

ENTERTAINMENT

Work-in-progress stalled

Play flounders in sea of troubles

By PAT LIGOWSKI

A third-year Department of Theatre "student work in progress" must be judged on its own terms. The production of *Have* in Atkinson studio last Thursday night was encompassed by distracting influences which did nothing to help the floundering production. The company, under the direction of Malcolm Black, was working against a number of handicaps — handicaps which unfortunately were evident in the nervousness of the actors and the painfully slow pace of the play.

When a director of Malcolm Black's stature is involved in any production, professional or pre-professional, expectations rise immediately. The York production of

Have was the North American premiere of Julius Hay's play, and because of Hay's association with Brecht, combined with the recognition of his works by Martin Esslin, much was expected from both the script and the production. These factors contributed to the tension which resulted in opening-night performances which bordered on the histrionic.

The script of *Have* was translated from Hungarian by the playwright's step-son, Peter Hay and suffers somewhat in this regard. Although Peter Hay has stated that the language in the play is not that of the Hungarian peasant, but a literary language evolved by Julius Hay, the text is stilted and repetitive and certainly

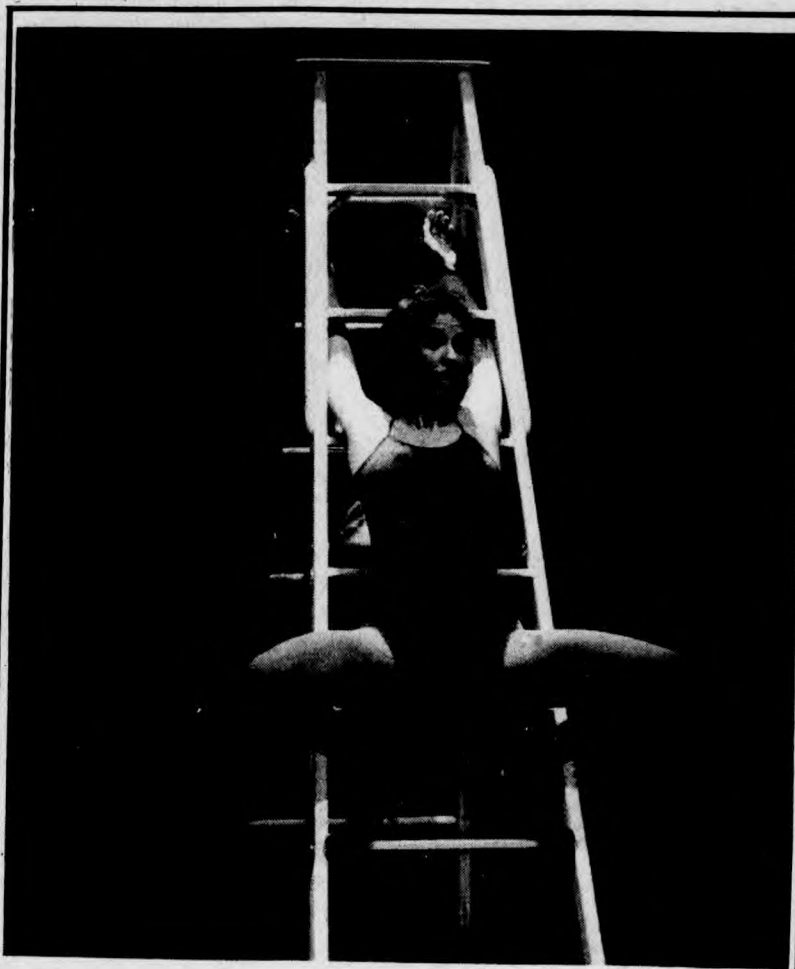
not lyrical.

Apart from the translation, *Have* suffers from two other major textual flaws. A cast of twenty-three is not exceptionally large, but in *Have* the relationships between the characters becomes muddled as the play progresses. This haziness, and even unreality, spills over into the quasi-Marxist theme of the play. *Have*'s basic plot follows the progression of the heroine, Mari, from romantic innocent to materialistic murderess.

The basic theme of *Have* is illustrated by the title — in order "to have" land (the ultimate material gain in the village) the women of the village marry in order to kill their pre-arranged husbands and receive the inheritance, thereby separating themselves from the "have-nots". Mari's conversion, the rejection of her spiritual love for materialistic gain, takes place in one rapid scene, so that instead of a gradual corruption, we are presented with a hasty and unbelievable reversal. Script revisions helped the translation problem to some extent, but the other two flaws are of a structural nature and proved to be insurmountable.

