

READING EDITION

RECURRENCE

20

RECURRENCE

A QUARTERLY OF RHYME

Spring 1955

VOLUME V

RECURRENCE

A Quarterly of Rhyme

Volume V · Spring 1955 · Number 20

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

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[*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."

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THE WELL

Leah Bodine Drake

The well in the field is bitter,
only the spider
lairs by that sullen glass,
only the dry leaves sink
to its scummed face:
all other things
pass on to fresher springs.
Not even the tramp in summer's drouth
stops at that place.

Just once there was one who came,
furtive, at night, and drank,
being crazy with thirst
wilder than he could bear—
then wiped the rank taste from his mouth
on a ragged sleeve, and cursed
the well, despising in his shame
that water and himself for drinking there.

LOST LANDSCAPE

Ethan Ayer

To distant islands where such flowers grow
As crisscross tapestries or spot the banks
Where virgins walk with unicorns I long,
In the storybook of wintertime, to go—
To gray cathedrals where in serried ranks
Knight-errantry lies dead, and at its feet
Armorial animals and crowns complete
With marble names descended in a song.
But this desire unto rose and thorn
Or fleur-de-lis or such prerogative
As passes into chronicle, I know,
Is not for us, nor castles that survive
But only for the stricken unicorn
And for the flowers underneath the snow.

FIRE HYDRANT

George Abbe

Exactly at the tick of fire
the hydrant's arteries expand,
and muscled iron exudes desire
to clasp, to circle, to command
with the flumed water born of power
repressed in dark for passion's hour.

Exactly at the hush of noon
a tree secreted out of calm,
seeing the end of lust's alarm,
bends, shadows, soothes the bold
despoiler now returned to cold,
and dulling its knobbed and lacquered
eyes,
arranging the chain in monkish charm,
instructs in the art of growing old.

SURVIVAL OF THE SNAIL

Grover Jacoby

This proud ship sailing through the grass
On waves of horridness and grace
Is a grey, strange and liquid life
Emergent from a brittle case,

Pursued by poisons and man's ire,
Brutal defenders of the flower,
Or crushed by anything of weight.
Eternal still his cruising hour!

HORSETAIL GRASS

Mary Winter

Equisetum: the only survival of a
prehistoric genus, sphenopsid.

Playing with stalks of equisetum,
Delightedly, the child has found
How easily they come apart;
Crisp lie the banded segments
Like ancient pillared art,
Fractured upon the ground.

But he will re-erect this broken
green;
The reeded joints, so tenuously held
By delicate bonding siccative
The living mucin that could weld
And firm the columns' tapered
points.

Only a few together fit
And these no longer neat.
The reconstruction sours
While he himself, intact,
A puny Samson, glowers;
Devonian ruins at his feet,
A sober fact.

THE FORGOTTEN YEAR

Elizabeth Bartlett

Past the brittle transient display of Oxford Street,
Past the young women in coloured velvet caps,
The workers are marching under their banners
With a dull uneven shuffle of heavy feet,
Under the mottled sky, under the paper banners.

The feet that echo in me are the feet
Of my father, marching in another town, a
 smaller street,
In a forgotten year,
And my childhood creeps back like a bitter scent;
But I cannot remember the way they went
In that unknown year.
I only remember the gaunt faces, and a word—
The Dole—like a mournful cry, heard
In a dream,
And the world shifting beneath my feet,
As it did to-day in Oxford Street,
With the weight of my fear.

NEW ENGLAND SPRING

Frances Minturn Howard

Rain? O surely not
So soon again
To wake and hear
The bleat of rain!

Rain's a pleasant thing
Sometimes, to see
In early spring
Darkening a tree.

But this—
This loud insistent flood
Has put grey water in
My veins, not blood.

Light, light; at night we die
But wake in sun;
Each day's a little birth
We count upon,

But I've regressed, and float
Upon primordial waters
Long left behind by earth's
Dry-clambering daughters.

Shrink, shrink, my arms;
Wave like the waving weed;
Eyes, glossy grow and round;

You have no need
To notice more than waves
That in deep gloom
Rock me within my green
Barnacled room!

THE WATCHER

Eloise Downer

They have gone away . . .
footprints in the snow
soundless but distinct;
no one else will know.
The cycle of the year
obliterates the track;
only one is scarred
by white, by black.

