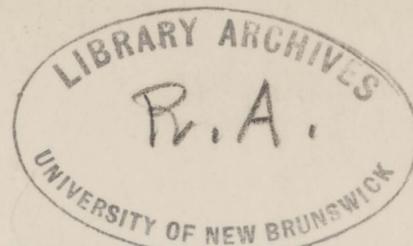


Hatheway Room.



PREVIEW

F. R. SCOTT MARGARET DAY BRUCE RUDDICK PATRICK ANDERSON NEUFVILLE SHAW

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STATEMENT

This is no magazine. It presents five Montreal writers who recently formed themselves into a group for the purpose of mutual discussion and criticism and who hope, through these selections, to try out their work before a somewhat larger public.

As the group takes shape, it becomes clear that general agreement exists on several points. Among them are the following. First, we have lived long enough in Montreal to realize the frustrating and inhibiting effects of isolation. All anti-fascists, we feel that the existence of a war between democratic culture and the paralyzing forces of dictatorship only intensifies the writer's obligation to work. Now, more than ever, creative and experimental writing must be kept alive and there must be no retreat from the intellectual frontier - certainly no shoddy betrayal, on the lines of Archibald MacLeish, Van Wyck Brooks and others, of those international forces which combine in a Picasso, a Malraux or a Joyce. Secondly, the poets amongst us look forward, perhaps optimistically, to a possible fusion between the lyric and didactic elements in modern verse, a combination of vivid, arresting imagery and the capacity to "sing" with social content and criticism.

Thirdly, we hope to make contact, as a group, with new writing movements in England, the United States and other parts of Canada. We will welcome such contributions as space and the aims expressed above permit. We have envisaged from the start a gradually widening of our group to about twice its present size. And may we add that you can receive six issues of "PREVIEW" for the sum of fifty cents, amilable to any of us.

AT THE PLANT

He cleans the sinks, the water closets, urinals, scrubs the floors and hides himself, as he walks, behind a great tumble of tissue towels and toilet paper. He is badly paid, hates his work but like all of us has his secrets.

What does he look like? I see his sharp dark face usually half masked behind his large paper load. His hair is greased and shines like black marble. His eyebrows are large, immobile like spun iron.

He likes to talk and he and I have large conversations beside the burette stand or in the moderately clean lavatory set aside for foremen and engineers. I'm not an engineer but own a key to their excretory sanctum.

In a way he is symbol to me of hard insistent work, of a kind of hidden protest mixed with impotent longings and dreams to which he hangs on like a life belt.

I have said that he hates his work but still he does it. His hate is a small one. I don't think that it ever bothers him because of those secret dreams of his. He tells me about some leading up to them with an impressive series of irrelevant generalities which gradually get more concrete as we get to his point.

"I am free now," he says, meaning at night. "I like to be free. When I have a dollar I can spend it. When I want to go to the movies, I go. When I am thirsty, I drink. If I want to play with the children I play." Then with the slightest lowering of pitch, the subtlest emphasis, "And when I want to make a ring, I make one."

I say "Oh" because I know we have arrived.

He puts down his brush broom to dig in his pocket. "Stainless steel," he says. A simple thing, smoothly tooled, it flashes against his yellow brown hands. "It takes much work. Many nights. But I could sell it if I wanted to. Stainless steel." His words caress it and he turns it so that it catches the light. "It's more valuable than gold or silver, isn't it?" This seriously.

That time I am foolish enough to dissillusion him. I can be quite a fool sometimes.

He talks in the same manner of his life in relation to the world. I could reomaticize a good deal on what he has to say about this. He always goes through the same song and dance though, a flood of principles, all of which are irrelevant, but somehow take him to the goal he is aiming at. Once when he complained of the harshness of his work compared to others, "They walk around with a piece of paper and leak big." ("They are office workers.) "They're no more important than us. Why should they live on the mountain while wellive in this dirty air."

I offer trade unions tentatively for I want to see what will happen.

