

RECURRENCE

A Quarterly of Rhyme

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GROVER JACOBY, *Editor*

TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE

Elma Dean

The hunter's ominous step is in the wood,
The spitting stick of death upon his arm.
Either the jay with his blue-winged alarm
Or some wild radar cautions Nature's brood:
The rabbit, in the dark earth, feels him pass;
The leaf-hid squirrel eyes him overhead;
The coveted buck, as still as any dead
Hung trophy, waits in shadow and high grass.

But should one go in love, with little sound,
And only the magic glass, there may be seen
The gem eyes watching from the parted green—
The sharp, furred faces at the tunneled ground.
Surely something beyond sight and scent and ear
Informs these travellers on the feet of fear.

SOURCE

Josephine Miles

The color of happiness, its end and cause I question,
But its cause most, the secrecy of source.
Its color is present, the world steeped in it;
Its end is ever and of course.

Lost psychiatrist of my imagination,
Come from the past into this color of noon.
The cause you search shapes itself to the question
And is in process, and will greet you soon.

RIOT

Josephine Miles

What strength give to riot that it can subside?
O hungry riot, here and here is food,
Eat and rest.
Comfort the little riot. Love is best.

But the big little roarer leaps from the breast,
Hungry, angry, and for no good.
And what then
Cries mother, cries uncle, to the rioting man?

E A G L E

Josephine Miles

My eagle-face boy, none is too quick for you.
With what majesty you peck and descend.
There is little percentage for anyone who
Thinks to consent to call you friend.
You will be the bird at his untimely end.

The American talon in your clenched hand
Sharpens itself on the mice we both perceive.
But how hawk are you? Do you understand
An orthodox figure with a flapping sleeve
Standing and watching, or do you believe?

ROOM

Josephine Miles

We may see the room despair
As the east goes out of it,
The colors greener wester
Than this cooling spirit.

But if we come at night
We shall see the glare
Of the red sunset
In the reflective air.

THE LAME ARM

Ruth Pitter

I stood there, by the gate into the yard,
And told Him.
I'm not so young now, and the work's too hard.
My bad arm ached, and I began to scold Him.
Lord, I said, looking up the diamond air,
It's ached for years now. I believe You care,
Because I care for all in pain,
Though I'm a poor thing, and You are the Lord.
If love and pity live in my small brain,
What love and pity make the living Word!
See, I am made so that I must and can
Pity the poor; do You not pity man?
I saw a cage of monkeys at the Zoo,
Oh, years ago: and one had hurt his arm;
Didn't know what to do.
He couldn't pray, he didn't know a charm,
But nursed it in a corner, and his eye
Was fixed upon a little patch of sky.
My heart turned over. Oh, I felt to blame!
The creature needed help, and no help came.
Or if I understood
A little better, I could be content.
I do believe that anyone who's good
Knows somehow why these things are sent,
And how to bear them without going bad.
Then pain's no grief, and sorrow isn't sad.
A bigger monkey, Dumbo, had a chain
Hung in his cage, to climb upon and swing.

So had his next-door neighbour; but the pain
For Dumbo's small-town mind, the dreadful thing,
Was that his friend had got
His chain into a lovely knot:
And poor old Dumbo glowered at his chain,
And hated it for being plain,
Then lifted up the end and made a loop,
And oh so carefully he drew it down—
Then turned away with an expressive droop,
A puzzled melancholy frown,
Because no knot appeared. He couldn't do
The headwork. No one told him, Pull it through.

The people round the cage jumped in the air,
And ground their teeth and stamped their feet,
And clenched their hands and tore their hair;
And poor old Dumbo still would not be beat.
He did it all day long, and every day.
I couldn't stand it, so I went away.

If You are Love, You won't mind if I scold.
We laugh when creatures nag—it is so funny.
We like their impudence. I know an old
Blackbird I wouldn't sell for any money,
Who curses us to heaps because it's cold.
It's all our fault. We laugh till we are weak.
We like that bird the better for his cheek.

So don't be angry, don't take it amiss,
(I said), You know I need to blow off steam.
My arm has never ached from that to this!
I know it sounds a bit extreme,
But I say, Scold Him if you find
It does you good. I'm sure He doesn't mind.

STATE OF GRACE

Hanson Kellogg

Laughter is the broken bread the older gods release
To those with the credentials and the proper
 countersign,
Precinct workers all, their families on relief,
Bound to get the vote out and the voters ranged in
 line.

Laughter is the tinsel on the gifts the gods have
 stacked
Tall in dusty corners where the studs demark the
 walls,
Where the strong wind holds high cornices in
 intermittent clasp,
And dawn trips on the mackerel sky, with genial
 blush, and sprawls.

Laughter is the syndrome that should never have
 begun.
Victims nailed to laughter find that laughter's never
 done,
On crucifix, on battered spear, before the Pilate gun.
Will laughter still continue beyond the final peace?

