

The Cave Dwellers

by PAM KEIRSTEAD

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women
merely players;
They have their exits and their
entrances:
And one man in his time plays
many parts,
His acts being seven ages."

William Saroyan may well have shared this thought with Shakespeare, but certainly in the course of ten scenes, he was unable to convey it as clearly, significantly and dramatically as Shakespeare did in one speech. *The Cave Dwellers* performed by the UNB Drama Society under the capable direction of Professor Alvin Shaw survived ironically because of the players; "it was a bad play". The actors struggled courageously to convey the delirium of Saroyan mood and thought, and for this the cast and director must get full credit.

The play centres around the difficulty of four dreamers in finding some meaning to their lives. Two of them, "King" and "Queen" are "has-been" professional actors who through present unemployment have returned to an old abandoned East Side theatre in New York to dream or live. After eight months a former prizefighter joins their ranks. "Duke" is haunted by the shattering loss of a crown he once held. A month later, as the play opens, a young girl, terrified by the inhumanity of a world of violence and more specifically mass production, seeks asylum in the growing "cave" community. The four act their dreams of the golden ages long past or, as the young girl does, for a new life to come. It is unfortunate that her "true love" does not come sooner to spare the audience of an unnecessarily slow moving, and long play.

The play lacked impact not only because of its many contrived and trite speeches, not only because of the unbearable length of the "King's" numerous soli-

quies, not only because of some melodramatic Proctor and Gamble Hour scenes—like the dream scene which in no way stimulated further understanding or appreciation, and became instead a game of musical chairs, or rather beds; or like the absurd scene when the girl was tossed from the arms of the prizefighter, "Duke" to the arms of her young love, the dumb milkboy—but also because of a basic disunity of theme, and confusion of thought. Love, truth, hypocrisy, a struggle for existence not by bread alone were its themes, i.e. life. (But every play is about life.)

By reductive analysis the muddle of the theme was caused by a muddle of diverse and even inconsistent characters. The most obviously inconsistent was the girl who was allegedly an innocent, shy, bewildered and frightened refugee from the harsh world of reality. Sometimes she was shy, sometimes she was bold; sometimes she was naive and rather stupid, sometimes she was perceptive and knowing. How did she manage to lose her inhibitions so quickly in the opening minutes of the play? Even the kindness and understanding of Duke surely couldn't cause such rapid transformation.

Arthur Miller in *Death of a Salesman* saw the division between fantasy and reality with dramatic insight. By comparison, Saroyan contrived this division, and in his lengthy and sometimes boring dialogue lost any dramatic effect this division could have afforded. The characters themselves weren't dynamic, and almost nothing of the tragedy or even pathos of a Willy Loman dream was conveyed. Certainly this is a different play, but even the struggle to find some meaning to life was dramatically ineffective. If one listened for significant "moments of truth", which Saroyan would have us all do, there was increasing disappointment that there was "nothing new under the sun".

The players themselves were no disappointment. They were very well cast, and within the limits of a small stage with its many and necessary beds, the actors moved with their respective and appropriate grace, clumsiness, and vigour about the stage.

Ann Gordon, as "Queen" was convincing and outstanding. Her voice, her diction, her inflexion were excellent; her proud upright posture perfectly maintained; her eyes unfaltering; but most important, with the air of dignity and sympathetic understanding which the "Queen" had, she portrayed her character with similar understanding.

Michael Gordon had a difficult

part in the "King". Mr. Gordon fortunately avoided giving over-emphasis to "significant" lines which were all too frequent in his part, but he did fail slightly in giving his part the dramatic vigour it needed so badly. "King" was old and tired, but should not have been boring. The "damn me" soliloquy was admittedly beyond any actor, and it may be that any criticism of Mr. Gordon's performance is a criticism of Saroyan. Certainly this play illustrated the versatility of Mr. Gordon since he handled a far less dynamic role than perhaps UNB audiences are accustomed to see him in, and he did it with some dexterity.

Wendy Tidmarsh, as the girl, like Mr. Gordon had her moments, but again the play merits little credit. Her expression after she had met the dumb boy was sympathetic. Her curiosity about "the bad play" was well done in its enthusiasm. Sometimes she was almost bumptious and effervescent, and sometimes she was quiet and resigned. One was never sure of the cause of this instability—maybe it was the girl, maybe it was Miss Tidmarsh.

