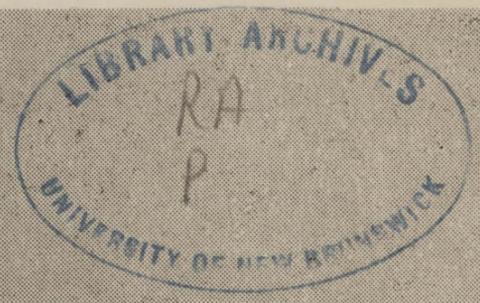


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PREVIEW



19

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TWO POEMS BY A.M. KLEIN

COMMERCIAL BANK

Flowering jungle, where all fauna meet
Crossing the marbled pool to thickets whence
The prompted parrots, alien-voiced, entreat
The kernel'd hoard, the efflorescent pence,
Wondrous your caves, whose big doors must be rolled
For entrance, and whose flora none can seek
Against the armed unicorn, furred blue and gold,
Against the vines fatal, or the berries, that touched, shriek.

How quiet is your shade with broad green leaves!
Yet is it jungle-quiet which deceives:
Toothless, with drawn nails, the beasts paw your ground--
O, the fierce deaths expiring with no sound!

BREAD

Creation's crust and crumb, breaking of bread,
Seedstaff and wheatwand of all miracles,
By your white fiat, at the feast-times said,
World moves, and is revived the shrouded pulse!
Rising, as daily rises the quickening east,
O kneading of knowledge, leaven of happiness,
History yearns upon your yearning yeast!

No house is home without your wifeliness.

No city stands up from its rock-bound knees
Without your rustic aid. None are elect
Save you be common. All philosophies
Betray them with your yokel dialect.

O black-bread hemisphere, oblong of rye,
Crescent and circle of the seeded bun,
All art is builded on your geometry,
All science explosive from your captured sun.

Bakers most priestly, in your robes of flour,
O Levites at your altar'd ovens, bind,
Bind me forever in your ritual, your
Worship and prayer, me, and all mankind!

*** AUTUMN ***

Autumn began to come. It came slowly, at first imbedded in summer, with a touch of coldness in the mornings, with a leaf hitting the windowpane hard as it fell to the ground. The trees were still a dullish green. But gradually the sunlight separated from the air, as though it were old enough to be a thing of itself, to be independent. And as the air grew colder and bluer, the sunlight became riper and more mellow. He saw it, a thing by itself, on the brick wall across from his windows. It was darker and gentler now.

It was at this time that the tomatoes grew cheaper and cheaper, so cheap that one bought them in baskets for thirty cents and then twenty-five, so cheap that one occasionally could buy two baskets at a time. And the peaches came down in price too. The tomatoes and peaches would be heaped on the table, the sunlight wrapped around them like something soft and even woolly.

One day there was the heavy drone of a trainer in the deep blue sky. He thought of this as a sign of autumn. The sky was so blue that you couldn't see the frost. But the essence of frost was there, the sky was hardening, there was no doubt about it, and suddenly he said to himself, as he nervously touched a strip of sunlight on the window sill--'This way one owns a death.'

There was, of course, somewhere a great rain. One night it gathered round the house, perpetually descended the windows, gushed from the roof spouts, and made the streets black and shiny. It held no trace of wind or thunder. It needed nothing but its own enormous force which covered space and time, for it gave to time a new accent. It made a black tent of noise and in the centre of this tent he switched on a desk light and carefully arranged pencils and paper. 'Now I am in the still centre of the turning wheel,' he thought. It was the privileged position. In summer one is never at the centre. The excitement almost always is somewhere else. Children fumbling in water. A rabbit, a bird, deserting into immense nowheres of underbrush and forest. A mountain rising blacker behind another mountain. But now one was driven in upon oneself. And the rain, without birds or mountains or anything at all but itself, continued to fall. It fell all night. In the morning it was still there. The leaves were sodden underfoot.

