

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

VARIEGATION

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A reading edition from the complete issue

07

ISSUE 07

VARIATION

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*

FURROWED LIGHT

Daniel Smythe

The sky is plowed by the mountains,
And the furrowed light is spreading.
The aprons of the steep slopes
Spill the forests like a green flood,
And they are guiding the swift winds
And the valley-pointed rains that come down
Upon the houses and the faces of the people.

DRESDEN TRAGEDY

Virgie Bernhardt

Once in a high and marble room
Where quiet watched us through the walls,
As if dignity might tap a shoulder
To mind a squeaking shoe, a loosened thread,
Yet no one saw a thread or heard a shoe.
Each moved deftly past the others,
Liquidly, like fish in opaque water —

Once you were there with me,
You were a tiny thing beneath your dark-blue coat,
Behind your long lashes;
And quiet and marble
Tensed your small hands.
You were still and solemn; silence
Made your eyes large and your
Lashes darker; and the marble walls
Were white cosmetics on your face;
Your dark-blue coat was longer;
And your brown braids were browner;
You were older on this day.
I had never seen a green shoot
Grow an inch within an hour.

In a lighted alcove, behind glass,
You watched a man who placed some china dolls,
Blue, small-featured, Dresden,
Grouped on a swish of silk.
You swallowed in your throat and smiled,

Quickly and to yourself and with bright
 recognition,
As to a welcomed playmate suddenly seen.
Your fingers itched with wanting.
You spoke, and then were startled
At the shower of the sound down upon you.
You did not feel me there till then.
Your fingers tightened on my hand.

Then a doll slipped
And fell through the man's fingers.
Your cry was deep and sudden
As if the doll had cried it.
Broken pieces in your fingers,
In your pillow, through your future,
Your cry was sharp with broken pieces.

With your tear-wet face against me,
I took you far, heavy with sobbing,
To the cool and prickling grass;
And the earth rocked from your sorrow.
I stayed with you long,
Long, before the grasses
Could with their constant curling, curling,
Comfort a small child,
Stroking her fingers with caressing blades,
Stroking her small fingers.

LOVE IS NOT LOST

Virgie Bernhardt

Love is never lost; the calla lily
Has the bee in mind when she
Makes with her madness,
Her deep jungle yellow yellow;
When buckwheat wears lace
And ruby-throated hummingbird
Vibrates flitter-flitter wing-songs
To the sweet flower,
Love is not lost. Across the world
It is so; the bower bird
Steps out a love dance in his jeweled arbor;
He has built his dedication with his beak.

Sometimes I hear it in a song.
When love has no harbor, it might come up
anywhere
And cry to be fulfilled —
The heightened smile,
Tears for a hungry child,
The way I kiss you sometimes in the evening.
Love is not lost and does not tarnish;
Broken, mislaid, reincarnate.

YOUR SOUL

Charles Wharton Stork

The deepening violet after sunset,
Where I can feel the urgency
Of silver points
Impatient to prick through.

SEA SHELL

Irene Bruce

Here in the secret ear of echo
Near the green realm of endless else
Roars the reflected all,
Where the inner out enters
A spiral of orange pearl,
And sound bears the round cell of the self,
Singing,
Curving,
Singing.

THE EVICTED

Dorothy P. Salsig

Once again
the difficult tears of maturity
blind my eyes.
I must move on.
I must leave the familiar smooth paths
that courage and patience
have worn to ease of use.
I must move on
to jungles of strange faces,
to unknown roughness for the feet,
to shut-door loneliness of heart.
I must leave my home,
I must move on.

DARK RUMOR

Dorothy Humes

What is this rumor
hoarse-whispered by the wind,
this universal gossip
among sardonic, winking constellations?

Does it concern the furtive moon
sidling from cloud to cloud?

Or mutter
at the course a headlong comet streaks
through space?

Or is it the disclosure
from one scarred, smoldering planet
of plotting that portends
annihilation!

INTERROGATION

Florence Stevenson

How can I think of you?
You have stolen my mind
And placed an autumn maple leaf
Within my brain—
Which crackles like thoughts,
But produces nothing.

Does my mind feel heavy
In your hands?
Or do you fold it neatly
Into your breast pocket
With my heart?

BUILD WALLS OF NOISE

Gertrude Fletcher

Noise — this is the age of noise . . .
This is its day, and a million alarm clocks begin it.
 Snap on the radio,
 Give it the works;
 Push it up to the limit.
 Louder — louder,
 Bathe by it — shave by it —
 Have it for breakfast;
 Have it all day — all day.
 Go to bed with it — fall asleep to it,
 Leaving it vocal — going on blaring;
 Ready for any awakening,
Keep one jump ahead of silence.

DUNE COUNTRY NIGHT

Ethel Fairfield White

Always the harsh rustle of tall dune grass,
And the weed-pod castanets;
Always the swish of wave tongues licking the sand ...
Restless, the dune spirit searches vainly for peace.

Midnight darkness hides prowling furry creatures,
But cannot muffle the scurrying of their small feet,
Nor the flap of low-flying bony wings like romping
skeletons,
The faint, quavering call of nightbirds, and one
sharp cry.

Mystery rules here and silence never intrudes.

TIDES

Elizabeth Cooper

Impulse coalescing

swelling

crashing

on the thin, well-swept sand.

Here and there

a wave is flattened

in the clash with bonfire and song.

Mostly

its churning fills the dark.

So as the tides, these nights.

Not nothing —

night is kinesthetic

motion flowing through leaves,

brimming the streets,

weaving in windows open to the hint of a breeze.

This sinuous force is plated with sound,

discordant complaints of desire,

jazz,

O be still and let me savor the night.

SANTA ANA

Hannah Smith

The wind is a whirling Amazon,
Dancing
With looping veils of sand.

The trees are a Greek chorus
Bowing in deep obeisance
In the yellow spotlight
Of the dust-dimmed sun.

The doors and windows of my little house
Clatter unwilling applause.

TO FAIR PERPLEXITY AND
LAKE ELSEWHERE

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

This tree is full of contradictions,
Little attempts at wind.
Its tentative leaf
Is indecision's portrait.
Come, stand before it,
Match bewilderments.

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

LAKE ELSEWHERE

Not quite a wind,
The continuous shift of air
Athwart the lake,
Evokes
The multiple smile of water.

You too, my dear,
Pluck gaiety out of the air,
A carefree loveliness.

TO THE NEW TELEPHONE
BUILDING AND DISTANT
NOISES AT NIGHT

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

(Chorus to be intoned by employees and stockholders)

Large block of concrete!
Sunset obstruction!
Magnificent boor!

Of telephonic communications
You are the center, huge structure,
The heart.

Go on squatting at sunset
In the midst of the various flame,
Interrupt boldly
With your rectangular mass and your bells,
Fill the air with good-bye and hello,
Crash the sacred horizon at dawn and twilight.
Deliver your impact.

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

DISTANT NOISES AT NIGHT

Vague fountain of lost precisions,
Composing and decomposing
In descents of auditory spray!

THE NIHILIST'S PLAIN

Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.

Attention!

All you affirmers!

Here where leaves cut the sky,
Converting the vastness to flecks,
I catch my breath.

I am suffused with delight
By the blue tatters,
The green lacerations.

There must be some need for negation.
There must be!
There must be!