

READING EDITION

RECURRENCE

26

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A QUARTERLY OF RHYME

Autumn 1956

VOLUME VII

RECURRENCE

A Quarterly of Rhyme

Volume VII · Autumn 1956 · Number 26

*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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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

RECURRENCE: A QUARTERLY OF RHYME is published by
Variegation Publishing Company. 25¢ a copy, \$1.00 a year.

All correspondence for *Recurrence: A Quarterly of Rhyme* and
Variegation: A Free Verse Quarterly should be addressed to
Variegation Publishing Company, Post Office Box 75384,
Sanford Station, Los Angeles 5, California.

GROVER JACOBY, *Editor*

VARIEGATION and RECURRENCE are being widely distributed
to bookstores and newsstands by B. DEBOER, 102 Beverly
Road, Bloomfield, New Jersey

[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."

VARIEGATION · RECURRENCE · VARIEGATION PUBLISHING
COMPANY · Post Office Box 75384, Sanford Station, Los
Angeles 5, California · \$1.00 a year for each quarterly

SPIDER WEB

Marguerite W. Truslow

The web hung like an heirloom veil
from hemlock to pine,
reticulated rib on rib,
cloud-frail and unobtrusive,
exact as crystals in design.

Spendthrift and elusive,
the moment of perfection went
when a rough wind blew.
But it will come again,
for spiders are obedient
beyond instruction of the brain
whether a Bruce be standing by
or only faith-endangered I.

THE TRIUMPH

Lincoln Fittzell

Time is smaller than the rain,
And vaster than earth's whole domain,
More bright than galaxies, more dim
Than webs invisible and grim.

The sudden gulf is cold and black
That eagles know, and cities crack
Like centuries, dust rolls the crown,
And monuments fade like renown.

The hour breaks the hourglass.
Earth eats the dust in men and grass.
We wreath the vision we can see—
Time's aureole—eternity.

SCORCHED GOTHIC

Samuel Hazo

Hoses pythoning from hydrants coil
over hose and curb to blistered walls.
Cratered in water scowls a gargoyle
tipped from its perch when belfries fell.

One toppled bronze apostle kneels
chipped and headless as a shattered prize.
Blunt to the clouds loom stumps of steeples
lopped of their cupolas of praise

and charred as buttresses and timbers
vortexed in aisles where ranks of nuns
stood chanting veil by veil in choir
monotonic antiphons at nones

before the climbing blaze blackened
and broke white altars down to stone
while water burst, arched, slackened
over spires burning in the sun.

A T A DESERT AIR BASE

Alan Stephens

The jet planes wheel around
Blunt-snouted, trim, and stiff,
And then release their sound,
Spurt fire, and fly, as if
The strip had dropped below
And left them hanging there
Sustained upon the flow
Down which they disappear.
Whatever they pursue
They leave no residue,

Or, sometimes, a white wake
Along a windless height.
But, flying low, they shake
An accidental might
Through timbers, windows, floor.
I have felt it on my face,
This corrugated roar,
This smashing in of space
With a temporal blow
That flings them where they go,

So swiftly hurled beyond
The heat of my concern
That how can I respond
Who breathe the air they burn?
By noting that all is clear
A thousand miles around—

The whole of space seems near:
That pilots, distance-bound,
Vanish in flawless flight
Which shines with vacant light.

GAZING AT THE HEAVENS

Louis Ginsberg

Deep in the night, we gaze above and mark
How galaxies are dusting all the dark.

How enigmatic in their far-off stations
The archipelagoes of constellations!

Century after century has flown,
And still in vain we query the unknown.

Astronomers who peer at Heaven see
Telescopes but enlarge the mystery.

How insignificant we shrink to face
Eloquent silence of unfathomed space!

Yet we are greater than the biggest star,
Because we know how very small we are.

SUBWAYS

Louis Ginsberg

Subterranean caves are teeming with
Serpentine monsters, spawned from primal myth.
Lizard-like, jungle, plated creatures growl
And through the dank and winding hollows howl.
And, mad with miles, they slither fast and squeal
Through labyrinthine lanes of pillared steel.
Some hurtle on in a fantastic race;
They gorge on distances, they gulp down space.
Sometimes they cough a shower of colored sparks
In greedy bolting down the subway darks.
Near station-platforms, they can raise a din
As if they swallowed minor earthquakes in;
So that these convoluted serpent-forms
Grumble inchoate speech of thunderstorms.
And yet, for all their fury, loud and shrill.
Man has their fierceness harnessed to his will.

AT A CALIFORNIA COLLEGE

William Stafford

On a dark pivot the talk veers;
youth leans in the same careening boat
I knew in those unstable years.
Rescued now, I remember yet.

I have crossed, going west,
hearing the secret transformer hum,
a drawn finger in the dust,
and found a continent, but not a home.

E V E

Richard Frost

She lies alone, driving a silver knife
deep through flesh that never bleeds,
but breaks, gaps open easily; white life
lies crisply moist. Everything she needs
she now has: some black, oily apple seeds.

A STEP BACKWARD TAKEN

Richard Frost

I feel like Thoreau, watching all these ants
travel both ways up—down my old peach tree.
Thousands of warriors retreat, thousands advance,
fierce armored heroes . . . Look! One got on me.

TRANSITION AT DAWN

Hannah Kahn

This is the hour of dawn when sound
Takes on a meaning all its own;
The newsboy and the muffled thud
Of papers thrown against the lawn . . .
A shuffling footstep on the street;
A pebble crushed into the ground.

This is the hour of dawn when I
Become aware of filtered light;
This moment that is leaving night . . .
This interval that is not day,
And yet before the footsteps pass
The sun illuminates the sky.

THE CONSCIOUS RELATIONS OF TIME

Robert Beloof

In the planed planks of history
Great men lie like knots
Round which the grain whirls.
Leaf's pride, limb's minor or majestic contour,
All that reach beyond the
Slow concentric tide,
Are by these inferred.

Chance eats even such central wood.
Shattered in the fire,
They couched in their ash
This marred vase (from, no doubt, a third-class potter)
Now cased in careful glass.
By this wretched burl
All must be inferred.

DESERT SHIPWRECK

Barbara Leslie Jordan

I am adrift in a desert where too much sun
Leaves me parched and faint from swimming a sea
of light.

I shall sink in these arid swells; I shall be spun
Like an empty shell to the cool, dim shore of night.

I am becalmed in a molten current of sand.
Huge combers of rock surround me, upthrust
and stark.

Tossed within dusty squalls in a waterless land,
I search the sky for the first, faint promise of dark.

This solar tide will ebb at dusk and I shall reach
The clouded coast of evening where I shall lie
As still as any shipwrecked sailor on a beach,
While overhead the far, uncaring stars wheel by.

GOODBYE

Josephine Jacobsen

The image, lost in mass
And innocent of scale,
Plushy with habit's moss
Is now with savage skill

By love and absence freed.
Flawless, without a blur,
Now tangible you are fled
Your presence here is bare,

As if the blood-marked story
Needed such confirmation
Of how possession's glory
Waits on this final motion.

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Solar energy is the consuming interest of John Yellott, the husband of BARBARA LESLIE JORDAN. It is no wonder that some of it penetrates her poetry.

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Verse by ROBERT BELOOF appeared in Poetry (Chicago) recently.

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