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Decorative Illustrations: Local scenes, Olive Moore; Tree, Robert Lindborg.
Not With a Bang But a Whimper

By ROBERT T. TAYLOR

Illustrated by WILLIAM O’NEIL

So, out went the candle, and we were left darkling. Lear.

When John Lorman looked at his face in the mirror, he sometimes noticed there a youthful sensitivity, a sadness that had no counterpart in his mind. His face was yet a common face, an open face, because hypocrisy and corruption had not yet touched him. He was vaguely aware that he was somehow different, and yet he could not define how; the difference only hinted itself to him in the mirror. It was hidden from him, and he did not worry about it.

He worked, for everyone works in a blind age, in the local Butterfly Crucifactory, down by the river. He was a rood-tyer there, and he worked, as his mother said, was honest work. All day he sat in the darkness of a large room and tied together the fragile, half-rotten sticks or the cross, the rood. Then he passed it on. He knew that if it survived even for so short a time that it would become another delicate symbol of the times, of the delightful, never-ending prosperity of All, of the death of the soul. Of course, no one noticed the beauty in the hideous body and the wide, scaled wings, but all men were aware of its meaning, its link, fragile as it was, with omnipotence, with power. The world chanted in its sickness, the sickness that was health to it:

Crucify the Butterfly;
All’s will will be done.

The whole world chanted it, and the man, the woman, the savage child wore the butterfly; the demand was insatiable. And so the crucifactory squatted everywhere throughout the land, the smoke curled with nephitic languor into the barren sky, the whistles blew, and plenty blossomed from the rootless past. Of course the machinery did nothing, everyone knew that—but the wheels turned with an ironic power, anti-

ethical to the fragile simplicity of the product. And everywhere swam the bulk of All, a slightly obscene bulk, but no one knew what it was, and no one really cared. The meaning was lost, like the trees that old
men said once grew by the river. There were few old men, and John Lorman did not believe them anyway. He was an unassuming young man, he was honest and unthinking.

He might have gone on in this way, in these old beliefs for years living in his mother’s house, tying the roods, eating the tasteless food experiencing the same fatigues, the same unthinking apathies; but two things happened in John Lorman’s life that changed the pattern, that destroyed him because the aberrant are always destroyed. He met a woman and he read a book. Now neither of these are precisely classical acts of hybris, but the book was rather old, and the woman was Martha Sellers. They were created for him alone.

He was walking home from work one fall evening, hungry with the dead hunger of early night, tired with the tiredness born in petty slices of eternity, in boredom. As he strode up the dark streets, he stumbled against a girl who came from a doorway. He stopped and caught her, but he said nothing. Instead, he became quietly conscious of the time and of the street itself. The wind blew softly from the west, and he was aware of the cold and the black clouds and the harsh rain to come. No one else was in the street, and the wind picked up little papers and dust, carrying them in swirls and then dropping them like paper men, like men of dust in the winds of time. There was silence except for the soft and vacant sound of the wind, and he could see the lights in the houses, the silent lights, and in his mind he saw the families eating together, enjoying a common peace and warmth of home, where one belongs, where the child is. He felt the loneliness of the evening and of fall, the quick despair and taut excitement before the storm, the eternal emptiness of the dark streets. Only when she spoke to him did he become aware that he still held her.

“Well?” The voice was soft and yet it contained energy, the touch of deep animal warmth.

The rain began to fall, quietly and slowly and then quickening into a steady downpour. And still John Lorman stood silent, because he did not know what might happen to him in that timeless instant, that vacuum hour. There were never enough names for experiences, and although he searched his mind for a word, he could find nothing to describe his feelings.

“You’d better come in,” she said, “it’s raining.”

“Yes, yes it is.”

He followed her into a small, untidy room, furnished so barely, except for the bulk of the torn couch by the window, that it seemed more of a cell than a room, a place where one might be imprisoned, but never live of free will. And in the harsh light from the naked bulb, he looked at last at Martha Sellers. He saw that she was tall and strong and brownly healthy, almost voluptuous in her largeness. She was not pretty, but he could sense her animality, and it tingled on the
edges of his nerves, exciting him. One of her eyes was set a little lower than the other, and he found himself staring at her face held by the ascension of crookedness. He sat down and she poured him a drink and sat beside him. He felt suddenly relaxed and warm; the storm had begun; the tension was partly released for him.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Why, Lorman, John Lorman, and what's yours?"

As she told him, he put an arm around her and felt her move slowly to meet him. He was suddenly alive, desire washed him with slow waves, and he felt the days of routine slip dizzily beneath his feet like ard and shiny bugs until they were all gone, and then night exploded into a soft silver gleaming, a nebula of argent light and speed, a whirlwind in a flame, the cushioned ticking of an eternal clock.

He went home in the early light of morning, and his mother was angry and frightened at once because he had not come home the night before. He was too tired to be angry, but he told her that his life was his own, and went to bed convinced of it.

He stayed home from work that day, and his mother sent word that he was ill. In the afternoon, however, he got up, and decided to lean out the attic of his mother's house; he had intended to for years. It was then that he found the book—under some old lumber and fruit jars—two books, in fact, thin and worn, soiled with ropy dust. One was a little dictionary, the other a small volume in India paper, titled dally A Short Book of English Verse. He looked curiously into the front cover, and he saw there only the name of his uncle, Charles Lorman. Although he had been only a child at the time, he could remember when his uncle had died, and how his possessions were taken by All, especially the books, forbidden mostly, thought by some to be destroyed forever. But somehow these had gone unnoticed, uncared for. He looked through the pages, and discovered writing different from the books that he had read before, the gayly colored All books with the seal of the Butterfly in the cover and the title page. This book he had found was not like these; it carried no passionate encomiums to the wonders of All's will. The cover contained only a small seal, with words in some language that Lorman did not know. But he could read the brief foreword, and reminded him of how old the book must have been:

This book is dedicated to men who are free in spirit, alive in ideal. It presents to them in this unhappy time the thought of individual men of kindred thought, who are alive and immortal. It is dedicated to the memories of the sad, the lonely; to all lovers who were unafraid, even of the world; to all poets who were wrong; to all artists whose genius only makes men weep at what they are not; to all who wished to practice virtue and love, and could not see the error in their desire; to all who died in wars for nothing, for evil whim, who died unwillingly,
free but very sick, oh very sick of soul. This book is for them, but how few shall have survived to read it.