THE SERVICE OF SONG

Byron Herbert Reece

The apple the bough let fall
To ease its too bounteous store
And deemed it no matter at all
Is withered to its core.

There is nothing left to define
Its glow as it hung on the bough,
And yet the service is mine
To restore it now.

To restore it where earthward it hung
Pendant on slender stem,
For this is the service of song:
To brighten the dim

Coin of a kingdom whose king
Lies centuries asleep,
To tender the humblest thing
To memory's keep.

EDGE OF SLEEP

Leslie Nelson Jennings

This house of sleep in which we move assumes
A silvery lucidity, the shape
Of windows opening out of dark-walled rooms,
Doors thin as moonlight leading to escape,
To gardens of an underwater green,
Whose flowers are imperishable; here,
Troubled by half-remembered worlds, we lean
Over a ledge precariously sheer.

One step, and we might never need to wake
From that sublunar dream, beyond the slow
Ordeal of dawn, whose pallor cannot break
Across a shadowy landscape; where we go
Lost to all mornings, what we knew as day
Only a darkness, vague and far away.

WHEN SORROW IS THE DRESS

Barbara Leslie Jordan

When sorrow is the dress that you must wear
Then cut the cloth of grief with daring shears.
Discard the overt pattern of despair,
The usual embroidery of tears.

Using the heart for dye, you may choose red
To warm the frosty grief you wish to hide.
And in a curious way, be comforted
By wearing, too, the twisted scarf of pride.

UNCLE

Helen Curry

Poinsettias border back my early ways:
The place of Uncle and the unloved doll;
Around the gray house recollections fall
Past all proportion, but the red leaf stays.
Uncle was patient, waited through the phase
Of endless questions, introduced the tall
Delight of calla lilies by the wall—
Then dropped the careful sequence of his days.

Being too small to understand that talk
Of lilies could not wake him, I was far
Too small (they said) for visions—but they lie!
I saw him take his Sunday cane and walk
Past the poinsettias, then start up the car
And drive beyond the edges of the sky.

NUCLEUS

Snow Longley Housh

Seize the moment, shatter it at will,
Grind it to atoms charged with ecstasy;
Deeply explore its inner essence—still
We find but defeat and bitter memory.

IN THE LOST SEPTEMBER DUSKS

Eric Wilson Barker

Where the Bikini lion outroared
The latest (obsolescent) gun,
The poison mushroom of our lives
Shoots upward from the foundered sun.

The heirs of Leonardo fall
Intestate from the sphere of wings,
Where grew no feathers on their steel
Nor any fire-bred phoenix sings.

The earth lies wary in her womb,
Content with the unpeopled air;
The radio-active rotten bone
Thins to aseptic fragments there.

The subtle change within the bone
To sapphires and to diamonds flows
Through labyrinths of dark and light,
As dust to the eventual rose:

Here are flowers that were our eyes,
And petals shaped like tears to fall
In the lost September dusks,
On our loves, and on us all.

ON EMPTY AIR

Frances Montague

Abandoned to the spider's shroud,
 Captive to grass,
An island sleeps upon a bay
 Where no ships pass.
The houses bleached to silver, gaze
 With unseeing eyes
On tawny ledge and barren shore
 Where no gull cries.

Bereft of every mortal voice,
 The island sleeps;
Only an ancient towered bell
 A vigil keeps
Till in some breathless summer hour
 Its chime be fallen
To float upon the empty air
 Light as pollen.

Or on the winter gale it throw
 Its voice, to hurtle
Along the terraces of storm—
Something persists within a bell
 That is immortal.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

JOSEPHINE MILES' books are published by such firms as Macmillan and New Directions. She teaches at the University of California.

ERIC BARKER lives in San Francisco. A poem by him appears in the current issue of *Variegation*.

Six poems by RUTH PITTER appear in Louis Untermeyer's well-known anthology. James Stephens, Hilaire Belloc, and John Masefield are among the poets who consider her one of the most important figures in contemporary poetry.

FRANCES MONTAGUE, HELEN CURRY, and HANSON KELLOGG all live in Southern California.

ELMA DEAN has taught classes in the writing of poetry.

BYRON HERBERT REECE is the well-known author of *The Ballad of the Bones*.

SNOW LONGLEY HOUSH has done more to obtain a place for the writing and appreciation of poetry in the public schools than any other educator in the Western section of the United States.

BARBARA LESLIE JORDAN'S poems have appeared in "A Week of Verse," the column of reprinted verse in the New York Herald Tribune.

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS is well-known for the encouragement given by him to other New York poets.

HANSON KELLOGG'S poem, "Old Man, Alone" which first appeared in *Variegation* was reprinted in *Poetry Awards* 1950.