VOICES

is the vehicle through which Western Writers—a group of student readers and writers devoted to good writing at Western and determined to encourage those interested in creative work—intends to present the members' best efforts in other than class-assigned papers. However, this "avant-garde" movement does not mean that there is to be a definite form or method of writing; instead it simply means a forward movement in writing on this campus.

The first number—the Whitman Issue—circulated to members only by the new club organized in October, was rushed out in late December to meet a 1955 deadline and so be dedicated to the Leaves of Grass poet. Consequently the magazine appears now for the first time in public in this, its second number.
The Mexican sun beat down upon us, and the atmosphere was hot and sticky. Still we were glad of the persistent warmth. He and I had come across the border to Mexico in haste—the haste of the hunted. Cold fear was in us yet. We were noticeable on the hot sun-baked street—not only that we were Americans, but also that we were strange Americans. Some, though, had the look of understanding in their eyes, who were themselves hunted at one time or another and read our suspicious glances and too-quick movements. We need not have been so cautious, for here we were safe. But the thing that got him was that we could never cross the border into our own country again.

He smiled at me with his eyes, and took my hand.

We walked across the street from the hotel where we were staying and went into a cantina where we were to meet a man. We met him, and, in the innocent conversation, he slipped us that thing we had come for. It was a diamond, stolen from a wealthy family across the border—we held it for him until he could pass it on to Mexico City to a fence he knew there.

Now the night closed in about us, and suddenly I knew for the first time the thing he had been trying to keep from me: we were here in this country for the rest of our lives. Here I was in this place that was my home. I walked down unfamiliar streets seeing things that I had never seen before, hearing talk I could not understand, seeing things that were strange to me. Looking back, it seemed in another world at another time that I was among my own people. But here I was with him. Everything was strange, would be strange... But he smiled with his eyes. I gave him my hand.
WHAT MAKES US TURN SO?

Bobbe Gorin Long

What is it that makes us turn so?

Yesterday: life and a passive contentment—
Monotony, but life nevertheless.

Today: fame—empty cocktail parties echoing
with the voices of frustrated people;
acrid cigarette-smoke smells,
stubs that have long lain cold.

Tomorrow: who knows?

(As a matter of fact, who gives a damn!)

"Was it for want of a kiss?" the poem says.
"Of course not—But then...yes, indeed!"

On the other hand, what if you don't like
the kiss after you get it?

UNIVERSITY

James Atchison

From a darkened room caved
In stone, the gilded, dedicated
Doors are outward thrown;
And like seeing bats, they come
From the hallowed, musty halls
With spheres of thought curiously causing
Them to bump and hit the casements,
And those smoking, standing out
In the open air peer in auspiciously
Saying 'They soak their heads
In books and perch on webby roosts.'

ALL NIGGUS AIN'T BLACK

Adam P. Matheny

The earth was soft and the heavy man leaned on his
cane as the black-suited man read from the Book. Be-
tween them lay a cavity which would soon be filled with
former life now as much clay as the remains of the
cavity.

Dust thou art, dust thou art, he says. I wish
Jim were here with a bucket of spring water, the old man
thought. Must be getting old, Jim isn't here, I know,
he thought again.

Over the rise he could see a faded red brick
building which could only be a church. "Jim's church,"
he thought out loud this time.

Jim Griffin was a pious man. He sat on the front
row of the African-American Methodist Church South 1873,
as the stone read, and his lusty voice drowned out the
low throaty sounds from Adele his wife, when "Roll Jor-
dan Roll" was sung. On Sundays he carried a ponderous
Bible.

"One large enough to mash the debble out of any
man," Jim would say and chuckle deeply. Jim couldn't
read the Bible; but over the years, as Adele had read
to him in her Virginia-gentled voice, he had memorized
the pages of the Book, and the scripture was deeply set
in his mind: Jim could open the Bible anywhere and
recite the exact words on the page. Yes, Jim was a
religious man.

The big man was tired now. He had aged rather
rapidly in the last few years and his doctor, who was
in worse shape than he was would say, "Take it easy,"
and he would say, "Yes," and both of them knew what a
lie it was. It is not as it was when I came to this
country with Jim and Adele. I was young and strong
then.

Jim and Adele had come to the land when the nearby
town was but a dream in a speculator's mind. They came with a giant white man called Bird. Bird had got his name from a not-too-tame past. All three of them then were young and youth swelled as the young white giant roared at the oxen, his whip shouting louder than he but without bite—no sense in cutting good oxen—and the young buck threw his shoulder into the stocks when an obstacle came into the path of the wheels.

Youth cleared the land, youth built the buildings and youth got strong brawling children. The young giant was married by then. She was a young Austrian girl. She could cook. She could work. She was thrifty. She was his wife.

They were close, those four from the East: day after day strong white arms moved with strong black arms in the sun, while at the house snip snip snip went black and white fingers over beans and peas and celery and all the things women did in those days.

In those days we had good things to eat and not all of this canned garbage, thought the old man remembering his dinner at the hotel when indigestion helped him remember. We had meals in those days—big slices of ham fried in their own fat and biscuits as big as six are today swimming in red gravy, lettuce with bacon grease in the summer and sometime a good piece of roast mutton when a sheep was killed by dogs. When a man got up from those meals, he could talk and be at peace with the world.