That was a long time ago, thought John Lorman, and he was startled because the date was then, and the name in the book beneath his uncle's was his own. He dropped the pencil and wondered briefly where he had found it. As he read the words again, he felt some of the tension that he had felt before the storm, in the charged night, the same awareness of time and place. He felt lonely and isolated, and he knew that anyone who looked could now see his new nakedness. He was afraid, but he began to read, hesitantly, slowly, looking up the words that had fallen from the trite speech he had always heard. He began, for no reason, close to the middle, with a lyric that was unimportant, minor and naive, yet which brought to him realization and a sense of himself and of his powers. It made him aware of his body and of his mind, and of the warm sunlight gleaming yellow in the old room:

When once the sun sinks in the west
And dew drops pearl the evening's breast,
Almost as pale as moonbeams are,
Or its companionable star,
The evening primrose opes anew
Its delicate blossoms to the dew,
And, shunning-hermit of the light,
Wastes its fair bloom upon the night....

Something of his childhood came back then, how everything had had a brightness, a cleanness, a fresh beauty and wonder that he had not known as such; and as he looked out the attic window, smelling the warm old wood, he could see the world in two lights, that of the yellow sun and of his own eyes. Even the dry hills had beauty for him, the barren fields were lovely because they were living and of earth. All that afternoon he read, and he fell into the intoxication of poetry, and he knew at last that the world and the stars belonged to him, and that everything he had ever done was unimportant compared to this discovery.

That night, of course, he took the book with him when he went to Martha, and as they sat together in the insolent light, he took it from his pocket and opened it.

Martha looked at it with surprise and then anger: "A book! A forbidden book here?"

He nodded.

"I don't like it," she said, "You shouldn't have brought it here.' He could see fear mingled with the anger in her eyes.

He said, "It's beautiful. You don't know how beautiful it is.' His face shone with an innocence, a naive inspiration that irritated her
ill further. But he began to read, his big fingers rough on the delicate pages; he read clumsily, with an uncertain rhythm; his mind felt again with awe:

Dear Night: this world’s defeat,
The stop to busy fools, care’s check and curb,
The day of spirits, my soul’s calm retreat,
Which none disturb;
Christ’s progress and his prayer ti...

She heard her begin to laugh, and he was ashamed and afraid. Her laughter grew warm with relief, and then she stopped and her voice as intense again and burning.

“It’s foolishness. Put it away, come, put it away.” She laughed in time almost shyly, and the timid laugh was grotesque somehow, considering her largeness.

John looked at her, amazed at her sudden ugliness. Her crookedness repulsed him, their light seemed evil and fevered. He felt again animal warmth and her power over him, and he became disgusted her coarseness. Afraid of her, of himself, he pushed her away from him, and ran into the street. There was no one there, but it seemed to full of people, the wind blew such an intensity of tongues, and the voices of the night screamed in his ears, and behind him he could hear Artha cursing him with regular, harsh monotony. The rain giggled the pools with delight, the lightning cracked and filled him with terror. He ran through the rain, with the book clutched in his hand, ying like a child, crying into the darkness for fire to burn out his uncleanness. His steps ground into his ears, his heart beat with a dull, crushing rhythm:

Crucify the Butterfly;
All’s will will be done.

The next day they arrested him, but he was still too disturbed to mind much. They were short men, common men, slightly unclean. Their voices too were commonplace, although he heard nothing that ey said to him beyond the first words:

“We have come to arrest you.”
“I expected you.”
“You don’t need to take anything with you.”

They walked silently to the Building of Justice, the three of them, like friends walking through the streets on a holiday. No one looked at them sharply, none of the drab workers or the painted women the passionate children playing. No one cared, for each was trapped up in his own non-entity, his patient acceptance of All. As ey entered the low, dark building, Lorman could sense the voices, the lights of the streets disappearing. It seemed that every-
thing had happened sometime before, in a dream perhaps, far from the now and the actual. He was not afraid; he almost luxuriated in the peace, the cool quietness. The smell of disinfectant and insecticide stung his nostrils. They entered a small room with a desk; a sexless, obese woman sat before it, writing.

"Yes?" she said.

"John Lorman, arrest order . . ." One of the men reeled off a number.

"What for?"

"I don’t know," he said.

"All right, cell five, sign for possessions." She wrote something on a card, and turned away. She did not follow John Lorman with her eyes as he walked down the corridor to the basement. She did not care she had no idea of John Lorman’s new importance, or of his discovery.

The days of prison flowed together with the thick smoothness of inactivity. John Lorman slept for hours, there was nothing else to do. As the days went on with tired regularity, he became calm and almost somnambulant. He was aware that only one of the other cells was occupied, and yet he made no attempt to communicate with its inhabitant. The silence, the peace, the late fall sun shining through the high window played upon him until all his senses were numbed, and he entered a period of unbeing. He was not surprised or relieved when at last they took him out and allowed him to bathe and to shave and to change his clothes. He was led upstairs by an old man with a bald head, carrying a broom, a janitor. The motion of walking up the stairs was unreal, motion in a dream.

The room into which he came at last was small, and smelled less of the pervasive disinfectant. The man who sat at the table looked up at him kindly. His eyes were very soft, covered with a mist of weariness.

"You are John Lorman," said the judge, and it seemed so little like a question that Lorman did not answer. "You are charged," said the man, "with something, perhaps virtue, perhaps devotion to personal ideals. Do you understand this?"

"Yes," he said.