Well, he starts on his "when I want" series again. "When I want to buy a coat, I buy a coat. No one is going to tell me." He puts his toilet paper down at this point and is very noisy while I become uneasy and hear some grunts from a neighboring water closet. "When I want to go out at night, I go." His face is now quite animated. "No unions. You can take your unions before they take my pay." This amuses him so we laugh.

Sombody yells for him so he curses and leaves me with his jigsaw thoughts.

Lately he has been over industrious and is continually scurrying from one place I knew nothing of to another. He has only time, now and then, to pelt me with a few hurried words which mean nothing except that he has seen me and wants me to know it. We are very grave when we make our brief recognitions or, at least, only jocular in the most judicious manner.

The watchman tells me that his wife beats him but I can't believe this.

Neufville Shaw.

Brother - You of the City

O you in line buying
Your bargains and liquor
Your balcony tickets
To watch play men dying,

Your city will fall
The streets will be bare
Grass will be there
And slugs on the walls.

In corner of wharf
You were free to loaf,
To toss chips and laugh,
To stare and to starve.

You - dull to the omen -
Will trespass in woods
And hunt season's goods
And be dead in autumn,

Free to find Cathay -
The cinema Friday
Aphrodisiac Saturday
And sleep over Sunday.

And over your heads
Squat guttural beasts,
No column rests,
No, nor woman with beads.

Bruce Ruddick.

Remembering the Village

Riverside life was so uneventful and friends so few that a visit to Miss P's cottage was something eternally exciting. When people came to stay with us we would take them to see her, just as we would drive

them over to Ide Hill to see the view, or go into Sevenoaks and show off Knole Park. However faint it might be, for our lives were in so many ways identical, we were conscious of a difference, almost a foreignness, in Miss P's personality and world. Her enthusiasm was almost over-bright, her cottage almost too lyrical, her features seemed "French" even if her accent was not impeccable. "She's an awful liar," my mother would say, meaning she was inclined to build up the stories she told for effect. She had a way of grasping things that she liked, of trying on one of my mother's hats and deciding that it really suited her mych better, with the result that she finally went off with it. On the other hand she was absurdly generous.

At Oxford I would be with people all the time, talking, eating, playing belliards and I soon got so used to meeting celebrities that I occasionally declined an invitation to meet the well-known Mr. So-and-so - but at Riverside I remember I was bitterly disappointed if Miss P had promised to come to tea and then did not turn up.

I remember how quiet the village became at night, a quietness of houses collected into themselves and inwardly creaking, the village peace expressed and confirmed when the church clock struck and the beautiful tenor bell suspended its notes in the air. It did not reach to the outlying suburban districts. After the clock there would be again the silence or the sound, the atmospheric pressure, of a country evening, say in Autumn, and the owls would be hooting in the valley and a slow train coming up the distance. The air would smell overwhelmingly of the country, even though this was scarcely country at all, and there would be that feel of land and wild life, of lonely farmhouses and silent woods, which I shall always associate more with crowded England than with the true wilds of Canada or the United States.

The main London Road would be almost deserted; once clear of the village streets it had no lights; after ten the glow from the pubs disappeared also, and the whole place was wrapped in an obscurity which revealed as much as it hid - the shape, more the feel, of red-brick facades, the village and country smells, the chuckling of spring water in the drinking fountain, the sound of footsteps as someone walked in from the railway station. Above the little square the churchyard rose steeply and the church spire would be outlined against the sky. It was now that the village came into its own. Never picturesque like some of its neighbors, or like the self-consciously perfect villages of the Cotswolds or New England, it had at night this shut-in and peaceful quality, as though it nestled contentedly on the threshold of a tremendously lonely and infinitely mysterious country, a country where Roman roads came alive and little local wandering trains lost themselves forever.