But after it came more of those days when the sky was deep blue and the edges of buildings hard and brittle, and when the sunlight stood here and there like a fruit tree or flowed into little patches where it collected itself and seemed to fall asleep. One afternoon he walked on the mountain. The glades were taking on again the straightness and solitudes of their bare trunks. Whole suburbs of leaves, whole neighbourhoods of birds were disappearing. The fat squirrels went about in an atmosphere that became more and more like a cage. He saw, in a clump of maples near the playing field, the sun caught and transfixed in a cloud of smoke, its rays deployed in deep slants through cathedral windows. The deep droning of an aeroplane had for a moment the excessive tortured noise of cicadas in summer. Then it faded away in a whining diminuendo. 'This music has a dying fall.'

This was the time when those who could afford it took a trip up North to see the autumn colours in the Laurentians. This great holiday country hung suspended between two more familiar seasons--summer with its lakes, berry patches, verandahs, and the winter of skiing, deep drifts altering, often beyond recognition, the roads and bypaths. The country was now scenery above everything else: a backdrop, more or less impenetrable. It was something seen from an armchair, touched with the colours of books, touched with the brown stains and distant misty water-marks of old paper. Woods too wet to walk in, lakes too cold for a bathe, trails muddy and impassable. The atmosphere was usually permeated with water and yet within it the woods

burst into flame. The scarlet of the maples, one always heard of that. The word 'scarlet' was not one which would often be used in the city. Yet people would, in autumn, use such a word freely and gaily, with an enthusiasm they seemed to keep specially for the autumn trees, as though there something very precious to them, something they usually kept repressed, were gloriously liberated. And the beautiful violent words made him think of what these people kept repressed and hidden--their desire for beauty, for violence and perhaps even for death. And there was yellow too, the pale yellow of the birches. And russet and purple. Yet nowhere was there anything but wetness, decay, falling of leaves, infinite paling of leaves already on the ground.

He could not deny that the relation of city dwellers to the country above their heads interested him. For what was Canada but crude ragged exploitations along the southern fringe of enormous distances? To take such symbolism seriously was a poetic device, rather than a psychological one. 'Yet over our heads,' he thought, 'there lies a comparatively unspoiled beauty to which we each bring a secret response. It lies there, half empty and unreal, and we work out in it the wishes we do not see satisfied in our daily life. Someone kills a snake. Someone watches a leaf falling to the ground or sees the rain clotting the trees or a hill rising, solitary, blue-black, behind another hill. Driving back from it, past the chalets and the private property signs and the notices about restricted clientele, one cannot help feeling that it is full of the ghosts and emanations of ourselves, who meet on that neutral ground the still vague wind of the future.'

As October proceeded, the autumn grew at once harder and more pale. The sunlight became pale as a flower in its sheaf of wind. It was less a commodity to be handled. There is a time when those who are afraid of thunderstorms look up at the sky and are amazed to see ragged formations of cloud which would have filled them with unease in summer now pass over without stirring a hair on their heads. Instead of lightning, there is a hint of snow. And now one lights the stove. It begins to breathe heavily with its red lungs. Outside the window, the trees look like apparatus in some deserted laboratory.

Often now, on Mondays, his boss presents him with a brace of wild duck he has shot during the weekend. The parcel the Janitor hands him is curiously soft and limp, and seems to mould itself under his hands--a parcel so strongly tactile that one would not think of tucking it under one's arm. Now is the time to enter the storeroom where the ducks are hung, the ducks with their long limp necks, the almost unbearable iridescence of their feathers and their great ugly feet swinging against the wall. The smell of apples in the gloom. The small but satisfactory stores of jam and cheese and tea. The cobweb window and the background of coal. The storeroom, unpleasantly hot and stuffy in the summer, is now a source of warmth which is entirely an illusion born of its tarry, spicy smell.