"And you make no defense." It was a statement of fact.

"No, I do not think defense is worth anything."

The man stopped writing. "No, defense is worth nothing. Your crimes are simple, and yet all the purpose of All depends upon their punishment. You refused Martha Sellers; you read a book, a book of poetry." He paused. "You may not see that crime is present here, but you seek in these acts the very things that All must refuse for survival, the right to choice, to individualism, to live in one’s own way.
to be alone. It is a crime against universal law, not the law of men; it refuses the truth that a man is nothing to the life of All. And you liked the book of verse, you believed in it?"

"Yes, it was different from anything I had ever read. It made me see the world, to know that it belonged to me, to me alone in what I could see with my eyes, hear with my ears, feel with my fingers and my body. The commonplace became beautiful; that which I once thought hideous and unfeeling."

"You also refused Martha Sellers."

"I was afraid of her, because I could see her pale and very starved soul that could suck out my own."

"Such goodness is only evil to the world, to the modern world, John. I too like books, John Lorman; I have read poems and even known love that could share without devouring." His face was old, was tired. "But you were wrong, because you believed in them. I could know them without believing in them, John, and that makes all the difference in the world. Goodby."

They shook hands indifferently, and the man left the room. Lorman watched him and marked the sag of his shoulders, the gray pallor of his neck. He looked at the writing on the table and saw in beautiful print, over and over:

Crucify the Butterfly,
All's will will be done.

Lorman knew that the man had only copied what was written deep in the hidden garden where he had buried his soul. And as he sat staring at the writing, he heard the building grow more silent and yet no one came to him. He did not think of escape, because he had made a new discovery. In his ears were words, colors, designs that had no relation to practical unbeauty. He heard the faint settling of the world, too, the settling into decay, the quick burning toward ashes and dust and nothing. He wondered vaguely about the voices of the birds and certain music that he had never heard, and he did not imagine that they were like the sound of the world sinking into chaos.

At last the old janitor came for him.

"Come on, now. I got to close up the place." They walked back and the silence was complete and alive and weary with peace.

They shot John Lorman on a winter day. The sun was shining with the futile brilliance of winter suns, the snow sparkled andunched beneath the feet. Everywhere, the world was light and cold and pristine clarity. Of course the men with the rifles, the soldiers, did not care. They did not notice the day at all, except for the cold, perhaps, and they cursed that. Lorman drew in deep breaths of the air, and looked out over the fields all joined in gleaming purity, in
undulant softness. He was very conscious that he was alive, like the world around him; he had never felt so alive before, and yet he was calm and indifferent. Then he turned again to the prison, and he was surprised to find that he was not alone. A man and a woman were brought out from the building, as indifferent as he himself was, and yet as alive. He was a little startled to see the woman, to notice the fineness of her features, the thin quietness of her hands. In his days of forgetfulness, he had almost begun to believe that all women were vague, unsubstantial creatures like his mother, or strong animal women like Martha. The man looked at him strangely, as though trying to place him in his mind. He shook Lorman’s hand. They stood together then in silence, the three travelers from this dying world to another being born, to nowhere. To Lorman, the sheer physical contact of hand to hand was comforting, giving him a new feeling of completeness, of warmth and courage. And then the man spoke, quietly, almost to himself:

Hands, said I, since now we part
From fields and men we know by heart
For strangers’ faces, strangers’ lands—
Hands, you have held true fellows’ hands.
Be clean then. . . .

The woman smiled at him. "Goodby," she said softly. He looked into her face, but he could not distinguish her features. He was listening listening too intently for the world finally to die, to sink into the abyss and then the earth burst, but he only felt the first shuddering crack as the world broke first in its deep heart. He smiled at fertile nothingness, in death.

They loaded the bodies on a wagon shortly after, and they drove them to a nearby cremator. And there, beneath a painted sign of the Butterfly crucified, they slid the bodies into the flames, and they watched the fire’s beauty and did not know it, because beauty had been lost. The door clanged shut, and the only sound was the swift roar of the furnace. The stars would come out again that night, and like sister stars, the planets would shine in the winter sky of space—except one. The world was dead, and no one knew it, no one knew.
Automat

By JACK P. SHAPIRA

Old veined hand with coffee-cup, what have you felt?
What lusts, hates, aspirations long since lost
Were once yours? And did watching all this fly hurt?
Or was it numbness, that special sort,
Which glides slowly and settles comfortably?
Perhaps you know but will not tell.
The coffee creeps from mouth’s corners—
Sloppy old man.

Watermelon, they say, is a pleasant dish.
We see them here, its eaters—
They slice the slab into neat but large red chunks,
Push the product through their faces.
Watch him. Watch him—him of the grey temples,
With his horn-rimmed eyes and shark-skinned suit.
Watch him. Watch him—he is made by Brooks Brothers.
He knows how to dispose of pits.

Youth is a baked-bean eater and musician.
Look for the bacon slice and meanwhile
Hum a little snatch from “How High,” drums and all.
Don’t let the beans cool off, keep the beat,
Ogle the broad opposite, find the bacon.
And don’t let the grinding get you.
Sing it loudly, sing it softly, sing it far—
Youth’s syncopated requiem.

And in the midst there is a place removed
From all the worldliness of youth, age.
Solid, strong, barricaded it stands—alone.
Fine grained marble and clearest glass
Sing a symphony of strength to the tone deaf.
Within she sits, a lucrative goddess.
Five nickels for one quarter.
He rocked back and forth in the old barrel-stave chair, his sunken eyes staring out from under the tangled gray eyebrows. He was thinking. It was hard work, and he’d been at it for over an hour; the strain of it showed through on his face. The idea had come to him just after breakfast. He’d probably had it in his head for some time before, but it took a while for these things to seep through the fog in his mind.