I would walk up the unlighted stretch towards Miss P's cottage and turn off along a narrow path between tall hedges. Miss P's cottage was one of two, set well back from the road, both with their small gardens in front of them. She lived in the farther of the two, the nearer cottage she let out to a rather difficult family who alternately cadged on her and showered her with insults. This family was remarkable for having produced a daughter, Florrie, who was something of a poetess. She would lie about in the garden in her bathing-suit simultaneously acquiring the suntan prescribed by the papers and writing her odes and when Miss P passed through she would look up brightly with - "Oh, hell-o, Miss P. Glorious weather we're havin', isn't it? Ay say, ay think your flowers are just too marvelous, aren't they? Just too lovely..." - and so on, all with that infinitely patronising air that the working-class snob, who lives in a world of society columns and movie actresses, adopts towards the genteel poor. Later she seemed to have given up her poetry. She found a friend of her own age who had hair as platinum blonde as her own and the two of them used to wander elegantly through the village accompanied by Pekineses they had either borrowed or hired for the occasion.

One of the nice things about Miss P was that she was nearly always in and liked nothing better than to be visited. She was one of those absolutely invaluable people who say, "Come in, how nice of you to come and see me," and then add, "Won't you have some tea - the kettle's just on the boil" - and end up by providing cakes and sandwiches as well. In the green recess of its garden her cottage radiated friendliness, an open attitude, as though it was not afraid of being found out. This perhaps explained why the oddest people and things were always happening to Miss P. If any mysterious stranger were to tap on a window, if any respectable character were to fall down dead drunk, it was sure to be on her window that he tapped, on her path that he sprawled. Such events became even more extraordinary when she recounted them; you could see the anecdote develop each time she plunged into it with her - "My dear, the oddest thing happened last night..." Perhaps it was that nothing very exciting ever did happen to us and so, being imaginative people, we had to make the most of what did - I probably am dramatising Riverside as I write about it.

There were two rooms and a small hall-way on the ground floor of her cottage and everything in them was not merely an expression of her personality but a sort of translation into visible form of innocence and naivete and optimism and the words that go with these - bright, jolly, fresh, child-like, nice, God. The blue tea-cups, fine in colour but of a servicable cheap quality, were an embodiment of the "anyway the sky is free" philosophy; the chairs looked as though they might say at any moment, with a note of jaunty cliché, "Of course we're old, but we're comfortable; the water colours reminded me of - "How nice it had been in Italy that summer!" Numerous "reflections," between children's photos pinned up over the beautiful old writing-table and wooden dogs and the Della Robbia Christ-child, between the sleepy puppy by the fire and the riding-crops in the hall and the empty bottle of Chianti, all created a sensation that the place hung together, achieved an emotional harmony. It was all supremely reflectable, because its main quality was light - a physical airiness and a certain emotional airiness too, a quality that should be often breathless and sometimes over-done but which was nearly always refreshing.

There were times, of course, when the room actually out-shone Miss P, when her face grew heavy and tired in the midst of all her cheerful belongings. More animated than most she seemed also to reflect a dull weariness more easily than others - my mother's face would shine optimistically as ever in repose, but hers became set and painfully vacant, her dumpy figure and black clothes making her apparent disillusionment almost brutally solid. Such tiredness often came after a bout with the tiresome neighbors.

I can only remember vaguely what it was that Miss P and I talked about. It was a little more about books, about poetry, than the ordinary English conversation; it had a touch here and there of understanding, as between two "literary" people; it was mostly, I imagine, sheer comfortable atmosphere and the satisfaction of having a friendly and admiring audience which made me feel I could talk, and to talk was more important than what one actually said. Certainly we had little in common. I thought her poems - "rhymes" was her word for them - too sentimental, she considered mine dreadfully obscure. I laughed cruelly at her unsquashability, she thought of me as "clean-limbed", than which there was nothing I loathed more. Her conception of Youth - something tall and lithe that wrestled with sin and ran off triumphant into the clean winds - made me sick. I did my best to chock her when I was in my teens, but it was never much use.

Patrick Anderson.

ADVICE

Beware the casual need
By which the heart is bound,
Pluck out the quickening seed
That rests on stony ground.

Resist the shallow gain,
The accent of an hour.
Escape, by early pain,
The death before the flower.

F. R. Scott.

NEW DEAD

I think of those who falling between my words,
burn out unnoticed like a summer's bee:
those planted green in the forest of smoke and wire,
those carrying down into a sea of acid
the neat white bodies of bathers.

