

Martlet MAGAZINE

Vol. 1

NOVEMBER 18, 1965

No. 7

Irving Layton, Poet

By J. F. HART

Irving Layton may be Canada's best poet, but many of his critics are not ready to admit it if he is. He does not have a "copyright on passion" as a recent article in Maclean's Magazine suggests, but certainly many of his poems are written from his heart. He is a man who feels things intensely; at once he can be both gentle and angry. Many of his poems seem pettily bitter,

"I have always maintained that when people stop learning, they start teaching."

but they are not, for Layton is often joking in a serious manner. In *Family Portrait*, for example, he describes a nouveau riche father who, with his two sons and daughter, is eating watermelon in a hotel in Montreal. The daughter "... however is embarrassed / (*Second Year Arts, McGill*) ..." because her father makes so much noise. The last six lines of the poem:

*They're about as useless
as tits on a bull,
and I think:
"Thank heaven I'm not
Jesus Christ ...
I don't have to love them."*

When Layton read this poem at the Canadian Services College, Royal Roads, three weeks ago, his eyes gleamed and he could hardly contain his laughter. He was serious, but hardly bitter.

MONTREAL INFLUENCE

Except for a year in Neamtz, Rumania, where he was born in 1912, Irving Layton has lived all his life in Montreal, and the city has definitely influenced his life. He was brought up in a poor Jewish area, on a street which no longer exists. He put himself through high school collecting overdue bills owed to the family grocery store. When he was ready for university the depression was at its depths, so he studied agriculture at Macdonald College, 20 miles west of Montreal, because the government paid a small subsidy. His interest was in agricultural economics and this enabled him to later take an M.A. at McGill in Political Science - Economics. When war broke out, he joined the army's officer training course; but Layton was not officer material. As he tells it, the army felt an honorable discharge would considerably help the war effort. He found himself back in Montreal in 1943, publishing poetry, with John Sutherland and Louis Dudek, in *First Statement*. Dudek and

Mr. Hart is an Arts student at the University of Victoria.

Layton were close then, but later split up, supposedly over a political dispute. They got together again in 1953 to co-edit *Canadian Poems 1850-1952*. They are no longer on speaking terms, as Montrealers well know; every few months a salvo of letters from Layton and his supporters, and from Dudek and his supporters, comes into print by way of the letters-to-the-editor column in the *Montreal Star*, and the *Montreal Gazette*.

UNIVERSITY LECTURER

Layton now lectures at Sir George Williams University in downtown Montreal. He is a frequent guest at a local radio station on a program which invites listeners to phone in questions. Three years ago, a woman phoned in



"He sees phoniness in nearly everything ..."

to tell Layton that she had read his poems, and found them dirty, disgusting and sick.

"Madam," replied Layton, "I have always maintained that when people stop learning, they start teaching."

The fact that so many school teachers, who heard this remark, became highly incensed over this, simply helped prove this point. There are many, however, who still insist that Layton was implying that teachers had stopped learning.

"Yes, of course I'm angry. A good poet has the gift of anger; he should be angry."

NO LOVE

Certainly Layton has no love for the general run of teachers, nor, for that matter, librarians, bank clerks, students, business executives and ministers. He sees phoniness in nearly everything, and writes about it so convincingly that he cannot be ignored. Haven't we all known Anglo-Canadian.

*A native of Kingston, Ont.
—two grandparents Canadian
and still living*

*His complexion florid
as a maple leaf in late autumn,
for three years he attended
Oxford*

*Now his accent
makes even Englishmen
wince, and feel
unspeakably colonial.*

Sooner or later, Layton gets around to everyone, and because his poems are forceful and direct, no one should have any trouble recognizing himself. Perhaps this is one reason why Layton has so many critics.