He looked over the shabby interior of the cabin and smiled contentedly as he scratched Rex behind the ears a few times. He didn’t suppose it’d do any harm; a woman puttering around might even brighten up the place a little. He shook his head from side to side, hough. He was kind of used to things like they were—just him and the dog and the horse. He couldn’t remember, quite, how many years he’d been that way; been a long time though. Of course, living alone had a few drawbacks; there was that kind of empty feeling inside him he had most the time when he was alone—not in his stomach or nowhere, just kind of all over inside. He didn’t feel it so much when he talked to Mrs. Clingerman. She was the only one who was really nice to him, and didn’t make fun of him or talk sharp at him. Ever since the first time she asked him in for some coffee when he was making the rounds collecting garbage, he’d felt kind of at ease when he was around her. He didn’t stutter so much either, then—the heavy feeling in his head seemed to leave, and he could talk almost like in the old days.

He guessed maybe it was the right thing to do, proposing to her. He owed it to her, he thought; it must be what she had in mind, when he kept inviting him in and listening to him talk. It’d been ten or twelve years since her husband died, and she was probably pretty lonely by herself, too. Still, though—he just didn’t know.

He went out and hitched Sally to the garbage wagon. He patted her side of her neck, walked around, climbed up on the front of the wagon, flicked the reins, and settled back for the ride into town. He
drew up by Bill’s Tavern on Main street. There weren’t many cars on the street, so he guessed it was okay to leave the wagon there. He limped over to the bench at the side of the bar, and sat quietly in the sun for awhile, not paying much attention to the small talk or the pointless pornographies of the old and frustrated men about him. One of them was drunk and started to amuse himself by trying to get “Stuttering Jake” to talk for the bunch of them.

He turned and walked back to the wagon, the cackling of the crowd making him feel sick and empty. He sat up on the seat, still trying to make up his mind about the widow Clingerman. He shut his eyes and tried to concentrate.

“What’s that,” he heard a shrill voice say, “some of your locals up here?”

“‘S old Jake Hallstead,’” the young man said, “He used to be pretty smart Joe, I guess; graduated from college and all that. Got run over by a wagon or some damn’ thing thirty, forty years ago. Why his back’s all twisted. Got rocks in his head now, if he’s got anything there at all.” The young man chuckled to himself, and the old cripple had got used to overhearing things like that, but it still bothered him. Mrs. Clingerman never mentioned how he looked, she’d listen to him talk, and even sound interested and ask him questions. It made him feel good and kind of important. He wanted to see her, all of a sudden; he made up his mind. He guessed he’d marry her.

He should bring her some flowers or something, he thought, but was kind of late in the year for that. He spotted a mountain ash on a vacant lot, though, and cut several branches full of the red-orange berries for her. He drove the clattering old wagon up the alley toward the back of her place. The peeling white paint of the house looked grimy under the dull gray sky. He still didn’t have to ask her, thought; he didn’t need to make the change. The whole business seemed to scare him. Still, she’d been good to him, and he guessed he owed it to her. He rapped on the door. His hand seemed to be trembling more than usual. He heard her footsteps, and he had a sudden impulse to run to go back to the cabin, where there’d be just him and Rex and Sal again.

She opened the door and nodded her greeting, her angular old face quite expressionless. He walked into the kitchen, stuttered his hello, and gave her the bouquet of ash-berries. She smiled slightly as she turned to put the branches in a jar on the table; he watched the swirling he of her faded gray-black coat.

“It’s like I was just tellin’ ’em now at ladies’ aid, Jacob, you got good heart underneath it all,” she said.

He wasn’t listening. He’d finally decided to risk it for sure. 
some reason, he reached out for her, touching her shoulder. She turned towards him, puzzled, and gasped as he pulled her to him. On an impulse, he brought his unshaven, tobacco-stained face down close to her mouth, and damply kissed her cheek. A warmth of some sort seemed to fill the cavity within him, and the mists in his head seemed to clear away as he watched the warm red color rise in Mrs. Clingerman’s cheeks. He smiled happily.

"Get out, Get out, Get out!" she screamed, "Get out of this house, you lecherous old freak!"

She slapped his face. He stood mute, a black gap in his head from his half-opened mouth, as he gazed at her bulging eyes and swollen, pursed face.

"Oh, when I think of all I’ve done for you, making a point of bein’ nice to you and sittin’ here in this kitchen listenin’ to your idiot babblin’s and then you—Get out of this house this instant and don’t you dare try and come back!"

He started to raise his arm to strike back at her, but dropped it again. It was just like everything else; no use . . . no use . . . He turned and left the house, his footsteps keeping time to the spluttering gasps of outrage from within. Sally whinnied at him softly as he approached. He climbed up onto the driver’s board, picked up the reins and started back to the cabin. He could feel, somehow, that it wouldn’t be the same.
The boys riding in the new car never looked at one another when they spoke, and the bugs made insignificant little flashes of color; they spattered against the windshield. It was late afternoon—the would reach the city by early evening. The driver, a tall blond boy with a sunburn that would never develop into a tan, leaned over and punched the cigarette lighter. After a few moments it popped out with a slight noise. He lighted his cigarette and said, as though he cared little whether or not the others heard, “It’s nice to ride in a car where everything works.”

She leaned intently over the machine. It was not too difficult, the business of making small ball-bearings to fit into large machines—one did not think. One simply watched the machine and remembered what one was hired for and did not think. This way it was comfortable and numb, or numb and comfortable. The ball-bearings slid through the machine like a greased, disjointed snake sliding through clicking, gauge-laden cavern. Watch the gauges and twist the knob that is all one must do—watch gauges, twist knobs. Thirty-seven-fifths every Friday.

The boy called Red leaned over and switched on the radio, but the driver switched it off. “Look, Red, we can listen to the damned radio anytime. But I gotta bring the car back tomorrow morning. Let’s just ride.” Red grunted and looked out the window. On either side of them lay the spoils of a mechanized world. Smoke-greyed and gaunt buildings laughed an ironic laughter. Pools of greenish color residue smiled up at this perversity. Fumes of industry crowded into the car and attempted to envelop them. But the road lay before an behind—a shelter—a concrete haven—an aseptic peninsula jutting out into a sea of filth.

