

READING EDITION

RECURRENCE

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A QUARTERLY OF RHYME

Spring 1951

VOLUME I

RECURRENCE

A Quarterly of Rhyme

Volume I · Spring 1951 · Number 4

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Recurrence: A Quarterly of Rhyme is published by
Variegation Publishing Co., Room 540, 124 West 4th Street,
Los Angeles 13, California. 25¢ a copy, \$1.00 a year.

GROVER JACOBY, *Editor*

THE FISHERMAN

Mary Moon

Our Lord is a fisherman, and He
Lets down His net into the sea.

The sky curves shadowy, deep and wide,
Over the place where His creatures bide.

Down drop the stars, loosed every one,
Into the sky when day is done.

Down drops the net in sky and sea
Woven and cast for you and me.

Stars and fishes and men who fret
Are gathered to brightness in the net.

THE PORCH

Myron H. Broomell

Reluctantly the thunder stops.
A pale light brightens dripping leaves.
After the rain, the gathered drops
Swell and are severed from the eaves.

Here it is warm behind the screen,
And you may watch the raindrops grow
Tumescant in suspense. They lean
Vibrant on air, and plunge below.

BIOLOGY LESSON

Myron H. Broomell

The moss is moist and soft, you see,
The lichen hard and dry.
Distinguished easily can be
One from the other by the eye.

Itself can either kind display—
yesterday moss, lichen today.

IN TIME OF PEACE

Myron H. Broomell

The eye will not absorb the whole
Of what it sees, but only such
As flatters its selective role
Of telepathic form of touch—

As if it were a hand which grasped
The knee of truth, the breast of light,
Or the barn door of wisdom, hasped
Belatedly when all is flight—

But yet it sees the things it must,
Its being in the task it does:
To see the cities shine and thrust
A black beam where the searchlight was.

NOW IN THE NIGHT

Eric Wilson Barker

Look westward now, look peaceward with the dark
That quietly sheathes a last thin sword of light
And yields a star no bigger than a spark.
What eyes behind the domino of night
Flash menace like the sun? What tells the time
In days resolved to one climactic hour,
The noon to which their furious shadows climb,
Tolled in meridian's high and ruinous tower?
What from that blinding ambush makes to spring,
Widening its range? Now we are lost and small,
Our love-hugged earth itself a little thing
That scarce would rob the starlight by its fall,
Yet prove this fruit of science all unsound,
Since lack of it might hold us to the ground.

THE ROAD

Dorothy Berry Hughes

Let the day be the road and narrowly
Envelop us, they said. Let its course run
Identical through us; so we shall be
Indivisible, we two shall be one.

Yet as they went, he sensed the irregular
And rumpled texture of earth, the harsh back,
The buffalo-hunch of mountain; for her
Frost flamed in the meadow. The hot sumac
Branded the eye. Even the austere aspect
Of structure sundered: each one knew alone
The mind's wall. Each was his own architect,
And they had in common barely a stone.

Eagerly they searched the day for twin words,
Duplicate images, small testaments
Of union: from silence, a bolt of birds,
The decent gaze of a horse, fact and fence.

Backward the road lay fair under its curse.
Many traveled there, each striving to speak
From the isolation of his universe,
All as lonely as gods, proud and unique.

“ONLY ONE OF OUR
PLANES—”

Elma Dean

(Item from a yellowing newspaper)

Quickly they pulled their bulky sky-clothes on,
each knowing in the dark which shape of gray
was his to fly—knowing the certain way
to touch her into life! And it was done,
moving in pattern; first the starting run
and then the wing-lift eastward into day—
for one the last—and not a man could say
whose death would rise to meet them with the sun.

Count the returned now; one less bird come home ...
See them silent at the needed food.
Watch how the youngest makes a new tight face
and drinks too much and swears and swaggers some;
and how the eldest sits, a man of wood,
hearing a doorbell in a quiet place.

P A V A N E

Ethel Jacobson

My neighbor lives upon the hill.
His lawns are velvet spread,
And there in the plane trees' dappling
His hundred peacocks tread.

They jewel all the terraced slope
With jasper, lapis, gold—
A glory that my ravished eyes
Are free as his to hold.

Elegantly robed and crowned,
They yet are not too vain
To visit my small garden
Below them in the lane.

Their regal talons tear my vines.
Their beaks slash fruit to shreds.
They make a Persian broidery
Of vegetable beds.

My neighbor owns magnificence
We can enjoy together . . .
I lift from my garden's shambles
One gleaming bronze-blue feather.

OLD HOUSE

Neeta Marquis

Autumn has crept upon you,
silent and lax in the pallid sun.
Over your drabness a senile design
as of tumid veins
spreads where a netted vine
clinging stark on a dusty wall
reveals among its umber threads
thin, specious crimson skeins.