When Layton—who has just completed a tour of Canada, prior to the publication of his latest book—was in Victoria three weeks ago, Dr. Morgan of the English faculty at Royal Roads, kindly arranged an interview. Layton is a short, good-looking man with a deep, almost rasping, voice which is pleasant to listen to. A convincing

speaker, he knows what he is talking about, especially when talking about his poetry and his critics. Layton never hesitated when answering a question, and patiently listened whenever asked an overly-long question. Unfortunately, he had little time and so I began by asking about his relationship with Dudek which had started him publishing.

Question: You and Dudek were very close at one time. What caused your final break? It has been suggested that it was political.

Layton: No, not at all. I'm afraid my success went to his head and he has never forgotten it. I'm very grateful to him and always will be. I'm sorry he could not share in my success, although he himself, of course, has made quite a name as a critic.

Q.: Writing in the *Montreal Star*, in 1963, a reviewer said that at the age of 51 you were the oldest angry young man in Canada; or words to that effect.

L.: Well, I would say I am a middle-aged angry man.

Q.: But you are angry.

L.: Yes, of course I'm angry. A good poet has the gift of anger; he should be angry. Incidentally, I took exception to that reviewer's comments, and wrote him a long letter.

Q.: Your critics contend that your poetry hasn't really changed over the years, that you are still angry over the same things now as in your earlier poems.

L.: Not really. I see things differently now, and my poems are different from the ones I was writing years ago, but the same things still anger me, yes. There is a distinction though.

Q.: A. J. M. Smith, writing in *Masks of Poetry*, says "... There are also romantic weaknesses that the critical reader will want to consider, particularly the poet's (Layton's) ambivalent attitude toward sex and an almost doctrinaire egoism."

L.: Any poet worth his salt has ambivalence about most things. It is a compliment. The "I" in my poems is used as Walt Whitman used it; it is any "I". If I refer to my armpit, it is anybody's armpit. It is a convenient fiction which I employ for my own purposes. The image is made stronger by relating to it personally. If I say, in a poem, how good it is to urinate, I am talking about life that I can see and feel, about something we all feel and know.

Q.: Robin Skelton, in a review of your book, *The Laughing Rooster*, writes: "... Perhaps the most astonishing ... piece of all is *Success*, which reads:

*I've always wanted
to write
a poem
with the word
"zeugma"
in it.*

Now I've done it!

You haven't you know, you haven't!"

L.: But I have, haven't I?

"Any poet worth his salt has ambivalence about most things."

Q.: Many of your critics attacked this book, including Skelton. Do any of the have anything personal against you?

(continued on page two)

ARC
LH3
M32
C.2

Effective Technique In Modern Novel

By ROBERT M. MCGINNIS

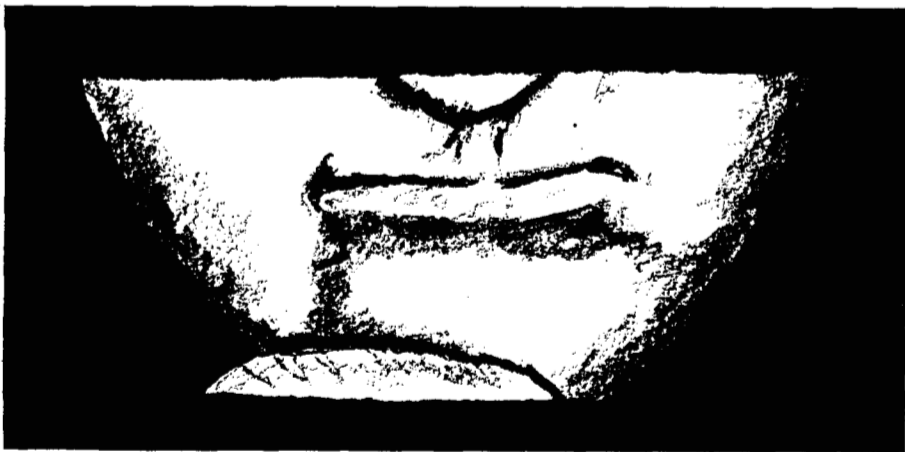
Today all serious fiction is psychological with the entire consciousness being opened up by the device of interior monologue or the stream of consciousness technique. The 19th century novelist probed man's relation to society and his times, whereas the modern novelist probes the inner recesses of the mind, or man in relation to himself. The modern novelist further deals with the dark tumultuous sea of emotions, with mental processes, with monetary sensory impressions and with remembrance of things past which the older narrative methods either ignored or did not reveal in the same vivid authentic, and dramatic

Mr. McGinnis, an instructor in the English Department at the University of Victoria, is a frequent contributor to the Martlet Magazine.