The girl switched off the machine and walked to the women’s room. It would soon be quitting time. She wanted to rearrange her hair, wash the smudge from her face, rest. The room was crowded. The women, the smug, silly, dirty women crowded through the place and littered its floor with soiled paper towels. They filled the wastebasket to capacity, and then, when nobody bothered to empty it, threw...
the rest of the towels on the floor. She knew it was not their fault, not really. It wasn’t really anybody’s fault. That she was working in this place and being unhappy and feeling superior was just the way it was. The girl leaned over a washbasin, splashed some lukewarm water on her face, looked up into the mirror and saw the scraggly hair and pimples.

He was the smallest of the four boys. The others called him by his real name, Eddie, until they became acutely aware of his low mentality and slight speech defect. Then they called him Doc. He did not like this, but accepted it as he had done so many other things. Now he sat in the back seat and listened to the smooth murmuring of the trees to the concrete. The seat was soft and cool, and he was awed and frightened by the beauty of the interior. Never in all his life had he ridden or even sat in a car such as this. He cowered into the corner and tried not to move for fear that the slightest motion would dispel the illusion. The others talked in coarse tones, but he did not hear them. He listened to the poetry of the tires’ murmur and tried not to move.

She hurried back to the machine and stood before it for a moment, gazing down at a little puddle of oil that had accumulated on the floor. It annoyed her that the oil should be there. She did not know why, but some strange, wild fury welled up within her. She choked, restrained a sob, rubbed furiously at the puddle with her heel. The puddle enlarged and thinned—but did not disappear. A curse escaped her lips. She grasped a rag from the shelf above the machine and scrubbed madly, as though killing some repulsive insect. The oil was sopped up, but a stain the size of the original puddle remained. She switched on the machine and watched the gauges.

The boy sitting next to the one they called Doc knew that the ride would soon end. He was a fairly handsome boy with sensitive features and skin that was just a little too dark to be mistaken for a deep suntan. The ride appealed to him in a vague and uncertain manner, made him nervous. The others were, he was sure, thoroughly at peace. It seemed to him that he had never been—could never be—at peace. It was true that the others treated him with the same casual indifference they used towards each other. He was sure they felt no antagonism toward him. And yet he was uncomfortable. He was sitting in a white man’s car and riding through a white man’s world. Dispelling these thoughts, he turned to watch Doc huddling in the corner the seat made with the door. You lucky, white, dumb bastard, he said, almost aloud.

It would only be a half-hour more before the whistle blew. She concentrated earnestly. It was no use. The ceaseless movement of the bearings overpowered her. She switched off the machine and walked out on the little fire-escape overlooking the highway. The breeze hit her, and had it not been for the odors she would have felt free. The sun was setting rapidly and the little cars moving towards and beneath her seemed detached and exultant. There were so many cars. She tried to count them. Too many and too fast. She watched the
cars and thought about the people in them and her white smock fluttered in the breeze.

They watched the sun pull itself from the expanse of sky and their faces became grimmer. Even Doc sensed that the sunset meant the end of the ride. He crouched lower into the corner and listened to the fugue produced by the tires' murmur blending in with many other murmurs. Tomorrow the car would be returned.

She saw the attractive grey convertible round the curve. Four young men sat in it. An involuntary smile crossed her face. She hesitated, then raised her hand in a half wave.

The driver saw it first—a white blotch against the grey building, waving its hand. He nudged Red. Red saw. The dark boy happened to glance up at this moment. He saw and said something to Doc. Doc saw. The four boys sat up quite straight and the grimness left their faces.

She wanted to do something more than wave—wanted to make a sound—to shout a greeting. But she did not know what to shout.

The boys grinned and waved.

She waved.

The car took another curve and sped toward the city.
A Note to the Reader

The following portion of the magazine represents a departure from usual MOUNTAINEER selections. First, it is completely poetry, although in the past poetry has generally occupied an ancillary position. Second, it is the work not only of students, but of faculty members and of townspeople as well. Perhaps this choice merits further explanation.

During autumn quarter, the English Club has featured readings by poets who are in some way affiliated with the University. The program, as directed by Mr. Byron R. Bryant, had two principal objectives. The primary one was to reproduce a closer contact of the poet with his audience, to re-establish poetry as a vocal art. The second objective was to stimulate interest in poetry itself and to reveal the variety and scope of the poetry being written here. The program has been moderately but encouragingly successful.

Because the attendance at these meetings has not been large, however, we feel that something more can be done to stimulate interest in poetry and in the English Club program. Therefore we are presenting this selection of poems from the readings given there. The poems are representative of the poetry read, if not representative always of the best work of every writer. We hope that they will be received with the attention that they deserve.

Noting briefly the writers themselves, we find eleven poets in this group. Five are faculty members, one is a graduate student, another a senior, and four are either alumnae or members of the AAUW writers’ class. We thus have a selection of work by many people of varying talents, of different educational and social backgrounds, but all now living and writing within the influence of Montana State University.

The poems reveal quite as much variation as the poets who wrote them. As might be expected, they certainly do not reflect any Montana “school” common to these poets, although the poems represent several rather roughly divided “schools.” Probably the most regional work is the individualistic poetry of Mr. Barsness, whose poems here are taken from a sonnet series on Montana history. Many poems are more traditional in form and thought, particularly the poems of Mrs. Clapp, Mrs. Stepanoff, Mrs. Sappenfield, Mrs. Loeffler, Miss Pocta, Dr. Marvin, and Mr. Taylor. On the other hand, the poems of Dr. Fiedler and Mr. Moore are of another tradition, one more complex and difficult.
of execution, one more completely contemporary. Only Mr. Bryant's poems are professedly representative of a school, the "apocalyptic" poets, a division of the neo-romantic movement. As such, they offer excellent examples of a new and not widely publicized trend of modern poetry. The poetry, of course, should speak for the poets themselves and in its own voice.