Sometimes in the evening when the sky was filled with a glow and words came easy, they would watch their children and talk.

"Mistuh Bird, don't seem as if the old ewe gonna git well."

"No, Jim, guess we will have to kill it. I hate to. She is one of the few that we saved in the blizzard and she has always had strong lambs."

"Well, suh, I'se gonna do all I'se can, but she sho am a sick up."

Maybe, "What you gonna do wit that ole barrer, Mistuh Bird?"—not stopping—"If you gonna throw it away, I kin sho use it to make a wagon for the chillun."

Now the "chillun" are riding in big cars and every now and then they stop by and see me. Bosh, bosh, bosh, all is bosh, thought the old man.

"Why doesn't that old fool man get on with this sermon? It's too hot to be praying this long in the sun," he said with a low rumble. He could see the road home in the distance and he thought of the many trips he and Jim had made to town in all these years.

Sometime when Bird was busy, Jim would have to go to town for the salt and other supplies. He did not like to go, for in town he realized again and again that he was black.

"Black men's different, the whites say, but I'se just as strong as Mistuh Bird, and he's the strongest man in the state. There ain't no difference but color." But he knew there was something else, and his soul cried out in anguish.

The only man who really seemed to enjoy showing Jim that he was inferior to the white man was Elijah Cabell, owner of the general store.

Though Elijah's name came from the Bible, his heart was hard as the gravel in St. Asaph Creek. Elijah and Bird had never become friends, because Elijah seemed always to be coming out second best to Bird in some contest of honesty.

"You can't cheat an honest man," Bird always said. So the two men were even compared in public like the walking specimens of good and evil: human examples of the forces of right and wrong.

Elijah could not win over Bird but he could get satisfaction from Jim and he did.

"Wait until the whites are waited on, 'niggah," he would laugh out.

Jim would stand there clenching and unclenching his
hands, his beautiful scarred hands, and say "Yes suh."
Nigguh! The word did not mean a color, but
hatred. All the vile and rotten things that man knew
came out in that word, "nigguh."

Finally Jim would get his order and he would ride
slowly out of town not looking at any man until he
reached Bird's land and then he would look up, head
high—he was a man now.

He never said anything to anyone about what hap-
pened when he went to town; he never even refused to
go, but on some nights when they sat under the big sy-
camore that marked their years with its own, Jim would
say softly, "You know, Mistuh Bird, all nigguhs ain't
black."

The day began to cool and the old man felt re-
lieved. I remember when Jim and I used to work in
this heat and work all day. There was lots of work
do in those hot years; lots of mouths were wait-
ing for the food that we fought from the land. Lots
of children and lots of food, that's what makes a
country strong.

From across the rise the old man could hear the
other preacher say, "We are all children of God."
We are all children all children all children.

The years had passed and the children grew up.
What had been equality between Jim and Bird did not
ripen so in the children. When they went to town to-
gether, they realized that something wasn't the same.
Mr. Cabell usually told them when they bought candy
from him, the weekly precious candy.
"I'll serve you all right but I ain't selling nigguhs any of this candy until last.
Their bewilderment became shame became anger be-
came knowledge and they grew up. Then it did not
matter any longer.

Mr. Elijah Cabell did not refuse Jim's children
A LETTER HOME
Shirley Risher Holland

Close your eyes.
Hear me whisper...

Darkness,
A royal sky
Dusted with stars,
Low singing,
Cabin lights,
Cricket's chirp--
The myriad sounds of night
Play a melody
In blue.

Trees stand bold amid the night
And pose themselves
'Gainst heaven.

The smell of tomorrow's shower
Breathes cool
On a weary
damp brow.

With pencil
Scrap of paper,
Here in my secret place apart,
I long to have you seeing too.

Touch my hand now,
Say, "I love you,"
Outshining
Magnificent night
With those three words.

The highest star (see it there?)
Needs look up
To find your place in my heart,
Needs only glance down
To measure the depths
Of my aloneness...

Clouds hid the sun and despite the welcome relief
from the glare of its sloping rays, the old man suddenly
felt chilly. It wasn't the coldness of day, just
a superstitious coldness. Bosh, the old man thought,
I'm as bad as Jim. He smiled inwardly at that: Afro-
Americus Jim and he was only a few steps from voodoo
Methodist.

The Methodist in Jim was tainted with his African
origin. Many dark nights when the wind ran across the
sheep fields, he would pick the leaves of an elderberry
and when the days numbered two until the new moon, he
would burn the leaves in the stove. When questioned,
he always said, "It's foh da house, Mistuh Bird."

As he grew older, one of Jim's biggest superstitions
was that he would not go to heaven unless the
white man's God wanted him. He wanted to be prayed
over by a white preacher because how else would the
white God want him. He spoke his superstition just
once: It was harvest time and the work was hard.
Bird didn't work then but he would watch. Jim usually
worked along with the men, not doing much but "keeping
his hand in" as he called it. The men had almost
finished one turn on the large wheat field when Jim
fell. Bird ran anxiously to him. "What's wrong, Jim?
Are you hurt?"

