

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

VARIEGATION

VOLUME VI / SPRING 1951

A reading edition from the complete issue

22

ISSUE 22

V A R I E G A T I O N

A Free Verse Quarterly

Volume VI · Spring 1951 · Number 2

*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.*

CONTENTS

<i>School of Porpoise. Katharyn Wolcott</i>	3
<i>At the Grave of My Father, Edgar Lee Masters. Marcia Masters</i>	4
<i>To Andrea, On Her First Birthday. Marcia Masters</i>	5
<i>Transitions. Marcia Masters</i>	6
<i>Hampton Marshes. Edith E. Hewins</i>	7
<i>Dark Atoll. Mary Moon</i>	8
<i>Marmoset Miniature. Mary Moon</i>	9
<i>An Handful with Quietness. Hanson Kellogg</i>	10
<i>Spring Song. Hanson Kellogg</i>	11
<i>Faith. Allen E. Woodall</i>	12
<i>Nostalgia. Lee Richard Hayman</i>	13
<i>Perspective. Ray Ballard</i>	14
<i>The Sun Dial. Ray Ballard</i>	15
<i>Cobalt Constellations. Christine Turner Curtis</i>	16
<i>Poem Reviews. Hanson Kellogg · Alice Fowler Whitfield · Grover Jacoby</i>	17
<i>Contributors' Notes</i>	19

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SCHOOL OF PORPOISE

Katharyn Wolcott

Out of the ocean's depth they come,
Thin black blades,
Pointed fin after fin
Rising, diving, rising again,
Following in a straight line,
Rolling in a rhythmical loop;
Sun glistening on their ebony backs
As they undulate through the water—
A huge bracelet of jet beads
Circling a mighty wrist.

AT THE GRAVE OF MY
FATHER, EDGAR LEE
MASTERS

Marcia Masters

Let spring come now to this hill by the river,
And turn the grass the color of boyhood:
Green for the fingers to dream in,
And the afternoon thoughts of youth to walk upon.

Let this spring be like any spring
He remembered—
With larks blowing out of the fields,
And the tall wind lifting the prairies.
Let nothing be changed:
Not the least bush
Nor the water worrying the banks
Of the tiny river,
For he who was part of this land's own springtime
Has come home.

TO ANDREA, ON HER FIRST
BIRTHDAY

Marcia Masters

You whom my hands love, .
Whom my shoulders., knowing the warmth of your
 head, love—
Have been given to me that my eyes may see again,
And my heart be stretched to the utmost.
Out of a far spring I brought you,
Summoning you with the need of my flesh
And the need of my spirit.
O Life, be kind to this warmth at my shoulder—
To this incredible dearness,
For who can say from what world without fault she
 came
To look at a garden that yearly darkens
And toys that only can perish.

TRANSITIONS

Marcia Masters

The snow has such a young look today—
See how expectantly it gleams
In the noonday sun,
As if it had just heard from spring.
And yet a few dark days ago
It was expressionless.

How curious it is that everything in nature has its
moods:
By dusk when the tall light of deep blue angels
Curves over the lawn,
Snow will have changed:
It will look reverent.

HAMPTON MARSHES

Edith E. Hewins

Cocks of coarse grass
Stand beside their squat shadows
Under an August moon.
A pulse from the distant ocean
Throbs beneath stillness.

The reedbird's cry is shrill
As it flies in fright
From plundering owl's beak
Or jaws of a water rat.

Sea-bound, the wind
Unwinds through the sedge,
Clacks dry knife-blade reeds,
Ruffles haycocks,
And drones drowsily down the dunes.
Pipings from the hurt bird
Lament a lost brood.

DARK ATOLL

Mary Moon

Beneath emerald foam the shadow-still reef
lies sleeping too deeply to hear
the sound of sea pulse or to know
the rise and fall
and breathing of the sea.

And so it was.

Silence, and only the tremor
of running tides,
and her green gold tresses
rippling lightly outward
on the unquiet waves.

Upon her brow stars woven
with sun fronds and sea ferns,
and sleep along her thighs,
along her curving cheek,
and all her shadows drowned in sleep.

But now stricken
with a sleep deeper, O deeper than dreaming,
under cataclysm the rock riven,
and nothing left under cloud drift,
under wind drift sea drift,
but ghost ships wavering beneath green waters
and coral clinging to blue-veined rocks,
and in shallows the fire of sea treasure wreathing
the mute pallor of mariners' staring bones.

MARMOSET MINIATURE

Mary Moon

Beneath jungle leaves
in fern forest,
he shivers
with desires and appetites.

In the small curve
of skull,
his eyes blossom with hunger
to savor juices
of smooth-skinned fruits,
of green honeyed berries—
and the teasing crispness
of golden seeds.

Quickly
in his dark claw,
an emerald bubble
rises to burst in sweetness
against the sudden death
of his greed.

AN HANDFUL WITH QUIETNESS

Hanson Kellogg

Ecclesiastes 4:6

The old sad function of the dawn
Ends only as the need for waking us.
The pirate crows are up; small birds investigate
Our lawns for booty.

Long dawns stand always at our backs
Goading us on through the unceasing hours
Chime-weighed and heralded, to aged familiar
Duties, and raw, never final pleasures.

Night blinds us and we are then stilled,
Lying well above the grass that grows and grows
Planning to be cut.

SPRING SONG

Hanson Kellogg

The television trees begin to bud; they shine
As a pretty panoply for rooftops,
But the sap descends instead of rising:
The very furniture drips, sticky
With sight and sound and a green, unseasoned smell,
Acerbated further by decay,
In the flickering gloom.

