

PREVIEW



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LIFE BLOOMS IN THE AFTERNOON ...

MIRIAM WADDINGTON

All morning the sun streams in through the corner window. Slantwise its beams fall across the four brown paper packages that wait so patiently for noon. The four lunches primly set out in a row that smell faintly of sardines, cheese and tomato. This smell of food injects into the disinfected atmosphere of the city Public Welfare Department an incongruous and bizarre flavor of life.

When the big clock over the city hall strikes noon the three social workers and the student who is doing her field work will come and sit down at the table by the window. They will go through the ritual of pouring tea, and the brown paper packages will be taken from the shelf. The paper will rustle in the faint, sulphur-laden breeze that blows from the lake at the edge of the city, and the sun, moving imperceptibly to its place in the west, will spread clear, thinning fingers of light over the empty shelf. The dark varnished surface will shine like oiled hair.

Today Miss Cotter is on counter duty. She stands at the beck and call of all comers; all the desperate and timid and defiant demands for medical supplies, shoe repair vouchers and rents past due. Some times women weep haltingly before her as they tell of an eviction. Some times men in dusty caps twitch their battered faces into smiles as they thank her for services rendered.

There are people who come every day and stand patiently in front of the counter, waiting, hoping and waiting for something to happen. Mrs. Lenny is such a one; her husband deserted her during her seventh pregnancy and is living with another woman. What Mrs. Lenny hopes to find here is hard to say. To Judith Vannin, the student, it seems that the placid, mournful face of Mrs. Lenny confronts her every time she raises her eyes from her own desk. Not only that, but she sees Mrs. Lenny on street cars and in busy downtown stores. The placid, mournful face haunts her like an eternal reproach.

Judith's desk faces the large open frame over the counter, so that she seems constantly to be looking through a large window from which the pane of glass has been removed and in front of which passes a never-ending stream of faces.

So many of the faces are dead. Old pale men look heart-breakingly at Miss Cotter from between the bristly sedges of their worn-out beards. The wife is sick, they plead, how can I go out to look for work when the wife is sick? I can't leave her alone like that, can I? And faded blue eyes with limp fair hair straggle in, vague areas of indeterminate child-life clinging to their elbows. Children troop up the stairs, yowl, fall asleep on the waiting benches, anonymous and wilting.

ll. Great windows open to the south. Oh Lissadell! Once there was someone beautiful and another like a gazelle. But Miss Cotter, harsh and dry as a nut, tough and rubbery as an ostrich, goes about her business automatically. Her movements are without grace or love or mercy, and her body is a corrugated iron pipe. Oh Lissadell!

The poor you have always with you and the dead are never buried. Daily the dead stream into the public offices, line up behind the public counters, fill out endless forms and expose their gaping wounds to the lancets wielded by officials. And the public authorities, on their part, caught on the other side of the same trap, held prisoners in their own camp, dole out inch by inch and penny by penny the blessings which public-minded citizens have provided for the poor. Dole them out meanly, grudgingly, drily. Writhe like worms into the dead hearts, push their way rudely past closed doors and drill like insane woodpeckers through the rotten wood.

Tread softly, for you tread on hallowed ground.

Mrs. Lenny. Large and sodden and patient as the sphinx. If I could only get my hands on him. Left me with six children and another on the way. An eviction to face. I won't move. I'll come here every day till I die or something happens. Something happens.

Mrs. Lenny, push your hat back from your forehead, yank the springs from your sausage curls and down a beer. Two beers, three beers, five, ten; then stagger home rakishly, eyes bloodshot and face askew, a lewd song issuing from your throat, and murder your six children and the seventh too, and throw their bodies into a trunk and ship it collect to the public-spirited citizens of this world.

Then, Mrs. Lenny, sit down on the curbstone and weep. For the world hath neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help from pain.

Miss Cotter's heels click smartly over the bare wooden floor. The telephone shrills and is silenced, and soft grayed conversations flow through the wires. All the voices in the office are gray and fuzzy like cat's fur, and the smiles are pinned onto the faces and hang tremulously, ready to drop at a moment's notice.

Miss Cotter is writing out a voucher for household remedies. Suddenly the vast silence is shattered by a harsh scream from one of the walled-in offices - the investigators' domain. A strange, inhuman, hysterical voice screeches: "I'm not asking you, I'm TELLING you".

