

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

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01

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IN THE COLORS OF THE HEART

Margaret J. E. Brown

Pictures come out on the film
In the dark-room of the mind.
Beautiful,
To make the heart burst.
They are gone;
They will not walk about in the daylight.
How to make strong with muscle and heartbeat
The desperate hope
That grew for a moment
In the dark?

POINT THE SUN TOMORROW

Gertrude May Lutz

There is a wonderment upon this day lifting locked
lids.

Strike, heart! Lean to fables.
Out of the drawstring dark
Come to summer and to seeing.

The mind is a telling of time where no time changes:
But the heart knows the mind is yesterday—
Leave it! Enter the fever-bright waking,
This knowing and seeing where no time is,
And the feet are a light-shaping of grasses.

Arms, lift transparencies!
Hair, blow out wreathed with leaves and fragrances.
Nothing passes in this tall space
Where fingers stop the dial
And point the sun tomorrow.

AISLES OF MELANCHOLY

Nina Willis Walter

A bright-haired thought,
Curious,
Impervious to caution,
Wanders down aisles of melancholy,
As twilight sallows retreat
Like hunted wraiths
Under the star-sown canopy of night,
Wanders down aisles of melancholy, and finds—

Untutored pageant unfolds,
With vibration in minor
From the insistent niches
Swathed in sable
And spray-obscured with gold-starred jasmine.
In configurated crypt lies fallow genius,
Lies in complacent quiescence,
Sterile,
With amber-lighted bouquets,
Gargantuan trophies,
Integuments that augur only inflated melody,
Perfume drenched,
But freighted with futility.

There is no secret of being revealed
In the twilight zone of the mind-whorl,
No joy,
And no reason for cycles.
Turn again, bright-haired explorer,
And look for a beacon.

WORDS FROM A MOUNTAIN

Lucille Evans

You, mountain, are a piece of the sky,
high and heaven-yearning, neighboring with clouds.

Blue, and bluer than blue
where shadowed in amethyst,
mountain, you speak in cerulean words
eternally of God.

SPRING PERFORMANCE

Rosalie S. Jacoby

The wind

Sweeps up the poplar's vast height

In chords and octaves,

In light and air harmonies.

Invisible fingers

Depress and relinquish,

Relinquish and depress,

The keys of foliage.

THE FAR-SEAS LETTER

Edith E. Hewins

Yesterday, this hill-crested coast
Was to me no more than stage-discarded scenery
Stacked behind an old barn door.
I knew not if the robin woke,
Nor when the sun
Slid behind a storm-spun cloud.
Today, whipped by flails of rain,
I taste the bitter salt of spindrift
From wind-steeped waves.
When your letter comes,
I shall know, though they be mist-ridden,
How vast these hills.

MORNING ON THE LAKE

Edith E. Hewins

Let the early calm of lake
Comb out the tangled nerves
To smoothness.
Take a detour to see a flock of gulls
Like moored boats-motionless,
While trains of dark ducks
Move freight-slow toward shore.
At the wharf's edge
A taper-white egret preens his plumes.
From an unseen cloud-rift
One white house catches an eye of sun,
So the day is begun-in peace.

THE VOYAGE

Dorothy Humes

Now is the Moon of Melting Snow
And I embark.
Bear me bravely, frail white birch canoe,
On the tumultuous river.
Light as an arrow winged with the wind
We ride the current.

Silver sky, shed no more tears,
For my sorrow of many moons will soon be past.
Dark shore-fringing pines, remember and murmur
Only my song.

Down the rushing waters
Into the seething turmoil of the rapids,
As a floating pine-cone, buffeted, we are borne,—
Tossed-whirled-flung—
With the foam and spray.

Now the lull and the long heaving swell before the falls.

Clear, above the roaring flood,
Rings the call of my lover
Waiting in the rainbow mist to clasp me gently,—
Soon, soon, we shall roam the Happy Lands together!

P E A C E

Joseph Joel Keith

Peace lies
 under the hardened surface
 like a dormant seed
in the depth of the universe.
It freshens—
 a sudden miracle—
even in the moment's oasis
of the plundering invader;
it quenches the thirst
of even the dark and the evil ones.

Peace is a prayer for the aged,
kneeling, rising,
and warming selves under the quilt,

 the fallen
blossoms of evening

laid like a cover upon them.

Peace is a young face,
 stained with weeping,
at rest on the crumpled pillow,
after the long, soft crying.

HALF OF A SOUL

Evelyn Gorsuch

The moon continues in its orbit though the earth is
gone?

The flower lives after the stem is cut?