Layton

(continued from page one)

L: I don't really believe any of these people have anything personal against me; although I can't understand why Skelton would say that. If any one volume of my poetry is crafted, it is *The Laughing Rooster*. I worked a long time on all those poems. In that same review, Skelton said that the first three words of *The Cactus*, "I can imagine," don't belong. He says that the use of the first person detracts from the following image of the airman. He isn't reading those poems correctly. The cactus is symbolic; an airman parachutes into, and is enmeshed by the thorns, the thorns



"I see things differently now . . . but the same things still anger me . . ."

of life. If you omit the words Skelton suggests, the poem becomes almost literal. Again, you see, the image becomes very strong when I relate to it personally.

Q: In 1957, Dudek, writing in *Delta Magazine*, said: "All poetry, nowadays, anyhow, is someone's effort to save his soul". Would you comment please.

manner that this new technique of stream of consciousness makes possible.

As is well known, the term "stream of consciousness" was first used by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* as an attempt to describe the nature of consciousness.

NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

"Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly . . . it is nothing jointed;

"The 19th century novelist probed man's relation to society and his times, whereas the modern novelist probes the inner recesses of the mind . . ."

it flows. A 'river' or a stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream . . . of consciousness."

This was written in 1892; today, such terms as 'stream of thought' or more accurately, 'interior monologue' have opened up new frontiers, new vistas of novelistic development whereby the whole range of human emotions and thoughts become material for the modern, objective novel.

The first, fully sustained novel written in the stream of consciousness technique was *Les Lauriers Sont Coupés* by Edouard Dujardin in 1887. There is an English translation by Stuart Gilbert, *We'll to the Woods No More*. The novel, of

L: That is a narrow, scholastic attitude. It is typical of the generalizations that Dudek makes. He hasn't made it; he knows it, and it gnaws at him. Poetry certainly means more than that.

Q: Does the poet then, have an obligation to his readers. A moral obligation say?

L: Let's put it this way: a man is a poet because he has an energy to say something. He sees, and he must comment.

At this point Dr. Morgan insisted that Layton get some rest before his reading that evening. As we were leaving, I asked him if Montreal had any effect on him as a poet. Would he have written the same poems had he lived say, in Toronto. His reply: "I wouldn't had I been brought up and had lived in Toronto, no. Montreal has influenced me, certainly. It is the only truly cosmopolitan city in Canada, and there is a driving force there; for me anyway.

great technical interest, is about a Parisian boulevardier who is enamoured with a young actress, with the affair not culminating in bed. Nothing happens. The whole action of the novel is filtered through the young man's head in an extraordinary fashion. The fragmented, abbreviated style records moments of feeling and thought. It is the moment arrested or in Mallarmé's phrase, "l'instant pris à la gorge". This kind of writing comes very close to living, for we do live moment by moment.



James Joyce

LANGUAGE OF THOUGHTS

The stream of consciousness technique is all but indispensable for rendering obsessive states, being the natural medium to portray the language of daydream or anxiety. A man can present a placid demeanor on the outside while his inner thoughts may be a boiling sea of suppressed hate. Such a character is Quentin Compson in *The Sound of the Fury*. Quentin is obsessed with incestuous thoughts about his sister Caddy. Faulkner gives us the incoherence and discontinuity of the young man's thoughts; the disorder and confusion of the more emotional, obsessed sections of the monologue are those that have to do more directly with Caddy.