Nobody looks up to see who thus profanes the morning quiet. On all the passages of sense the atoning oil is spread with sweet *ness*.

The stenographer, Miss Jamison, sits unaware. Her hard white face is set in lines that have long ago lost their way in search for dreams. Miss Roger shakes her old eagle's head over a record and continues to write. And Miss Laurie, blue and tinkling as a china figurine, seems strangely removed from this world to a distant sunny upper deck, first class. Up there she cannot hear the groans from the steerage and misery is hidden from her cold blue stare.

Death litters the office. Death creeps along the walls. The inflexible Anglo-Saxon temperament. Stupid, wooden and unkind, or pink-icing sweet, cunning and libelous.

lll. When Judith looks up again she sees on the other side of the counter Mrs. Galleo. Dark, wide-apart eyes in a West Indian face. She bristles at Miss Cotter. With triumph she announces: "Sold my furniture and got him out of jail."

"Well, what do you want now?" intones Miss Cotter with deadly efficiency.

There are more heartless things done on earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy, Mrs. Galleo.

"I want to put him back on the voucher," says Mrs. Galleo, still triumphant.

A careful, low reply from Miss Cotter and Mrs. Galleo's color rises. She begins to shout with frenzy.

"What the hell d'yuh think I am? D'yuh think I've got nothin' t'do but sit home and wait for yuh? This damn office expects yuh to sit home'n wait until yuh get ready to make a visit. Not s'posed to get out or nuthin'. Just s'posed to wait all day. Hell! What next! Yuh mean old bitch, yuh're just as crabby as yuh look," she clinches vindictively.

Miss Cotter walks urgently to the file. Her face is flushed a dull, muddy pink. Her hands falter with anger.

Mrs. Galleo splutters dark thunder for a minute, then subsides.

Judith, who has been watching all the time, meets the black, storm-empty eyes of the West Indian woman. Involuntarily Judith begins to smile. The woman's eyes answer with sudden singing warmth that overflows into her face and shapes itself into a glistening white smile.

This smile makes Judith glow. This smile spirals gaily through the lysoled air. It gives off a fragrance of its own, it dances toward the window where the afternoon sun streams in. It warms Judith who thinks - "Now there are two of us alive. Two of us and the sun."

FOR DEAD LOVERS

They ran on shores as honey and ~~co~~oney,
they lay in house as luck and lovely,
their hunting lovewords were busy as bees
and they were beautiful. Praise these.

Gulls flickered like a curtain on their bed
and stars reprinted everything they said:
never quite soil or sea creatures were they
yet drowned in a wave of land, whose bed was a bay.

Their angels never sexless yet often flew,
cut off by sleep they walked each other's dreams,
our age would give them clearer work to do-
praise them aloud, and they may waken you.

Patrick Anderson

EDUCATION

Drugged with the opium of the Flanders poppy
and born to dreams of peace, he played
 where the people cut down like flowers
 or starved in a witty winter
falsified all vows the dead had made:
he learned to know his accent and his place,
a true-blue boy and happy
floating the Royal Navy,
whose mother's smile was guarded by the police.

Pitches and tennis courts drawn smartly
over the natives crowded down below,
 he trod their fingers like daisies
 and chalked his rules on their races -
he cut the kiss of love to his hero
or drove the ball for six in the trees,
happily unaware
of what history prepared,
the terrible trauma droning beneath his hair.

But when his tears froze solid to a cane
to beat his hands into the grasp of love,
 his flesh baroque and empty as a church
 rocked the more real alleys of his search
or with the stammer of a schoolboy's loins
he planned his life amongst the rank waste grasses -
there in a nervous shiver
hoisting a pirate flag
the factory of his father
rose amongst nicotine and whiskey glasses.

Who fell on bed, a virgin in love,
was not aware of where his strength was sucked,
in the community of his clinging
the amputation of the Jewish limb-
a ruined stump in which all love was mocked:
who clapped his girl and cried like birds
love is miraculous
being utter happiness!
awoke to Hitler's gangrene empire
and little Franco strutting in Spain's pus.

Patrick Anderson

WAKING

I lie in the long parenthesis of arms
dreaming of love
and the crying cities of Europe

wake to the bird a whistler in my room
and sun a secret

light on the bed of air
and buoyed by morning
the easy bugle of breath
projects and echo
and over the difficult room
the brimming window
opens the bandaged eyes
to the shape of Asia.

