

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

VARIEGATION

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A reading edition from the complete issue

14

ISSUE 14

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 JACOBY, *Editor*

A DATE PALM HOLDS
DREAMS

Edith E. Hewins

Lest streams of wakening sunlight
Sweep me too suddenly
 out of the dark of dreams,
I have a tree at my window.
Sun must creep through

 the shutter-foliage of a palm
 slit by slit—while
 step by step I come
From the land of sleep,
 to accept slowly
The limitations of the real.

AGED MAN TO YOUNG MOTHER

Ruth Pitter

Now he is here, he needs a friend.
Cover him from the dreadful light.
Weak from the nightmare journey,
Cast out of his heaven,
Thrown naked on a bitter shore,
Hide his eyes awhile from space,
Break the news gently about time,
Help him to forget:
To forget exile and death,
Crass defeat and the repulse
From joys he thought his own forever,
The place of dreaming, beautiful island,
Where the dream and the life are one.
Ah, can you know, you so young,
Even you, his island home,
You that bore him in the night,
The bitterness of birth and death?
Did you learn, did you listen,
So that you keep in mind for ever
Hope and anguish both together?
We need a friend. Whisper to us,
Close in the ear, about God's mercy.
Whisper, "I love you. Love is here."
Hold hard the lonely, bending hand,
The hook that seeks a mooring,
Anchorage in darkness,
The roseleaf hand or parchment claw;

And put your hand
Under the skull, comfort the neck;
Poor neck; it aches more than it knows
With traffic to and from the brain.
Dark journeys, all alone,
Coming or going, and hard
Throes for all to endure, mother;
We all need pity, O give us
Pity from prescient hands and eyes,
Pity for all from the sacred breast,
From the low voice in the dark
When the morning is far, and fear
Bellows in the cold caves
Far under the mind of man.

Come to meet us. Think of our need.
Plan out the rescue. That stringent pain
Gave you a glimpse of the iron passes,
The basalt walls they forget. O mother,
Light us, coming or going,
Bring us the Mercy.

So when the night is over,
So when day is no more,
We shall forget, and be merry,
Dancing and singing in tune and time,
In time, and beyond time;
And you—you shall smile at our dancing and
singing;
You did not fail us. We are your own.

THE TRANSPLANTED TREE

Marcia Masters

The miracle, then, is this:
That the maple tree not very young
Could have been transplanted;
Could accept after so many years,
Spent with tall-voiced trees of the forest,
This lawn where the birds rise softly
And their silence means more than their song.

Though by spring the leaves of this tree
Will glow like a thousand green butterflies,
There will be some root
Still resistant,
Some bough still leaning,
Though people will say that the wind did it,
Toward the forest, and the way that it came.

LATE AFTERNOON

Virginia Wilhelmsen

What rhythm of rich remembrance
does the wind wake in you, old woman?
What memories have the years been
unable to annul for you,
daughter of a Californian,
as you sit in this drab room
where the shadow of the soot-filled curtain
lies lightly on the floor like a black lace mantilla?

END OF THE YEAR

Margaret J. E. Brown

The fog came in the night at the year's end;
There was no sky and no moon;
The neighbor's house was a vague line
 unremembered,
And the lamp at the street's end was a ghost lamp,
With no pillar to hold it
Where it hung in vagueness.
We saw no farther than our own fence.

Then we walked down the ghost street.
The edge of the world came no nearer
Than it had been from our door,
But ever as we walked
We half saw that it was not the same world;
It changed with every step,
With the edge always a little way on.
We came back comforted;
We had found that all did not stop there—
With our own fence.

CITY OF STONE

Rose Rosberg

Grass, break through the stone;
roots, frail and searching,
settle in the earth beneath
and send up green banners.

City, you have stopped the mouth of earth.
You have prevented it from uttering flowers;
you have put your hands of stone
over our eyes and ears.
Great city, how glad I am
that your mile-high towers some day
must fall before a blade of grass,
must topple before a flower.

After the noise and fury
you will hear an insect's hum,
you will be still
with the sound of flowing water.

BATTERY SKY LINE

Alice Fowler Whitfield

A mighty tide
On the edge of the ocean,
This giant of cities
Creeps onward.
Screaming with power
It surges over bridges,
Tunnels, rivers.
Here no ancient roofs house ghosts,
But on towering shafts
Of grey and silver,
Roofs in the running wind
Flare with high daring gardens.

ARRESTED IN OUR VISIONS

Christopher Maclaine

The new lips of the dawn
Hushed our murmuring
And urged us to other laws
And hours,
Spilling on a world of day
A light to overshadow mind.

NO TRUCE

Hanson Kellogg

The clod watchers, the clod kickers, unarmed and
unaware—
As surely as they swing that ponderous weapon of
vision upwards
Bring down, in undulate snow, the iridescent breast
feathers,
Swirling thick through the butterfly wings
Riffled to flitter dust,
Never on their faces, never to their shoulders,
Always to their feet, untouched, for comfort in
crushing,
For walking on.

The clod watchers, making clods of clouds,
Tread every bright high deft aerialist
Into glints in grit: mirrors of always sunset.

SEE R

Hanson Kellogg

Would you have me prophesy? Cross my palm
With any silver you have paid enough days for.
I will show you the future in a pool
Of ink, brine, or time-flattened soapsuds.

It is only the past I dare not handle:
The moments that clank and stalk.

I can draw out any cluttered happiness,
Fumbling among the sticky oddments
In the reticule of your faith.

VARIATIONS ON INTUITION

Muriel Spark

I

I

The old ridiculous partner
is back again, who
speaks my mind before me,
sings me now
fonder than ever,
the embarrassing vancouverier.

I am her fool
the noisy one to follow
who sounds my intuition like a bagpipe;
I am her acrobat
and altogether lacking an answer loud enough, I
somersault to her tune
how sick soever.

II

II

I left her once
for seven years long,
then she piped
and I did not dance.
Little it reeks that
seven long years
I wept not
although she mourned.

III

So she is back again, and
the mood is on.
So must I bear my old she-wolf
who once
suckled the rising moon
for a growing girl,
to blow her pipes
and I shall dance
again.

SHARED DESTINY

Eleeza Hadian

As my one hand will find the other
In darkness
Unerringly,
And mutely through the hurt . . .

And as one hand will reach the other
Blindly,
Unhesitatingly,
So my heart found yours
In the hurt hour of night.

Knowing, touching across space
The entity of you,
Unabsorbed by the multitudes,
Undisputed by time . . .
Oh, as my one hand will find the other,
So my heart found yours.

THE REFINING HOUR

Grover Jacoby

(Old-fashioned Suburb)

The air now holds enough twilight
To blur the fuss on old buildings;
In lieu of architectural details—
A dim whirl of erasure.