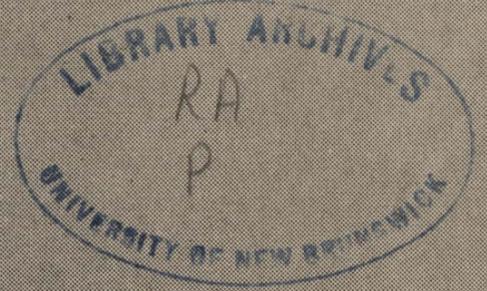


PREVIEW



14

P.K.PAGE N.SHAW B.RUDDICK P.ANDERSON F.R.SCOTT

MINERS . . .

PATRICK ANDERSON

Here it is always night
under Glamorgan:
under the heels of girls
hanging their washing
in a Welsh wind,
under the heather hoarding
the mountain bees
whose blaze pales
in the shadow of mountains;
dark in the big seams,
dark at the coal face
and in the shaft, the workings (whether the pit
be under land or sea)
it is always dark.

But the men come with lights
and bury themselves in the mine
where the great forests of fern
and flowers and fabulous trees
that once grew on the earth
now lie all hard and dark
and packed together-
that we may have ferns of flame
and flowers of fire
and great vines of power over our cities
and great birds and mailed saurian
machinery
the men go down
to that dark harvest.

As though the lightning returned to the thundercloud
the men return
to the great primitive thundercloud of the earth:
as though the child returned into the womb
the men return.
Many die. It is dangerous.
Gas explodes. Water pours in.
Dark becomes dark again.

The dead in the coal
slowly precipitate.
Many died after waiting
on ledges or in the black water
until their hunger relaxed
into a satisfied decrepitude
and their eyes reflected no more

the imagined light.
Many died after long waiting
for a hammer in white
to tap like a saviour
and lights rinse with haloes
heads fear made holy.
But the dark was sufficient
unto itself. The hours
were absorbed like chemicals
and time slowed down into geology.

Many times the syren
gushed in the hearts of women
or the wheeling steeple
stopped, and the strike was on:
then by the little cottages,
each with its privy under the black and blue hill,
men hard with anger
stood like sketches drawn by a nervous hand
upon the margin of life.

Their dangerous trade
had made them radical and black
yet what more dangerous
than to sell furs or flowers
to women whose good time was nearly up,
whose discontent, drawing the mouth's bow queerly,
impaled a Jew upon a continent ?
And what more truly dark
than the dim workings
and mining miles of slums
where labour picked itself to be
another's profit ? What
more certain than that props would give
and death, leaking in roof,
cover them up with darkness, a final shame ?

Yet now the derricks race
upon Glamorgan's hills
and the wheels of our heads
draw up the loaded veins
of once blind power
and dredge for the long dark
and waiting monuments
of the people's dead:
firing those histories, we forge
from shadows weapons.

TWO POEMS

ALICE EADY

THE BELL-SOUND AND THE COPPER TONE

The bell-sound and the copper tone
Of the strange longings of people
Resound and resound.

Until the air is filled with a maturity of sound.
Until there is a ripeness and a wholeness
Like the richness of funeral bells,
Crossing and inter-crossing
Like a field of barley.

INDIVIDUAL

You must be far apart and alone and together.
I mean, together by yourself,
Together with all your different selves.
And then you will be spread out like a bog
And hard like peat
And tramped down like marsh.
And that is the loneliness
And that is the speaking.

GIRLS

MIRIAM WADDINGTON

In summer the light flushed faces of my girls
Rush to me with hullos along the green street of their growing,
And from their freckled smiles all their hopes bloom out,
And in their curving laughter all their past is carolled,
While the strands of hair damp against their foreheads
Are tendrils reaching from the roots of their joy.

Oh my girls, as you rush to me with your swift hullos
I see over your shoulders the years like a fascist army
Advancing against your love, burning your maiden villages.
I see your still minorities destroyed in lethal chambers
Your defenseless dreams falling backwards into the pit,
And I see
The levelling down of all your innocent worlds.

I offer myself, a splint against your sorrows,
And I kiss the broken wings of your future.

EXAMINER

F.R.SCOTT

The routine trickery of the examination
Baffles these hot and discouraged youths.
Driven by they know not what external pressure
They pour their hated self-analysis
Through the nib of confession, onto the accusatory page.

I, who have plotted their immediate downfall,
I am entrusted with the divine categories,
ABCD and the hell of E,
The parade of prize and the backdoor of pass.