Invalid, I,
and crippled by sleep's illness,
drowned in the milk of sheets
and silk of dreams,
I wake and write the rising curve of day
with mercury of the smashed thermometer
and trouble the sudden mirror-
pale in suspension on the oval bed. who have been

PKP

JOURNEY

Never resist the going train of the dream
risen and steaming on hard tracks
through Breughel landscape
or the troubled slum.

The houses and the faces fabricate
heart's drop to terror and eyes' flight to madness;
cling, madam, the blunt caboose like a streamer
or prod the engine.

Oh do not lag behind syringe of whistle
douching your ears; on spongy fingers
number the revs. per min.,
they are your tempo.

You may be box-car baggage or begonia,
porter with epaulettes and moon for navel;
the way is water-colour to the station,
the stop is limbo.

PKP

THE BARONS

The barons
make
Applause they
take,

And pay for
Peals
That hide their
Steals.

They buy the
Press
In which they
Stress

The press must
Be
Unbought and
Free.

They sit on
Hordes
Of corporate
Boards,

And use their
Shares
To sell their
Wares.

They take their
Slice
Off every
Price,

And shut down
Shop
When prices
Drop.

This is their
Test
Of what is
Best --

Whatever,
Fills
Their vaults and
Tills.

They push their
Rule
To church and
School,

And pose as
Guardians,
Trustees and
Wardens.

Their bread-lines
Take
The men they
Break,

Their prisons
Seal
The fools who
Squeal.

Their needs
Dictate
Affairs of
State,

Their stooges
Sway
Election
Day,

Their lobbies
Bend
The forward
Trend,

And laws
Command
Protects their
Hand,

While we with
Arms
Protect their
Homes,

Their fingers
Force
The public
Purse.

Though parties
Strain,
The barons
Reign.

Though experts
Plan,
The barons
Ban.

For them the
Loot,
For us the
Boot.

For them the
Swag,
For us the
Bag.

F.R. SCOTT

TO A FALLEN AIRMAN

Starless now is he who owns
Egregiously these grounded bones:
Silence, his praise who vainly brings
A quill to him who died on wings.

RALPH GUSTAFSON

PARABLE

Sun behind this fog
seeps through,
yet, vapor-twisted, is no reassurance
but shifting, dull-white uneasiness,
distorting the true world.
Stunt-limbed trees waver through mist
smeared with uncertain luminance,
octopus-branched, leering-leafed.

So, blurred by furry fog of fear
(small false securities melt
under the dank touch)
old, clutched life looms shapeless, without comfort,
menacing our thin desires.

But wind from decisive, human-dwarfing sea
will cut away this fog,
leave a strong land action-ready,
all outlines sure.

Anne Marriott

OLD ELIZABETH AND NEW GEORGE ...

Neufville Shaw

By contrasting attitudes as remote as those of the Renaissance with those as immediate as our own one might be accused of a fondness for pedantic jousting or a delight in the obvious, but it is possible that an effort in this direction might be valuable in that the writing of the poets and dramatists of the period which ushered in what has loosely been termed modern history is generally considered as the greatest which we possess. Although, in an essay of this length, it would be an impossible task to elucidate in detail the conditions which allowed either the Renaissance or the more limited outlook of today it should be recognized that this writer realizes their importance without, he believes, falling into the positivist error of asserting that a general social analysis is in itself a complete aesthetic for besides the mechanism of birth there is the product of birth to be considered in its own right.

The heroic attitude is perhaps easier to recognize than to define. If one was to contrast, for instance, Bloom and Hamlet it would not be difficult to select the one to whom the term would best apply. Hamlet is heroic because when faced with a problem he attempts to solve it in a dynamic fashion; he plots, murders and is killed at the climax of his triumph which is a nemesis (How little this word is required by critics of modern literature is, in itself, significant.) not only for his uncle and mother but necessarily one for himself. When Bloom has to cope with an almost identical situation he goes for a walk and carefully avoids the scene of the seduction only to return when he is sure it is all over. Such an attitude is unheroic - that is it is one of acceptance of conditions which are of considerable importance to himself.