That evening, at Royal Roads, he read poems which he had previously selected from his own work. Over a hundred cadets were present, as well as professors, wives, and a few university students. Before reading each poem, he gave a brief description of how he had come to write it. It would be unfair to say he was wasted at Royal Roads, but certainly the reaction from the audience was somewhat stifled. Where laughter was called for, he got polite smiles; and when he read *Whom I Write Poetry For*, in an effort to jolt his listeners, he received only titters from the cadets and embarrassed silence from the men and women in the front rows.

Replying to a question, he said his poems needed little revision if they came to him very suddenly, but usually even a six-line poem took weeks before he was completely satisfied that every word was right. He was asked what his idea of the Canadian experience was. He said the thought of growing up in a slum area, on a street which is no longer there, and suddenly, years later finding himself reading poetry in Victoria was fascinating. "If I could find words to express that 53-year journey — that, for me, would be the Canadian experience."

The following feverish flow of tape recording of our unconscious thought. If it were possible to make a thinking, it would look very much like this selection which Quentin recalls about a young man he wanted to kill for having enjoyed his sister's favours:

did he make you then he made you do it let him he was stronger than you and he tomorrow I'll kill him I swear I will father needn't know until afterward and then you and I nobody need ever know we can take my school money we can cancel my matriculation Caddy you hate him don't you don't you

Notice how Faulkner has all but refined himself out of existence. Quotation marks of any kind would indicate the presence of an author arranging material for the reader. Such guide posts would remind us of the narrator's presence.

NO EXTERNAL ACTION

James Joyce, the most influential exponent of this brilliant narrative technique, presents two fascinating examples of interior monologue at various depths in the third and last episodes of *Ulysses*. There is almost no external action in these episodes. Objective descriptions and monologues are mixed but transitions from one to the other are not indicated by the use

"The stream of consciousness technique is all but indispensable . . . being the natural medium to portray the language of daydream or anxiety."

of paragraphing or any form of punctuation. Molly Bloom's monologue, for example, is all description in third person with only a few breaks in the 25,000-word meditation. Thoughts tumble out one after another with no indication where one stops and the other begins. These thoughts are in no way linked together in a logical or intellectual order, but rather in a purely emotional order. We can begin anywhere . . .

. . . I wear red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first . . .

The stream of consciousness technique, like no other method of novel development, reveals the truth. But truth in fiction is not the same as truth in mathematics as fiction is not an exact science; however, it is one more tool in our slow progress toward a more faithful imitation of life. The basic source of mental anguish for the twentieth century man is a lack of community and communication. Above all a man needs communication with himself by keeping open the inner channels between the heart and mind. Individual isolation, inner conflict, ambivalence, and fragmented memory all make up the conscious awareness of the modern mind. Stream of consciousness thrives on this awareness.

Letters

Atmosphere

A reply to New Student Atmosphere: the responsible intellectual answer to contemporary chaos.

Fight fire with fire, they say. Use the means at hand to bring about social reform. To be a responsible student one must meet the future on its own grounds.

This attitude can only lead to a protraction and elaboration of the present conditions for the simple reason that the workings of the democratic society tend to annul any innovation. The extant evils are repressed by machinery that developed simultaneously with the problem.

We are urged to follow by certain compromising elements in our midst. It is most unreasonable to consider that the best course of action can be found in this naive approach. Why is it not more evident to these advocates that the surest way to become mute and ineffectual is to assume that the foe in this case can be brought to reform from within?

I suggest that it is merely a case of massive conformism. That is, a desire to appear enlightened and progressive without having to run the risk of responsibility. Of course, the new disciples can steadfastly thrust their windy petitions and re-



ports in the "in" boxes of authority. How easy is it to ignore the up-the-sleeve laughter of the same authority as long as everyone else agrees to hold the same social contract.

Authority moves at its own good speed. The ever-so right and clean action of our democratic lamplighters does hasten the processes, but immeasurably so.