The thread is here,

Waiting to be rewoven,

Rewrought into something again purposeful.

A new pyramid without the base.

A new base to be begun.

Forever's arrow must be redirected,

Though all force be gone.

TO THE PROUD HEART

Elinor Lennen

Return, return, before it is too long,
Before time's gaping rent
Refuses to be stitched again.

Pity if past and present are not seamed
Against the future's wear!

O heart, would you defraud yourself with pride?
It is no garment for the years!

ESPALIER

Marietta Thompson Sprague

"A sapling planted to an alien soil,
Twig-bent with thrusting boughs strapped down,—
I am impinged upon a patio wall:
Pruned to dimensions!
Dwarfed!

"Espalier! Caricature of a living tree!
I feel the run of sap, show leaf and bloom;
Come to a scanty bearing of my fruit;
To sear and dropping leaf.

"I dream I am the perfumed pear,
Full-contoured, forked, and heavy with fair fruit;
Or yet the fir, soughing in the mighty winds,
In-holding with root and needle carpets the soft rains!

"Oh, to be full-growing! Free!
Rather would I bear brunt of fire,
The lightening jag; the wind-torn branch;
Or, a lordling, feel the woodsman's axe,—
The fall, the crash,—
The drop through churning waters to the sluice and
mill!"

TWO TOWNS

Frona Lane

- I The women walk with hips in that town;
the children with knees,
hop-scotching the walk squares—
danger only in the lines there.
- I The women walk with vertebrae in that other town;
the children behind hands
stare from grottos of eyes
through stalactite tears.

BEFORE THE VERDICT

E. MacDermott Johnston

The defendant leaned forward . . . static.
If breath came there was no motion.
Silence held the emptiness of hope.

Freedom ... slum-fenced ... is such a living thing
That the loss of it
Can intercept the breath.

SUSPENSE

Gertrude Fletcher

Through candled hours
Measured by wax
Slow-dropping in sluggish streams,
Blood-warm ...
Making no sound . . .
And clotting
On the table's circular dark-shining,
Into shaped pools
Of strange white death.

I 19 II

CITY SEEN FROM AN AIRPLANE

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

1. Amid the riot of austerities,
2. The jungle of straight lines,
3. The profuse luxuriant intersection,
4. The white smoke wells upward
5. With a faint suggestion of nuance:
6. A hint of breasts
7. And the necks of swans.

Analysis of the verse trends:

1. Dissyllable line
2. Wavering line
3. Loosening line
4. Trisyllable line
5. Trisyllable line
6. Dissyllable line
7. Tightening line

PROSODY FOR FREE VERSE

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

1. In free verse the ictus distribution or occurrence of accent is not used to establish patterns exacting conformity and repetition, but to provide textural contrasts. A free verse poem contains a variety of prosodical feet in unanticipated juxtaposition even as a variegated petal or leaf is characterized by irregular areas of more than one tint.

2. In free verse there are three distinct types of lines: dissyllable lines, trisyllable lines, and wavering lines.

A dissyllable line, (the terms, dissyllabic line and trisyllabic line, can not be used in this connection, since they imply a line composed of only two syllables and a line of three syllables respectively), is a verse composed of dissyllabic feet such as iamb, trochee, pyrrhic, and spondee in any order, number, or arrangement as long as the trend towards dissyllabism is quite definite.

A trisyllable line is a verse composed of trisyllabic feet such as anapest, dactyl, amphibrach, etc., in any arrangement that leaves the trend towards trisyllabism clear.

A wavering line is a line wherein the arses are so distributed that the trend of the line "wavers" between trisyllabism and dissyllabism.

3. A free verse poem may be composed entirely of any one, two, or all three of these types of lines with only one thing necessarily uppermost in mind, that the chosen movement or movements, and shifts of movement, suit the subject of the poem and the emotion it arouses, although for purposes of attaining a contrast in texture,

juxtapositions of a dissyllable line and a trisyllable line are often effectively employed.

4. There are lines not composed entirely of trisyllables or dissyllables, and yet not “wavering” between dissyllabism and trisyllabism, since a majority of the feet definitely go one way or another. If the majority of the feet are dissyllabic, then the line may be called a tightening line. If a majority of the feet are trisyllabic, such a line may be termed loosening. If the line has an equal number of trisyllables and dissyllables, the character of the line is then determined by the final foot.

5. Feminine and masculine endings are not a factor. A final iamb followed by a thesis should be considered an amphibrach in scanning free verse.

6. From the foregoing it is plain that anyone employing free verse as a medium of expression should have had some experience in the writing of conventional verse and have studied it with great care.