

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

VARIEGATION

VOLUME VII / WINTER 1952

A reading edition from the complete issue

25

ISSUE 25

VARIATION

A Free Verse Quarterly

Volume VII · Winter 1952 · Number 25

*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 S E P A R A T I O N

Kenneth Gee

Through this bleak spring day, time grows
Into the green-veined year,
Along tender leaves and shoots.
Even a time of waiting moves:
But the knife of separation cuts
Bough and brightness down.

You are away, at the end of dark
Distance. I, alone here:
What I see is not
Blossom in suburban gardens
Or flowers on blowing curtains,
None of the day's small certainties.
I do not see now that the earth is real.

Spring comes coldly.
Blossoms hang like dumb waterfalls,
Leaves mean no more than simply being green.

You are away;
The distance is not far.
It is the separating darkness: lying
Along these few familiar miles,
Dark becomes infinity.
The limes weep down the long street in despair.

To love is never easy;
It is as hard as love's own definition
Within our separation
Or in the bread of our daily life.
Who can say for certain
What dusk intended?
That the particular evening pointed
The way he has come to now?

Your letter comes in answer,
Revealing life at the core of love.
Distance burns away:
We are a hand's touch near
In our separate places.
The wind forgoes its cry.
Now you name them on the page,
Writing what is dear to you of spring:
Leaf and apple blossom wake and speak,
Blow down their former silence with their green
and white bells.
Wind blows the sky
Wide open in a gale of love.

LOVE SONG

Dorothy Geneva Styles

In a space of wave breakage
You washed the marrow from my bones;
Bleached and brittle
They splinter nervelessly
Like silver daggers of the moon's monotony
Shattering on the beach.

ENGLISH SUMMER

Clive D. Greidinger

Rain drifting onto a tree-walled lake,
A quiet sound about teatime.

WINTER ACONITES

Christine Turner Curtis

And after a night's vigil one perceived
in the dawn, the small bed of aconites:
new snow muffled their lemon heads;
their lemon eyes were closed.
They had the absorbed air of suckling,
imbibing, perhaps, a milk of endurance.

Or, in the mute manner of flowers,
they may have been meditating
a pantheistic philosophy:
"Take heart; nothing is too late.
There will be other chords to come.
All is in progression; all will resolve."

AFTERNOON IN THE LIBRARY

Marcia Masters

Thoughts grow here like grass,
Quietly;
Are like unjustled flowers
In such a stillness.

I feel that by making no demands
I have mastered time,
And I shall stay here
Until the unlighted furniture
Wades in pools of purple,
And dusk moves down the sky
Surrounded darkly by his last pale sheep.

PALOMAR

Hanson Kellogg

It takes a mirror
Fully to see the galaxies.
Do they lean towards their reflections?
Do they primp for pictures?

It takes a mirror to see anything at all.
And the focal point is always
Somewhere in the past,
Light years past—

While the lines of the spectrograph
Coil like serpents, while the way
Winds through space:
A vacant road
Alien to endings.

INTERIOR

Hanson Kellogg

Let us not talk of love now.
Turn on the radio, the water or the weather.
Open the windows, air the room with veils of
curtains,
Straighten the pictures, move the lamps around.

Consider the implications of histrionic
assassination,
Or politics, or games of cards designed for two.
Spot the floor with the Sunday paper.

Never, never, never
Let us build anything, own anything
Desire a thing at all,
Or plan.
Ruins gouge our ankles as it is.

Let us not even speak, but pass as quietly
As rivers flowing into different nations.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Hanson Kellogg

This is no night for the levity of smoke,
For garrulous perfumes; no night
For laughter absorbed by panelling,
Or ribaldry reflected from veneer.

Go, rather, out into the chill quiet.
Under the stars, whether it be in sand or snow,
Dig until your fingers bleed.
Dig and cover.

ENDURANCE

Cecil Kyle

Time opened perfectly;
Redolent the moment's
Heart of sun
Poured on the afternoon's quiet air.

She had striven through the day
To stop the flutes in every pulse,
Fearing he find the music rude.
He stood beside her, love in eyes and voice,
To find she had turned to stone.

WHY DO I RUN?

Cecil Kyle

Why do I run?
To feel the wind pulling
Each separate strand of hair;
To hear my blood pounding
Against my temples like
Brass gongs;
To feel the crumpled kiss
Of leaves and dust
Beneath my demanding feet.

