

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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WILLIAM HOLT GLENN, JR. · SALLY GLENN, *Associate Editors*

NEVER THE SONGS

Dorothy Hobson

Forgotten
the beautiful face of love
or her sweet eager warm mouth clinging
but never her songs. . . .
Though the pain
of her swift passing be hushed
in a grave hidden these many winters
by tawny leaf-layers
not memory scattered,
her tunes
assail the inner ear forever;
and hearing them, the heart sorrows
not as a lover for a face
but as a desert traveller nostalgic for the silver voice
of water flowing.

PACIFIC BEACH

John Gould Fletcher

For three days and nights, at the pier
that stood out over shoals,
I was wakened by the ocean's fury,
having first gone to sleep
at the sound of waves under my feet.

For three days and nights the eternal
movement of rollers,
Pounding of the fists of the sea,
shook the pier and my cabin;
and filled my brain with its sound.

All people have been afraid of you
when they came to the edge and looked over
The mile-long hills of green water
advancing at an even gait
from the horizon
bare of all known signs;

All races have feared to put out over water,
and leave behind sight of all land.
Only the Polynesian in his narrow canoes
tempted the far depth;
and he could not speak of your secret.
But to him who is made familiar with you,
who can measure the wave as it rises,
Lifting the sail or shifting the helm,
time is done, and events:

there is only one change, night and day.

Only night and day under the drumbeat of rollers,
the power of the gale or the calm;
The measurer of margins, gull in the trough, seamew
swooping down to the brown kelp:

Life holding on, letting go;
the breathing miraculous moment
Before we are whelmed in the boiling surf
in our turn; and another life-wave
lifts and pushes onward.

O ARROGANT

Elinor Lennen

Awhile, O arrogant,
Cloud the mirror of time
With your impatient breathing—
Borrowed air shaped into words
That pass as vapor.

The mirror awaits you,
Clean as if a billion billion lives before
Had not clouded it.

Time is an element you use
But do not trespass on,
Nor make another's portion less
For having used the mirror.

Your turn, O arrogant!

ITERATION

M. A. Mays

The rain comes and the postman.
New hours with old names:
Six o'clock, ten o'clock, noon.

The sun comes and the larkspur.
Blue petals fall: seeds.

The rain comes and the postman.
She does not live here now.

SCAVENGER

Frances Montague

Even the vulture,
Unconscious partner of wind and rain,
Of sun and time,
As he pauses
On his high, intangible stairway
Vision-distant from death—
Even this gleaner of corruption
Bequeathes to the arid land
Incorruption,
Leaving behind him a cleaner dust.

CITY BIRDS

Joseph Joel Keith

Go,
park birds,
from building to building,
between the grey
old churches,
on walk, on body.

Lift and fall freely.

The gun smell,
the breath of smoke
and of fire,
the field flame
do not shame the market place,
where your brother dead '
is placed under glass
by the fingers
that lifted the fallen bird,
once kind as the sun and bough,
the fingers that later
far from
the city,
fired the gun.

WIND: NEW ORLEANS

Clifford M. Gordon

The wind
drunk on heat
careened
through the streets
of New Orleans,
staggered against rotten houses,
threw its inebriate bulk against rotten houses,
smashed itself into gusts against rotten houses,
drunk on heat.

EVERGREENS IN WINTER

Clifford M. Gordon

Ever-greens
in the distance
hover against the horizon
like women in green fur,
smoke wrapped about them
like woolen scarves.

SLEIGH RIDE

Marcia Nichols Holden

Mittened house-warmth
Flung against embracing frost
At the dark doorstep.

Old as memory of snow,
Steam from standing horses,
Runners on a wagon,
Stable hay,
And burrowing under piled rugs.

Ice-squeak
Moving to the harness pull,
Skidding across a salt-white sea,
The house slides behind,
Star-sprinkled.

And children, rime on red woolen caps,
Singing noisily,
Until toppled like ninepins
One after the other
By the glancing ball of sleep
Rolled down the polished alley
Of a winter night.

LITTLE BIOGRAPHY

Marcia Masters Jennings

Things ancestral, things dim, clock ticking,
Ticking thin
In an old house, a loved house, house of my childhood,
Clock ticking, ticking thin.

Then I came to a land of sorrel,
Butternut leaves, and sunlight blue on the river,
To bird-hushed twilight, and the stars hung out
Like a silver wash from the poles of the infinite.
In the heat of the noon I lay down in the orchard
And the lips of the wind closed over ...
The bluejay shuffled his notes by the river.

Things ancestral, things dim, clock ticking,
Ticking thin,
Its sound remembered ... even then.

I was to have had a singing stove
And a copper kettle;
I was to have been rooted down
Like the oak tree by the river;
I was to have borne like the oak tree's branches
Beautiful dreams of matter ...

Things ancestral, things dim, clock ticking,
Ticking thin.

PRECARIOUS GROUND

Marcia Masters Jennings

As if it were the bird
I buried
In my childhood,
Beneath the maple tree,
I put my love away
In that secretive grave
Reserved by thought.

Over the bird the grass grows deep,
Clamped firmly to the reticent place.
You can walk there if you will,
Disturbing no one.
But if so little as a word is said
Of him I loved—
My heart convulses
Like a dying bird.

SPRING RIDE AND WOOD SONG

Marcia Masters Jennings

It was the time of violets,
And of brooks upon the brink of speech;
By my glance
Field, forest, meadow, hill,
Lay pinioned.
Not one creature moved,
Nor one least grass
Martyred the rest
By breaking from my hold.

Then suddenly the earth shook loose,
Crumbled to dandelions and falling green,
And sliding light that shifted in and out of hills;
We raced, my horse and I,
Leaving a landslide
Of glad sound behind us
On the road.

Farmlands that ran to meet us
Smoothed out and slipped away
Behind the fence;
Clothes on the line
Sailed into the wood;
Chickens leapt up ecstatically
Upon new heights of air.

Riding my walnut wind,

I saw the God-bright fields
Surge backward,
And the cows sink into wreaths
Upon the ground;
None else but me was there
To see the violets' purple game
Outside the woods.

MOUNTAIN CHILD

Gertrude May Lutz

I often think of that place where I went as a child:
pine needled hill steep-sloping to river—
cliffs raising
tall ceilings of sky,
sun lighting small flight of eagles.

I remember how the slant earth felt under my shoulder
 blades,
how my heels dug holds between rock,
how, with sky over and earth under,
suddenly—half lying, half standing—
I felt projected as statue
come to life. . . .

Now the far-sounding water
became my hidden thoughts—my quickened heart-
 beats
Here was space to dream away my awkward limbs,
my awkward speech.

PORTENT WITH WINGS

Gertrude May Lutz

The gulls fly inland. . . .

On this bright blue
who dreams beginning storm?

Now wind-sound
louder than gull cry, blows
the yet unseen images of cloud
across the mind,

as gulls write
with white falcation
a winged—
a multiple prophecy.