

Layton: Outspoken Poet

At Art Centre Tomorrow Night

by TRUDY MAAG

Irving Layton is coming . . .
He is coming to UNB.
He is coming to UNB tomorrow.

Who is this Irving Layton? . . . he is a poet from Montreal with a degree in Agriculture. He is a professor who gives seminars on Auden. He claims to mock "the distinguished and amiable men of letters". He is an economist with a Rock and Roll song in his hip pocket. He is a man who says, "I worship Lawrence".

Irving Layton is a poet who has been ignored. Anthologists have ignored him. Pacey's *Creative Writing in Canada* dismisses him to the index. But, recently, critics have hastened to praise him. His latest collection is on the best-seller list in Canada. He is one of the most prolific Canadian poets. He is one of the most fluent. What does he say?

Here is his view on Marilyn Monroe:

"You make absurd for us
All love that's chivalrous;
There is more wisdom
In your shapely bum.
Real pleasure and goodness
Are in your rippling breasts,
Animal health and pride
In your magnificent stride".

Here is Layton's **Misunderstanding**:

"I placed
my hand
upon
her thigh
By the way
she moved
away
I could see
her devotion
to literature
was not
perfect".

Irving Layton is coming . . .
He is coming to UNB.
He is coming to give his view.

Irving Layton likes to pound his head against a stone wall. Layton's a poet, and a good one, but like most poets since the first questioning cave man uttered the first series of rhythmic and more-or-less profound grunts, Layton has a stone wall, and his stone wall is man's folly.

He pounds away like all the other poets, with about the same effects to the wall.

But where others bleat and whimper at their self-inflicted pain, Layton shouts, stamps and curses.

Layton has been called Canada's best poet and a "bawdy balladier". Certainly his preoccupation with sex is the first thing that strikes a casual reader.

It is there in most of his verses—sometimes subtly threaded in a character sketch or incident, sometimes purely pornographic, of little but shock value and obviously contrived for that purpose.

Layton says he does not write about sex "to debase either it or women—I love them both too much for that".

Sex, says Layton, is the opposition, the counter to death. As such, it is a benediction to life.

Other than sex, Layton's favorite word is Philistine.

When Ryerson Press refused to distribute his controversial book of poetry, *The Improved Binoculars*, in 1957, Layton labelled Canadian book publishers Philistines—narrow minded and afraid to handle his work.

The Montreal teacher-poet's new collection, *A Red Carpet For the Sun*, was launched last month at a larger group of Philistines, the Canadian reading public.

NFCUS FOSTERS

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Press national conference passed a motion supporting this motion, "in principle".

During the Christmas holidays, Messaoud Ait Chaalal, president of UGEMA, visited Canada in search of bursaries, and scholarships for students now living in refugee camps in Morocco, and Tunisia.

He stated that there are 250 students in Morocco, and 750 in Tunisia studying in these refugee camps. Another 500 are scattered in universities throughout Europe.

CAMPUS CALENDAR

(Continued from page 2)

ART CENTRE: Fredericton Branch of Canadian Humanities Association is sponsoring a lecture by Dr. Morris Engel of the Philosophy Department—"The Nature of the Yiddish Drama", 8.30 pm.

ENGINEERING SOCIETY: 7 pm, Eng. Bldg., Room 104—Topic "Winter Carnival".

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THE HOTBED



Who am I?

I come from Montreal, often called the city of sin. I write poetry, and to many people I am Canada's best poet. I have often been charged with pornography in my writing. I will be on the campus of UNB next Saturday.

Who am I?

The name is Irving Layton. A very unusual poet. Not the kind of man that some people associate with poetry. Not a meek and mild abstract thinker. He writes poetry that lives—straight from the gut.

Often in the past Mr. Layton has been charged with being a pornographer, with obscenity in his writing, with writing poems in poor taste. By the same token he has often been praised for being earthy, stimulating, honest, unafraid. Without wishing to enter into a discussion on what is earthy and what is obscene, HOTBED feels that most of the criticism against the so-called "pornographic Layton" has been unjustified. Pornography exists only in the mind of the reader, or as D. H. Lawrence, author of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, puts it, "What is pornography to one man is the laughter of genius to another".

Layton appeals to almost any type of reader. He writes with equal ease in almost any direction. He knows life from the undesirable to the beautiful—from the miserable squalor of slum Montreal to the pulchritude of the earth. The great versatility stems from the fact that he has fought his way up through the city of Montreal to become one of Canada's leading literary figures. During this process he has become appreciative of the finer things, and his perception has developed to an amazing degree.

For instance he has written a poem called "Earth Goddess" showing his unabashed admiration for the physical structure of Marilyn Monroe. He has written rough, tough, insulting poetry at some of the reviewers who made the mistake of criticizing him, notably George Whalley.

He has written of De Bullion Street, and he has written of "Woman" . . .

"Oh not remembering
her derision of me,
I plunge like a corkscrew
into her softness,
her small wicked body
and there, beyond reproach,
I roar like a sick lion
between her breast."

And this same man who has written with an "eye-for-an-eye" attitude, has written with unbelievable tenderness in such poems as "The Bull Calf" describing the slaughter of a newly-born bull.

"Struck,
the bull calf drew in his thin forelegs
as if gathering strength for a mad rush . . .
tottered . . . raised his darkening eyes to us,
and I saw we were at the far end
of his frightened look, growing smaller and smaller . . .
. . . he has written . . . he has written prolifically . . . and

he has written well. HOTBED salutes Irving Layton and HOTBED salutes the people who have been responsible for bringing him to our campus.

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