In the tight silence
Standing by a green grass window
Watching the fertile earth graduate its sons
With more compassion -- not commanding the shape
Of stem and stamen, bringing the trees to pass
By shift of sunlight and increase of rain,
For each seed the whole soil, for the inner life
The environment receptive and contributory --
I shudder at the narrow frames of our text-book schools
In which we plant our so various seedlings.
Each brick-walled barracks
Cut into numbered rooms, black-boarded,
Ties the venturing shoot to the master stick;
The screw-desk rows of lads and girls
Subdued in the shade of an adult --
Their acid subsoil --
Shape the new to the old in the ashen garden.

Shall we open the whole skylight of thought
To these tiptoe minds, bring them our travelled world
And the broad acres of art for their field of growth?

Or shall we pass them the chosen poems with the footnotes,
Ring the bell on their thoughts, period their play,
Make laws for averages and plans for means,
Print one history book for a whole province, and
Let ninety thousand reach page 10 by Tuesday?

As I gather the inadequate paper evidence, I hear
Across the neat campus lawn
The professional mowers drone, clipping the inch-high green.

FREIGHTER

BRUCE RUDDICK

In concord then they set up hasty ways
 on city's edge swept by the inland waves.
 Built her to formula like a hundred more
 as low and ugly as their stunted love.
 Men from the bread-line and from rodeo
 poured out the metal down in dark Lachine,
 rivet and rib were knit on wooden ghosts,
 death in her beams and cheap and hurried plates.
 Not built to pick her languorous way among
 the Isles of peace that now are armed or burned,
 no spice or jewel rests cosy in her gut,
 but snubbed to wealthy harbour she receives
 her streamlined properties for scenes of waste,
 and no boy ever whistles to see her sail.
 Guttural here and silent in the gulf
 she'll plough her secret track among the waves
 and pound uneasy waters on the heads
 of rotting heroes and of rolling whales.

Built while the day is eager she will sail
 till profits or a million sailors die,
 or, lost some night in heaving tons of space,
 she'll swell a warning from a Cabinet Voice.
 Or, when the thing is done and heroes go
 back to the greasy east or wooly west,
 rusting she'll lie tilted in the bay
 while boys and tides maraud about her bows.

PANORAMA

P.K.PAGE

In quick panorama with parasol, parrot and panda;
 saying perhaps or because,
 eating pink end of match
 and with pastel tissue for lavatory use
 and deparlourized parlour
 and cheddar the lamplight of love
 they dissolve upon chairs,
 write ruin in pearls
 on the flesh of inherited faith
 and famish in pairs.

They attend us in dreams and in droves
 like a filigree shade
 fall down between us and our time
 prick the drum with their tune
 and fence the inviolate field
 with the quick of their eyes.

Yet we grow like a child--
 overnight
 have shot up half an inch;
 become tall with belief,
 on the rungs of our hope
 become strong; are travelled,
 know mountain and plain,
 are the jacks of all trades--
 Jack of diamonds and Jill,
 steeple jack, happy jack,
 demi-john.

Know the spectrum--
 the colours of air and of death;
 bruise the press with our sight;
 are stippled with sound of the world
 and are steep with desire;
 are not fancy for fools, haemophiliac men,
 or physicians in love
 but multiple one
 become man
 are moon for their tide.

THE CHIEF MOURNER

P.K.PAGE

The cortege of hopes
 with its astonishing mourners
 goes single file in the street
 in this turbulent weather--
 drawn on a transfer
 with a cross-nibbed pen.
 The carriage hearse
 and the bobbing plumes on the horses
 are of another time--
 not this, not now, not ever.

While child with tear-smudged hands behind the window
 smells the dust on the lazy ~~gruyere~~ curtain,
 not understanding her sorrow; the chief mourner,
 spared the pulled down blind of a black dress,
 the cobwebbed gloves, the bonnet of Victoria
 and the hand of the dead in the pastel papered album.
 Spared these-- yet narrow in grief as the pauper's coffin
 given no military honours, trailing its black
 line of despair across the smoky window.

On the slipping sill there is dust and one dead fly
 dry as a cinder, blowing as she breathes.
 Nothing is sure but death and the crazy weather
 and the punished child standing with eyes too big
 and the bones of her fingers growing beneath her skin.