"No, Mistuh Bird, nothing can hap'n to me until
I've got a white preacher to pray over my remains."

Bird said nothing but he looked at Jim for a long
The wind started to rise a little and the few leaves left on the elderberry trees around the cemetery began to sing a funeral dirge for the lack of human voices. Omnes Dei, Omnes Dei, came out green from the thin trees. In Sanctus, In Sanctus, the grass replied. The sun was going down. 

How like the life of man is the sun. My sun is going down and Jim's has set.

The old man put his coat on.

When Jim died, Bird finally found out about those trips to town. Adele was gone then too and there was no one to tell but Jim's children. Somehow they knew. Bird found about Elijah's hatred for Jim and his children.

All these years and he never told me.

Angrily the old man went to Elijah's shack; but whatever violence he planned, he never accomplished: Elijah had died that morning... and Jim.

Not much difficulty in a decision here, is there, Lord? Bird thought. Elijah and Jim—Jim and Elijah: no, not much of a decision. One thing was wrong though. It was what Jim had said the day he had his stroke. "No, Mistuh Bird, nothin can hap'n to me until I'se got a white preacher to pray over my remains." It had happened anyway. But what about the white preacher? Bird thought about Elijah and Jim for a long time.

Two hours and a few dollars and it was done.

Over the rise they had stopped singing "Roll Jordan Roll" and Bird could see Jim's friend slowly walking back to town from the little cemetery behind the church with the stone which read African-American Methodist Church South 1873.

I saw a wasp die.
His body quivered, and
In great pain,
Dropped
To the Earth
Below.

Wings too weak
To hold the air
Beat the dust,
And left weak patterns
Which were soon gone.

ONE MULTITUDE

James Atchison

I stood alone upon the mount
Where I could see the city lights
That blinked and winked into the night;
My heart forgot the miles
And went into the streets
Lit by the dancing, flashing lights.
I heard in that imbroglio
Husky voices
Celebrators celebrating
Walkers walking.

Alone I was, yet moving in the city too
Feeling, seeing tired lilting lights
Where sailors drank and warmly kissed,
Where nurses nursed the maimed,
Where mothers bathed their babies,
Where motors motored through the maze,
All linking lights with living life
Illumining the watching hill.
I

Haru no muni
Sumire tsumini to
Koshi ware zo
Nu wo natsukashimi
Hitoya nerikeru

Yamabe No Akahito
8th Century, A.D.

A Translation by Adam Matheny

WAKA

Meadow-ward in spring
I came picking violets.
There, night brought its silence
So enchanting was the field.

II

A Free Transcription by Adam Matheny

TANKA

Tree-like patterns
Fall on the spring day.
Like undressed wood
His mind returns to nature.

After
Kahinomoto no Hitomaro
8th Century, A.D.

LES CHATS

Charles-Pierre Baudelaire

Les amoureux fervents et les savants austères
Aiment également, dans leur mûre saison,
Les chats puissants et doux, orgueil de la maison,
Qui comme eux sont frileux et comme eux sédentaires.

Amis de la science et de la volupté,
Ils cherchent le silence et l'honneur des ténèbres,
L'Érêbe les eût pris pour ses courriers funèbres,
S'ils pouvaient au servage incliner leur fierté.

Ils prennent en songeant les nobles attitudes
Des grands sphinx allongés au fond des solitudes,
Qui semblent s'endormir dans un rêve sans fin;

Leurs reins féconds sont pleins d'étincelles magiques,
Et des parcelles d'or, ainsi qu'un sable fin,
Etoilent vaguement leurs prunelles mystiques.

Translation by Jeanne Jones

THE CATS

Fervent lovers and austere wise men
Equally love, in their maturity,
Powerful and sweet cats, pride of the house,
Who like them love warmth and like them are sedentary.

Friends of science and of voluptuousness,
They look for silence and the horror of darkness;
Erebus might have taken them for funereal chargers,
If they would bow their pride to servitude.

They take on when musing the noble attitudes
Of the great sphinx reclining in the desert,
Which seems to lie in endless meditation;

Their prolific loins are full of magic sparks,
And flecks of gold, like fine sand,
Vaguely bespangle their mystic eyes.
AIRE TRISTE

Carmen Alicia Cadille

El aire es triste a veces
Tan triste
Que imagino
Que Dios duerme
Y olvida.

A Translation by James Atchison

SAD AIR

The air is sad at times
So sad
That I imagine
That God sleeps
And forgets.

Busy and none-too-wealthy readers such as usually are found on college campuses are grateful for the increasing number of good paperback books coming off the press. Rinehart and Company, for a long time publishers of these inexpensive volumes, has just come out with a book of poetry that is sure to be popular among readers of the young contemporaries. Entitled Fifteen Modern American Poets, it contains selections from the works of many well-known writers, as well as those of only recent recognition. The 257 poems plus notes from the editor, George P. Elliott, present an excellent picture of contemporary American poetry.

