

READING EDITION

RECURRENCE

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A QUARTERLY OF RHYME

Summer 1950

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RECURRENCE

A Quarterly of Rhyme

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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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RAIN FOREST

Frances Montague

Rain does not fall as on a city roof,
In this green fastness, where each cedar frond
Meshes with hemlock in a verdant keep.
Slowly the drops descend, limpid, aloof,
Yet drawing to themselves all green beyond
The farthest branch, where centuries lie asleep.
Nor does each season's turning touch the trees,
Whose only cycle is the pulse of rain;
This translucent gloom, where bird songs do not fall
Has other rhythms, other cadences.
Forever isolate stands this domain,
Withdrawn from time and undimensional.

OLD SEA CAPTAIN

Frances Montague

Cool with salt distances his deep blue eyes;
He tastes a bitter salt upon his lips.
Loud are his ears with raucous sea bird cries,
For he is always thinking, thinking ships.

On mounting seas of memory he gazes
And listens for the hurricane's threatening roar;
Each wheeling point of bright Canopus blazes,
Reflect—d in the doldrums' glassy floor.

Brushing aside the mists of yesterday,
He sees gray spider wharves forever crawling
Into the prisoned waters of the bay,
And hears the gulls like empty echoes calling

From aged dories crumbling on the beaches.
His mind—a sea anemone, blindly reaches
For present sustenance, and finding none,
Draws in its groping tentacles one by one.

COUNSEL

Oliver Hale

Unless there are aims and a star
marked out early in life, it is
not enough to increase in size,
nor inflate to be a power.

After the little triumphs, your
middle age gains, it hardly is
worthwhile to seek more successes,
without the salt taste of fervor.

Be aware of the far future,
and age, the period of ice,
who ignore the soul's destinies,
and are careless of each hour.

A S E E K E R

Lawrence P. Spingarn

What though the gain proved greater than our need!
A cousin-german to John Appleseed,
He carried little save a branching stick
And in his head the earth's arithmetic.
Our soil is poor and belted in by stone
That makes divining guesswork. He alone
Could tell us where the waters ran, or why
The brooks were stingy and the springs were shy,
Or how to drill through granite shelves, or when
The floods of Noah might return again.
Each night it was enough for him to sleep
In hay and be awakened by the sheep
Who nudged against him softly, or to dine
In outdoor pantries underneath the vine.
And now his sleep is restful, long, and sweet
Beside the maple where young lovers meet.
And no one comes to cut the net of grass
That binds his grave, so that his feet may pass
Once more toward the orchard and the hill,
The vineyard where the drunken whippoorwill
Sobs for the wasted grapes. Within this well
The light reflects more than a poem can tell,
More than a mirror hints of woman's grace:
The water-seeker's mild and saintly face.

GRAVEN IMAGE

Leslie Nelson Jennings

Hers was a strange translucency which took Away the
glow from living flesh, and gave Her face an
other-worldly, stained-glass look, Limned in such light as
slants across a nave. Self-consecration may at last wall in
The heart from peril of all carnal storm, Turning to marble
what could once have been The body of a woman, ripe
and warm.

If in some private ritual she embraced A graven image,
fashioned in her own Likeness, at least among those few
more chaste Than coveted she was not quite alone. The
niche was narrow and the claustral air Too full of incense.
So we left her there.

THE UMBRELLA

Myron H. Broomell

Segmented scope on ribs of airy steel,
Collapsible circle and web-footed wheel,
Funereal fabric spreading like the wing
Of rotary bat sanguineous of sting,

Despised invention when you guard the state,
But instrument of drouth, man's surrogate
For canvasback's slick feather, muskrat's fur,
Or worm's protection in the chestnut bur,

Companion of my thoughts, and handy shroud
To carry folded through the living crowd,
Sublime device to mark the prudent man
Who dares such storms as never once began—

Come, and with me walk through the rainy
day.
The rain falls cold on docks a world away.

THE AMPHIBIAN

Myron H. Broomell

Drifted upon the beach and drying fast
The jellyfish obscure and purely lies,
Single as one of a dead poet's eyes
And iridescent as a poet's past.

Each lapping wave as the full tide recedes
Hastens the moment it will flake and curl
To powder delicate as any girl
Wore whom a poet rhymed to pretty deeds.

Lest any foot disturb its gentle mass
The jellyfish is quiet in the dusk.
So modestly it sags within its husk
As happy prospects viewed through isinglass.

It flecks the sand ingenuously still
And photocryptic as a poet's will.

ATTICS OWN HOUSES

Hanson Kellogg

Almost anything is somebody's yesterday's dream:
Riches from a penny gum machine,
Or love from a high school yearbook.

Have we not left the best of our lives,
Sere withdrawn, or reaching green,
In a closet corner caught on a hook;
In warped recordings; in the deckle-edged leaves
Of asymmetrical anthologies splayed with wear;
Burnished by the years, in Christmas card friends?