Do these people realize their relative immunity in the university? I suggest that they will be politely hushed once they leave the context of the university. The undergraduate a te feature-executive-wordiness is only a social phenomenon. There is no need for responsible persons to pull punches. Read Miss Pelland's article of 4/11/65 Martlet Magazine for the material of my attack.

Strangely enough, I advocate a non-violent approach to the solving of extant strife. But here is the difference. Join a group that has similar demands as yourself. Yes. But do not dribble endless platitudes for the sole purpose of enhancing your social status. This attitude that appears so safe will make you a few years hence another nobody who has not contributed one fobbing of his potential unselfishly to his fellow man. Instead, pay attention to your various talents and express them to your fullest. In this way can you

best serve others. Act before your conscience. Goodness should be unconscious.

NOTE: American campus non-violent action is effected because the students are united. The Canadian counterparts are united only on a minor social scale. Moral: If you cannot get together with Joe Canuck, do something for him yourself.

R. E. Cox

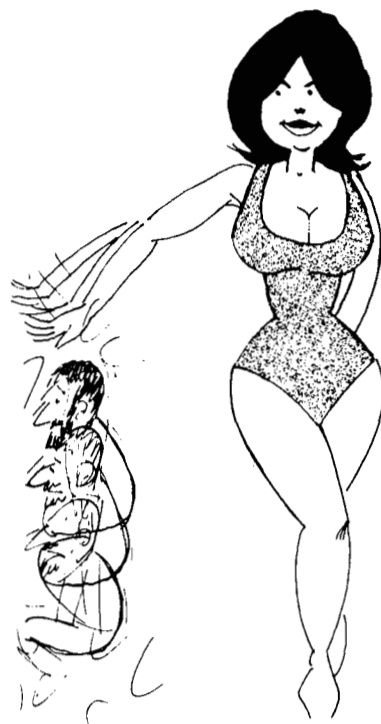
Slavery

"Intellectual Cattle or Cream," that stimulating little essay in the November 10 Martlet Magazine, is a phoney. A poorly-tailored collection of rabble-rousing cliches.

You'll note that revered Alumnus confuses asking questions in public speech's question period with questioning the traditional aspects of education and "intellectual ferment." A laugh. Everyone except Alumnus knows that there are two types of public orations: the pat, one-sided political solidarity speech, which is not worth the bother to question, and the REAL speech. Like Dr. Linus Pauling's. Here you sit down and absorb as much as you can, mull it over for a week, and maybe then you're ready to ask questions. Otherwise, naturally, you can't help but ask picayune, niggling little questions — unless you have an alternate approach to the entire topic. Then why are you asking questions? Get up there and give us your little speech.

Alumnus plays dirty. Alumnus picks on the poor inarticulate guy who does ask questions. "One brave . . . incompetent." Alumnus confuses a lack of articulacy with a lack of rebelliousness. Hey neat! Let's all rebel. But the best rebels always strike me as pretty inarticulate. Take Castro. I never could understand a word he's saying. Perhaps because he speaks Spanish and I don't. It seems to me that Christ and Einstein too are pretty incomprehensible to the average man today. But it's not really their fault, they just can't fit their ideas into our idiom.

I was sorely tempted to call Alumnus, whoever he, she or whatever is, a blatant ass. But by admitting that Prof. Bishop "justly" criticized that inane Freedom Menaced editorial, Alumnus is saved. But look here. Alumnus quotes a bit of the prof's letter, and sneers at it as having an "academic 'tone'". This academic tone is really the Queen's English, a nasty subversive plot craftily designed to bring sanity back into rebellion and intellectual ferment. Prof. Bishop is slyly insinuating that we downtrodden students should go about our business quietly and to the best of our capabilities. Little does he know that we vassals can rebel very efficiently and still seem quite peaceful on the outside. We're just as capable of reforming things as the F.L.Q., say, and we're better equipped. We have facts, ideas and (I blush to confess it) brains — more than the F.L.Q. Let these types follow Alumnus; give them "license to go out on a limb, to make accusations." Let them sling mud at our faculty and government and make fools of themselves. We serfs can get to work behind their noxious smokescreen and with a little bitta



Most people are familiar with the charming prints of the not-too-distant past which depict a woman seated by the kitchen fire, sewing in hand, and a pot bubbling merrily on the stove. The small curly head of one child rests gently on her knee, while nearby, rocking dreamily in a dimity-draped cradle is the youngest offspring.

