

READING EDITION

RECURRENCE

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A QUARTERLY OF RHYME

Summer 1951

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GROVER JACOBY, *Editor*

THE TENNIS COURT

Geoffrey Johnson

But a month ago, when light and grass were short,
The spirit of youth awoke this tennis court;
Dewily flashed the figures of white on green
And all looked new as a beach or sky washed clean.

But—a month abandoned; and nettles and clovers
Have hidden knee-deep the bandied shots of lovers,
And the empty pavilion looks as hauntingly old
As the baths of Titus or Nero's house of gold.

BRYCE CANYON

Harold V. Witt

Science dissects to geologic time
the rose-drift orchard sculptured by wind and rain,
makes chart of beauty to trace the hidden crime
of violet in the cliff, or genius in the brain,

fathoms the fault scarp whose lift is music,
measures with numbers all this muted red,
structure of dream and labyrinth of lavender,
ticks off the timeless heavens in the poet's head;

science that hangs a net and captures wind,
knows algebras of rain that calculate despair
agelong and cloud born, and the grief of weather:
soul rift for a runnel's running through the red there,

and the pink here equals a gash for a river
or rain-wash in a gulch, can carve no canyons
such as yellow earth gives and wind yields
nor hollow a poem from these nor any stones.

FOR THIS THEY DEPARTED

Harold V. Witt

For this they departed, that my heights were haunted
mountainous and treacherous, for this they said:
you are the young land and the crude land;
We'll never come back until you're dead,

your meadows brought down to us, your fierce rocks
rounded
leveled and laid low and in gentler season;
for this they left me and returned no more,
for this they forsook me, one by one.

So now only the sound of great trees falling,
the crash of mountain over the crush of stone
shudders the silence in my dying country,
forsaken, and wind-grieved, and forlorn.

SANTA ANA

Ethel Jacobson

A desert wind with devil face
Sears this green and pleasant place.
Bud and tendril know its breath
And the brittleness of death.

Even as they half unfurled,
Curving fronds are shattered—curled,
Awkward and unlovely now
On the shriveled, useless bough;

So my heart at one hushed word
Felt the blighting gust which stirred
Tattered palm and blossoming fig—
And snapped as lightly as a twig.

WITCHWIFE

Mary Moon

Look for me in fox fire in a cave of nettles,
Under a black thicket blossoming with thorns—
Look for me in the forest when blue fog settles
Over strange soft echoings from wind-wound horns.

Stone be my pillow and leaves my cover,
Low in a hollow, cradled and still,
With my two hands held by my satyr lover,
Deep in dark grasses under the hill . . .

Pass by the cottage with the small windows
 shining,
Pass by the pretties inside the open door—
Look not at the maiden with the down-dropped
 eyelids,
With feet set primly on the scrubbed pine floor.

Throat of an adder, flick-tongue of an asp—
Winnowed brambles, my thick brown hair—
Colder than serpents, my frost-green clasp,
And more bleak than death, the smile I wear.

Look for me in fox fire where the witch weir is sighing,
Where smoke-white curling vapors give
Scent of the woods and the day's dark dying—
 Pass by the cottage where I live!

CINERARY EPIGRAM

Neeta Marquis

(For One Unhappy Poet)

Once this was man, now shrunk to a name.
Once he moved, as lithe as the panther.
Glances of women stroked him like flame,
(Sweet-starved bees at the pollened anther);
Lips curved smooth as the stone unflawed,
Though smutched with speech like fumes from a
crater;
Matchless mold of a luminous god;
Brow of an angel; soul of a satyr.

SHELL

Eunice Clise

Some creature
Fashioned from the ocean's womb
Made this its home.
So all the shell of our desires
Stays on;
While we transmute, and slough
To foam.

WAY LOST

Rachel Harris Campbell

“When I was young . . .” he said. “I’d not be young
Again for all the fortunes time might give.
Rage at the heart, salt folly on the tongue.
A wonder we are cured of youth, and live!

“Indeed, I think that all young things are mad,
When I remember how my days ran then.
You’d not believe it, the wild dreams I had,
The plans we laid . . . why, we were gods, not men!

“The happiness of youth! I’ve not been lonely
Since, as I was at twenty; though I’d walk
Close to my friend’s heart, it was I, I only
Peopled the world! The nonsense I could talk!