FURTHER NOTES FROM BAIE ST. PAUL

PATRICK ANDERSON

To the mountains we never got. They remained a perpetual distance. Sharp and blue they rose and fell as one walked on the hillsides--ridged like tarpaulins, with ash-coloured shadows on them, they would suddenly appear over the soft steep outline of a pasture--in groups or one alone--judged distant and high and formidable by the degree of blue darkness they secreted, the packed looming shapes, at once simple and sinister. Meanwhile we worked and ate and absorbed the life of the place: walked five miles here and six there: bathed in La Lumiere or the St. Lawrence or some mountain stream where one didn't need any swimming suit: afforded a bottle of beer once a week and now and then invited people in to the dingy sitting-room of the hotel, drawing a curtain across the middle of the room to give us some privacy from the commercial travellers talking around the counter: picked blueberries, wild strawberries and everlastings, drank quantities of water and felt often depressed and guilty as the German advance closed in on Stalingrad.

When we first arrived the fields were a mass of daisies, by the time we left at the end of August the trees were already turning. In the heat of the day the country was singed and difficult, the valley walls emitted a yellowish haze, it was with an effort that one's eyes climbed then to some distant thumbsized poplar or barn. Everywhere grasshoppers pattered like rain in the dusty scrub and crickets chirped with a sound like broken glass. After lunch I would be trying to work in our room which creaked and snapped with the heat, getting up often to have a glass of water and kill flies with an old sock. Peggy's canvasses were propped against the wainscote, the nude turned (when one of us had remembered) to the wall, to respect the feelings of the chamber maids.

The road to the bathing pool was long and straight and ran past the Avocat's house where there was a squirrel in a cage. Automatically one paused and rapped, and the squirrel ran out into its wheel and galloped round, and it was the very buzz of irritation, the singing of a fly in the circle of your ear. That way one passed near the madhouse whose long galleries were turned towards the afternoon sun. From it there came an incessant humming punctuated with shouts, scraps of song, the rough sketches of human talk, and you could distinguish figures walking behind the wire as you looked across the gardens and duck pond--the delphiniums and asters and dahlias growing profusely in the garden to the left. This road was used by the sick nuns on their way to the private kiosk they were building as a rest house up in the woods beyond La Lumiere. Benches had been provided for them at regular intervals. To sit on one of these was to feel the countryside give you a slight electric shock, something compounded of warmth and the throbbing of wind through all the rail fences to which the bench was, so to speak, plugged in. At such a moment one would distinguish the various tones in the barley, wheat and long grass around one--seething, tinkling, a profound low sigh, mixed with the stiffer rustle of darkgreen frilly corn.

On hot days when I had not worked easily or well I was, I suppose, over ready to detect the sinister and strange, especially since this countryside symbolized many confused haunting preoccupations of my own--this place

that was so lovely and so wrong, so much minority-land, rich in grievances, frustrations and out-moded faiths. Even some of the idiots whom one passed on the country lanes had about them when they were still at a distance, or when one caught only a glimpse of their faces, a strange bright tender quality, a beauty that was perverse without as yet changing into positive ugliness--which reminded me of the people one meets in dreams.

I remember certain incidents. There was Real Simard, a school teacher with whom I went for several walks. We talked incessantly of modern literature and politics. He told me to read 'Le Devoir' in the same breath that he railed against the Ontario capitalists. He was small and young and jolly, loved reading but couldn't get many books, was poor, still really a peasant in appearance, and led a lonely life in a small town some miles away. When we reached a precipice on one of our walks he shrank away and could not bear to look down it. He retreated to a safe distance and waited for us there. He had a game leg and from time to time as he talked would fall cheerfully headlong. It was all rather courtly, enthusiastic, tender and then embarrassing--as Real picked himself up from the bushes and continued to explain Quebec to me or justify his preference for Alfred de Musset. And the blind man who read the 'Catholic Digest' in braille and so appreciated composers like Prokofiev and Shostakovitch that he composed some variations on the theme in the first movement of the Leningrad Symphony--the day he walked with us through a waste of sand and scrub inhabited by over a thousand hens the sun was blazing down and he looked so sooty in his blue wind-breaker, and we wondered if he could find his way back across the stiles. Finally he turned and left, a lean bobbing figure walking confidently, and most of the hens began to follow him in an obscene v-shaped phalanx through the dirt and smells of the place.