A knowing eye, interprets the heart-warming scene thus: hubby's off at the pub, she's left darnin' his socks, and it's stew again for supper. As for the children, the elder brat is whining for candy, and the baby is teething. (The artist, as artists so often do, has failed to translate the sound effects onto canvas.)

A modern rendition of the scene might have the lady, garbed in rollers and an old wrapper, coping with a jinxed washing machine and a mixmaster with a mind of its own, while the children, gagged and bound, watch TV. Still no sign of the man of the house, the self-styled

Miss Temple, a University of Victoria Arts student, is a staff writer for the Victoria Times.

luck we just might be able to build ourselves what is best in the way of a university. Judging from Alumnus' puerile views, God knows we could use one.

Yours truly,

STEVE OXENDALE,
3rd Year Arts slave

Alumnus Replies

You take me to task for singling out "one brave . . . incompetent" and earlier stated that if I have something to say I should get up and make my little speech. I cannot agree more that we have in effect a solemn obligation to articulation, not just rebellion. If we as the top ten percent of the population's intellect cannot express ourselves — who the hell can? It is not, however, the lack of provocative communication that I would emphasize. It is that this is symptomatic of the amount of personal thought that this institution engenders. I don't question your animal aggressiveness, your ability to rebel. I question your ability to think. Neither Christ nor Einstein would exist for us had they been unable to communicate their thoughts. If you don't communicate, I can only assume that you don't think.

ALUMNUS,
Quietus Equus

"I have a plan"

By CANDIDE TEMPLE

lord and master. This time he is either on the ninth hole or down at the Kings with his pals.

Not much progress between frame 1 and frame 2, you think, after a cursory glance. Right. But take a look behind the scenes, and what do you see — a campaign of feminine self-advancement, energetically undertaken by Western woman — and so far with amazing success.

CIA vs. BOND

It is what a contributor to this magazine last week called "a conspiracy as old as Eve against his (Western Man's) Christian society". Maybe it is, maybe it is, Mr. Jeffrey. But it's like pitting the CIA against James Bond, or rather Modesty, Blaise, and youse guys haven't a chance.

This is one fight that we're winning.

Women may do masculine things these days, like wear pants, drive cars and smoke. But who pays for the pants, (her husband, or at least her sugar-daddy), opens the car doors and lights her cigarettes? And after all, women still hold a monopoly on several ultra-feminine pastimes, like wearing perfume and crying in movies — so we're way ahead.

"Statistics show," states Mr. Jeffrey in his article . . . the inherent perversity and immorality of Women." Statistcs also told Mr. Pearson he would get a majority, and tell you you'll have 21 percent fewer cavities if you use Crest.

97 LB. WEAKLING

In the business world, Mr. Jeffrey charges, men are being reduced to little more than hewers of wood and drawers of water. And isn't it because that's what they want to become? Isn't that why they fall for 97-pound weakling pitch?

Send women back to the Amazon Valley, urges Mr. Jeffrey, so the society of Western Man will be "safe and certain to endure." Safe from what? Western Man, to use his full title, would probably die of combined scurvy and rickets if he had to do his own cooking for longer than his wife's two-week vacation. And "certain to endure?" The species would endure for about one generation if women weren't around to perform a certain (ahem) necessary role.

VIRTUE?