Among the most noted of the authors whose works are included in the book are such men as Randall Jarrell and Karl Shapiro. Jarrell, a Vanderbilt product, now teaching at Women's College, Greensboro, North Carolina, is especially noted for his volumes of poetry, Losses and Little Friend Little Friend, as well as critical work including Poetry and the Age. At present he is working on a literary biography of Edgar Allan Poe for the American Men of Letters series. Karl Shapiro, until recently editor of Poetry, is best known for his V-Letter and Other Poems and Trial of A Poet and his critical volumes, Beyond Criticism and Essay on Rhyme.

The volume also contains selections from Robert Penn Warren, novelist, critic, and poet of distinction for many years; Robert Lowell, a descendant of the literary family of James Russell Lowell and Amy Lowell; and Richard Wilbur, author of Ceremony and Other Poems and The Beautiful Changes and Other Poems.

Selections from the works of these poets themselves would make a volume of considerable merit, but Fifteen Modern American Poets also contains some of the works of such recognized authors as Elizabeth Bishop, Richard Eberhart, Josephine Miles, Howard Nemerov, James Schevill, Hyman Plutzik, Theodore Roethke, Muriel Rukeyser, Delmore Schwartz, and Winfield Townley Scott. $1.95, Rinehart and Co., Inc., New York, 352 pp.
THE WATER TANK

Mary Bridges

I reach and open the blind
To the silky night.
I lean against the sill
And gaze upon the land
Silvered by the moon.
Silhouetted against the sky,
Brushing the moon with its tip,
Stately towers the tank.
It stands guard this night
A faithful sentinel.
Sometimes I can see
A prehistoric beast
Stalking uneasy prey
To plunge into his maw.
Again, I see the tank
A Titan friend to man
Bringing down life
Against his famishing.
Silhouetted against the sky,
Brushing the moon with its tip,
Stately towers the tank.

JAZZ

Carl Dalton

Dey calls it jazz but
Ah don’t know what dis mean.
Ah only know hit sends me
Right down truma knees.
Dis man blows uh real mean bugle;
Dat un slaps uh crazy drum.
Dey bot broke out with dat ice cold sweat
An, man, just feel dat hum.

See dat pair a’ dancin’?
Dey sho is havin’ fun, cause
Dey done felt dat crazy heat
Dat starts duh blood tuh run.

Duh blood run hot,
Duh floor gets slick.
An, man, oh man!
Jest lookit dat chick!

Dat chick is sharp;
She’s sharp as uh bee,
Cause she done full
With dat whoopee dee dee.

Me, man, I don’t feel nutting,
Nutting, I say, at all—
Dat stuff called jazz is sending me.
Look out, man, heah come duh fall.

ODE TO A BROOM

Jerry O. Williams

Oh, Broom in the corner with sturdy wood stem,
And long dirty straws that hang from your hem,
How stand you so proud when your fate lies
In the sweeping of floors and the shoo-ing of flies?
HIS BOOKS
Marcia Williams

Musty...
Dusty...
Foul-stenched books,
Mildew and mould blur your words.
What is your life now?
Untouched for decades, you lie there.
Vermin ridden...

You say nothing to me,
Yet you could whisper----
Confide truths I shall never know.

Tell me!
Tell me of ones who listened.
Tell me of the one...
Did you make him laugh?
Or did you cause
A terrible...aching...grinding
Pain in his throat
Until the tears had to flow?

Miserable, wretched things,
Tell me what you taught him!

Faded, mottled book----
You! with the red cover-----
Why are you so worn?
What did he find in you
That surpassed the others?
Are his notes scrawled on your pages?

And you...you stiff back----
You green one...green with envy,
Because he did not deign to envy you?
Why did he set you aside?
Tell me!

You were all so proud...
So damned new!
Look at you now!

I pity and would touch you----
To learn.
Your lives are over,
Yet no one has the decency to give you a burial
As they gave him.

Stay in those water-logged, cardboard cartons----
And remember.
You are nothing to me!
Those who made you are gone;
He who listened and learned is gone.
I would save you if I could.
But stay there and entertain your guests----
Those bulbous, pulpy vermin crawling over your facea

THE LIBRARY
Mary Bridges

Lights hum
Hardly noticed.
Everyone studies.

Door opens,
Heads rise.
Half-whispers
Break silence.
Errant fly
Distracts attention.

Gradual calm
Re-descends.
Sagacious struggle
Then resumes.

Dead silence.

Book falls.
Someone laughs.
Mood broken.
Battle lost.
Disdain

Bobbe Gorin Long

The cold gray waters of a country pond
Move before the breeze, as the sun,
Angered at having to leave so soon,
Flings a glass of apricot wine in the stubborn face.
But the placid countenance makes no motion
Of recognition, and the sun,
Remembering an appointment, suddenly
Forgets its anger, turns, and hurriedly climbs
Down the mountainside.

Why

Jeanne Jones

I lie beneath the tree this autumn day
And watch the little clouds go scudding by
Like busy tugs upon a wind-swept bay,
While all around me brilliant leaves defy
Their mother, Tree, to run away as if
They were so many naughty little boys,
Here multitudes of birds and insects lift
A hymn to God his power and praise to voice.
But why, think I, amidst this peaceful breadth
Must men forever hate their fellow man?
Why is there greed, why sorrow, war's vain death?
Why lust, oppression, creed, or racial ban?
All creatures of the earth in peace do live,
Save man, to whom God more than all did give.

