

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

VARIEGATION

VOLUME X / SPRING 1955

A reading edition from the complete issue

38

ISSUE 38

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 JACOBY, *Editor*

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to bookstores and newsstands by B. DEBOER, Post Office Box
761, Hoboken, New Jersey.

[*The publisher's own advertisement, from the last leaf:*]

ENJOY THE OTHER EMPHASIS AS WELL. You will find in *Recurrence* that rhyme is more modern than many think. Although *Recurrence* and *Variegation* are probably the only magazines intended to complement each other in terms of writing technique in the history of periodical literature, they do often meet on common ground. For instance, both quarterlies use a considerable quantity of poetry experimental in form and content, though the conventional forms are amply represented in *Recurrence*.

FABLE FOR SUMMER

Margaret Lewis Albanese

Crying a need of splendor, the seekers came
from wide savannahs to the heart of the
 radiant wood;
through the sunweb of the wilderness they
 came
and the goldflecked forest.
But they found no amber of Paradise
nor ancient manna,
no splendor sold for a penny;
only the guardian lion of summer
sloth in his eyes and indolence in his bones.

Scanning the bright wood, summoning all who
 hear,
he feeds on marrow of morning and flesh of
 noon.

“Who will lie down with me,” sings the
 golden lion,
“Who will lie down and cease?”

LAMENT FOR THE CHORUS OF ARGIVE ELDERS

Keran O'Brien

By the dust in the wind
and ghosts that disturb the grass
we are forbidden certain uses of time;
all death and birth,
the horde the flood leaves
when what was sea becomes ancient land
and ancient bog.
We know what lies hidden;
those we have sacrificed to protect the wheat,
to insure the victory.
London's lyrical agony will never be done
and a child on the charred breast
cannot be propitiated with a new dance
or a spring dance.

After the bad harvest, the bitter winter
and the spring earth rotten with flood
(is there some ecstasy in disintegration?),
watch as they pull from the bog
a dark Hyakinthos, smiling
as he did when the rope bit.

A terrible persistence is in the stone
and we who are not runners with fire
afraid of the agony too knit in the nerve
dread the clear issue
and obscurely retiring

scream like the gored Mykenaian bull
when we infer
when the menacing years imply
the unremembered tangling robe
Kassandra's misunderstood lament.

The light once shot cannot be recalled,
and a disturbance in the aggregate
travels forever outward;
ho, sing
one split star in illimitable night!

FAREWELL

Cecil Kyle

My hands have become the roughened texture
Of an old woman's,
Since the shadow of oak leaves
Fell upon our clasped fingers.

RETROSPECT

Cecil Kyle

Surely the tears of old friends
Are crystallized into jewels
I may take out
And wear now,
But as I lift the scented cover,
The liquid drops break on my fingers
Still fragrant, warm.

OFFERINGS TO APHRODITE

Cecil Kyle

I set out for thy temple
With a rose, two doves
And fruit,
O Aphrodite.
It was a clear morning,
And the hills were green jewels
In the sunlight.
I met Lyceus at the Forum,
Who teased me for the rose.
I gave it to him—
I do not know why, unless
It is because his eyes
Are like the blue haze
On the farthest edge of the sea.
I meant only to give a pear
To the beggar woman,
But there were children in the street
Who begged so prettily.
With such laughter they scrambled
For the apples!
A little white cloud floated in the blue—
Alone.
My doves looked at it so sadly.
I let them go free to make more
 white clouds in the sky.
Here I stand, O Aphrodite,
Before thy altar with no offerings,
With bare hands, and only my heart—

And of it I am not so sure!

CHILD IN LONG GRASS

Candace T. Stevenson

Slipping your hand from mine,
what do you see in the jungle of stems
scaled to your stature?
Is it the pure green
of a wave in sunlight?
Do you feel the giant caress
of wind blowing over,
feel it stroke the rough pelt of earth
as a hand strokes cat's fur?
You smile at me through the pale stems,
elfin, elusive. Do you see a bobolink's egg
or a round stone shaped to a child's palm,
Or is it only the breathless
adventure of separateness;
what do you see in the deep grass of the meadow?

J U X T A

Grover Jacoby

A well of freshness
Overflows among the skyscrapers.
The trees in billowy interruptions
Of all this precise geometry
Are carrying on—
Their verdant vague remarks
Announcing Nature's presence,
While somewhere
In a roomful of busy typewriters
She moves about—
A spring gale
Eddying amidst the scrap iron.

AFTER WOUNDS

Joseph Payne Brennan

After wounds
the sympathy of speech
stifles and smothers me.

I want the sea wind,
the whine of it
keening through salt-crusts sedge.

I want full waves
pounding wet sand,
rolling the porcelain shells,

beaten boulders
set at the sea's edge,
bleached shore grass.

If you say anything,
say that the wind is strong,
that the dunes are shifting.

I will be healed
by the breakers' roar,
by the wordless wind.

PROCESSION OF CLOUD

Lucille Evans

Protean shape of cloud
patterns a castle of snow
brief on blue.

Even as I stare
turret and battlement dissolve,
segments break and shift
to form a tiger
crouching on feet of silver.

A phantom bird hovers,
white, fantastic,
one bird, lovely, ephemeral, hung in air
with no song.

LAURENCIN GIRL

Mabel MacDonald Carver

Not of any period,
modern nor Renaissance,
this fanciful, white-faced girl
wearing small hat of tulle and birds
and unfashionable lawn dress,
looking from the canvas
with great dark eyes, fever bright—
not innocence,
not guile.

DEMOLITION

Elizabeth Stanton Hardy

For a man standing in a machine
this crane
points a huge iron finger, slowly right,
then left, or bows to earth
gathering gravel.
At a pushed lever
this drudge obeys,

building a pavement for people
who hurry past to work;
smoothing a passage for fellow-bondsmen
who also move at a pushed button.

LUNCH HOUR: CITY SQUARE

Lisa Grenelle

On this green oasis posturing pigeons
strut among crumbs of sun,
squirrels beg primly on plume-tails.

Three young secretaries gossip
over ham and rye; opposite,
unwanted old men
blink from broken benches.

Beneath these exiled trees, green quiet
can be had without cover charge;
duties and indignities of morning
melt away; derelict and office worker,
peanuts in hand, turn philanthropists.

KINTAMANI (BALI)

Mary Kennedy

We were lonely, the ghosts and I.
In a swift procession of thin figures
That one could see and see through at the same time,
They blew down the mountain
Toward the dim lights of the native village.
The music of the gamelan, the shrill sound of pipes,
Arose from beside the thatched roof of the temple.
It was there we had seen the dancers,
The hypnotized child, stiff as a doll,
Turning in the light of the torches . . .
Walking on air.

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