But chiefly I remember the Conjuring Show. We went with Ninette. It was stiflingly hot and the school auditorium was packed, so much so that children crouched staring through its basement windows. As always, the Curé and the other priests occupied the front row. People stood against the walls, plaster casts of saints poised above their heads. There was a little stage, blue velvet curtains drawn across it twitched occasionally, then someone (the Mayor, the Master of Ceremonies?) came through, bent over to speak to the Curé, and disappeared. There was a great deal of shuffling, whispering to the ushers, scraping of chairs, waving to friends. Most of the audience were slicked up in their best: farm boys in black serge, the flashier customers in green flannel with a pin stripe and, maybe, a straw hat. Some of the women wore that favourite colour combination of crimson and magenta which is usually reserved for the Sunday parade.

At last the lights were turned down and the curtains parted amidst much giggling and craning of necks. The stage was elaborately decorated with crimson tables and stands embroidered with magical signs. This conjuror had no less than four assistants. They wore boiled shirts and red tailcoats which were far too large for three of them, but quite a tight fit for the fourth, whose loose pot-belly sagged in front of him. I never saw a more depressing group of men. The tall lean ones looked half-starved. They drooped with vacuous grins on their faces. The fat one shook like a jelly. Then, after a moment of expectancy on the part of the audience, the Conjuror swept in. He was

a huge bull-necked man with a brisk manner and a rather hectoring ill-tempered face. His large head was bald but what made his appearance so frightening was that he wore the long black cassock of a priest.

I cannot say that Brother Maurice, for this was his name, was a very good conjuror though all around me I saw gaping mouths grow wider and wider until Ninette, who had a Rabelaisian sense of humour, suggested she stick her umbrella in one of them and then open it. He used a great deal of apparatus and very, very little sleight of hand. For comic relief he reached down into the folds of his cassock and produced glasses of brandy which he tossed off in a dramatic muscular way. But what he most loved was a revolver, a big black one whose deafening report and spout of flame accompanied his most important tricks.

The second part of the program consisted of a Chinese scene, the tricks being done to a piano accompaniment by one of the local girls. She began playing the wrong piece and Brother Maurice barked at her and strode over to one corner of the stage from which he issued directions. He was dressed in the robes of a mandarin, his hands in his sleeves, and he passed up and down in a ruminative chinese way while one of the assistants sang a song, and sang it well. The decor depended largely upon a number of dolls (incidentally neither Chinese in appearance nor costume) which were carefully, if rather indecently, perched over a semi-circular row of light bulbs so that their tulle skirts were illuminated from within. This was considered a masterpiece by the audience. When the song was over, Brother Maurice produced a rabbit from nowhere, held it firmly in his hands and stared at it so intently that I thought it was going to die of fright. Its ears lay back and its eyes glistened. A moment later he had a parrot on his shoulder. When it flopped down he looked annoyed and snapped his fingers at the assistants.

I must confess I was intoxicated by the heat, the packed house, the sweat and shuffling and barging and the incandescent loins of the dolls. When a young man in front of me insisted on standing up and obstructing my view, I found myself placing a sharp bit of wood on the seat of his chair. He sat down but showed no signs of noticing anything. The next time he stood up I did something quite out of character. I got mad and gave him a yank from behind. He subsided without turning round. And there it all was--the parrot back on Brother Maurice's shoulder, the lights, the dolls, and a lacquered cabinet from which yards of handkerchiefs were being conscientiously drawn.

The most memorable trick occurred during the last part of the program. Brother Maurice walked through the first few rows of the audience collecting slips of paper on which people had written something they wished to see revealed to them on the stage. I was not close enough to notice exactly what the Brother was up to, whether he had an accomplice or not, and his French was rather beyond me. But that was the general idea. He then selected one of these slips, pointing the while to a screen at the back of the stage. On this screen would appear the desired object.

I shall not easily forget the scene that followed. The Conjuror called for his revolver and then stood, one arm on his hip, the other holding the revolver pointed at the floor some distance away. A great black figure, the cassock curving smoothly outwards over his belly, for all the world like a

larger Mussolini. We looked at him, then at the screen, then back again. The revolver clicked. His face darkened. Clicked again. He was furious. Then he pulled the trigger once more, and this time there was a noise like the crack of doom, a vivid flash, a cloud of smoke and on the screen we saw appear to his triumphant shout, what had been demanded of him. A picture of Saint Theresa holding the Infant Jesus!

Could anything have been more appropriate than that?

(Note. The above is an extract from 'Montreal Journal', a study of life and wartime conditions in the Province of Quebec.)

All contributions and subscriptions (\$1.00 for twelve issues) should be sent to: Mrs. Kit Shaw, 5593 Cote St. Luke Road, Montreal, Quebec.