We wish to thank all the authors for their kind permission to publish their poems.* And in closing, may we add a brief warning to the reader: poetry is not prose and should not be read like prose. It should be read carefully and preferably aloud. Quantitatively, it should be sipped like good wine. If the reader accepts the poems as representative of creative effort in the University and reads them in the proper spirit as poetry, he should find them of interest. Our civilization does not depend, after all, entirely upon technicians and politicians; and the artist, and particularly the poet, is too frequently ignored. With the hope of stimulating interest in poetry by persons known to us all as individuals, we present this brief anthology.

R. T. T.

*The poems by Dr. Fiedler have been published previously. Agitato Ma Non Troppo appeared in Epoch; A Lament for Little Farfel and Child's Play appeared in Poetry.
Three Poems by Leslie Fiedler

A Lament for Little Farfel

Last member of "Murder Incorporated"
lately dead on Long Island

The pride of death and that desire
The night uncloaks in each of us
To love the slain above our power
To touch the living lie in trust
With Little Farfel who is dust.

Our only hero is the hood;
Our only sacrament his blood.

And those whom Little Farfel slew,
Who laced our pavement with their blood,
Whose small demise the copper knew
Not passion cued but livelihood,
Adjust their silence where he stood.

No ghost is heard, no prayer is said,
The rod sleeps with its silencer;
While all the sudden will to death
Lies spilled upon the suburb’s floor
And does for frankincense and myrrh.

Our only hero is the hood;
Our only sacrament his blood.

Sweet death, grant Little Farfel peace,
Who sold your favors like a whore’s;
Your bridegroom now, he softly sleeps,
Blood’s rose rubescent in his jaws.
Agitato Ma Non Troppo

For D. Scarlatti

When the warm infidels
Call from the grass:
"Domenico, Domenico,
Stone are the manes of your animals,
Their breath glass!"
You cry, "There is more for marrow
Then fattening grass; let it recall
The bone's narrow grottoes
Where we plotted sonatas,
The wit of bones that fought
The cembalo, its stubborn teeth,
Without show of grief
Or swagger at all."

Domenico, Domenico,
Like the hot blood but more slow,
Even the cold bone dies,
And none dances to its noise;
But one among stone beasts, breath's glass
Alone upon the starving grass,
Leaps with his boys!

Child's Play

Only child's play can solve
The spill of birth;
Our lofty mothers let us fall
To pain, and when they heard us bawl,
Smiled first.

The stone, the stillest animal,
Crouches in the dirt;
There is no brown, unlikely love
To sell it short.

From stone to stone the children sprawl,
Mistake the meaning of their fall,
The insolence of earth;
Their mothers from high windows call:
"The stone, the stone is hurt!"
Two Poems by Robert T. Taylor

Ophelia Grown Old

Ophelia grown old and grown wise
As old wives always are, the slender waist
Stretched by a dozen tow-heads (ten of whom
Still lived, good thanks to God) would think and dream
While dozing on the long bench by the hearth.
She stared long at the fire, smiled in love
Upon the boy and dog who played the hunt
In imitation of the older boys,
Unconscious of her bellied husband, vast,
A snoring mountain by the fire, a lord,
A noble lord—oh, not the Prince, it’s true,
But fit match for the daughter of a lord,
A Chamberlain and favorite of the court.
A snapping log might spew forth from the bowl
Of dulcet memory the teasing ones
Of girlhood in the castle, of the strange,
Strange Hamlet, wild, unruly, always dressed
Like some vile peasant, full of madding speech,
His eyes aflame...yes, she had sometimes felt,
As girls will feel, a pang or two as he approached—
But, by the Heavens, to marry such a fool!
Hardly for a maid of gentle birth,
Prince though he were. And at the last,
He’d gone clean mad, after his father died;
And even now they said that he still lived
Alone in a tower, put there in all concern
By the aged queen his mother, and his kind uncle,
Claudius by name, now dead, killed in a fall
From a battlement while drunk.

Ah, those had been
The golden days, so full of little things
Women enjoy: a courtier who had been
Most charming (and the halls of Elsinore
Were long and dark on winter afternoons),
The feasts, the traveling troupe, all these
She had not seen in recent years. There is
So little time with children. Yet the queen
Inquired often for "the lovely child,"
At least her husband said.

A servant came,
And with a sigh Ophelia rose and went
To see about some kitchen task gone wrong.
A throng of happy boys came from the kill,
Triumphant to the door. Ophelia laughed
At their young roars, and with a sleepy grunt
Her lord appeared and stepped along with them
To view the still-warm carcass of their deer.
She watched them go, and far upon the hills,
Upon the farthest cliff close by the sea,
Stood Elsinore, alone. The sun was low
On Elsinore, in dusk the towers rose,
Grey bones in fading grays of winter sun,
Too commonplace for notice on this day.

Rima XI

(From the Spanish of Becquer)

"I am ardent, I am dark; of passion
A symbol, all my soul is filled
With deep desires of possession,
Do you seek me?" Not you, no, not you.

"My brow is white, my hair is gold; I guard
A treasury of tenderness,
I offer joy without an end,
Do you seek me?" No, not you, not you.

"I am a dream, a being impossible,
A phantom of vain cloud and light,
Incorporeal, intangible,
I cannot love you." O come, o come!
Two Poems by John Barsness

John Bozeman

John Bozeman, seeking for a western pass —
Explorer no less than greater, earlier names —
Was looking not for empire but for grass.
The Texas longhorn, long of Southern fame,
Was pushing north. Bozeman went ahead,
To do the work that Chisholm had just done
Upon the lower trail. It has been said
He opened up the northern range, and won
A million acres of free grass for beef
Instead of buffalo. He found his pass
And lean wild men and animals brought grief
To Indians. Blackfeet took revenge, at last.
One dawn they found him camped within his pass
And left his bloody corpse to feed the grass.

