

READING EDITION

RECURRENCE

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A QUARTERLY OF RHYME

Autumn 1951

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*Set from the scan of the magazine. The poems, their titles, the poets'
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GROVER JACOBY, *Editor*

THE PROPHET OF DARKNESS

Rachel Harris Campbell

There is a bird whose voice sounds like an omen.
All the night he cries; I hear him when I rouse.
Silent by day, he prophesies in darkness.
I cannot guess his kind; never on fruited boughs

Sanctified by sun, have I ever found him,
Never heard his call till the deep of night.
All his sad forebodings are in an alien language—
Foolish nothings, doubtless, were it only light.

THE INWARD LOOK

Carleton Drewry

People who think the world's beginning and ending
Are in them only, who have the inward look,
Are like the willows with their own weight bending
Above a brook.

They see themselves merely in a moving mirror,
That distortion of days, the diminishment of seeing.
The glass gives back but the egoistic error
Of their own being.

TIGER, TIGER

Carleton Drewry

Tiger, Tiger, burning blind
In the forests of the mind:
Old and toothless you have grown.
The forest of our fear falls down,
Freeing us of the ancient awe.
We come but slowly to the clear
Where, emptied, we refill with fear
Before this large mechanic law,
And go on living, dying here.

CURIOUS ADAM

Frances Minturn Howard

Man cannot live by bread alone;
By bread alone, he cannot live;
No, nor by water nor by wine,
For all the pleasure that they give.

By solitude he cannot live,
Nor by the light in other eyes;
By whispers in the ardent dusk,
By love, by laughter, nor by lies.

But by a crumb of this and that—
Seed of wheat, and seed of dream—
He nourishes two appetites,
Unique in universal scheme—

This brute half risen from the earth
Who saw the cramped and narrow skies
Recede and multiply again
Before the question in his eyes.

PORTRAIT

Muriel Spark

Spleen was the spur, and still is yet.
You'd never think, to look at her
Glowing behind a cigarette,

This drowsy smoker once was set
On making a wholesale massacre;
Spleen was the spur, and still is yet.

The little paper stick has met
Its match; behold her character
Glowing behind a cigarette

Which holds her tongue. But don't forget
Her blood has turned to vinegar.
Spleen was the spur, and still is yet,

That last infirmity must let
The waves of violence occur,
Glowing behind a cigarette,

And she be satisfied to get
A change of saddle, not of spur;
Spleen was the spur, and still is yet,
Glowing behind a cigarette.

RENO

Harold V. Witt

Rose and violet mountains slowly slope
to a green valley groove where willows over
a snow-cold silver-sounding river droop,
and poplars' flambeaux flicker from hot clover.

Brick houses float on shadow lawns of amethyst,
sweltering lovers tour the unsure shade;
boys in white shorts toward a tennis tryst
loiter like heatstruck cougars through a glade.

The dapple is derived; under the town's center,
deep under brilliant pediment and cool arch
old forests wither in a pumice winter,
ancient weathers mineral the dark.

BUTTERFLIES IN MY NET

Harold V. Witt

I'll catch your winged body in my net
of sonnets like so many butterflies
surprised by my guile, your beating wet
red mouth (the scarlet moth) and tiger eyes
and swallowtailed sides, all of them radiant,
ragged against my walls of air and string,
captured in one lightning moment, and pent
up ageless behind what time can bring.
If the trap being touched here and there should
 quiver
like a gauze tent with your tenuous wings,
or tremble with your antennae or should shiver
as felt flesh shivers, men will say live things,
pulses and nerves shaking behind my lines,
make my mesh monument more marble than shrines.

SLOW JERICHO

Hanson Kellogg

The weather is deep in the walls, grinding away
Mortar from stone, wood and plaster from stone.
The sun has been long in the sky; yet the day
Freezes and melts in the towers; buildings alone
Know the seasons. The garden, the forest, the path
Are pensioned, forsaken, forgotten. All of the flowers
Live only in vases. But weather is never neglectful.
Although rain and the wind keep irregular hours,
Their purpose is clear; no structure escapes their
slow wrath.

P O E M

Hanson Kellogg

We rendered it from Attic Greek and found it still
obscure.

We tried the whole Rosetta stone in every permutation,
And it added up to nothing; not epitaph, not paean,
Not love song, nor in any combination
Of these could we read meaning in it.

If it was in code, its message quite escaped us.
It did not deal with cities, swords or hate.
It praised no god nor any of the clergy,
Nor mourned the past, nor dignified a date
For scorn or celebration.

It posed no questions on the dialectic.
No arithmetic symbols spoiled the sprawl
Of words across the tablet. We despaired
Of learning from it anything at all.
Sun . . . trees . . . hills . . . sky and seas and
men.