And clinching the argument with quotes from the Good Book, Mr. Jeffrey ends with a whole slew of references to Miriam and her timbrels, Huldah and her extracurricular activities with the frat boys. So? The Bible may query: "Who can find a virtuous woman?" But virtue, like a lot of other things, is most often in the eye of the beholder.

A final comment on woman's status in a society is another quote, again from the Bible. I can't back it with chapter and verse, I'm afraid, but it's the clinching argument to squelch Western Man's favorite pipe-dream . . . polygamy. It says simply: "No man can serve two masters."

They Came To Play - All Of Them

The Election Preview in Retrospect
By ROBIN JEFFREY

In Britain the national sport is cricket. In the Dominican Republic it is revolting. And in Canada, the senior member of the British Commonwealth which separates the North Atlantic from the North Pacific Ocean, the national sport is election.

Not since the days of John Calvin has the sport of election been so popular.



"Sandy" Diefenbaker

Indeed, for the outsider to get a true picture of the excitement generated in this crawling nation by the annual election, he must try to imagine at once: Alabama during the Australian Rules Football Final, Bolivia during the Warsaw Gymnastics Championships, and London during the World Series.

SIXTH SEASON

For the sixth season in succession, this campaign has thrown together two seasoned veterans in "Sandy"

Mr. Jeffrey, a third-year Arts student at the University of Victoria, is a noted Victoria sportswriter.

Diefenbaker and "Mudcat" Pearson. For the "Mudcat" this is the chance to pull even — he was edged out by "Sandy" in their first three encounters, but has come back strong. "Sandy" would like to finish him off.

But for both old pros it looks like the last cataclysmic clash. Whoever annexes the gonfalon this time will surely annex the gonfalon.

There have been rumours of dissection on both sides. Some of "Mudcat's" players claim he's been mixing too many cornpones with his grits, while others maintain he has not shown sufficient alacrity in going to his left.

FAST BULL

"Sandy," on the other hand, is faced with the charge that old age is finally catching up with him. His fast bull, they say, just isn't what it used to be.

Other clubs have been moving to challenge the two major clubs. "Crazy-Legs" Caouette, the astounding silly-sider, has put together a resilient squad, but with perhaps too many local players.

"Big Daddy" Thomson is handicapped by the fact that his farm system is better than his big-league outfit.

And "Dancer" Douglas has a capable club, but one which plays a style unattractive to most sports fans.



"Crazy-Legs" Caouette

BIGGEST EVER

Nevertheless, this year's election looks like the biggest and most successful ever. Sportswriters and tourists from all over the world are pouring into this sleepy big country to witness a spectacle which has taken on all the significance of the Academy Awards.



"Mudcat" Pearson

For the locals the annual event is of almost national importance. The names of the leading players are household words, while some of the more zealous fans can even cite the records of the various competitors.

The cost is considerable — about \$20,000,000. But, the natives say, it's worth it. Occasionally the event gains worldwide publicity. And for the competitors themselves, a winner's share is never worth less than \$18,000.

ONLY GAME

To the outsider, however, this feeling of frenzy is a little baffling. "It's only a game," you say. "It's just not that important. After all,



"Big Daddy" Thomson

there'll be another one next year." But the natives don't see it that way.

For them the annual election is the symbol of a way of life. This, they say, is Canada: a country where any boy, regardless of race, creed, colour or ability, providing he has money, can grow up to play for the Toronto Maple Leafs—or be Prime Minister.



"Dancer" Douglas

Thespianitis

Great Plague Hits Victoria

By JOHN MANFRED FRANKLIN

THESPIANITIS: a disease occurring in North American cities, particularly in Victoria where it reaches epidemic stages, where new theatres have sprung up to saturate the minds of the community with lousy productions.

SYMPTOMS: This disease occurs often in new theatre companies. Take Victoria's newest bastion of theatre, Bastion Theatre, drooling wet with Broadway-styled productions, such as *Come Blow Your Horn*. Or consider the opposite extreme of this company, spineless spine chillers, *The Sound of Murder*, a bad production of cardboard play actors on a cliché set with cliché situation and lines.