“Talk! How we all talked! How the flood ran on
Through the uncaring night, on what high themes—
Ardor, bravado—of the old creeds gone
And new good rising—all the stuff of dreams!

“I loved, too, sweated, anguished, lost my reason,
Grew drunk on great loves, felt the senses’ prod . . .
Separate faces, in that crazy season . . .
Who love now only certainty, the god
“Of work well done. Man’s work I had not found
In that far time. My task was living, solely.
How crude I must have been! At core, though,
sound—

Able to learn how few things time leaves holy.

“Yes, in good time I learned that. We all learn.
Things make sense now. The heart’s no longer tossed
With every wind.”

He finished. I saw him turn
Like a blind man, cane probing, the road lost.

TO A GIFTED SON

Elma Dean

It may be given you to know the high ceiling
of achievement—the thing created well.
Already your sure young fingers are feeling
with old directness for the particular swell
or hollow in the unfinished piece . . .
Almost we have seen from our shadow the luminous
 line,
brain-to-hand running, wondered at the source
and warmed ourselves a little in the shine.

With all your knowing, know this is not yours
to keep—only to use and pass along,
you being the channel. It was never ours,
but slept the years until the small clear gong
waked it in you. Now we who seem blood strangers,
bruise ourselves upon the stout young wall
of your indifference to a thousand dangers
and foolishly would save you from them all.

DESERTED HOUSE

Edith E. Hewins

This empty, hollow house
Is mined for memories.
Fling a casement wide
Or tread a squeaky stair;
Visions ride the dust
Through chilly, stagnant air.

Step lightly on bare floors.
Loose boards may wake
A ghostly sob, malicious laughter.
Quick! Hurry past closed doors
Lest horror come sharp out
And have us by the hair.

THE SELF

Carleton Drewry

Where now is your horizon,
You curious questing thing
Pacing your ancient prison
In an unreal ring?

Stand up. What is your stature?
Time cannot make you tall.
Lie down, composite creature,
And bear the weight of all.

Stretch out through sleep's dimension,
Lie long and deep and wide.
The quarrel, the old dissension,
Will still go on outside.

NIGHT PATROL

Frances Montague

Through sullen valleys bristling with steel,
He took an arduous and angry road
Bound closely with integuments of hate;
The darkness crackled with an evil code
Of snapping twig and faintly rustling leaf;
The silence pressed him down with Atlas weight.
He thought of sunlit hills where he might feel
Warm peace, untinged by fear, unscarred by grief,
Yet—dared not think, lest even thought beat loud
Upon the stillness, and devise his shroud.

A WAY WITH RUINED HOUSES

Rachel Harris Campbell

If anywhere a sad untenanted house
Stand, with the spider curtaining the cracked pane,
Floors echoing to the footfall of a mouse
And broken shingles letting in the rain,

Tear down the ruin, clear the cumbered space,
And show the dark foundations to the sky;
Release for flight the ghosts that kept the place—
All the unearthly have a need to fly.

Then for sure exorcism of the past,
Mixing new mortar, you must build again
A structure that will last, as homes can last,
Meant to be lived in, not by ghosts, but men.

IN THE MISTY NIGHT

Christine Turner Curtis

Sometimes in the misty night
when May unstops
her bottle of mille fleurs,
and the sprinkled drops—
lilacs, muguet des bois,
rise up to lure
the heart to a reassessing
of a forgotten score . . .

The buried years emerge;
the drowned moments swim
to the surface, are as when
my bliss lodged with him.
Then despite new riches—
house, husband, son—
in the misty night, there is
no restitution—none.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

GEOFFREY JOHNSON is the author of six books of verse.

In the current issue of *The Georgia Review*, there is an article on CARLETON DREWRY by William W. Davidson.

A poem by HAROLD V. WITT was recently accepted by *The Yale Review*.

NARROW KEYBOARD by CHRISTINE TURNER CURTIS was recently published by The William Frederick Press.

ELMA DEAN and EDITH E. HEWINS both live in Oakland, California.

Two poems by EUNICE CLISE appear in the current issue of *Variegation*.

NEETA MARQUIS was at one time on the editorial staff of *The Lyric West*.

RACHEL HARRIS CAMPBELL and MARY MOON both live in San Diego.

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