Ridiculous. We buried it again.

PHOENIX

Josephine Ain

Having at the last outgrown despair
I sit with music and endure
The streaked anguish of the autumn air
Upon my ankles, wrists, and hair.
Hope and faith were not more pure
Than the closing of this door.

Silently I wait up for the sun
Viewing the end of moon and stars.
Everything is dark and beautiful.
The broken bird inert on stone
Is not my doing or concern.
I watch now for the dawn.

After death the quiet belongs to God.
His is the revery alone.
Nothing but slumber has occurred.
I wait for the rock to burn, the bird
Collect a monumental form
And a new song come.

INTERLUDE

Jean Burden

Stillness fills infinity
between the You and Me,
silence thin as film on water
and as frail,
as finely spun as silk that marks
the spider's trail;
silence blown as thin and taut
as a gray thought
lying light between our shores,
waiting for this spell to break,
for the hour of disentanglement to strike.

THE HOUSE OF FOAM

Leslie Nelson Jennings

Once, in a dream, we built a house of foam,
All windows looking westward, water-thin;
We said the sandy threshold of that home
Could never shift, its green walls topple in.
There was a narrow garden strewn with shells,
Flowers without root, ephemeral as spray,
And, carried on the wind, a sound of bells
Rising from sunken ships long washed away.

No storm could reach us who had learned to foil
Tides eating at our sill and surf tossed high
In a white fury, only to recoil;
Our many rooms were open to the sky . . .
Waking, we heard the sea and found no more
Than driftwood on a sweep of lonely shore.

THE UNSCEPTRED

Peter M. Urquhart

Oh, there has been too much death in my time:
Not death grown softly into green, waiting arms
But spun from black muzzles, sudden-starred in
 anger,
Raping unbudded shoots, rasping distraught alarms

Before and always; so that those who died
Breathed out unquiet and those who, strangely, live
Are bile in memories no crosses can repent,
Nor tears endow, nor penitence forgive.

Only is hope in those whose bitter years
Are ingrained creases; whose childhood's epic lies
Have floated on bloody tides to flint grey beaches;
Whose pity burns from disenchanting eyes;

Who have themselves sunk down through all the
 slime
Of despair and hatred clotting in human hearts;
Who, strataed upon their terrible rocks of knowledge,
Play silently the unsought, sceptic parts.

Who, against darkness seeping the cold, grey mind,
Against blinded fear clenching its armoured glove,
Against all wiles and whips of their unconscious
 kind,
Bear only the naked flesh and agony of love.

AXIOM: THE WHOLE IS
MORE THAN EQUAL TO
SOME OF ITS PARTS

Myron H. Broomell

Love of women, love of horses,
Jealousy and other forces,
Greed and fear and mutual aid—
By such motives man is swayed.

Social being but morose
When his fellows press him close,
For his independence, he
Fights cooperatively.

Then as fast as cools the heart,
Leagues and partnerships dispart.
Facets generate the prism
Of an individualism.

THE PHENOMENON

Myron H. Broomell

The summer was not fierce enough
To charm away the gullied cold,
And in Hawk's Gulch, near Condor's Hold,
You may discern an icy stuff

Constant beneath the chocolate clods
Spring showered on it, and the loess
The wind brought north from countries worse
What time the savage danced his gods;

And that is snow, but not as once
Soft-sifted till you'd smother in it,
Pure and untouched, but an iron river,
A cretin glacier where the eagle hunts.

You may observe it merely from the plain,
A dead-white gash seen only toward noon
When the sun rounds the labia of stone.
Here, from the cornfield, look—a whitish stain
Against the mountain, narrow and soon gone.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

A poem by CARLETON DREWRY appears in the current issue of The Yale Review.

MYRON H. BROOMELL is on the staff of radio station KIUP in Durango, Colorado.

A short story by Harold Witt recently appeared in Decade.

FRANCES MINTURN HOWARD received the award for the best collection of miscellaneous verse submitted in 1948 to Dr. Robert Thomas Moore's foundation in Pasadena. The collection was published under the title All Keys Are Glass.

JEAN BURDEN wrote the foreword for I Was a Monk by John Tettemer, published by Alfred A. Knopf.

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PETER URQUHART and MURIEL SPARK are British poets. Criticism by MURIEL SPARK has appeared in Poetry Quarterly and other English periodicals.

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS now lives in New York, but in 1930 he was a resident of Los Angeles and one of the editors of an anthology of verse published by the Poetry Society of Southern California.

JOSEPHINE AIN is the wife of the painter, Robert Chuey.

A review of a poem from HANSON KELLOGG's new book, Attics Own Houses, appears in the current issue of Variegation.