Cowpuncher

He squatted on his bootheels. Space had spun
A million tiny wrinkles round his eyes.
Long squinting through a hundred miles of sun
Had turned his eyes to a chunk of prairie skies
Laced to a rangeland face. He watched a colt
Fight its tied head against the snubbing post
And lit a cigarette. "He'll take aholt
And make a horse," he said. "What he wants most
Is freedom. Takes a lot of sense to know
Freedom is havin' pride in spite of tightened ropes.
Horse-sense? That's his. Too bad some folks don't show
More of it. Looks like he's calmin' down—I hope."
Standing—philosopher in jeans—he spat,
And walked off, tipping his twenty-dollar hat.
Three Poems by Jean Ann Pocta

I
Like a child moaning —
The cradle is rocked by a terrible wind,
And when the wind sobs so wild,
Like a child,
I cannot hear the voice of the child calling,
There are so many voices in the night.
All the wild old winds are groaning.

Like a star falling
Out of deep, cushiony spaces.
The other stars wink in their places
So beautiful, proper and bright
That disbelief smothers my delight.
Was a star falling?
Was a child calling?

II
Gay as the day, the moths dry in the sun,
One in the interminable blue,
Two for a little while.
Smile, while the old moths on the wall
Crawl like beetles to the light,
White in the second marriage sacrament,
Spent by the painful rites of kilowatt.
What gods smile at us as we
See, smiling, how moths burn again and pray.

III
Then tin soldier really loved the doll.
Yet he could not aspire
(A room away)
To save her from the fire.
Casual hands soon cast
Him after her.
The flames mocked his desire.

Yet they could not destroy
His heart
Her imperishable rose.
Three Poems by John Moore

The Ubiquitous Car

At thirty-five the overdrive snaps in,
The ratio takes a metaphysic leap
While time and space (an elm tree lengthened out,
The concrete fluid now) grow round and tight
As kinematics takes the wheel.

Extension of the little ego, this
Bright charnel house with chromium trim
Transmutes the dull and stupid slag of mass
To gilded hearse undrawn by unicorns,
Undirected by the dream.

Eighty-octane slips the Mickey Finn
To unfrustrated valve-in-head desire
While, somehow illegal, unethical, the Death
Leers brightly through the safety-glass.

Tourist Court

Conformity by the riverbank where Highway One
(Or Fifteen or what-have-you) banks toward darkness,
Leaves the town behind telling the profane beads
Of street lamps under the jukebox moon.

Boxed and fitted against the mortised joints of night
And American loneliness, here find the bed soft,
The wall thin (neighborliness is all), no questions
Asked, none needed ever and ever.

O Rancho Villa Vista Bide-a-Wee
While Death and Dark lie cramped and caught
In this Chick Sale dream by the riverbank.
O Cinema

The lights recede and one by one
The violable worlds go out
As each by each, against the airfoam seats
The sigh of air and felt expectancy flows up
To rectilinear life as velvet curtains
Bow this miraculous conception in.

Annunciation of the vested dream,
The tin-horn angels of the sound-track trace
The dubious virgin through the muddied script
While far away in technicolor grace
Inevitable crucifixion waits
The hero on the spotted horse.

Confessional of the unconfessed,
Through this doubly haloed grill
The penance comes: Love Will Triumph
Beginning Wednesday; on Saturday,
There Is No Death.
Two Poems by E. L. Marvin

Child Mood

When the rain
Makes a gray wall
And the fall
Of drops is endless;
When the weather-vane
Forlorn and wet and friendless
Creaks, slowly turning,
And no fire is burning;
When in all
Dim corners of drenched yards
Trees drip and hide and loom
And a chill pervades the room
And books fail, and cards;
When the dark seems coming,
Coming soon,
But doesn't come
And the rain keeps drumming—
On a long lonely Sunday afternoon
When all the eyes can find
Is rain—
Then, then the sodden mind
Makes a drab synthesis
Of weariness, faint pleasure,
And weak pain.
Grasshopper or Poet

The birds in May
Sang gloriously,
And I, in the meadow
Where sunlight was golden,
Was holden
Enthralled by a shadow.

June came with its languorous
Loveliness. I
Was asleep in the clover
My head covered over.

When Autumn her bounty
Was heaping
I stood on a hill, a brown hill,
And the air was so still
I could hear the far voices of men
In the valley,
The valley my vision was sweeping.
But I did no reaping.

Then the winter came on
(It had happened before
Just the same)
To my shame
I had nothing in store;
From my summer-long dream
I awoke in a bitter-cold dawn
And from door went freezing and begging
To door.
There Is Something in Us That Loves Death

There is something in us that loves death—
The marshbird flying sharp and clear,
High in the grey-white sky,
Is lovelier to man,
When at his feet it lies,
Its feathers sticky,
Beak apart in dumb appeal.

The summer tree,
Its plumes uplifted,
Each leaf astir in cosmic meditation,
Moves us,
But draws awe from us,
Masked poorly by false sighs of shame,
When, stiff, it stands in splintered sticks,
As if we mean: "God made the tree,
But see what man has done."

A city, centuries old, and rich
With living aspiration,
Its work well done,
A mission carried out—
When, far beneath the plane
That homeward turns,
It flares in orange flame,
Above the children’s terror cries,
The wailing of the old and weak,
And smell of burning flesh.

Something in us that loves death
Transcends the need for living,
And grasps the scythe
In jealous rage
From the slow, abeyant hand
To reap in eager doom.
The Joyless

When once in fifty years or so their feet
Stub on the verge of joy by chance
They back away, with furtive glance,
Brush off their clothes, and walk on down the street.

The Workers' Day of Rest (Twentieth Century)

With last week's chores behind them, done, complete,
On Sundays they go riding thru each street,
Looking for something to look at, up and down,
Waiting for Monday to come back to town.