Let us consider the twitching remains of the last cadaver of the company, *Sound of Murder*. The masterminds behind this flop managed to build up our interests weeks before by the artfully designed Art Penson poster. Bravo. First prize goes to Art Penson for his poster design. But posters don't make a production.

The curtain rose to the tune of *Sound of Music*. The set reminded one of all the dark and stormy sets of all the dark and stormy productions from high school to Perry Mason. The blackness of the flats was highlighted by the brightly

Mr. Franklin, a theatre critic for a noted metropolitan newspaper, consented to write this article for the *Martlet Magazine* in reaction to the sheer horror of seeing many Canadian centres struck down by thespianitis.

printed sofa, a wise choice on the part of Peter Mannering, director and designer. But his wisdom did not extend throughout the whole set. Stage left was muddled by the messy chocolate brown desk where our soon-to-be-dead hero, Charles Norbury, conceived of his financially successful children's books. Of course, this confusion was balanced on the other side of the stage by the proverbial French windows which reflected light to the point of distraction.

It might pay to use something which resembles glass faintly rather than gelatin squares.

NEWEST MONSTER

We were then carried through two acts of Victoria's newest Frankenstein monster. The play never quite succeeds in involving us in the loves of the soap opera heroes. Three of the four main characters were painted in stark white and demon black. No room for subtle greys. The fourth main character in many ways a cliché, managed to come alive. Why? Miss Richards, who played Miss Forbes, did not play act. She was the character.

I'm tired of phony actors who try to play at acting. Charles Norbury, fruiting about the stage, became steadily more repulsive. I couldn't wait until they succeeded in killing

him. Of course, every villain has to have a pure defenseless white virgin to hassle and mangle. Ann Norbury, his wife, provided this necessary internal disorder.

Along came the knight in shining armour like an advertisement for Ajax. Not nearly so virile. He did not succeed in becoming much more than a boy. I saw little reason why the wife should be attracted to this emotional infant. Peter Marriott, played by Lawrence Eastick, would have made a good mannikin at the Bay. He should stick to handing out the door prize instead of cluttering the stage with his chips of wooden soldier acting.

CURE: Since it is quite obvious that the play has contracted some form of infantile paralysis, it might have been advantageous to burlesque this disease. The play as it is written tends to make the characters seem contrived. The director should not have taken the play so seriously. The play would have been successful as a burlesque of the mystery thriller. In practical terms the set should have been designed in light and happy tones.

After a decade of Perry Mason local audiences are surely smart enough not to be thrilled by such improbabilities. Of course the author, Fairchild, has a terrible tendency to overwrite. He constantly repeated the plot incidents as though he were dealing with an audience of imbeciles. The play finally succeeds in picking up pace by the time we reach the last act and the high keyed

duet between Charles and his wife. But the author drops this tension at the last minute by the ludicrous ending. If Mannering had cut out Peter's entrance at the end of the play and had been content to leave the defeated Anne at the foot of the stairs, the stairs of a Sisyphus, he would have had a more successful play. This ending represents a place where the director must put the text aside and play the role of a creator.

REMARKS: But at least it is a live theatre. At least we are succeeding in getting people to come to the theatre. To see what? I'd rather they would stay home and watch Perry Mason where at least the audience is kept guessing, where at least glass looks real, where at least we know that this is to be regarded with tongue in cheek. I'm told by a junior member of the company that this type of play sells, makes money. I would suggest that the company is creating a delusion, audiences composed of emotional zombies.

Maybe You Never Can Tell. Maybe the next production will raise itself out of the maggots of decay and present to us a full-bodied production. Bastion Theatre, be good thespians, and take your medicine.

Martlet Magazine
(Last issue before Christmas)

co-editors
Alan Mackenzie and Guy Stanley
Staff this issue:
Kathy Tate, John Hart, Brian Excell
Peter Axhorn, Candide Temple