

READING EDITION

RECURRENCE

14

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A QUARTERLY OF RHYME

Autumn 1953

VOLUME IV

RECURRENCE

A Quarterly of Rhyme

Volume IV · Autumn 1953 · Number 14

*Set from the scan of the magazine. The poems, their titles, the poets'
names and the figures at the feet of the leaves are the printer's; everything
in this color is this edition's.*

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GROVER JACOBY, *Editor*

[*The publisher's own advertisement, from the last leaf:*]

ENJOY THE OTHER EMPHASIS AS WELL. The two quarterlies, *Recurrence* and *Variegation*, differ not so much in kind as in emphasis. In *Variegation* you will find the contrasting rhythms of free verse. Each line of *vers libre* is a unit with a certain trend and direction, and there is always discernible the occurrence of accent, not at specific stated intervals, but still with a feeling for its placement which registers certain effects. For this reason free verse is not an attempt to undermine conventional methods, but actually reveals them in a new and valuable relationship. This relationship is further amplified by the editor's epigraph on the title page of each issue of *Variegation*: "Free verse is not a desertion of prosody; it is an exploration, intentional or unintentional, of the mysteries lying at the metrical core of speech."

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L A R G E S S E

Ethan Ayer

Every night he hums a tuneless tune
And scratches through the ashcan by the door.
I know he will have finished scratching soon;
I do not know what he is looking for.
It's all that I can do to look at him—
He is so neat in such a dirty way,
And by some late and therefore desperate whim,
He is so inappropriately gay.

Or is it happy for him in the night,
The silence and the space and all the dark—
His purpose gone beyond electric light,
Beyond policemen in the public park?
I know I threw away an apple-core . . .
I do not know what he is looking for.

ASCANIUS

Eleanor Glenn Wallis

Aeneas wrenched the spearhead from his side,
Bent down to kiss his child and sped away,
Leaving the boy transfixed before the fray
Caused by an arrow through a young stag's hide.

His act was innocent, the outcome dire:
He could not have foreseen the quick retort
On what was but his natural love of sport
With no intent to lay so fierce a fire.

The city burns: his father has a wound;
He stands aloof, his cold child-senses keen
As, watcher of an embattled, flaming screen,
He marks the wheel of destiny go round.

SILENT CRY

Joseph Joel Keith

Sit in darkness, deepest blue,
when you wake.
See the silent drama spread;
watch day break

on the canvas of the sky,
in the hush;
see the fragment, then the whole;
see no brush

held by hand, but see instead
a wide sweep,
high, miraculous as dreams
come from sleep.

Morning-clear, refreshed by dawn,
walk uphill;
stand where heaven seems to shout,
yet is still.

MADRIGAL

Ann Stanford

The drifting snow piles high
By every wall and tree
Leaving no earth or sky
Only the blown and lee.
But merrily, merrily carols ring,
Merrily sing.

On such a night as this
No man would wandering be
But keeps where the tall fire is,
Wine, warmth, festivity,
As merrily, merrily carols ring,
Merrily sing.

And He who walks the year
Alone by land and sea
Tonight is cherished here
In baubled brilliancy,
As merrily, merrily carols ring,
Merrily sing.

SPRING TIDE

Ann Stanford

'Stern limbs of winter still hung low
Rigid with cold, and a pale sun
Was shallowing the snow.

The river broke beneath the bridge,
The steeples dried, the ice had run
In flood from the warm roof-ridge,

While far away the summer hung
In every bough. A southern world
In earlier green had sprung,

And northward moving, the soft tide
Lapped tree and meadow and was hurled
Over the bleak hillside.

INTRA MUROS

Leslie Nelson Jennings

From pitiable shards heaped higher and higher
That refuge of the separate self has grown
Taller than trust, more obdurate than desire.
Groundwork was laid, stone by submissive stone,
Until it stands between us like a wall,
Doorless and windowless. Poor captive, your
Escape was won the hardest way of all!
Yet love survives the living sepulture.

Now it is finished, every crevice filled.
By such immurement you may half-believe
Nothing can breach what took so long to build.
Only the watchful years will undeceive;
And time is patient—more than you or I—
In leveling walls and letting in the sky.

HAUTE COUTURE

Charles Edward Eaton

If you should wear blood's shade of red for me,
I would not greet you here;
I have grown used to clothes without a gaudy stain,
The world no divan for the flesh in flame.
If you came scarlet-breasted without stress,
I would not know your face, I could not call your
name.

Take a black gown from a hidden closet
And come to me as white as black will yield;
Obliquely we have loved, obliquely kept
Our faith black-suited, warding off the end.
It was enough to see one afternoon in summer
The flame lick up the dry and tangled field.

So gross the fire that gorges on the land,
All that you wear of it, the girdle or the band,
Makes a tremor in the fingers start,
Lures a groping for the color of the heart—
My hand goes naked when you drop your glove
To loot the darkness of all love.