Lean form drained of youth's wine,
you are done.
Your flaccid pores may no longer imbibe
bright blood from any sun.

THE INDEFATIGABLE

Oliver Hale

Who have survived two wars, and hear
men questioning if this is peace,
may well ask if one should rejoice
in an apprehended future,

where towers and men no longer
stand, and all dust is perilous
with death. After the last bomb has
dropped, what shall excite to wonder?

Yet, hound unleashed, how into air
does a man strain, ignoring his
newest defeat, and to the skies
return, still undaunted seeker.

THE DESIRE IN THE DREAM

Oliver Hale

To transfer all my thoughts to others—
is my ambition, but barriers
of words oppose. In the hollow brain
they clatter like iron over stone,
or thud like clods. And upon the tongue,
poised hopefully as if for a song,
a stutter soon shapes them wrong.

Sometimes in the night I am aroused
as by a great light and my mind seized
with a vision. Round and round the earth,
like luminous moons my thoughts speed forth,
and are bright in the heavens of men.
Always there is the shattering sun
following, and they are gone.

THE LIGHT SONGS

Rachel Harris Campbell

As for the little songs, that were
So pleasant twenty years ago—
Feed them to the hungry sea,
Cover them with snow.

The brittle songs of happy men
Who had no need to look on doom—
These had a delicate, bright flower
And a slow perfume,

But the garden now is bare
Where they flourished. They who reared them
Are gone to an unlooked-for end.
A cold fire seared them.

And the little poems still
Have a savor and a smell
To spice these sops of meat we fling
To Cerberus of Hell.

WE WERE NOT EXPECTING
THE PRINCE TODAY

Muriel Spark

Madam you had better show him the sleeping
Beauty upstairs with her powder still intact,
Where the whole court on sentry duty, believe it,
Propped in their wigs a century exact
Deplore her blunder but cannot undeceive it.

Madam you had better and better deliver
The bat from her tresses, dispose for a kiss
That bluff on her webby mouth; suppose he should
call it
And give her a nudge, and she take the hint, and
this
Beauty be a storm of powder over her pallet.

L A T E V E R S I O N

Marguerite W. Truslow

Only red beans and proletarian peas
now fill the turquoise-colored jars that held
the honey of the Hybla bees.
Yet that alliteration haunts the room
with scent of herbs, verbena, the warm hearth
and all that made its idiom
part of their “little language.” As he went,
“Penelope” he called her, both aware
of what this ancient symbol meant.
Its syllables were stiff with discipline,
and she alone passed on from war to war.
But not tonight, not now begin
the centuries of waiting. From her stock
of schoolroom books she took the Odyssey,
stopped the collaborating clock,
and then put beans upon the fire, pretending
that there was honey, too; and while they
 burned,
read and reread the happy ending.

ON CROSSING THE DESERTS OF THE SOUTHWEST

Byron Herbert Reece

For Roy W. Penny

Coming on arid country, not the mind's
But nature's, witnessed by the slabs of slag
Molten beneath the morning sun that blinds
Travellers eastward, the insensate crag
Of iron on the desert's rim was dry
And thirsted in my throat; and on my brain
Momently as the four wheels whirled us by
Weighed the unfruitful centuries of the plain.

Greater than grandeur was the look it wore;
Its verge was vision, as if one should find
Framed in the mortal sight a magic door.
Time, the immortal substance, flamed behind
Permitting us of numbered days to see
The endless burning of eternity.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

ELMA DEAN'S poem, "Letter to Saint Peter" was reprinted in the Reader's Digest, Coronet, and many other publications.

MURIEL SPARK lives in London. At one time she edited The Poetry Review.

Two poems by MARY MOON appear in the current issue of Variegation.

A poem by DOROTHY BERRY HUGHES was selected for publication in Poetry Awards 1949.

ERIC WILSON BARKER was born in England. He now lives in San Francisco.

MARGUERITE W. TRUSLOW'S poem, "Van Gogh" which appeared in the Winter issue of Variegation, was reprinted in the New York Herald Tribune's column, "A Week of Verse." Because of the notice taken of it by that distinguished newspaper, it was again reprinted by a periodical in Panama.

OLIVER HALE lives in New York. He has received recognition as a young poet of promise.

MYRON H. BROOMELL'S work has been praised by a number of good writers. Among them are Marianne Moore, Marcia Masters, and Jean Burden.

A play by RACHEL HARRIS CAMPBELL, "The Potter's Field," was published recently by a firm in Boston.

ETHEL JACOBSON'S humorous verse is familiar to the readers of popular magazines, but she also contributes to such journals as The Atlantic Monthly and The Saturday Review of Literature.

NEETA MARQUIS' poem, "Blind" which appeared in the
Autumn issue of Recurrence was later reprinted in the
New