

READING EDITION

# RECURRENCE

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# RECURRENCE

A QUARTERLY OF RHYME

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*Winter 1951*

VOLUME I

# RECURRENCE

A Quarterly of Rhyme

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*Set from the scan of the magazine. The poems, their titles, the poets'  
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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

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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.

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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.