Punctilious Peccadillo

James Atchison

There are many organizations and clubs, but there are few as unorganized and clubbish as the Quibblers Cryptic Quill, thought Duane wandering along with Sam through a rundown section of the city toward the basement where the Q.C.Q. members gathered for their meetings.

It was Saturday night, and when the two reached the basement, a typical discussion, rehashing and thrashing, was going on in the pseudo-intellectual center. Each writer had studied seriousness and controlled mental strain clearly spelled on his countenance. It would not be appropriate for a smile to mar the quasi-creative visages of these whom the unfortunate world had not recognized. Rain spouting and gushing in the gutter outside and an occasional distant rumble in the thunder area somewhat darkened their dryness, as they conscientiously moved through the material submitted.

Now Duane was finishing the reading of Helen's "elevating" effusion -- "Henry Herm Meets Sally Sol." She had composed it with the children's market in mind. Duane found it difficult to read, for he was cramping inside, craving to laugh. He dared not offend Helen; so he suffered.

Helen was unhandsomely blushing after having heard her talent read before the distinguished and critical brains. Silence crept in and was stretching itself across the smoky room when Helen's friend Robbie spoke up, "Oh, really, that's so lovely. I could just feel Henry's sadness permeating my whole being, and oh, poor Sally. I really know how lonely she must have been before the hermit came into her life. I think it's all right." Pausing secondly to regain her breath, she continued, "Of course, the publishers may not recognize it. That is, at first."

"Well, you see, Robbie," answered Helen, "I intended to bring out the fact that children may be sad at times
and no one know the cause. Didn't you see that written between the lines?"

"I was wondering where it was written," blurted Chuck sardonically. "I surely didn't see it."

The snigger aroused by Chuck's justified observation was quietened when Duane said, "Don't look at the undeveloped side. It has some good points."

The meeting wore itself out. Unadmittedly defeated, those who had had their work hashed and thrashed straightened their ruffled and pricked prides, got up, greeted their colleagues, and left.

Duane and Sam emerged from the basement into the air. They said good night to the others leaving and walked off arm in arm into the rainy night. Their unbuttoned raincoats were flapping in the wind and drizzle. Sam was thinking out loud, "Duane, something has to be done. I know it has. There's no use going on with these simple endeavors. Not one thing discussed tonight was worth a bean pile. Something's got to be done!"

Duane was not following him exactly, but politely answered, "I guess so."

"You guess so! Duane, I know so. I know that we can do it," said Sam in one breath. "But look at that crazy Robbie Lee. She writes nothing but obscene love poems, and she teaches in the high school! It's ridiculous the things she writes. Then there's Chuck; he's forever writing for that blasted newspaper. Nothing worthwhile, just pointless editorials."

Calmly Duane replied, "Don't be too rough on the kid."

"Don't be rough? I'm not being rough. But you know that we spent that whole evening talking, just talking. Old snorkle snort Lee kept saying 'It's really spunky.' She's as asinine as Prof down at the university. Everything has to be fleshy, and that's horrible," Sam spoke agitatedly.

They had come to "The Hole in the Wall." By habit they found their way through the crowd that gathered there every Saturday night to tear other people's writings apart. When Duane and Sam sat down at a back booth, they stopped breathing oxygen and started inhaling cigarette smoke and alcoholic smells. Sam had not stopped talking when Duane ordered their drinks.

"Hey, Sam, don't you ever run down?" patiently Duane asked when he saw that no end was in sight for this caustic critic. "You know, we do the best we can."

"How do you know?" Sam butted in. "We can't know what is best. We've got to know what we are. You know this—that we cannot write a decent, hard-hitting, heart-warming, or heart-rending story until there is something inside of us to express. Look at sister Lee; she's never been with a man in her adult life, yet she feels more capable than Venus. Horrible! It's sublimation with her."

"Don't be too sure about that," defended Duane.

"Heck, we can do better than that. To do anything, we've got to be more than that. You know, get to the real crux of the situation. Nothing covered. Not superficial. Heck, I can't say it, but you know what I'm driving at."

"Sure, but who cares?" Duane casually answered.

Their glasses were empty, and they were gazing into the space where people look when they don't know how to say what they are thinking. It's a convenient stare, one that puzzles all but the starer.

Suddenly an idea struck Sam; he jumped up, "Duane, I've just thought of something. I know what we can do. I know how to stimulate that group of ours. I've got it. I know I have. I'll tell you about it. Let's go."

Duane left a tip and paid for their drinks. They were out of breath when they came to their apartment on
Ninety-first Street. Duane knew Sam was nervous and effervescent, but he had never seen him quite like this before. Maybe he wasn't excited without reason. No use deflating his friend.

They worked through the night, and as the city buses started their honking and screeching on the street below and the milkman's bottles were left on the door step, exhausted they fell asleep. The manuscript was finished.