EACH GREEN SYLLABLE

Frances Montague

Each green syllable of summer aspen
dissolves to silence in September—
to scarlet and to saffron depths of stillness:
a forest
soundless in its amber.

The squirrels' treetop conversations
languish;
deer drift slowly by;
the puma's step disturbs no shadow;
death itself could summon with a sigh.

Man, sensitive only to his own season,
to the chanting of his joy and grief,
absently snaps the fallen twig,
crackles the dry and heart-shaped leaf.

STRANGE ANGERS

Frances Montague

Man is long acquainted with strange angers
That blow about him from his birth till death.
All his hates and dreams and ancient hungers
Are touched with their breath.

Faggots of oak and terebinth are blazing,
Fanned by these winds that harry branch and root;
Out of baleful embers from earth is rising
A violent fruit.

Strange winds of anger are forever blowing
The scarlet leaf—the bright prophetic leaf—
And in the dust, as in man's heart are sowing
A dissonant grief.

In valleys of defeat he builds his tower;
There come the gales, though air is never stirred;
Yet man, transcending storm, defies the power
Of their ultimate word.

ALTERNATIVE

Oliver Hale

Did I not believe in man's destiny
as separate and shining, and a high
purpose find in his spirit's agony
wrestling the darkness between earth and sky,
wonder at life, and its reality
raise like a torch although its flame must die;
then should I be in love with all stopped things,
stagnant water and the scorch in the sand,
favor the mute over the voice that sings,
and prefer the bare rock to the green land,
nor feel the presence of a thousand wings
beating between the stars and where I stand.

TERMINUS OF YEARS

Stanley Charles Rose

Pert snowflake poised on autumn's brow.
Defied, she enters in.
Not long before, blithe summer's crown
Had cloaked foreboding sin.

Lost bloom of Michaelmas could shake
The dust of lavender,
And she had scarcely found the room
For scanty provender:
"It's cold tonight.
Oh, sir, a light!
Nay, child, this hearth I may not stir!"

WONDER

Lori Petri

I glance from the lark in heaven's awning
Before he dips in earthward glide,
Briefly knot the ribbons of dawning
About my spirit, then turn aside.

I never follow a curve of wonder
Beyond the zenith of its bloom,
Lest it end in abyss or thunder
Or the closure of a common room.

HUNGER

Gertrude Claytor

One winter evening fair and cold
I was both shepherd and the sheep,
The trusted guardian of the fold
And those his care must keep.

The creatures herded in a corner
Were less a captive flesh than I
Held in this lowland, and a mourner
Penned up within mortality.

As sheep I huddled and I shoved,
More restless than a toddling child;
As shepherd I was calm; I loved
Those foolish ones, dismayed and mild.

Turned sheep, I butted for the food,
I trod on lambs, I raised a cry—
A hollow bleating understood
By all who live and die.

PROVERB RECONSIDERED

Elinor Lennen

Paper, they say, is patient, more than man.
Unhurrying, it will let you empty heart
Of joys or fears, with an attention span
Fresh at the end as it was at the start.
Concomitant, this promise masks a threat:
Paper that will accept your every word
Will not forgive, will not let you forget
The obligation utterance incurred.
Old phrases touched with glory or with shame
Will some time haunt your waking or your sleep
Relentlessly, to bless you or to blame,
For that which paper takes, it takes to keep!

NOTE: Because of a typographical error in this poem's first printing it is included here for the second time. It first appeared in the Summer issue of Recurrence.

CONTRIBUTORS

CHARLES EDWARD EATON is writing a collection of short stories dealing with Brazilian life.

Verse by LORI PETRI has appeared in *Voices*, *Poetry*, *The Commonweal* and other publications.

ELEANOR GLENN WALLIS is represented in Rolfe Humphrie's unusual anthology, *New Poems*.

A professor at Keio University, Tokyo is making a translation into Japanese of a section of *The Stubborn Root* by JOSEPH JOEL KEITH.

FRANCES MONTAGUE is now holding forth with her perennial charm as president of the Poetry Society of Southern California.

STANLEY CHARLES ROSE is a member of the English department of a college in Northern California.

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS was recently appointed to act as one of the judges of the poems to be read at the October meeting of the Poetry Society of America.

ANN STANFORD is the wife of Ronald White, an architect and artist of talent and accomplishment. Their three little girls show no signs of lacking the power of self-expression, though they are too young to have selected any particular fields for it.

The sonnets of ETHAN AYER are already familiar to readers of *Recurrence*.

In 1950 a poem by OLIVER HALE was reprinted in the New York Herald Tribune's famous column, "A Week of Verse."

"Judgment Day," a poem by GERTRUDE CLAYTOR, opened a recent issue of Voices.