SHORE LEAVE

Era Chamberlin

The sea on the outward eye moving
Rocks no cradle—the mind bent
On sky chatter and a blue wind blowing.

Yet when on the slate sand the stumbling foot
Overturns a skeleton of crab,
The clocked mind stares at the socket emptiness,
And fingers, crooked into palms,
Seek in pain a deceiver.

SOFT CONQUEROR

Elinor Lennen

Deer-swift but elephantine,
Suddenly, fog was everywhere!

Yet the amorphous thing
Came with no body I could touch,
No tail nor head marking off length,
No voice to warn or answer,
Nor any odor to entice or repel—
Only a thousand licking, lapping tongues
To swallow me quietly.

DESPOILER

Esther M. Richard

She is like the. love vine,
Seemingly innocent of evil,
But insidiously weaving
Tendrils of catastrophe
About the hearts
Of her victims;
The wicked intent
Of the creeper,
As it weaves
Living patterns of beauty
About tree branches,
Hiding for a time
The slow disintegration,
Until the strangle hold
Yields deadwood.

ROOM OF NO MEMORIES

Florence Kerr Brownell

This room that seldom is entered
Turns tyrant
Invading sleep:
The shape of it
Is branded on my pillow.
Dreams rearrange sofa and rocker,
Glass-globed clock.
I lean to light the fire
And morning seals the door.

Florence Kerr Brownell

EDITORIAL

Grover Jacoby

THE DISCIPLINES OF FREEDOM

In free verse, the nature of metrical effects due to contrasting rather than corresponding textures can be determined. However, the control of these contrasting textures is possible, because despite the infinite varieties of movement within different lines, each verse is a unit which can be ascribed to one of a limited number of categories. Free verse moves from one to the other of these categories in response to the demands made upon it either consciously or intuitively. These points were covered in greater detail in the first two issues of *Variegation*.

The writing of free verse relates to the control of spontaneous forces. Conscious control of these forces is important not only for its own sake, but, in addition, it may demonstrate possibilities which can be extended in some other guise to the social system. Society, too, is searching for formulas which will permit it both discipline and freedom. An understanding of the nature of freedom in verse may presage a similar grasp of what constitutes freedom in society.

ANNOUNCEMENT

When the department, "Poem Reviews," was initiated, the publication of *Recurrence: A Quarterly of Rhyme* had not been undertaken. The simultaneous publication of the two quarterlies, *Variegation* and *Recurrence*, has resulted in an increase in costs which makes the omission of "Poem Reviews" a necessity.

The department was well received by such poets as George Dillon, Ruth Pitter, and E. E. Cummings. Mr. Cummings expressed his pleasure with a review of one of his own poems, and Miss Pitter wrote from England: "I think the practice of reviewing single poems is good, and wish it could be done here."

Therefore, it is to be regretted that this change must be made. Every sacrifice will be made to maintain the policy of a regular rate of payment for all poems appearing in the two quarterlies.

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The reader is likely to notice a change in the method of numbering the issues on the title pages of both quarterlies. The change emphasizes the number of issues which have appeared. This system has been used for a number of years by other periodicals.

CONTRIBUTORS

FLORENCE KERR BROWNELL is the author of *Pendulum*, published by the Fine Editions Press in 1949.

MARCIA MASTERS' poems were reprinted recently from *Variegation* by two of the most prominent newspapers on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, the New York Herald Tribune and the Los Angeles Times.

KENNETH GEE and CLIVE D. GREIDINGER are British poets. Mr. Gee's poems have appeared in *Horizon*, *Poetry London*, *Poetry* (Chicago), etc.

DOROTHY GENEVA STYLES lives in New York.

ESTHER RICHARD is president of the Mississippi Poetry Society, which was organized in 1932 at Belhaven College.

ELINOR LENNEN, CECIL KYLE, and HANSON KELLOGG live in Southern California. Miss Lennen and Mr. Kellogg are represented in the Winter issue of *Recurrence*.

CHRISTINE TURNER CURTIS is a New England poet who has received a number of honors.

Verse by ERA CHAMBERLIN appeared recently in *Number*, the magazine in San Francisco, which is closely associated with the movement led by Lawrence Hart.