

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

VARIEGATION

VOLUME II / AUTUMN 1947

A reading edition from the complete issue

08

ISSUE 08

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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TIME'S SERF

Lucille Evans

Bound to the wheel of hours
man is ever the serf of time—
the captive, the reluctant vassal,
his eyes set on the clock
or the jeweled gadget on his wrist.
He is goaded by the small black hands,
their quantitative gestures.

FOR CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE

Elinor Lennen

Now, in the silence,
Truth comes,
Filling the outlines of words.

Speech is too noisy
For thought to be sure it knows;
Sense, too soon quickened or dulled,
Gives poor testimony.

Inquire of silence,
Where sound fades past echo,
Where light dims to shadow,
Inquire . . .
And be taught.

YEARS

Virgie Bernhardt

Years,
Like steady dim caravans,
Go out, go out,
Breaking a track through the sea of sand
To where the bright water lies
And quivers in sun-pricked shade.

ANNO DOMINI 1947

E. MacDermott Johnston

There is sand in the wine
And a desert thirst;
The air whirls with the needs of people.

How can they talk of peace?
Their throats are parched.

KEY-CHILD

E. MacDermott Johnston

He lives the daylight hours unparented—
A key-child
With a weighted string
Around his throat.

THE CRUEL INTENTION

E. MacDermott Johnston

The critic's voice poured—
Fluid glass,
Settling and hardening
In unbelief.

POLITICIAN

E. MacDermott Johnston

Mummied by swaddling-power
He held his vision to a narrowing arc.

DAISIES

Marcia Nichols Holden

By day,
These children of the roadside,
Open up tight fists
Showing treasure
To those who pass.

SPRING TAPESTRY

Fanny Montague Hunt

Across the vast breadth of freshly turned earth,
Against a background
Of deep brown richness—
The myriad of soft spraying green.

WISE ONE

Barbara Levin

Go ahead, child, scrawl images in the dust.
Stare at their patterns; patterns need staring.
You have had little of life.
Ah, child, stay in your wide-eyed age,
Do not peer around cobwebbed corners.

But no—you leave the yesterdays.
You cry for the tomorrows.
Today is not shiny enough,
Though the glare blinds.
Keep away from tomorrow, child;
It is labeled “Do not touch!”

But you are like me, child,
You do not listen.

CITY DAWN

Dorothy Hobson

Fresh
as the world's beginning
cleansed by sleep from midnight care-shadows
wakes (in the pale
silver of quietly swelling light)
the mind
morning resurrected,
shaping (to its own white surprise)
one silver word
legend-strange,
nearly forgotten now,
that echoes like a clear call
among impassive sound-empty towers,
soaring from peak to peak tranquilly,
the lost
fabulous briefly renascent syllable:
peace.

CLIMBING RADIANCE

Rosalie S. Jacoby

A cloud avalanche
Has engulfed the moon.

The wind
Despatches a rescue party
To free her,
The pale but intrepid,
For her progress of light.

PARADOX

Jane Morrison

I watch the appletree in May,
The pink fire that soon will harden to fruit.
How can it be
That when I shake each branch
Of this fragrantly burning mound,
My hands and hair are covered with a cloud of snow?

MOONLIGHT IN THE VILLA

Richard Wirtz Emerson

We all love
the blonde hair
as it makes
a last act curtain
for each limpid breast
and then permits
a hasty curtain call,
But
We came late:
when will
the next
show start?

THE ALLEY CAT AND I

Irma Dovey

She walks her lonely way
Humping herself
 as if to some invisible caress,
Begging friendliness
 with plaintive mews;
Yet at one kind word
 or an outstretched hand
She shrinks away
 and tells of her quick distress
With “fft” and arching back.
The alley cat and I are kin.

WIND WORDS

Starr Jenkins

Luscious wind in the black night,
Gushing out of invisible mountains,
Bitter cold but exciting,
Cooling my hands,
Rippling my hair,
Flapping through my loose clothes!
The stars are smothered in clouds;
The black night talks to me.

TRAIN WHISTLES

Lillie Hall Antonakos

They scatter the night.
Train whistles
have no regard for minds
that go diving after wisdom
in the dark sea
where it lies hidden.

SPONSORED RADIO

John Moore

Tears are measured by stop watches,
And laughter is gauged to the second.

FRUITION

Snow Longley Housh

Fruition is not of the falltime;
Fruition is a processional of fulfillment:
Rounded red rose haws
Holding the heart of petaled fragrance,
Swaying grasses
Yielding up their seeds at the wind's behest,
Dew-sparkling berries
Laughing their tart lusciousness into the chill of
 spring—
These are the frail harvest of beauty;
These do not wait for autumn.

Only some life-sustaining grains
And a few leisurely fruit trees
Brood through the ripening seasons,
And fling their frost-rimed challenge
Into the face of lusty winter.

CONJUNCTION

Snow Longley Housh

Mars and Venus, Saturn, Jupiter,
And all the flaming galaxies of star-space,
And in their midst the cool detached moon
Bright with reflection of a living fire,
All these—and earth,
Chill darkness at the surface
But white heat at the core!
Here, sentient beings are caught midway
Between life's inner passion
And cold reflection,
Moon-bright reason, high enthroned,
While all the cold crust of convention
Hangs
With a planet's weight upon the heart.

TRANSLATION FROM
FRIEDRICH HOLDERLIN

(Written in free verse circa 1802)

All with yellow pears,
And brimming with wild roses,
The land hangs lakeward.
You swans well-favored,
And drunken with kisses,
Dip with your heads
In the water's pure calm.

My own sorrow, not to know flowers
In wintertime. Where are they,
And the sunlight
And shade of the earth?
The high walls stand
Silent and cold; in the wind
Clap the weather vanes.

(Translated by Grover I. Jacoby, Jr.)