There is a certain smugness in these satisfactions. Yet Time that was, in summer, no more than an accomplice is now a steady ticking in the room. With every effort to new work, with every leap of imagination or lounge of reverie, Time increases its stature. The year is drawing to a close. And it is no ordinary year. It is already destined to make history. To after generations it will seem a strange year, both heroic and horrible, with all the mysteriousness of war and heroism. It will be one of those vitally important years which many will prefer not to remember. For it will be difficult for people to think themselves back into so much tentative effort, so much doubt and misery. War years are years apart.

The dying year brings before him again the problem of mortality and immortality. The individual leaf falls and will never recover its colour and shape.

Nothing, however, just is: everything changes, everything becomes, everything is a process. 'To be lost in that process,' he thinks, 'is death. To accept it, to work within it as one of the great mass, is life. The people does not die.' This is some consolation.

Towards the end of autumn an extraordinary, a paradoxical thing occurs. When the first snow lies on the ground and the wind blows down from the north, it is part of his job to take his pupils bathing in the YMCA. The football season is over but it is still much too early for ice hockey. Faces that he has taught day after day are now attached to long slippery bodies and dance about on naked feet. It is as though, just as winter appeared, one had discovered a scene kept over from the summer, preserved in an atmosphere of bandaged pipes and chlorinated water. Or as though the white snow already held in its depths the white bodies and green lakes which would eventually replace it.

An autumnal person called Joe is in charge of the locker room. Badly paid, resigned and philosophic he keeps cigarette butts in a drawer and has beside him a usually empty teacup. He is gaunt and wry as a leafless tree. When he has driven out the white boys, snugly dressed in their overcoats and scarves, he lets in the black through his wire door--the small negroes whose turn it is to play in this basement jungle. The last white boy is always out before the first coloured boy comes in.

And now, really, it is autumn no longer.

PATRICK ANDERSON.

TWO POEMS

PATRICK ANDERSON

* * *

THE STOVE

Not only is heat ornamental and heavilly wrought
but it has its own smell and its own sound,
the smell of blistering tin where the pipe meanders
across the kitchen and into the farther room
and up through the roof and snow into the night,

and the smell of wood smoke where it burns and blows
massive and grandiose in the boosted room
and several sorts of ticks when it begins to cool
after we have gone to bed in our rough blankets
and on the hob the kettle whistles still.

And it is beautiful the big Quebec stove
standing in the farmhouse kitchen and quite as baroque
as the oleograph on the wall or the slobbering cretin
dragging his feet on the stair. A thing as curled
as Christ's hair. In its way also a sacred heart.

Take from the woodpile stacked against the wall
birchlogs in satin shreds of stippled bark,
pine logs pouted with gum, and shove them home-
under its iron racks the tiles will twinkle
and its mirror simmer at you across the room.

On it you can bake anything from ski socks to pies
and when you lie asleep, in your blankets, after
the day on the Maple Leaf trail, the dogs will circle
it still, and shuffle, and blink their eyes
and the fire will shuffle and slump and shut its coals.

BALLAD OF RAILWAY STATIONS

Why do they make the glass the colour of rain
and why are the restaurants lighted with steam and gas,
why do the mirrors work, but not the cigarette machines,
and why are the trains
made of horsehair and nicotine and glass
and why do the schoolboys leap on the dirty platforms?

Because Victoria is the railway queen
and the chandelier of tears hangs in her face,
she waves her unionjack in the weeds of sorrow
wearing widow's tweeds at Charing Cross,
the porters bear the bags of her Edward's eyes
and Disraeli's cricket bag with the sceptre in it.

The shooting-lodge of the train moves under the arch
to hunt Balmoral in the iron heather,
the ghillie whacks his gaiters, the Rothschilds stare
through opera glasses at the mountain money,
bagpipes play in the turfy harris fields
and every station has its tartan weather.

If you would go to Eire the start is here
with a brandy in the club or a tart in a hanson-
the Irish channel foams and the spit in Liffey
but the first of the frothy isle is the yeast of Euston,
the purlicus of Marx slide by in a peasoup fog
but the legendary land is Arthurian.