A Poem by Gertrude Loeffler

Discovery

My soul is bound
And weighted down
By life routined, encrusted in convention.
My very thoughts creep out in hackneyed phrases,
Poor little thoughts made poorer by expression.

I would be free
And dance my body, soul, and thoughts across the hills till dawn
As fairies do, so joyously, Midsummer's Eve
— Till dawn! — Till dawn?
So? — even fairies must obey
Fixed rules!
Be driven from their play,
Convention bound.
The Lesser Loneliness

There is no place to turn my searching gaze
That does not shout your dreadful absence now,
And I am lost in futile wondering how
I can endure the lonely bitter days.
The well-loved walls conspire to craze
My homeless heart that once again must bow
To loneliness and yet be strong somehow
To start upon our silent separate ways.

I am alone. From birth to death I go
Enwrapped in solitude. And not in love
Nor grief nor fear nor joy did I once know
Your secret self, nor you, the center of
My solitude. And still, I long to know
With you again the loneliness of love.

The Hunter’s Moon

The hunted now the hunter is,
And by the waning hunter’s moon
He stalks the wary haunted deer
Across the silent forest room.

But when this moon has waned and gone,
He will return so I may see
His target deer possessed and bound
While he still lives pursued and free.
Three Poems by Byron R. Bryant

“Able Was I Ere I Saw Elba”

Able was I ere I saw Elba,
But now I’m Cain. Twice Cained by Europe’s masters,
Who prate religion for the hell of it,
And smile across the napery
With golden molars plucked from jaws
Of gasping men at Waterloo,
I hear no drums from Africa
But carriage wheels that from Calais
Hurry to Vienna at tizzied trots.
A London dentist is their Rothschild
And Wellington’s now got a smile
Imported from a private’s uppers.
(He’s all to push the upper upward
While yanking’s done below
Where loss and death may gulp together.)

How deep may buried seeds be pushed
Before all sprouting’s hopeless?
How far may all one’s longings go
Before a foreign land is reached?
Adversity’s sweets have acid flavors,
Yet can the smiles of yesterday
Still batten Holy Metternich?

With gravyed feathers, grisly beaks,
They forever eat Prometheus’ heart.
The blood that seeps from off their feet
Spurted from trampled faces. Oh, how long
Shall these in waistcoats primp and claw?

Able was I ere I saw Elba;
Shall I be Cain forever now?
The Jones Tragedy

Mrs. Jones tosses a pale yellow mustard jar
Into a heavenly-blue garbage can. Her dirty skirts
Scrape off the dew from seedy grass-tops.
She puffs down battered steps into her lair.
What do you scry in your scullery, Mrs. Jones?
Says she, When I lost my boy—
The Army took him, though I don’t know why—
I blubbered all day long fur he was nice,
Gave me two potted geraniums—there they are.
I didn’t give him nothin’ when he went away,
Except some Camels, like the V. F. W.,
And then they sent me news that he was dead
While he was still in basic trainin’. I don’t know
Just what it was that made him cold,
Maybe he was eatin’ too much spam
I hear that’s about all them boys got.
Well, as I say, I used to blubber lots
Although I ain’t got time to any more.
And the petals o’ them geraniums is witherin’,
But I ain’t a losin’ any of my bunions.

Celebration

Like the rejoicings after a rape, the dance
Pickles the heats of staled romance.

Violins wheeze in a glow-wormed dark;
A lantern spurts on the mists a spark.

She fondles an edge of her gilt brocade;
He shoots his quid in the lemonade.

Romances, dressed in yellowed backs,
Sit like dolts on the far straw-stacks.

Results of the longings in her head:
After such hopings, surely a bed.
Three Poems by Mary B. Clapp

The Doctors at Commencement

Except for age, they are all alike today,
Self-conscious and spasmodically gay.

The velvet on their hoods is fresh as flowers;
Their caps are lanterns on black ivory towers,
The golden tassels flaunting righteous pride,
Sewed fast to keep from slipping to the wrong side.

Signalled, they march, and some quite "out of time,"
Down the long aisles to the sublime,
Portentous Aidian music or like strain,
And, soberly, appointed chairs attain.

Then each as per direction lifts the hood
Of him or her in front lest pressure should
Despoil the finish of the velvet and lining
By wrinkles where all should be smooth and shining.

The footlights show them pale and serious there.
Wonder is almost palpable in the air
As if the audience really sensed the toil
Of these who faithfully burned the midnight oil
To gild the tassel and enhance the gleam
Their hoods reflect now of their student dream.

Oh, Doctors, only he can tell who's done it,
How great and small the hood is when he's won it.
Emily*

A slender crystal, sharp faceted,
Turned in too tight a perimeter,
Became, still hard, soft-curved,
Its shining veiled as in a powder
Of white bruises.

Harsh light upon it
Was drawn in
For secret, still analysis.
Then out flashed beams of truth,
Too sharp for continence,
In rainbow colors.

Meanwhile, a little, white-clad person
Watered the fuschia and the hyacinth,
Concocted dainties in glass bowls,
Wisteria, peach-blow, amber;
Was dutifully busy being daughter,
Sister, aunt, making such routine
A stimulus to specific grace
To set her little boots leaping,
Not far, but to an upper room.

There in short lines on narrow paper,
Longer lines on wider,
She logged her "bulletins of immortality,"
Became reconnaissance cartographer of pain,
Atomized eternity in "nows."

Review brought starker findings
But cheerful-worded;
Showed a prison made a friend,
A load kept possible to bear
By being borne,
A last deduction made,
Not resignation, but perdurance,
As of a crystal by slow bruises
Attrited to prismatic light.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), American poetess.
Memorial

Sometimes the loved and lost seem near to us,
Stirring through memory with unearthly power;
The father's word, the mother's tender look
Answer our need in a defenseless hour.

More clearly now than when they lived and spoke
With us in mutual, sweet intimacy,
Appears before our quickened inner sight
Their dream of what they hoped we were to be.
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