This contrast is a general one i.e. one has only to think of Macbeth, Faustus and Swann, Mr. Prufrock to admit it. That it can be related to the social and technological achievement of the time goes without saying. The intellectual awakening of the Renaissance was caused or allowed, if you will, by the discovery and application of a series of tools such as the compass, printing press, paper and the cannon. All of this equipment for dealing with nature created a prosperity such as had only rarely been known before - the compass meant Asia and the Indies, the cannon reinforced immeasurably the power of the central government and so on. For the arts this meant not so much a time of questioning but rather a proclamation of all the energies and rich abilities of mankind. In their excitement at the possession of a new world men pitted themselves against it daring the most overwhelming odds, preferring the forlorn hope to the easy victory. The best of Shakespeare and Marlowe is found in their

tragedies while even Dante preferred hell to heaven.

The public was interested in the hero, the individual who chose the hard road rather than the easy one. There was none of the broad social conception of War and Peace, for example. Literature concerned itself with a man surrounded by a group of other unit men. The character per se, his achievement unmarred by the vague numbus of comrade band or nation, served as a focus of attention. His isolation was a part of the glory which through him to a peak of acclamation and his inevitable destruction was at the hands of forces which he himself had unleashed. Thousands of nameless silent people died in order to provide him with a stirring background; the throng of whispering courtiers who gathered about his deathbed were there merely to record the tremendous culmination of his death throes. Writers created a host of such people who, like Icarus, were only interested in living in order to die magnificently. There was little social uncertainty, no questioning as to the motivation for these tumultuous adventures for the reason that, broadly speaking, men had accepted their new world without being aware of it.

The period surrounding the first Great War was characterized by a much greater intellectual curiosity but, whereas the men of the Renaissance were so certain of the premises with which they faced the world that they were willing to test them with their lives, the curiosity of this and its succeeding period (our own) springs from a deep rooted sense of uncertainty. Worse than Duns Scotus who counted angels on pinheads, people were sure neither of the angles nor the pinheads. For an artist it was largely an age of rejection, a rejection which some times went to fantastic lengths i.e. pure verse, pure prose. The writer obsessed with a sense of drift resorted to a negative criticism of the forces which he felt to be pulling him. The typical character became an observer (often solely of himself) and not a doer. The importance which the author attached to this critical detached attitude is evidenced by the frequent and frank insertion of himself or of friends with whose opinions he either contrasted or identified his own i.e. Daedalus, Marcel of The Past Recaptured, Paul Morel of Sons and Lovers, Rampion of Point Counter Point, etc. It became a fashionable practice for readers to try to identify characters with this or that person in the literary coteries of Paris and London. It was as if writers saw nothing of interest beyond their own immediate circle. The positive and broader element of an energetic and stimulating world had gone. Instead of it providing a stage for heroic action it offered only the one-sided attraction of analysis without a corresponding opportunity for synthesis. The writer drew aside the facades from magnificent exteriors in order to demonstrate their hollowness and, his message being one of disillusion, he often resorted to verbal pyrotechnique as if to encourage our attention. No longer does our hero proclaim that

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which taken at the height leads on to fortune"

but rather allows the tide to recede in order to expose the fragile and trembling underworld upon which it rests.

The world, then, had become a challenge not to one's ability but rather to one's credulity. The hero lost his forceful attributes and became a shy exhibitionist or an irrationalist who sought by a kind of orgiastic and spurious enthusiasm to escape the tentacles of the city and live among a variety of deities ranging from Flora to himself. It is noteworthy that the calm and dispassionate tone adopted by the greatest of the writers of this time by reason of its very photographic common sense impressionism served to expose the bravuras and inconsistencies of society without making any very deliberate attempt to do so. So shabby had the rationalisms and justifications of the various status quos become that even so apparently an unprofound and superficial examination of them served as a condemnation. Indeed one realizes that by relating the neurotic and hysterical mores of the 'tens and twenties to an uncompromising spade is a spade estimate is in itself a very profound attitude. Naturally very few of the writers attempted to impose their ideals upon their environment. Its analysis sapped all their energies.

With the advent of the thirties there appeared on the scene for the first time in many years the rebellious partizan. "The whole of the poetry of Auden and Spender and C. Day Lewis implies that they have desires and hatreds of their own and further that they think that some things are to be desired and others hated." (MacNiece). The world had become a challenge once more with the important difference that these new young men were not so much interested in measuring their strength against it but in attacking its worst aspect i.e. capitalism. The hero in this last metamorphosis appears in the garb of a missionary with his book of ideals and his sentimental gesture. There had been no fundamental departure from the general morality of their immediate predecessors. They still analysed only their attack had become political and they possess a Plan.