The actors in *Have* too often regressed into caricature, a perennial problem facing immature actors who are confronted with mature roles, but a pitfall which should have been avoided considering Black's tutelage and the work done with other teachers in the performance stream of the theatre department.

All the problems considered, it is perhaps not surprising that there was little evidence of growth on the part of most of these young actors.



Students in the dance department are rehearsing for the spring concert to be held April 8, 9 and 10 at 8 p.m. in Burton. \$1 admission will go towards a scholarship fund.

Mixes religion and sense, Layton attacks smug views

By TSIVIA RABINOVITCH

Of Irving Layton, poet and York professor in English, Eli Mandel once said, "it is a sorry day for the world when Irving Layton can't find a cause." Once described in less-than-flattering terminology, Layton has since become recognized world-wide as one of the greatest living poets in the English language.

January of this year saw the emergence of yet another volume of poetry from this vociferous, vituperous writer. Layton is fond of irony and paradox; For My Brother Jesus is no exception to his time-honoured rule.

In For My Brother Jesus, Layton's irony flies home to the heart. If nothing else, this book succeeds in fulfilling Layton's view of the goal of the writer, "to disturb the accumulated complacencies of people, to make them take a fresh look at the reality..."

For My Brother Jesus is not only a book of condemnation, it is a celebration of life as well. Layton continues his crusade to reinstate Jesus as one of the Jewish biblical prophets of old as he mocks the Jewish closed-minded attitude to Joshua in the title poem of the book.

As an example of Layton's genius, one cannot help but point to the poem, For Jesus Christ. In four stanzas the irony and caustic 'aid' given to the Jews by the Christian world in World War II is portrayed chillingly:

One pontiff invented the ghetto;
more tender and loving, another
commanded
shivering ghosts to war out its
cobblestones
warmed by the yellow Star of
David.

He points the accusing finger at the Christian world throughout the book in an effort to clear up and forever dispell the false complacency of the gentile world. He fights the fable that the Jewish people marched like sheep to the death camps. In a poem called Runts, Layton warns us never to ignore the fanatic. He points to Hitler as precedent enough.

For My Brother Jesus is without doubt Layton's most thought-provoking book.

It deals with everything good poetry should; religion, life, death, and love. Written in the language of the common people, For My Brother Jesus tells of things that are universal. The

words are simple, only the meanings are deep.

However, lest this book be construed as the rantings of a bitter old man, it should be pointed out that the poetry still retains its characteristic risqué veracity. In writing this book Layton has succeeded once again in rattling our sensibilities and unsettling our self-esteem. For My Brother Jesus merely shows that Layton is not ashamed to proclaim loud and long his Jewishness. In his introduction he puts it best: "Whether it is acknowledged or not, in this century, we are all Yids."

For My Brother Jesus, Irving Layton, McClelland and Stewart Ltd., \$4.95

New mag pulls wool over public's eye

Gaslight, a wee humour magazine destined (we think) to shake the Canadian humour scene is six issues old this month. Put out by York graduate and Seer (Localibur) editor Warren Clements, the 2,000 circulation magazine is the only outlet for new humour writers since Fuddle Duddle bit the dust on Parliament Hill two years ago.

It has hot news (Newt Page), Lettuce column where readers can (still) air their gripes, features in a semi-serious vein (like the one about Hayley Mills being 30 this year, in the last issue, next to one that sympathizes with Grinches), reviles which pass for reviews (of such forgotten near-greats as The Rabbit that Ate Tokyo), cartoons, caricatures, ads that are funny, and some quite unmentionable deletables.

Not as corny as Mad, nor as bitter as the National Lampoon, the all-Canadian magazine is about to be distributed to stands at the bus and train stations. It will, no doubt, cheer its 25 subscribers. If it does not sell there, it will not sell anywhere.

Here, in true form, Excalibur staff writer Warren Clements interviews G.A. Dregges, a front he often uses when covering himself as editor of Gaslight.

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Interviewer: I hope you don't mind the fact that we have no chairs in this room, but I suppose you're used to poverty.

Dregges: Is that supposed to be funny?