Almost anything old is in somebody's blood,
Or his blood is on it in rust despair;
Garrets were made for odds and ends,
But the odds are great, the ends are elsewhere.
Stirring the nap of any dust offends
The calm possession of the unaware.

WITCH WITHOUT FAMILIARS

Hanson Kellogg

He stared at the alembic; his eyes stayed cold,
As he wove me stories I should not have heard:
Heavy with the purple of the unknown word,
Bright with the ingredients that fuse to gold
And the gauzy postulates that flare into truth.

I learned incantations and I came quick old;
My ash-cake I mumble with a single tooth.
My hearth is unswept; the thatch sprouts mold;
The oak chest bulges with dried, leathern things ...
No foot shakes my threshold, no child· sings.

FOG ON THE INLAND ROAD

Jean Burden

The road is white that leads us back
through melted pearl
and swirling foam,
following a faint and scentless track
to dry land, and home.

Almost I could persuade myself
we are travelling
through clouds of Time
to Origin:
the hand will soon become a wing;
the wing, a speckled fin.

Almost I could believe
we may retrace
memory of kind and race,
homeward to Light, to Mind,
back to a timeless place.

Mist and wave would have it so,
but the white line binds us to the things that are,
and we are less than angels, on a flattened earth,
and there is no star.

UNTIL YOU COME AGAIN

Jean Burden

Until you come again, the fountain will not play;
the water in the urn
will dry slowly, inward from the rim,
and where the young tree waits for day,
the leaves turn brown upon the limb.

Within the square and sunless court,
bounded by wall, and hedge of straw,
I pace a narrow mile
between a sleeping tree, a sandy pool,
and an idle Eros
with alabaster smile.

VANISHING RACE

Elma Dean

The last white-tailed kites come slowly down the
blue,
Wearing the gray and snowy dress of gulls;
The small formation skims the round bare hills
And finds the marshy meadow, two and two.

Having the shape of hawks (but not the lust)
They have taken the fatal gift from the careless gun;
The ranks that close above the fallen one
Are thinner with each flowering of the west.

See how the hawklike shoulders are hunched high—
How the sharp talons bite the bending willow;
And how, alert for food, the brilliant eye
darts where the water lies thick and green and
shallow.

Did sun strike steel? The strong wings spread and
climb:
Keep this for an empty sky—for a lonely time.

NOTE: According to the Audubon Society this race of birds is fast becoming extinct. They appear hawklike, although they resemble gulls in color.

RESTLESS GIRL

Sophie Himmell

Autumn is a guileless girl
Sweeping leaves one minute,
Piling them into a stack,
Sloshing in it;

Restless girl, foolish girl,
Clutching to her breast
Unresponsive branch and twig,
The empty nest.

BALLAD OF THE AFFECTIONS

Helen Curry

Do not pull the blinds, love;
do not lock the doors;
the powdered beast in taffeta
claws upon the porch.
For if we shut her out, love,
she will be inside;
and this I cannot bear
while I am still your bride.
Before you come to me, love,
let us leave this bed
for a briery bush
and roses 'round our heads.
"What are you doing, children?"
she will come and call.
Then we can answer loudly:
"Nothing. Nothing at all!"
And if we link our roses
and fall upon the thorns,
when she comes to find us
we must seem forlorn,
innocent and broken,
your arms entwining me—
then we can lie forever
where nobody will see.

POST MERIDIAN

Marguerite Janvrin Adams

Remember midnight: longest hour to strike,
most variable instant usual day evolves;
six strokes of retrospect, six strokes we like
well to consider, that the future solves.

Recall six loves well used, misused perhaps,
and profit by their pattern, and evoke
white magic for fresh day, that may collapse
before the final stroke.

B A R R I E R

Barbara Leslie Jordan

If you had spoken in a foreign tongue,
I would have made an effort to translate
Each alien phrase, searched willingly and long
For what you labored to communicate.

But since I knew the language of your heart,
I did not probe for subtlety behind
Familiar meanings. We are kept apart
By clarity too carefully defined.

THE CHAMPIONS OF APARTHEID

Grover Jacoby

Letters and ciphers of blood!
They have foolishly chosen blood!
To have written in unstable water,
Indistinctly and humbly in mud,
Or with a stick in the air
Initials of wind and laughter,
But not with the red ink of blood—
W ricing off claim to possession.
The ink itself is confession.

NOTE: Apartheid is the Afrikaans term covering the discriminatory policy of the South African government toward its subjects of native blood.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

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LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS was one of the first editors of The Poetry Chapbook. He is now working in an editorial capacity with the Falmouth Publishing House.

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OLIVER HALE'S poems have been published in Kenyon Review, Poetry (Chicago), etc.

It is of interest that four of the poets in this issue live in New York, one in Colorado, one in Northern California, and the remainder in Southern California.