At the next Saturday get-together, the odds and ends of the undiscovered literary world concurred in the basement. At nine-thirty Miss Robbie Lee and her chinless friend Helen had arrived. Always Robbie and Helen were arriving late at the basement conversations. They obsequiously smiled to the men already seated around the table and finally sat down attracting as much attention as was ethical.

Duane brought their thoughts to the new manuscript he had helped Sam write. Without hesitation, Lee said, "Really let's hear it. If this is as good as you say, I really won't bring out my Adonis poem."

"Thank God," thought Duane; he detested hearing Lee read her honey-dripping lines. "Sam, why not read your "Punctilious Peccadillo?"

The little persuasion was effective; he stood up to read. Sam usually slouched in his chair when reading, but tonight he stood erect, lifted his head like a golden orator, cleared his throat experiencedly and impressively, and read. Such a reading! The ears of each listener were fastened to the words of enthralled Sam. Even Helen's glass eye took on a lively, animated glint. Lee dropped her poem to the floor unnoticed, and an unrestrained smile jumped over her made-up face. She was surprised. This work had possibilities, the public would really thrill to its pugency.

Duane was glad he had helped his friend develop his electric idea. It had worked. He looked around the table. Suspense, elation, and acceptability were on the faces. Even Chuck and his unmerited conceit looked pleased. Now Sam was putting more emphasis and expression into the words. He was getting flushed, little humps of perspiration limped over his forehead unaware. His whole body was engulfed in his reading. Nothing was lacking.

The hearers were edged on their chairs and straining to hear each syllable, each interpretation of this unusual effort. It was moving, it was heart-rending, it was heart-warming. Slowing in his enunciation, distinctly and abruptly, Sam finished: "Tin-tin-nabulation told me too."

The small group's applause sounded like an incited mob. They were aroused. They were stimulated. Chuck announced with feeling, "It's reminiscent of Horace Greeley."

"Yes, I agree," added Helen, "but it has a great deal more than Greeley; it moved me like Shaw does on a rainy afternoon."

"Really, I've never heard anything quite like it. I'm really surprised that Sam could be so inspired; but of course, Duane admitted his help," spurted really Lee.

"It was Sam's idea, entirely his," Duane quietly answered her insinuating accusation, "I helped him in the choice of words."

"That's everything," said Chuck. "But, it still surpasses anything done this winter. Sam, would you mind reading the stanza starting with 'Rhythms wild and fancy free' again?"

Sam read the requested stanza again. This re-reading pleased him no little bit. It was actually more rewarding than he had thought possible, but he knew his possibilities. With the right encouragement, and with the deserved breaks, he could go far, he thought.
It was after one when the last comment was dropped. The writers were wide awake; Chuck and two of his buddies had to leave for the newspaper office, and the others thought it was time to call it a night.

"Sam, and you too, Duane, I think that we really will get down to some real work now. We have something to write about," rattled Lee; "I just wish I could write down my inspired lines when I get home, but those papers I have to grade really have to be graded. Good night, all."

The Sunday book section had an unusual article. It said, "S. Odos Nathan of Scribe and Sons has announced its forthcoming publication of a unique creation created by Sam Acton. The publishers have contracted for Mr. Acton's entire future work on the basis of the wide acclaim they are sure will greet 'Punctilious Peccadillo.'" Duane could see Helen pasting it in her scrapbook.

Harriet, that's my girl, had been trying to get me to go with her to one of those long-hair concerts, and I kept putting her off until one day she convinced me I must get some Culture; I left football practice early to let her drag me off to hear Rubiniski, or some name like that.

Harriet lectured me before we got to the concert hall and I thought that the people who go to these things must be off their rocker if they all act like she told me to. We got there almost late, she had a new dress, and others evidently did too, for all the bosomy matrons with their willowy-physiqued husbands, as well as a fair assortment of dilettantes, were whispering and ah-ing in the corridor.

We settled in our seats just as the spot light was being thrown on the big piano. Then the whole audience applauded as a little wiry, gray-tuberculare man strutted to the huge piano in the center of the stage. The audience seemed like a thunder storm let loose. However, this was nothing like what happened later in the evening.

He sat down on the stool at the piano. (I heard later he brought it with him.) He did something with the knobs on each side of this stool. Something must have been wrong with it for he kept turning the knobs and placing his hands on the keyboard; then he would turn the knobs some more. When I started to ask Harriet why all this commotion, she motioned for me to be silent.

He stopped turning the knobs on each side of the stool, I took Harriet's hand (I didn't know whether to or not). Mr. 'Man at the Piano' started playing, and Harriet squeezed my hand to let me know everything was as it should be. I was relieved.
I thought he was warming up, but he wasn't, for when he finished, the audience applauded him again. He got up, made a neat little gesture, and sat down again.

I looked at my watch wondering how much longer this was going on. He came to the "choping" section. One of the university fops sitting in front of us turned around and said, "This is it, this is it."

I didn't know what on earth he was talking about, and I started to ask Harriet, but she motioned again. I went to sleep on "this is it," and whatever it was, I missed.