"Duke", played by Walter Learning was tops. He had a good part and knew his character well. He spoke as though he'd been a boxer, he looked crushed and pathetic at a loss of love, he even panted convincingly after a desperate run, his attempt at shadow boxing was well pantomimed, and he wore his dressing-gown cord to perfection! And in spite of his ability he did not over-shadow the other three main actors. This is not only of credit to Mr. Learning, but also to the others.

Robert Ferguson, as the father of the newborn son, was convincing in his affection for his bear although not particularly for his wife. He seemed to tire of looking at her. None of the family including the bear seemed to fit into the "cave" too conclusively, but they played their parts well, again in spite of playwright, Saroyan.

Although David Likely seemed rather anxious to sit down and meditate, and although he was too young looking for the part of the boss, he gave some zip to the play which was perhaps misconceived since he was supposedly rather slow and methodical.

How the girl could "fall for" the dumb boy could only be understood if one had the Romantic imagination of Saroyan, but this was not any fault of Michael Eagen, who did look as though he wanted to express something to her, whatever it was. *The Cave Dwellers*, will be

What's Happening in Model Parliaments

Today students Up the Hill will be electing their choice for the annual Model Parliament along with the SRC aspirants. Each year we are given the choice of three or more parties, with voting along strict party lines. Representation in the "House of Commons" is decided by the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total Vote}}{51} = \text{No. of Votes required for one seat.}$$

$$\frac{\text{No. of Votes for Party A}}{\text{No. of Votes Req'd for one seat}} = \text{No. of seats allotted to Party A.}$$

where 51 is the number of seats available in the Legislative Assembly, where the proceedings are traditionally held.

The Model Parliament Committee, composed of two representatives from each of the parties, plans and directs the Parliament. A number of changes have been adopted by the committee this year; all non-nationally affiliated parties must now submit a petition signed by 25% of the student body to the committee, as well as join the committee, before October 31st of each year.

A big issue this year will be the position of nationally-affiliated parties on campus. The Mount Allison and Memorial University administrations have recently banned such organizations from their camps.

The history of the Model Parliament at UNB for its seven year existence has seen a succession of Conservative minority governments, often defeated during the sittings by a combined Christian Atheist-Liberal vote of non-confidence. The Tories were thrown out of office in the midst of the 1959 and 1960 events but managed to stay in power last year with the help of the New Party and the Maritime Monarchists. The NDP's and the MM's did not last through to this year but it is rumoured that the latter have joined forces with the C.A.'s. The swing elsewhere in Canada away from the Diefenbaker administration may have a significant effect on the P.C.'s slight lead here in past years. The swing back to the three-party situation should make the time factor less troublesome this year.

The sessions are held in the Legislative Assembly downtown both Friday night and Saturday. On Friday night, amidst the blare of bagpipes, and the splendor of a military color guard, the Governor-General (President Mackay or his representative) will enter the chambers and read the Speech from the Throne which has been prepared by the Prime Minister. This outlines the objectives which the government wishes to reach during the proceedings. It is moved and seconded by the government and debate on the Speech occupies the House for the evening. A question period, during which the government must answer for its policies and actions, adds much to the members' deliberations.

All day Saturday the page girls will be kept busy passing notes back and forth across the floor as the Government and Opposition parties present their respective bills to the House for debate and possible acceptance. The timing of speeches is carefully watched by the clerk so that each party can debate each bill adequately. One or more question periods will also be included in the Saturday sittings. Debate can, and often does, become heated, calling for all the power of rhetoric at the members' disposal. Heckling is spirited and widespread. Unusual happenings are the order of the day. Last year's sittings were interrupted by the assassination of Opposition leader McCluskey.

Spectators are welcome and much appreciated. Visitors in past years have found the proceedings both witty and informative.

UNB's production at this year's Regional Drama Festival. If the play were to be judged for its direction and acting, it should do well. Unfortunately the play itself will count. But possibly the judges will consider that the eight days that it took Saroyan to concoct this play were days well spent.



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