Interviewer: Why did you call

your magazine "Gaslight"?

Dregges: Because that was its name. (Waits for applause, gives up in disgust.) There were a number of reasons, really.

Interviewer: Does it bother you to have such an obscure magazine on your conscience?

Dregges: Don't you want to hear my reasons?

Interviewer: If you insist.

Dregges: I called it "Gaslight" after an old film starring Charles Boyer and Ingrid Bergman... a suspense drama, in which Boyer tried to make Bergman think she was going mad. The title became part of the vernacular, meaning to pull the wool over somebody's eyes.

Interviewer: Was Gaslight a good film?

Dregges: I saw it two months after I'd chosen the name. It was a bomb. Two hours of boredom. The ending was nice, though.

Interviewer: In the light of that viewing, have you thought of changing the paper's name?

Dregges: I thought I'd call it The Ending of Gaslight, but it was a bit too long to fit on the masthead. Besides, Gaslight is the symbol for a nice visual cue in the logo, and it has a few associations with Canadian names — Gastown in Vancouver, places like the Gasworks in Toronto and the Gaslight Restaurant in Ottawa. Then of course there's laughing gas.

Interviewer: How has the reaction been to the magazine?

Dregges: It depends whom you are talking to. I've had people writ-

Direction blunders with cop poet, pompous format

By GORD GRAHAM and TED MUMFORD

Direction No. 3 is an improvement over numbers 1 and 2, but it still has a long way to go before it will be palatable.

The new issue has a widened base of contributors, and the quality of the material is on the upswing. As always, however, the "direction" most of the poems take is nowhere: undeserving ideas are carried on the wings of

senseless metaphor to endings that end nothing.

Each issue of Direction has a "theme". The title of No. 3 is "Conversation at the Village Inn" taken as usual, from one of Jorgenson's poems. The poems share no theme, but do have in common an air of self-importance created by the journal's stiff and formal layout and unchanging format.

A welcome innovation is the inclusion of a short prose piece by Martin Avery, "Wildlife Studies". For most of its four pages this is an engaging, almost charming tale, but its impact is blurred by an unusually cryptic ending which leaves the reader wondering if this is a fragment of a longer story.

The few graphics that are used are excellent. The addition of smaller graphics tucked under some of the shorter poems would bring relief to the reader's eye. As it is, each unadorned page bears all the glamour of unpainted concrete, a commodity that York is surfeited with already.

The inclusion of three poems by the "Poet Cop", Hans Jewinski, reveals the editors' intention to give Direction as much prestige as possible, even if it means including the work of an outside hack who has no trouble being published by "established outlets".

If the editors were true to the purpose they set for Direction, they would not give preference to Jewinski's material.

Despite the aspirations of the editors to make Direction the most refined publication imaginable, the work included is still obviously the work of poets who are very new to the muse. The editors themselves seem to have only recently taken up the pen, and are as yet unable to distinguish clearly between good and bad poetry. They have always seen fit to include a liberal sampling of their own work, for example.

Direction is not going to end up on the coffee tables of the Very Cultured. A looser format and less pompous presentation would better suit the material and the type of person likely to read it.

ing from Texas, B.C., and Alberta saying they like it. One person said it was the first Canadian humour magazine he'd read from cover to cover.

Interviewer: Maybe he hadn't read the insides.

Dregges: You want to walk home with your head in a bag?

Interviewer: Have you had much trouble distributing it?

Dregges: I tried pushing the first issue myself, and got a strange reaction from one store manager: "Is there a point to this, or are you just trying to be funny?" I showed the issue to Maclean-Hunter, and they agreed to distribute it in Montreal and Toronto. I appreciate their support, but find it rather disconcerting that I haven't been able to find an issue of Gaslight in any Montreal store in the past two months.

Interviewer: How about Toronto?

Dregges: A lot of stores have it, like Lichtman's, The Book Cellar, the International News and Book Room, and the York bookstore. But a lot of obvious spots, like the subway kiosks, the railway and bus stations — they don't have it, which is disappointing. I think the railway and bus stations may get the latest issue.

Interviewer: Which one is that?

Dregges: Number six.

Interviewer: Is there anything you want to say about it?

Dregges: The nude photograph of somebody who looks like Margaret Trudeau is not Margaret Trudeau, and never has been.