This partizanship made reaching demands on the new school of writers. Too often the villain became a caricature of the real thing - the pip-pip game loving moron instead of the clever ingenuous being he really was; but their worst failure was in the treatment of the positive character (the hero) who by reason of his identification with the correct belief became an anxious Sir Galahad who retained his aitches and flourished a copy of Marx. In this connection one might recall the Dos Passos personage; how much more convincing are the down at heel sailors bumming their way from port to port, the drunken business men, the busy whores than the uprightly indignant partizan. The love their creator bore for them only too often resulted in their death much as a mother kills a spoiled child by over-pampering. They were too good to believe in and it is partially for this reason that many of the newer writers have of late dropped partizanship but only to find themselves in the mystic camp which a few years ago they were attacking and attacking so effectively. Their croquet mallets, like Alice's, have turned to flamingoes.

Much of this change had to do with a surge of over-optimism, a feeling that we recognize things are bad, here is the solution, now that we understand it and are with you, Utopia should arrive in the next mail. From his college window the writer saw a force with which he thought he could ally himself and, not forgetting his blazer, he ran to join it as if to join the angels. It took him many years and a war to recognize the bitter historic realities of revolution and social change. He had not missed the train but rather, when he climbed aboard found that the damned thing would not pull out of the station. This inefficiency disheartened him and he went in search of other railroads which although they didn't lead to Utopia provided him with an immediate satisfaction. He had found that he had overanticipated and, in disgust, he withdrew within himself. Auden wrote a poem whose main aim seems to be to show the world that he has read Maritain and Kierkegaard while Isherwood seems to be contented in devoting his splendid talents to writing for the expensive slicks. At best this latter pays.

Again disillusion has become fashionable - for everything stinks, see Partizan Review; for totalitarianism is upon us, there is nothing you can do about it, I have been there and seen it so you shut up, vide George Orwell. By means of some comforting solipsism, Alec Comfort gravely asserts that he is anti-war but not (that is objectively) pro-fascist. Among the elderly writers Andre Gide discusses the fall of France in terms of flowers and frankly states that he is only interested in the esoteric. "It is just that the more they (thoughts upon which everyone agrees) are shared, the less it matters to say them; whereas the others (thoughts which occur only to Gide) if I do not express them they are lost," - as if most of the greatest in art was not concerned with ideas which are common to everyone. This disillusion transcends that of the twenties and tens in that it is an almost complete rejection. At least the others thought that there was something to be analytical about. In the face of such an attitude (which is one with the bellicose antithesis of the neo-imperialists) Spender finds it necessary to assert - credit to him - the ordinary human values.

The great wave of American naturalist writing is receding. Its dean, Dos Passos, has just written a novel whose leading character (the one who bears the body of its assertion) has, it appears, given up the mass in order to plunder it. The hero is dead after a brief but false resuscitation during the thirties. What is there left, they seem to say, but our pacifism or their Roosevelt, their Van Wyck Brookes and MacLeish, and their hurrah for every piddling concession wrung from the ruling class, for every Beveridge and Marsh report, their halloo for the new internationalism which means a Stars and Stripes and, perhaps, a Union Jack in every drawing room? In the meantime the Soviets plod on and we hope that the world will totter as we think it should. There is still much left to destroy with the honestly destructive realism of a Joyce or an early Dos Passos. The hero cannot be anticipated. We shall have to wait for a new Renaissance, but there is no reason why we cannot prepare for him. We still can fight.

NOTE: Much of the foregoing appears to fall within the realm of uneasy generalization. For instance to say that all the writers of the Renaissance accepted the world in which they lived is not true (for example More) but to say that most, including the greatest, did is true. The same holds for the disillusion I have attributed to today's authors. Spender, MacNeice, Sholokov, etc. may be advanced to qualify this generalization. However there can be little doubt that a rejection of humanism has infected most of the North American writers (those who concern us most) whether they be Americans (Allen Tate) or Englishmen living in the U.S.A. (Auden).

We would remind our readers that we welcome contributions, although we are not able to pay for them at present. Subscriptions (\$1. per year) and manuscripts should be sent to Mrs, Kit Shaw, 5593 Cote St, Luke Road, N.D.G., Montreal.

