and power struggle. It is only vaguely recognizable as the seed of Boiler Room Suite, although it revolves around two central characters: vagrant alcoholics named Aggie and Sprugg. While the play for children focuses attention on the power that Aggie and Sprugg do not have, Boiler Room Suite emphasizes that which they do control.

55. The Work, p. 130.

56. The two main researchers on the Medicare! project were Brenda Bazinet and Dana Still.

57. Collective Encounters, p. 84.

58. Collective Encounters, p. 83

59. Deverell, "Medicare! As a one man collective," p. 178.

60. As above, p. 180.

61. "Drama in Saskatchewan", p. 233.

62. Showing West, p. 179.

63. Showing West, p. 182

64. Globe Theatre Annual Report: 1979-80, p. 3.

65. Dennis Gruending, "Medicare as Hansard," NeWest Review, 5, no. 8, April 1980, p. 2.

66. Jamie Portman, "New docu-drama recalls Saskatchewan's Medicare crisis," Calgary Herald, 28 March, 1980, sec. C, p. 8.

67. Kim McCaw, "Saskatchewan Playwriting: Trends and Directions" in Writing Saskatchewan: 20 Critical Essays (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1989), p. 115.

68. The Work, p. 135.

69. Janice Neil, "Deverell finds answer in his play," Leader-Post, 27 October, 1980, p. 8.

70. Rex Deverell, "Black Powder: The Text", in Grain, 10, No. 1 (February 1982), p. 72.

71. John Miner, "Play rekindles sad memories of strike and riot in Estevan," Leader-Post, 30 September, 1981, Sec. C., p. 19.

72. Ustun Reinart, "Black Powder burns bright," Canadian Dimension, 6, no. 5 (October/November 1982), p. 31.

73. As above, p. 30.

74. Reinart, Connections, p. 31.

75. The Work, p. 139.

76. Barry Barlow, "Globe Theatre's docu-drama more documentary than drama," Leader-Post, 19 October, 1981, Sec. A, p. 9.

77. Canadian Dimension, p. 31.

78. Stan Hanson, "Black Powder as History," NeWest Review, 7, no. 3, (November 1981), p. 9.

79. Canadian Dimension, p. 31.

80. John Miner, "Play rekindles sad memories of strike and riot in Estevan," Leader-Post, 30 September, 1981, Sec. C, p. 19.

81. Lee Anne Block, a review of Black Powder: Estevan 1981 and of Showing West: Three Prairie Docu-Dramas, Arts Manitoba, 3, no. 1 (November 1983), p. 45.

83. Don Kerr, "The Madness is Spreading," Canada on Stage: 1982-1986, (n.p.: PACT Communications Centre Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, 1989), xix.

84. Scholar, "Beyond Batoche: The Playwright in Mid-Career," pp. 329-339.

85. As above, p. 335.

86. Wayne Schmalz, ed., Studio One: Stories Made for Radio, (Regina: Coteau Books, 1990), p. 138.

87. Mary Blackstone, "Beyond Batoche", a review in NeWest Review, Summer 1985, p. 18.

88. Audrey Ashley, "Regina playwright's Riel unsatisfying on stage," The Ottawa Citizen, 15 May, 1985, Sec. D, p. 21.

89. All references to Quartet for Three Actors will be from Deverell of the Globe, ed. Don Perkins.

90. Mary Blackstone, "Quartet one of Deverell's Best," NeWest Review, 12, no. 7 (March 1987), p. 16.

91. Meta Perry, "Play shows actors trapped on stage with no usual exit," Leader-Post, 12 January, 1987, Sec. C, p. 12.

92. Michael Scholar, "Quartet for Three Actors", a review in Maclean's, 26 January, 1987, p. 55.

93. Don Perkins, Deverell of the Globe, p. 8. This edition will be used for all references to Afternoon of the Big Game.

94. Deverell of the Globe, p. 7.

95. Margaret Gail Osachoff, "Games People Play," NeWest Review, 18, no. 7 (March 1988), p. 18.

96. Kevin O'Connor, "New Saskatchewan satire thoughtful, but not funny," Leader-Post, 18 January, 1988, Sec. B. p. 11.

97. Stuart, p. 203.

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