

READING EDITION

RECURRENCE

24

RECURRENCE

A QUARTERLY OF RHYME

Spring 1956

VOLUME VI

RECURRENCE

A Quarterly of Rhyme

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GROVER JACOBY, *Editor*

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[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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TWO IN A MAZE

Mary Winter

In such a maze as this,
Rosamond might have walked
Before the “clue of thredde”
Betrayed her to the Queen.
Tall, towering the head,
Conspiring walls of green
Rise dense, to hide the lover
And footfalls make no sound
On the compliant ground.

There lurks in this dark cover,
Some ancient treachery;
A shade of fear lies heavily
In these illicit bowers
Wanting the branching tree.
Oh! come, return with me
To open fields and flowers.

THE CLOAK

Mary Winter

His gift of love to her
Was warm, a cloak
Worthily fashioned, shimmering too;
But wearing it a while and goaded
Ever by desire for something new,
She cast it off and spoke
Of style and stuff outmoded.
It would no longer do.

The self-same garment timidly
Upon another shoulder laid
Much later, (he now half afraid
To offer something worn)
Was tenderly received,
Mended, where it was torn;
Hardly to be believed
The way that she contrived
To alter, make it fit
And strangely, look so beautiful
In it.

FATAL WOMAN

Charles Edward Eaton

The desk, my writing things, the statuette,
Venus bronzed for my rough work:
I cast here white when we first met
And left her there to blandish or to irk.
Every day my fingers moved
She watched to see what thing was loved.

Each time I came the scent of doom,
A stale, eternal guest, was in the room.
But sunlight lent its golden bulk
Or rain the lustral, hollowing hand—
I did not know how that invading hulk
Could find a place to sit or stand.

Perhaps it was a way of being bold,
I see, with Venus now a tawny gold,
Smooth from a roughness at her feet
Where waves of rain and sunlight meet.
I think she put that ancient scent upon the air
To make the heart contend it everywhere.

THE RIDDLE IN THE SKELETON

Eric Barker

Unfailing continuity of day and night
Indifferent to our evil and our good
Compels the sun and moon be still
And snares us in the winter wood,

Stops thunderous ocean in our ears,
Withholds the singing in the trees
Clearer than ever throats before
Could weaken us in heart and knees

And bring us begging to the ground
To let the sun and moon go on
And revolutions of the world
The desperate cling and clutch prolong

Of handhold, foothold, and the stress
Of eyes for what they fail to find
Through all the changes of the light
Till lack of it has left them blind

Unless in that grave dark a clue
Unyielded by the sun and moon
Gives answer to the question mark
Left curled within the skeleton.

WHEN I AWOKE

Eric Barker

When I awoke the sky was alive with clouds.
I lay still, waiting for some carefree creature
That did not share the common mood of shrouds,
Clothed in that solemn and funereal feature.

Dark miles I went with that grim brood along.
The wind blew through them but they did not change,
The green-shade nested woods ran out of song,
Threatened by shadows ominous and strange.

I had been long in love and hoped to draw
Something up there through my heart's needle-eye.
I had threshed out the spring's green dancing-floor
And looked for such appointments in the sky

As would continue what my heart had found
Among the riotous acres of the grass.
But all that sunless train was nightward bound;
Cloud after sullen cloud I watched them pass,

Telling such gloomy fables to the earth.
The fields lost light, as suddenly grew still.
And then the lightning flashed, the thunder moved,
Rain opened green again from hill to hill.

THE RIVERING FALL

John Theobald

Watch, behold Vivaldi hurled along,
Then let watch his still rushing world.
Turn, then, now then, the stream
Of intense purity in, to wash
And scald the stunned, riven sin.
Sin? It is gone in the cool river of
Love, of heaven falling, in whom we fall
Always, exactly like dying,
The dying fall living how long?
For ever and ever, as long as Vivaldi.

SONG FOR THE SEASON'S RING

Anthony Ostroff

Look!

The world is like a clock!

Each blade doth turn

And every wind will wind the hours

And the world spin hours into days!

Look!

How at every stroke

Each blade doth burn

And make a magic wheel of fire

For the hour and the hour's praise!

TO PRINCE, WRITER OF
SATIRES

Francis Golffing

All would be well were you but mean enough.
You do not ply your rogue's trade roguishly
But as a child of diffident probity
Might learn to steal to make his fibre tough.

TO A FRIEND, ON EVIL
REDOUNDING TO GOOD

Francis Golffing

Stick up for goodness but, for goodness' sake,
Give hornets leave to sting you by mistake.

SHADE OF THE LEOPARD

Elma Dean

The black cat with the black intent
(Old burning in the small flat skull)
Invades my Eden. As angels fall,
Furred Satan makes the quick descent
From parlor pet. He twitches, stalks;
Quivers anticipating jaws;
Slips under leaf and bloom. He walks
Reptilian, the scimitar claws
Concealed. I am both hypnotized
And shocked. This is deliberate—
Is first degree. The yellow eyes
Shoot sparks—I am a second late.

Breast feathers float on this day's wind . . .
An angel sleeps. What creature sinned?

BLISS

Sandra Sue Hochman

In dream's long festival, a man may be
Caught within the maypole's gaiety
And, as he blends with the abandoned crowd
The frightened limbs of childhood sing aloud
Praising the dance, praising the rite of May
When suns step down and enter into play.
Here, mind unravels in a spark of flesh,
The heart finds its wild music till the mesh
Gravitates the dancer towards the sky
Where ribbons catch upon a startled eye.

ROUND

Eve Merriam

The more you clutch the less you own.
Who wants to wind up cheap alone?

So give and lose and gain and get,
Fish for the moon and nothing net

But joy and love and every night
A noon of silver-scaled delight.

ZOO

Leslie Nelson Jennings

The gluttoned lions indolently doze,
Bored by the crowds who, cheated of a roar,
Resume their Sunday saunter down the rows
Of cages to the Monkey House. What more
Ludicrous than to see the human race
In caricature, baboons and chimpanzees
Reaching for handouts with a wry grimace,
Shaking ferociously the chain trapeze?

Before those primates, barred and well patrolled,
We can afford to stand erect, somehow
Detach ourselves completely from that old
Darwinian hoax of the Primordial Bough.
Yet, giving stare for stare, perhaps they think
Of us as Apedom's oddly Missing Link.

THISTLEDOWN

Willis Eberman

The Queen Anne's lace and willows tower
Within the pale, bronze light.
The laurel glints; and thistles now
Release their seeds, those white

And silken wheels that roll on air;
Soft, weightless stars that glide
Bearing a future spring with them
Over the countryside.

OBJECT IN THE DARK

Ruth Dirks

Object in the dark
That I can almost see,
Would you shine clear
And show yourself to me?

With tense, squinted look
I search the night,
You remain a dim,
Seen and unseen light.

Is that a shape there,
Shapeless, nowhere?
Is it moving, motionless?
Oh, what is there?

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EVE MERRIAM's last book appeared in the Twayne Library of Modern Poetry.

ROBINSON JEFFERS considers ERIC BARKER "an original poet and a good one." Mr. Jeffers expresses this opinion in the introduction to Mr. Barker's new book of poems.