Rubininski knocked around on that huge piano until I began feeling sorry for it. That last piece was an enduring one. I dozed, woke, he still played, did this several times, and in one of the quiet, dying away measures, he let his hand slip off the keyboard, and the audience went wild. This was the loudest and most thunderous they had applauded all evening. He left and came back, doing this several times. I got up to leave, but Harriet pulled my coat tail and said, "He might give an encore." What on...? She motioned for me to be silent again.

I kept thinking on the way home, "This is it?"

FLIESSEN
Adam Matheny

Through the sleepy town the river runs,
Sucking the pap of withered land's breast,
Its space combed by concrete Euclid,
Its surface carved by sapiens homo,
Its insides filled with yesterday's filth
And tomorrow's disease,
Its course determined by time,
In time its course—ended.

Through the sleepy town the river runs.
Gaunt frames litter its intestines;
Cilia of cellulose peristalt its breath;
Belching waste perpetually
Man's enemy—friend, its being distorted
By memories,
Lives in time bounded by history and futurity.

Through the sleepy town the river runs....

ON COMING OF AGE
Wayne Everly

Shall time no more caress with soothing fingers
Innocence in unrealities?
She scrapes more harshly our mature illusions
(Friction from a love with years gone dry.)
Our finely pointed nerves her impulse kindles
Full with flames which scorch our very souls
And bite our vital organs into ashes
Left to shift within these gutted frames,
And that once tender touch almost unheeding
Hurls these shells toward insecurity.

Is this the truth from which we have been shielded?
Void, wherein no anchored hope to grasp?
Is this the lot for which we have been nurtured?
Plunge through night to common beds of stone?

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THE INQUISITIVE JAY
Carl Dalton

You shining black and solid thing,
Why do you lie there flat?
Why don't you spread your coal black wings
And fly through air and back?

I've never heard you sing at dawn
Or viewed you hop a limb.
Why don't you spread your rounded beak
And sing a song to Him?

You lie there in the fine grain sand;
You've erred to build your nest.
I fear you'll drown, you stupid thing,
Spring rise soon wets your chest.

You are the oddest bird I've seen;
I think you weigh a whet;
'Twas yesterday I pecked on you—
My bill still stings as yet.

I think I know what's wrong with you;
'T is the only thing could be—
She's helping build another's nest,
And you're lonely as the sea.

ON TRADITION
Charles Sanders

Things to be done,
Me to do them.
Where should I start?
I'll try the beginning.

How shall I start?
He did it like this.
Who's he to say?
I'll try it my way.

RAIN
James Atchison

Butchers are those pointed drops
That pierce into the meaty earth;
Cold is the hand that drives
The smarting cuts into its heart;
Boldly bites each sharpened blade
Of the hacking, forcing knife
That lashes gashes on its face
And clutters brooks with mucky mess
Torn from the helpless plains
That fail repelling ruthless pains
Of the scarring, severing rains.

THE BUTTERFLY
Mary Bridges

Spring, tripping forth daintily,
Brings fragrance of new-born flowers,
Awakening of life to heaven,
The softness of April showers.

Stirring to Nature's summon,
The leaves burst forth afresh,
The worm in the cocoon struggles
To free itself from its mesh.

Unaided by hand of human,
It still fights gallantly on,
Emerging in robes more resplendent
Than people can hope to don.

So, as struggle, indeed, is needful
For the butterfly's beautiful dress
Are endeavors in human conflict
For a soul filled with happiness.
The battlefield lay quiet under the moon. The shell holes looked like lunar caverns — silent, burnt-out. The barbed wire entanglements loomed before a great stretch of trenches. Scattered about the field were helmets and rifles of soldiers now gone — mute evidence of the hard fight. All was tomb-silent. A battle raged here yesterday; now the field lay ghost-like under the waning moon. The moor was as quiet as graves except for the occasional shifting and sighing of the wind. My cigarettes were spent. I slept.

Steel doors and white-washed walls age-yellowed encase a room. Six rows of chairs, six in each row, stand, staunch, upright sentries bolted to the steel strips down the rows. Each chair seat was a metallic color, dulled from long use. Facing the chairs, at the head of the room stood the gallows. The single ceiling lamp glowed dim. The gloom fashioned eerie shadows and the one of prominence was behind the gallows. A marionette hanging loose, his act over, waited for the next.

On the gallows was a marionette of this life; his act done forever. He hung there like a wet mop, head tilted downward, arms a rubber limpness, feet together, toes of prison slippers pointed down to his eternal doom. The grim determined rope that encased his neck was held by eight loops that formed the hangman’s knot. From the small of his neck to a stout oak beam extended upward five feet of half-inch rope. The gallows formed a big inverted U of twelve-by-twelve oak timbers. They were black in the gloom; they had seen; they had punished many men’s sins. This framework stood in the shadow upon the well framing the marionette. That suspenseful, heart-tightening, and cornered feeling that edges desperation made me wonder, “What if I were on the gallows?”