IN BRIEFLY PASSING

Donna Guyer

They paused among the flowers by the road,
Two butterflies with just one hour to spend.
So unimportant seemed the episode
That no one saw it start or watched it end.
A hundred million years had reached fulfilment,
And now two perfect butterflies could share
The ultimate in time's unique distilment—
One perfect hour. Yet no one was aware.
They hovered low, epitomes of grace,
Unknowing that they raced a minute hand,
And this was beauty which all commonplace
Had dreamed to see and longed to understand.
And on the highway leading out of town
Nobody saw the auto strike them down.

FRUSTRATION

Candace T. Stevenson

In perpetuity the high bronze door
Closes against the futile folk who lie
Tranced by its storied figures, its decor,
Too mazed to break the stillness with a cry.
The lake below lies motionless and more
Burnished than brass. The foolish folk who die
Barrier-bound do not deserve to wake.

PASTURE

Candace T. Stevenson

We shall have pasture here
After this wildwood,
By saw and axe made clear
Except for piled wood.
Watching the cattle graze
I also sorrow
Over this leafy maze
Gone by tomorrow.

High torch of sumach quenched,
Thread of white birch,
From its rock crevice wrenched,
From its steep perch.
Bulldozers toss the rock,
Power saws whine,
Skirling their shrill pibroch
Through ash and pine.

We shall have pasture here,
Cows chewing cud,
Driving away the deer,
The pheasant's brood.
I then will shun the place,
Wide meadows rolling,
If so we must efface
Brown thrushes calling.

UNACCOUNTABLES

Sara King Carleton

In that first time, that early time,
freedom was summer.

The school books left lying on the closet floor,
but the treasured top, that airy hummer,
safe in one's pocket, part of the pavement,
true,
but alive with wonder.

Carried from the city to where tracks
roll away, where rails unravel
toward salt, toward the smell of pine,
toward mountains, toward beaches,
who are we to cavil
at the boy with his top, warm under his hand?
Do we take with us things that are better
for us
when we travel?

RELATIVITY

Cecil Kyle

The space of a stream
I could step over
Was between us.
Smoke and candlelight
Made the darkness
Intimate as a dream.

I could push aside the roof
And pluck the clustered Pleiades,
But your face,
A star I could not reach
Was clear
And far away
As I sat at your feet.

Pulsing ominously,
Menacing,
Two feet of space
Stretched to infinity.

A TOUCH OF OLD NEW YORK

Dorothy Hughes

What I told you in the old restaurant
Made a present radiance, a daylight,
Upon the dark cabin of our corner,
On the floor oak curving thickly thwart
 and slant,
On the drifting dust, the russet night.

Slipped through some chink, shivering
 and kindling the hour,
The unbidden knowledge shone,
Suddenly explicit, on the wall
And the old ice chandelier, in the
 wines' slow humor,
The seething bottles, and the plain was
 known.

What you answered, your grave, mortal
 withdrawal
Of the dream, the mouth stopped with
 truth,
Was as sorrowful as the yellow playbill
With its lost story, as momentous and
 as small
As the old-fashioned deaths ghosting our
 booth.

CONTRIBUTORS

GEORGE ABBE'S work appeared last year in two issues of Variegation.

NO NEW COUNTRY is the title of SARA KING CARLETON'S new book of poems.

DOROTHY HUGHES is the author of a book of poems published by Scribners.

MARY WINTER is a sculptress. One of her poems appeared in The New Yorker.

Both FRANCES MINTURN HOWARD and LEAH BODINE DRAKE are recipients of the Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards for book-length manuscripts of excellence.

A poem by ELOISE DOWNER was reprinted recently from the Winter issue of Recurrence by The Times Herald of Newport News, Virginia.

A reviewer in The Indian P.E.N. recently praised a poem by CANDACE T. STEVENSON that had appeared in Recurrence.

Verse by DONNA GUYER is occasionally seen in the columns of The Chicago Tribune and The Washington Star.

ETHAN AYER was guest editor of an issue of Voices last year.

CECIL KYLE is represented by three poems in the Spring issue of Variegation.

ELIZABETH BARTLETT'S work has been published in such magazines as The Poetry Review and Poetry London.