F A I T H

Allen E. Woodall

Slow steps on the walk
Coming and going
In the beauty of the morning
The hot hush of noon
The soft loveliness of evening
The still black hours of night
Sometimes of course
There will be a hurrying of feet
Like the quick patter of rain
The sudden quenching of wheel-speed
The pounding of the heart
With the coming and going of life
And the cold long stillness afterward
The heart freezing in upon itself
But the old rhythm will return
Wheels roll to a slow crunching stop
Slow steps in the garden
Voices and laughter against the wall
They will be there
You will awake and hear . . .

NOSTALGIA

Lee Richard Hayman

Remembrance slips over present thoughts,
sweating the hour in angora warmth,
nestling soft down of past love
against my day's harsh duty.

PERSPECTIVE

Ray Ballard

From a distance I saw men
Discharging a lighter-load of clean fresh lumber;
Carelessly they threw the boards,
Which formed gleaming white rainbows
In their flight through the early dew-washed air.
It is good, I thought, to be alive,
And those longshoremen are doubtless singing
as they work.
But when I drew near I heard them quarreling
bitterly,
And on inspection the boards were found to be
worm-eaten.

THE SUN DIAL

Ray Ballard

In the late afternoon I sat alone in the garden,
Surrounded by my children and my children's
children.

"Look, grandfather," said my youngest child's little
boy,

"The sun is rising."

"The lad is a dreamer," said his father,

"And does not know that it is almost noon."

Fool! I thought (but said nothing),

Can you not see the sun dropping like a stone in the
western sky?

COBALT CONSTELLATIONS

Christine Turner Curtis

Cobalt stars of the anchusa
drip to the green lawn
in unfamiliar constellations.
One is tempted to interpret them
like tea leaves in a cup,
But how to read this blue-star language,
by what key decipher its script!
Shall it be translated through the miasma
and firedamp of our breathlessness,
the sword o Damocles hanging over our heads?
Shall it be read through the blur
of the deified flesh, or shall we employ
necromancy, and attempt a reading
through some dogma of the numerologists
or the Rosicrucians?

Well, no matter. Each will construe
through a secret lens; to each this galaxy \
will be an interior thing. Some may deduce
that the unpredictable has its own pattern,
and we are never outside;
but our cycle, like that of the anchusa,
is linked to imperceptible threshings of air;
to secret ripening and loosening of corollas;
and these decree our fate; from birth to death
we evolve our own tragic astronomy.

POEM REVIEWS

“For Any Member of the Security Police” by Josephine Jacobsen. *Voices*, January-April, 1951.

A good poem ingratiates itself through its frailties. The points that etch this one on the brain are two: an ambiguity and what, were I dealing with a less subjective medium, I would call a glaring fault. Whereas the color of the language—seems always masculine, the imagery is quite as constantly feminine. The result is a charming dichotomy reminiscent of disguised Shakespearean heroines. And in the lines: The capitulation point, . . . / In very strong young men, well-fed and finicky, the final word is not the surprising adjective but the incredible one. On the other hand, When the ambiguous bird in the dark meadow/ Cries out an undecipherable message has the true, hollow, oracular sound. And at the end the leashed hatred bounds against the fences of restraint: do you see / a small, unnatural eternity/ fashioned for you only?

Hanson Kellogg

“The Miracle of Dogwood” by Virginia Cummings. (From the book “The Miracle of Dogwood and Other Poems.”)

Sensitive to beauty, especially beauty in nature, this Canadian poet has taken the lovely dogwood tree as a symbol of resurrection. She compares the tree, barren of blooms, to her own life when her faith was darkened and she was empty of purpose. Just as “Out of invisible nothingness here,” the tree burst into “white fire” so her heart bloomed with faith. Now this faith renews each season as she beholds the tree, “thickened into blossom,”

"Like a nun with knees bended
Breathing visible prayer."

The simple rhymes in this poem ring musically, while its charming imagery, with its implications, helps to make the poet's meaning clear. Behind the "The Miracle of Dogwood" and the other poems in this book, one glimpses the reverent feeling of the poet and her reliance on a Power beyond the visible.

Alice Fowler Whitfield

"THE FISH" BY MARJORIE
BOULTON. POETRY LONDON,
FEBRUARY 1951.

Grover Jacoby

Twenty of this poem's twenty-four lines are consumed by an apostrophe to a remarkable fish, in which it is implored to take a ring on its fin to a lover four thousand miles away. Although the choice of go-between is the sort of thing literary critics often find objectionable, it is impossible to deny that every line of this lyric is penetrated by a passionate energy and a feeling for the sea. The emotional reality succeeds in sweeping aside any unreality of situation.

Once we hear that the fish is "Silver and free to move/Like mercury and laughter," we know that its embassy will be effective and that the woman "on the wet pleated sand" has reason to listen thankfully to.

"Winds and oracular voices
And music under my feet
Where the lost heart rejoices
And earth and water meet."

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

. MARCIA MASTERS, the daughter of the famous author of "Spoon River Anthology," has a brilliant record as an editor and poet. Though Los Angeles was her place of residence for several years, she now makes her home in Kenilworth, Illinois.

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EDITH E. HEWINS lives in Oakland, California. Two of her poems were published in the .first issue of Variegation in January 1946.

KATHARYN WOLCOTT lives in New Jersey.

HANSON KELLOGG's book, "Attics Own Houses," is being published by Alan Swallow. Mr. Swallow's "Index to Little Magazines 1949" includes Variegation. Mr. Swallow's project of yearly indexes is the recipient of a grant from the University of Denver, and he is receiving deserved recognition for his services to contemporary American literature.

RAY BALLARD is a resident of the island of Curacao in the Netherlands West Indies.

A poem by CHRISTINE TURNER CURTIS, "Reverberations" was awarded a .first prize by the Poetry Society of America at the December meeting.

A poem by Alice Fowler Whitfield appeared in Variegation (Spring 1949).