Killed as time floods the writing hand, their death
is harder and more obscure than any poem;
madness in images tormenting them
from delirium and the drum
they are changed strangely by pain's metaphors,
yet leave an unread book, who die for culture.

In this green landscape see their landscape's failure;
sun shuts and shines, trees wither and remain,
fields painted with too rich a paste decline
to last when memory's gone,
the casual strollers blaze with a final look
and then a bird is slowly flying out of the eyes of the dead.

Patrick Anderson.

PORTRAIT

It was on a hot August afternoon
in a remote section of suburbia
that the pasty-faced boy knocked, asked to be
her little lodger:
she showed him up the dark-brown stairs
and opened the door into a tea-brown room,
he put down his suitcase and his typewriter
and smiled his furry smile -
she didn't know his face was the face of a spy,
she didn't know he was a deserter.

There were the things to unpack, the valises,
the feel of the traveller,
the valise of clothes, the valise of wrinkled flesh;
then anked, his feet struck in the carpet
to flesh the prowling rose,
he was returned unloved from the closet mirror
as sour milk and cinders;
the key was turned in the door and the locked worm of light
switched on, the curtains close,
though the day outside was flagged with the cries of children
and all the drawers were lined with newspaper.

He undressed the false plant in the window
with the genuine leaf,
untied all the bows and found their pubic dust,
gave mats their secrets and a bell to the jug,
wrote love in the bed of brass:
the landlady below knew neither his fear
nor his way with her furniture,
nor how when fear drained fancy he would stare
in terrible vacancy
at a pattern of two roses round a twig
or the leather buttons walking her horsehair sofa.

Patrick Anderson

CAPITAL SQUARE

Danger is silent in the bloodless square:
the boxing brute of stone half hides his fist,
the moon in the haunt of weight is a heavy ghost
and the sun is a toastmaster,
the punishing facades disguise their skill
and fountains play before the parliament of stand-still.

You may go freely through the paved immense
slowness, the architectural snow;
admire the statues stiffened in the silence
with No upon their lips and the heart at zero,
until having made some circles you understand
you are a pigmy held in a stone hand.

No warmth is here, only an abstract good;
your dead shall never bleed nor your love return;
children ask here no gifts nor the hungry food...
but now and then four walls of added men
swing into symmetry, with a stone noise
harden and echo at a statue's voice.

Patrick Anderson

POEM

Great interlacing waters
Greenspotted with islands which surrender never.
As memories through a dead oblivion,
The world caught by the sun
Spins its rigid dance
Pushing us through ineluctable rythms.
Just sifting the varied sea silt
We catch the under bones of
Things.
Hidden behind leafy arabesques
We live on islands built
In waters which interlace.
Yet ships bear different flags,
Hose the skies with foreign smokes,
And wink distantly to their neighbours.

Neufville Shaw

RECOVERY

Now thought seeks shelter, lest the heart melt
In the iron rain, the brain bend
Under the bombs of news.
Fearfully the mind's hands dig
In the debris of thought, for the lovely body of faith.
Is she alive after this shock, does she yet breathe?
Oh say that she lives, she is ours, imperishable,
Say that the crypt stood.

We had nor right to hope, no claim to defense.
We had played in the hanging gardens, lain in the sun
On a roof of glass. We had given no thought
To the deep soil of the base, the sunken shafts
Resting on rock. We loved the facade
More than the wall, the ivy more than the stone.
We took our gifts for our gains; we fed without ploughing.

But she lives, it is true, the eyes glow.
The lips are firm under the pain, they move,
It is our name that is spoken.

O clutch her to you, bring her triumphant forth.
Stand by her side now, scatter the panzer doubts.
She is more dear after this swift assault,
More one and alone, an ultimate.
In her sure presence only there is strength.

This sharp blow pulls the excesses down,
Strips off the ornament, tightens the nerve,
Bares limbs for movement and the forward march.
More roads are opened than are closed by bombs
And truth stands naked under the flashing charge.

F. R. Scott

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