

'Book of Men' good idea, but comes up short

By Bill Roberts

A Book of Men: Visions of the Male Experience, edited by Ross Firestone/ Stonehill Publishing Co., New York, \$5.95.

Marc and Brenda Feigen Fasteau shed a little light on an important problem last week when they spoke at UNL about the need to change the role of men and women in American society. Marc said men need to break out of the "John Wayne" image of "strong, silent, and boring" masculinity, a true observation but superficial.

What we really need are some insightful observations of the male role in American society. If that role were defined beyond the ordinary stereotype, we could truly illuminate the basic question raised by the Feigen Fasteaus: to what extent, and with what validity, are our societal roles determined by our sex.

The subject is too big for a lecture—a good book is what we need.

So it is disappointing that *A Book of Men: Visions of the Male Experience*, which addresses itself to just that question, is only a fair book.

Four sections

Editor Firestone selects personal writings—autobiographies, letters and the like—of famous 20th century

men. He organizes them into four sections: Sons, Lovers, Husbands and Fathers.

The distinctions are interesting because they suggest there are certain roles men must play in any society. But the distinction between lovers and husbands is thin, and sometimes seems to have been made only to provide space for more juicy erotic passages.

Most of the selections were written before the feminist movement began and, except that they mention radios and automobiles, might as well have been written hundreds of years ago. Why then limit the choice of material to that written in the past 76 years? Why not go further back for better stuff?

Another gripe

Another gripe concerns some of the selections. Norman Mailer, who has much to say on maleness, is represented by a snippet from an interview. Mailer talks about masturbation, and then one wonders why Phillip Roth, who said

so much on that subject in *Portnoy's Complaint* and elsewhere, wasn't included.

A mechanical flaw of *Book of Men* is its lack of authors' introduction.

In spite of these faults, the book succeeds in places. The most striking example is a selection in the Fathers category by, of all people, W.C. Fields.

Forget the screen image of Fields's cutting sarcasm. This letter to his divorced wife about the rearing of their son is full of blunt rage. It vibrates with the human concern of parenthood, and the stereotype of maternal instinct is as relevant to Fields's situation as the man in the moon.

The Fields selection illustrates our problem: finding where the stereotype ends and where the real role of, say, fatherhood, begins.

But because the idea of the book is so good and so timely, it's a shame the editor didn't do a better job.

Two off-beat comedies open Friday

After Magritte and *The Real Inspector Hound*, written by the playwright who won recognition for his full-length play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, will open Friday at the Lincoln Community Playhouse.

The two one-act comedies by Tom Stoppard are directed by John Wilson, and will play on weekends from opening night to March 28, with evening performances at 8 p.m.

After Magritte concerns a couple who are professional ballroom dancers. Since they practice in the livingroom of their tiny apartment, the wife's tuba-playing mother must take her nap on an ironing board located in the room.

Matters worsen after the husband realizes that the woman on the ironing board is really his mother and that Inspector Foot of Scotland Yard has arrived to arrest him for a crime that he is almost sure he did not commit.

Don Renaud and Amy Thelander play the couple; Dottie Stoesz is the mother; Inspector Hound is played by Larry Zoucha, and John Flanagan plays Holmes, a novice

detective from Scotland Yard.

The second piece is a crazy "whodunit?" Moon and Birdfoot, two theatre critics, attend a play at Muldoon Manor, an eerie old house standing alone amid the coastal region's desolate marshes and treacherous cliffs.

Radio reports say an escaped lunatic is believed to be in the area. Just as the fog rolls in, making the mansion inaccessible to help, a man matching the description of the marauder enters.

Renaud and Zoucha from the first comedy also play the theatre critics, while Mildred Bailey is the maid (Mrs. Drudge); Shelley Lahman is Lady Muldoon; Carol McVey is Felicity Cunningham, tennis playing houseguest of Lady Muldoon; Gale Curtright plays Inspector Hound; Lee Aronsohn is the "lunatic" Simon, and Rod McCullough plays Magnus, the wheel-chair ridden half-brother of "her ladyship's husband, Lord Albert Muldoon."

Reservations for these two light comedies can be made by calling the playhouse at 489-9608.

Band slates music treat

The 130-member UNL Collegiate Band will perform seven works by North American composers today at 8 p.m. in Kimball Recital Hall. A highlight of the free concert will be a solo performance by Dennis Schneider, UNL professor of brass instruments, of Martin Mailman's "Concer-

tino for Trumpet and Band."

Robert Fought, UNL associate professor of saxophone and band director, will direct the "Concertino" and "An Original Suite," by Gordon Jacob, "Three Camcos," by Jared Spears, the "Four Freedoms" march by Edwin Franko Goldman, and "Panorama for Band," by Rex Mitchell.

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