

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

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# VARIEGATION

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VOLUME I / AUTUMN 1946

*A reading edition from the complete issue*

04

ISSUE 04

# V A R I E G A T I O N

A Free Verse Quarterly

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Volume I · Autumn 1946 · Number 4

*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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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Variegation: A Free Verse Quarterly is published by  
Variegation Publishing Co., Room 325, 124 West 4th St., Los  
Angeles 13, California. Subscription is \$1.00 a year; single  
copies, 35 cents.

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## DUSK

*Dorothy Hobson*

---

As a fair girl  
    departing  
leaves a room fragrant  
    with the light delicate scent  
        she wore,  
and forgotten trinkets  
    here,  
        there,  
the lovely,  
    the careless  
day wanders through the western door,  
    dreamily  
        trailing a dusk-wind sweet  
            with her memory,  
        a flame-bright scarf of cloud caught  
            upon the mountains,  
and one clear star  
    dropped like a jewelled buckle  
        from her slipper  
into the shadow-deepening blue.

## LEVEL OF HAWK

*Frances Montague*

---

At hawk's level  
The eye perceives life—  
Field mouse and fledgling,  
Burrowing owl and hare,  
Enunciating their small, sharp cries  
In the shadow of death.  
Can a people dwell forever  
At hawk's altitude?

## COME AWAY HYACINTH

*Marietta Thompson Sprague*

---

Hyacinth, flower of the grieving Apollo,  
Come away from the blue headlands,  
Above the bluer Aegean—  
Away from the heroic shores;  
Come out too, from tinsel pots in plate-glass  
    windows,  
Out from “arrangements”, sprays, and bundled dozens.  
Bed in the leaf-mold of borders;  
Mix with seedling and cowslip;  
Grow wild in the meadows,  
Spreading your fragrance on the proletarian winds;  
To their free music breathe and tremble  
In irresponsible harmonies.

## CONFUCIAN PILLARS

*Nina Willis Walter*

---

Dragons of flame  
Writhe around the huge stone pillars  
That hold up the temple of Confucius,  
Writhe upward  
From gray pavement into distant shadows  
Under the bright-hued roof.  
What ancient hand  
Worked the huge block of stone?

Gone is the hand,  
But the carved prayer lives,  
Supporting the temple roof.

## REPROACH

*Boris Randolph*

---

Why do you always bring my dreams with you  
And hold them out of reach?

You stood there tonight,  
Arrogant and proud,  
Dressed in the yesterdays that I have known,  
A faint entreaty in the softness of your lips,  
Forbiddance on your brow,  
The halo of my ancient hopes upon your hair,  
The dark of lost desires in your eyes ...

## SOUVENIRS

*Winifred Clark*

---

An ivory elephant and bits of jade,  
A filigree basket of mandarin fruit,  
A Japanese fan, a black pearl from the East—  
I should have journeyed far and brought you those;  
Oh, I should have brought you those and kept my  
heart!

## TWO WORLDS

*Mae Winkler Goodman*

---

We stand between two worlds;  
shadows purple the valley,  
blotting the steeples;  
we are suspended  
between space and space.  
Let us wait a little, beloved,  
till the long shadow  
covers the last handkerchief of roof ...  
then we shall descend  
by a compass of stars.

## DESTINATION

*Mae Winkler Goodman*

---

I have memorized  
the working of your mind:  
I know what fences it will hurdle,  
which corners it will turn,  
and where it will run headlong  
toward its own destruction,  
But your heart  
is unpredictable  
as summer lightning—  
never shall I learn its course,  
nor be sure of its destination.

## TWO PICKERS, SALINAS

*Ethelford Carroll*

---

Two pickers are flashing their knives,  
are slashing the life-green of lettuce.  
They are cutting the earth for restaurants,  
slicing the land for hotels,  
for waitresses in chop houses  
and the noon mouths of men.  
Two pickers are flashing their knives ...

## CHARM BRACELET

*Ethelford Carroll*

---

My dead days are the bright charms  
on this bracelet of silence  
that circles me with promise . . .  
Some inarticulate part of me knows  
that my dead days are my living days.