O the eagle soars in the rafters of Paddington
and beats its rusty wings with the flap of a padlock
and over the platform the grouse-grey wife is pursued
by the Alexandra man in the checked pyjamas
while my lady nicotine and the cancer bird
run weeping through the woods of Surbiton.

Why do they make the trains to Purley early
breaking the black bag of Victoria's womb,
why does the weather carry an open umbrella
through the southern counties to the domes of Brighton,
and why do we run upholstered past village cricket
with the azure summer light on an antinacassar?

Because Victoria is the railway Queen,
those are pearls that were her unamused,
she knits the purl and the plain, the bone and the button
into the cardigan she wears for the people,
she stabs her hat with a girder and in her veil
that dry squashed like a moth is Keats's nightingale.

FEAR... BRUCE RUDDICK

Buried O easily in hint
to the sole, and the hand
told by a rosy threat,
in eyelid quick to a blast
or, passive to penny
when pain's ultimate sends
death to the burning nerve
and fear goes.

These are accomodated,
the easy, and the final fall.

But elsewhere, in planes of living,
sudden and unnamed
it trapezes in brain,
somersaults through the blood,
and is sick in the coiling gut
or, malignantly,
booms to the eyes of love
or turns like a worm in the throat.

Take any city, say
in mind or innocuous on map.
See in the geometry
arrows and blades of it
clipping the edges of hope,
the tendrils of wonder.
In claxon or strung on a siren
it curls over the sills
or stammers under a stair.

At night, from the streets
though a slammed door guffaws at it
it stays, it stays
in shock of heel in a hall,
as doubt in a faltering key
and the soft unlatching hand of love.
Crawl from it, under a floor
and fur brushes the arm
or mars the exquisite cornea
opened into the dark.

Leave city and man and go
till rock and tree show none of it,
and new to the nose of the woods
your spoor spreads atmospheres of it,
and, some night, in the mind it miracles
pack-rat to panther.

In histories it stirs;
in pyramids, swaddled and dry,
prone for the call-boys of god;
word siezed in a rock;
Lazarus quavering, "Lord Jesus."

See it spell in a drunken sailor
a boyhood twisted in waves.
Take love or a faith for a cure.
Then, with Reason toppling the Wars,
O remember
the hags, without season,
dugloss, sucking their gums,
where fear makes cronos of the angels
and the soft-cyed girls of the world.

SATURDAY SUNDAY

F.R. SCOTT

The triple-decker and the double-cone
I side-swipe swiftly, suck the coke-straws dry.
Ride toadstool seat beside the slab of morgue---
Sweet corner drug-store, sweet pie in the sky.

Him of the front-flap apron, him I sing,
 The counter-clockwise clerk in underalls.
 Swing low, sweet chocolate, oh swing, swing,
 While check by juke the jitter chatter falls.

I swivel on my axle and survey
 The latex tintex cutex kotex land,
 Soft kingdoms sell for dimes, Life Pic Look Click
 Inflate the male with conquest girly grand.

My brothers and my sisters, two by two,
 Sit sipping succulence and sighing sex.
 Each tiny adolescent universe
 A world the vested interests annex.

Such bread and circuses these times allow,
 Opium most popular, life so small and slick,
 Perhaps in sugar comes tomorrow's dawn
 And cellophane shall wrap the heretic.

THE BANDS AND THE BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN

Band makes a tunnel of the open street
 at first, hearing it;
 seeing it, band becomes
 high; brasses ascending on the strings of sun
 build their own auditorium of light,
 windows from cornets
 and a dome of drums.

And always attendant on bands, the beautiful children,
 white with running and innocence.
 And the arthritic old
 who, patient behind their windows
 are no longer split by the sudden yellow of imagination
 or carried beyond their angular limits of distance.

But the children move
 in the trembling building of sound,
 sure as a choir
 until band breaks and scatters,
 crumbles about them and is made of men
 tired and grumbling
 on the straggling grass.

And the children, lost, lost,
 in an open space
 remember the certainty of the anchored home
 and cry on the unknown edge of their own city
 their lips stiff from an imaginary trumpet.

