

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

VARIEGATION

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A reading edition from the complete issue

03

ISSUE 03

V A R I E G A T I O N

A Free Verse Quarterly

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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.*

*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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GROVER I. JACOBY, JR., *Editor and Manager*
WILLIAM HOLT GLENN, JR. · SALLY GLENN, *Associate Editors*

DESERT TREES

Irene Bruce

They lean their sightless forms on banks of
stream-beds,
or stand together in ravines.
Grown thick and ringed with graying bark,
abandoned by the moving tides of growth,
they wait.
They know your step before you
in the gossip of the wind.

TREE ON THE MOUNTAIN

Marcia Masters

Oh, you uninterrupted, sky-tasting you!
Lover of silence, scholar of long slow spaces,
High in immaculate wisdom standing,
Why are you there?

Here on my street hundreds of branches are mingling
Cow-like behind the pale slim fences,
Staring at life, dam of discordant rivers;
Only you in the calm of the mountains are learning
The speech of the sun.

T A U N T

Marcia Masters

Little Lake Michigan, you have never seen an ocean,
Have you?

Did you know there are sharks that kill,
And breakers that bleed,

And tides that crack in a terrible whip?

Did you know that an ocean is continent-wide,
Little Lake Michigan, did you?

But you! sweet little one, have an intimate charm,

And you do not kill-with shark teeth or bomb,

Though sometimes like a demented boy

You have put wild throats to sleep.

LOVE

Clement Wood

Love
is wisteria
in Biloxi.

Plant it beside a tree,
and soon the sturdy holed one
bursts into a hill of drooping bloom—
lilac bloom,
with hearts of dark amethyst.

The tree lifts it toward heaven.
It fits the tree for heaven.

What a harvest for spring!
Clusters of amethyst wonder,
paling to shadowy clusters
of flowery snow.

Wisteria
in Biloxi,
love.

AFTER THE MANY VOICES

Gertrude May Lutz

Quiet, fall out of chaos;
Spread under feet mosaics cool as tile.
Stretch corridors through shadow
To blue far light,
Star-pale on eyes.
No voice now shatters moment folded like a wing.
O silence, lift in colonnades of moon;
Cushion this dark.

SONG AT MORNING

Lucille Evans

After the sweet dark of sleep was gone,
I heard a bird sing out
a morning song
beyond my window.

I watched the small brown throat
pulsate with cadences;
I saw his feathers shake with joy.

CHINESE ELM

Alice Fowler Whitfield

This morning,
My Chinese elm
Stencils in flowing green
A pattern of alliterative leaves
On the Ming-blue bowl
Of heaven.

FATIGUE

Grace Holliday Scott

I am worn as the weary plains are worn
with winds that whine and sigh.

The rock that lies beneath the tedious drip of water
in a cave
must be as burdened by the vexing promise of eternity.

The sand that bears the rush and wash of tides
in repetition's irksome indolence
must know my mind.

The soil—torn—and torn again
with man's heartbreaking march of wars
must be thus dispirited and sad.

UNDERTOW

Grace Holliday Scott

Strangers, then, we are—
who once felt tumult in every throbbing vein,
who wrapped a glory gauze across each other's eyes,
so every earthly thing was beauty,
and now we meet
and need must dull the edge of ecstasy,
that curious eyes may deem us—
strangers!

A DISTANT MOUNTAIN

Orian DePledge

This high acre of earth
Wearing the shadow of a dawn
And the white shadow of waterfalls,
This mist-strewn flight of rock
At midday armored with sun,—
When the first rhythm of darkness pervades,
It is a stark exclamation in the night.

A L O N E

M. A. Mays

Between the hearth and wing chair ... listening ...
Wind in the wire and the drawn latch.
The sea runs under the sky to the cliff,
Under flown vapors, through low sky.

The wind bends and braids the mist;
It twists the fog around thin eaves,
And I hear the swung wires and the sea.

The black hearth lightens
With the spread of smoke,
And the bulged flames cup
Round the goose-voiced wood.

The rain comes to flatten the sea,
And the gulls pitch
Above the squat house,
Above the white tide,
And there is that at the latch ...

THE PAUSE

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

Until you speak,
What is this moment?
It is the braided glass
Within the lifetime of a wave,
Till with moving lip
You make it smash and foam.

IWO JIMA, 1945

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

Now, only now!
Not since Iwo emerged,
And the sea broke
Like a cracked mirror,
Split clean with a flaw of land.
Not since then!
Not even then—
Was Suribachi more than a crust,
Iwo more than a name.
Not in one century,
In none of those centuries.
Now, only now!

DILEMMA IN CALIFORNIA

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

You are looking
Into a confusion of seasons and cultures;
Stains of orange and yellow dryness linger
Here and there among twigs almost winter-clean;
Now the date palm's jungle-splash of frond
Utters quite a summer accent.
Then a bird's voice,
One of spring's love trinkets,
Is picked up by the ear
And tossed among the scene's eclectic pleasures.

Now you leave the natural world by car
And, after having parked,
Wander among neoclassic banks and office buildings,
Wondering whether to learn Nahuatl,
Or with these stale pilasters
Recognize the humanistic premise
Of Greek and Latin above everything,—
Or take up Japanese.
(Far from this shelf of land
The islands stare,
And behind the islands, China,
A world of worlds and ages.)
Or go on with French and German,
And sip the filtered good of Europe
In Rilke, Verlaine, and the rest,—
Or Spanish,
Since Charles the Fifth once ruled the naked

aborigines.

One foolish friend thinks it best to talk with London
By transcontinental, transatlantic telephone,—
With Mr. Eliot of the gestured cadence
To be advised of the most elegant futility.

Oh, well, forget it!
Shake off philosophies of heritage.
Snatch what you like from culture's great buffet.
Decisions are not made within the head
But through the lungs.

The air so winter-winterless,
This diamond-atmosphere
Though flawed by intromission of phenomena,
Inhale it well.
Renovate perception,
Breathe, enjoy.