

Jerry Vanley

OUR PUPPETS ON THE STAGE



A Personal Anthology

OUR RUDE TONGUE



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SIR WALTER RALEIGH (c. 1552–1618)

What is our life? a play of passion,
Our mirth the music of division.
Our mothers' wombs the tiring-houses be,
Where we are dressed for this short comedy.
Heaven the judicious sharp spectator is,
That sits and marks still who doth act amiss.
Our graves that hide us from the searching sun
Are like drawn curtains when the play is done.
Thus march we, playing, to our latest rest,
Only we die in earnest, that's no jest.



The sun may rise and set
But we contrariwise
Sleep after our short light
One everlasting night.



GEORGE PEELE (1556–1596)

What thing is love, I pray thee tell?
It is a prickle, it is a sting,
It is a pretty, pretty thing,
It is a fire, it is a coal
Whose flame creeps in at every hole;
And as my wits can best devise,
Love's darling lies in ladies' eyes.

— ♪ —

MARK ALEXANDER BOYD (1563–1626)

Fra bank to bank, fra wood to wood I rin,
Ourhailit with my feeble fantasie;
Like til a leaf that fallis from a tree,
Or til a reed ourblawin with the win.

— ♪ —

THOM GUNN (1929–)
CONSIDERING THE SNAIL

The snail pushes through a green
night, for the grass is heavy
with water and meets over
the bright path he makes, where rain
has darkened the earth's dark. He
moves in a wood of desire,

pale antlers barely stirring
as he hunts. I cannot tell
what power is at work, drenched there
with purpose, knowing nothing.
What is a snail's fury? All
I think is that if later

I parted the blades above
the tunnel and saw the thin
trail of broken white across
litter, I would never have
imagined the slow passion
to that deliberate progress.



READ ON A WALL

God is perfect, man is not;
Man made whiskey, God made pot.



TIMOTHY STEELE (1948–)

You asked me to dine and talk
of Hegel, Mozart, a Picasso nude.
Your learning's splendid, but it's ten o'clock;
you've lots of food for thought, now where's the food?



Her lies Sir Tact, a diplomatic fellow
Whose silence was not golden, but just yellow



CODA IN WIND

Now moonlight has defined
the agile spruce and fir
And though we draw the blind
We hear their dark limbs stir

The mild familiar air
That we would shut outside
If only we know where,
Or when, or what, to hide.