## WINTER NIGHT

*Marie Erwin Ward*

---

The wind is scythed to a thin breath,  
The river is struck silent with a white stillness.  
Time slowly sifts its hours in snow,  
Down, down over hill and hollow,  
Making an ermined hush.  
There is no singing voice of bird or tree.  
The pattern of this night  
Is etched across the sky  
With the point of a small blue star.

## BEACH FIRE

*Kay DeBard Hall*

---

Around wood's delicate bones  
Flames curl their pointed tongues,  
Gold-vein the bleached arms of pine.

Fire of driftwood,  
Crimson the outgoing tide.

## AT SUNDOWN

*Rosalie S. Jacoby*

---

Beneath its silken robe  
Trimmed with fiery sequins,  
Has the ocean a heart,  
A heart that is pounding  
At the beauty of sundown?

## ACRES OF WIND

*M. A. Mays*

---

There is the bone-shake of the prairie's  
brittle grass,  
and the wide moving of wind.

There is the anvil of rock and the water on it,  
sounds  
in the crease of the hill.

It is a pimpernel morning  
lasting blue until night,  
with a white cloud high  
at the head of the wind  
and the toe-bend of the grass.

It is as if a passing were here,  
a something no two hands can hold,  
and I look the longitude length of the land,  
but nothing stands waiting,  
nothing but grass.

## SENTRY AT SNOWLINE

*Dion O'Donnol*

---

Hill, at this hour  
You are the prow of earth  
Cutting a wake in the stars  
As earth turns eastward  
Toward midnight ...

What thought, like frail wings,  
Is assailing the dark of watchful eternity?

Here in the green gloom of cedar and fir  
Darkness is defeated by the first snow;  
Solitude is destroyed by feathered silence;  
Night is subdued and the air brightened  
By slow-falling whiteness ...

My aloneness is expectancy, a vigil,  
A more than waiting.

I shall go home an unmarked way.  
Let there burn a window like an earth-loving star,  
That I may know guidance—  
Have the simple assurance of light.

## SOME FREE VERSE OF EARLIER CENTURIES

---

From "Samson Agonistes" by John Milton  
(1608-1674)<sup>1</sup>

O how comely it is, and how reviving  
For the spirits of just men long oppress'd!  
When God into the hands of their deliverer  
Puts invincible might  
To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,  
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men  
Hardy and industrious to support  
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue  
The righteous, and all such as honour truth;  
He all their ammunition  
And feats of war defeats  
With plain heroic magnitude of mind  
And celestial vigour arm'd,  
Their armouries and magazines contemns,  
Renders them useless, while  
With winged expedition  
Swift as the lightning glance he executes  
His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd  
Lose their defence distracted and amazed.

<sup>1</sup>In the famous choruses from which this passage was selected, Milton shatters the blank verse mold, although there are intervals of reconstruction. Since the passage contains short lines and several pentameters departing to a great degree from iambic, it ceases to be blank verse. It is free verse dominated by a trend toward dissyllabism.

From "Evening Twilight" in "Die Nordsee" by  
Heinrich Heine (1797—1856)

On the wan shore I sat  
Idea-plagued and alone.  
The sun lowered; it flung  
A streaked red glow on the waters;  
And the white full waves,  
Impelled by high tide,  
Foamed, speeding nearer and nearer—  
A weird rush, a whisper, a flute-note,  
A laugh and a murmur, a sighing and whistling.  
Through it all ran an intimate cradlesong.  
It was like hearing forgotten legends,  
Old lovely fairy tales ...

(Translated by Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.)

From "Leaves of Grass" by Walt Whitman  
(1819—1892)<sup>1</sup>

The commonplace I sing;  
How cheap is health! how cheap nobility!  
Abstinence, no falsehood, no gluttony, lust;  
The open air I sing, freedom, toleration,  
(Take here the mainest lesson—less from books—less  
from the schools,)  
The common day and night—the common earth and  
waters,  
Your farm—your work, trade, occupation,  
The democratic wisdom underneath, like solid ground  
for all.

<sup>1</sup>This excellent poem contains examples of  
submerged verses,  
lines which approximate prose dimension, but its essential  
character as free verse is only reinforced by the presence of  
the contrasting element.