Choking fumes tormented the hot air.
Blazing stars fell screaming in molten trail.
Overladen trees were suddenly bare.
The ghastly moon stumbled over the dale.
The jagged rocks roared in threatening groans—
Nature’s music jangled in crazy rhythms—
Creeping horror crushed peace, and the moans
Of poor lost souls hurtled into endless chasms.
I clasped clammy hands over my ears,
Bitter tears fell from dull unseeing eyes—
I was all alone with only stark fears
No one there to hear my frantic cries.
Then as I rolled over, beaten forlorn,
God came—I saw the soaring dawn.

Youthful streams danced in trembling night,
Murmuring winds wafted dew from flowers.
The moon shone with glowing, consistent might
Drifting clouds sent silver stars in showers;
A phantom moth glimmer’d in the shade,
And her shadow lying on the smooth glade
Look’d like a gloom of some foretold despair,
Then suddenly all was twisted, broken.
Winds screamed, the moon and stars shuddered,
The streams sobbed, rocked in restless motion—
All was glaring pain, peace was plundered.
And so it was until my faith returned,
Which I in blindness and grief had spurned.
Jemmerson, a youthful employee of Lindon Seaways and nephew to the owner, has many difficulties making office matters come out right. On this particular day, he has been unusually pressed with extra work and strain. A tourist jumped from the office window the previous day, and Jemmerson's expectant wife is in the hospital. He has been called from the busy office to the hospital.

Scene II

(The curtain rises on a spick and span hospital room where Faye Jemmerson is a very young and childlike patient. On the dresser is a package wrapped in brown paper.)

JEM: (Rushing in breathlessly with a package wrapped in green paper, identical in size with the one on the bureau.) Oh, my Faye, my little wife, my darling, I came as quick as I could, I...

FAY: (Interrupting.) Jem....

JEM: (Butting in.) Now don't get alarmed, sweet, just take it easy. Be calm....

FAY: Jem. (Trying again.)

JEM: That's right, be calm. I know that in a crisis of this kind, I have to be calm. And I want you to be calm. (Excited.) When I went to the office this morning, that's what I told them. I said I'm the perfect father; I remain calm at all times.

FAY: Jem, darling....

JEM: Now, Faye, don't go worrying about the office. I've got everything taken care of. Mrs. Morris, you know she couldn't work if she couldn't depend on me.

FAY: Why? (Pronounce 'Y.')

JEM: This bundle is for her. Before I could come see my wife, my own wife, I had to stop at the cleaners and pick up a flag.

FAY: A flag?

JEM: Yes, Hager wanted it clean for the exposition next week. (Puts it next to other package.)

FAY: Now....

JEM: You don't have to worry about a thing, not a thing, just rest, just be calm.
you'd better call the nurse. Maybe I'd better call the nurse.

FAY: No, Jem.
JEM: No, you haven't had the baby.
FAY: No, don't call the nurse.
JEM: No?
FAY: I mean yes, it's all over.
JEM: Now, now, it's not all over. It will be all right. You just have to be patient.

NUR: Yes, Mrs. Jemmerson?
FAY: My husband. Dear, this is Miss Kirkpatrick.
NUR: How do you do?
JEM: Glad to know you, ma'am.
NUR: Did you wish to show Mr. Jemmerson your.....
FAY: Yes, please.
JEM: Now I'll be right here, Faye. I'll take care of everything. You have nothing to worry about.
(Looks at watch.) (Under his breath.) I wonder if they need me at the office. (Aloud.) I'll stay with you, dear.
FAY: I know, darling.
(Nurse comes in with a little bundle in her arms.)
JEM: Huh, such a red little thing.
FAY: But he's ours, dear.
JEM: (Looks quickly at his watch.) It is a baby.
(Another nurse comes in with bundle; stands by bed.)
JEM: Just like the other one, little and red.
FAY: All babies are, dear.
JEM: My baby will be different.
(Another nurse comes in with bundle stands by first or second nurse.)
JEM: So many samples. (Looks quickly at his watch.)
(Another nurse comes in with bundle, stands by other nurses.)
JEM: (With pointing finger counts.) Four. Four little red babies in my wife's room. Is that supposed to help her have mine?
(Another nurse comes in with bundle; stands by other nurses.)
JEM: (To Faye.) Don't they know that I am busy?
(Pointing to nurses.) Do they know that I work at Lindon Seaways and can't come to see all the babies in the hospital?
FAY: (Interrupting quickly.) Darling.....

JEM: (Interrupting more quickly.) When you get your baby, when our baby comes, (Looks at watch.) I'll come back. (Reaches for flag.)
FAY: Jem, darling, these (Pointing to babies.) are our babies.
JEM: Our?
FAY: (Interrupting him.) Yes, Jem, these are our babies.
JEM: (Sprawls to the floor. Four nurses rush out in a dither, the head nurse, calmly takes a water glass and bathes his face.)
FAY: Jem, darling, are you all right?
INTERN: (Beckoned by four nurses hysterical with laughter. He enters and goes to Faye, not Jem.) Don't worry, Mrs. Jemmerson, this is the usual procedure for the father of quintuplets.

SCENE III
With great flourish and jubilance, Jemmerson returns to the office expecting to be congratulated, but instead finds his mix-ups and errors are catching up with him. The excitement and confusion mount as he contemplates the responsibility of quintuplets and the possible loss of his job.
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