

VARIATION

A Free Verse Quarterly

Volume X · Winter 1955 · Number 37

*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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CHAINED

Cecil Kyle

I am a creature
That has grown used to houses
Like a bird chained to a post
That forgets how the high air
Feels beneath its wings,
Or some woodland animal
That has unlearned the smell
Of leaf mold, and the taste of sap
And of young roots.
I must take long, lonely walks again,
Let my heart ache against the
 rounded moon.

LINE DRAWING

Cecil Kyle

She flung back her head,
And I thought
Of a slow, shy bird in the bushes
Tossing its song to the tide.
The smoke of her cigarette
Wound carefully upward
Not to blur
The firm outline of the long hand.

Dark stubborn hair,
Straight as driving rain,
Strove to touch her shoulders.

Tropic night,
Flung by the hand
Of some contemptuous god
Upon the eyes of savage man,
Falls not more fiercely
Than her image
(And she is unaware)
Upon my consciousness.

AT THE END OF THE WHARF

James Schevill

Eroded beach on the bay, an empty scene,
Only an old Negro lady hunched in her coat,
Hermit-shaped, at the end of a narrow,
moss-green wharf, fishing—

A bundle of fog binding her together with
Shore, sailboat, and a black buoy like a
Period mark in an unnatural sentence.

A sense of bungled weather, bullheaded sky,
But out of a ripple, action! Honeymoon
of hook
And a hornpipe in her homely face,
Climbs dripping her kitchen cord line
And what she hooks is unusual—

Lean leopard shark, small, yellow lefthander
With a blasted eye at his hoity-toity
family tree.
Back sinks the scene to its bungled sense,
Hollowhearted, unsuccessful and unfair.

MARRIAGE WITHOUT LOVE

Hanson Kellogg

"The hills are as distant in the dusk
As the days along the river, as the secrets
 behind walls,
Broadcast to the casual caller,
The mailman or the guest, entrapped
Like the sodden heroine of daytime
 radio serials.

"Spare me," he said, "the conversation
Of aged and thwarted actresses:
The sorry generosities
Wrung from a sense of sin.

"I am too old for caves now
In hills above a river.
Only talk absorbs me, like spilled ink
 upon a blotter."

PERIOD PINCUSHION

Hanson Kellogg

Slights she collected
From the thoughtlessness of friends,
Servants' gaucheries, the rude cheerful ways
Of hearty tradesmen lacking in respect,
The empty whistling of delivery boys ...

Cameo brooches she acquired, and stilettos
 made to pierce
The flowered hat, the arabesque of hair,
The heart (as stylized design),
Pins massive with dull jewels in heavy silver,
Or bright brass, common and cheap.
All, all she jabbed them in
To save,
Till the sachet scent resilvered them forever,
These remorseless mirrors,
Too sweet, too lavender,
Faintly decayed.

BIRDS OF BLOOM

Neeta Marquis

As white as birds of ivory, on branches
Bronze and green,
Blooms of magnolia lighten the dusk.
Some—wings folded—point their pallor starward:
Doves poised for virgin flight.
Some, mature of plumage,
Freighted with perfume, lean
Earthward in passionate brooding.

Beauty seeps from them
Like muted singing.

HOPSCOTCH

Ann Stanford

The school bus has swept up all
The sidewalk children.
How empty the corners!
The game they played
Still lies on the sidewalk
A scuffed, ancient pattern.

INDELIBLE INSECT FEARS

Ada Davies

We shall not always walk
Against unyielding solids of unsubstance,
The soft, unsure geometry
Of current minds and winds,
Nor shall we freeze our eyes
Upon the flaring streets of indirection,
Filling the four dimensions
With their blossoming arrogance;
We shall not forever numb our tongues
With these puny parallels,
Nor feed indelible insect fears.

ANIMALS

Ada Davies

Free of time-sickness, as only animals are,
They float in time like leaves without extortion;
It stops in them, safe from worrying clocks,
And they are filled with its flowers
Without guilt at dying;
Their skins are not branded
With the alien colors of years,
And they wear no shapes of hours for badges,
Nor custom's brittle livery for cover.

We live in careful rows of stamps upon
these hills
Where once the grasses rolled white stripes
under the wind.

DUSK

Ada Davies

Oh, cool to eyelids falling, those dim flakes of dusk!
Even the sunflower sockets,
Filling with dew beside the fitted seeds
And black the solid stems against the faster dark
Lifting their round tops, heavy over, into sky;
Nearer now, the wide sky-hollow, frosted close
with stars,
Spider-patterned, pouring, pouring white sands
through its glass;
And earth-smell after rain,
The spice of surface roots and buried petals—
All the sun-smell coming out through leaves
and apples!

THIS PROPERTY FOR SALE

Ing Smith

Behind a mystery of vines
on walls and the latched gate,
only laughter and glow of summer lanterns
had glittered outward
through trees and the muted clatter of patio suppers.

In their mounting charcoal smoke
could we have read petition?
Could we have witnessed anger poured into cups?
For now has dissension broken through the ivy;
it has slashed the bougainvillea
and set a flag upon the dying lawn.

SINGING IN A GARDEN

Alan Brownjohn

Now there is singing, suddenly,
Louder than the fountain:
The singing of children, far yet somehow close
In the immense warm air of the garden.

I rejoice in the silence broken, and imagine
That in their distant voices they become
The permanent, inviolable young.

Yet like the end of their unexpected song,
Which cannot continue, death seems near, perhaps.

Or nearer, at least, than their hard ageing
Into the mature, the inflexible,
Their unseen faces lined with the other children,
Those they are to bear.

For already the sudden music slurs and falls,
And the fountain begins again in the soundless air,

PURPOSES

Alan Brownjohn

Once in the garden in the evening, a flame
you struck
Too brief and wavering but to light
The gilded grass a moment, faltered and fell
Into a frail warm wind from the summer
darkness.

Garden before and garden after that flame
Shut down two jaws of blackness on the
moment
That a single match had coloured with
hands and eyes.
You had no other light. You had nothing
more

With which to search for what you had lost
in the daytime—
A book, or a key, or a glove.
And I
Had no other light with which to look
In a greater darkness for your hands, your
eyes.

SNAKE IN GARDEN

Elma Dean

Don't dream, walking in sun patches;
the cool one may be out sunning.
Don't step where he crinkles suddenly,
drawing the eye to a striped ribbon
running away.

What old Eve shudders in you?
Name him to see if the chill passes.
Let it be Lucifer,
if that's what you're thinking.

Look for him at noon
in the squares and circles of sun.
He belongs where leaves cool the stones,
but even as you, he likes warmth.
Walk around his yellow and green
 with the dark line;
don't run. His small eyes
will see you afraid. Stand still in shadow.
And stop shivering, you Eve.

CONTRIBUTORS

Poems by CECIL KYLE and HANSON KELLOGG have frequently been reprinted from the pages of this quarterly by The New York Herald Tribune, one of the six most prominent newspapers in the United States.

JAMES SCHEVILL is a dramatist as well as a poet. One of his poems was recently printed in The New Yorker.

ING SMITH was born in Sweden and now lives in Berkeley, California.

The name of NEETA MARQUIS is especially well-known in Southern California. She has a reputation both as a poet and teacher.

ANN STANFORD'S work, appearing in a previous number of this quarterly, is praised in a recent issue of The Indian P.E.N. of Bombay. That review is probably the most cosmopolitan of its kind in the world, since it not only treats of the literature in the languages of India, but finds space for information about literary activities in other countries.

It would be a task to enumerate all the prizes and awards won by ELMA DEAN. She lives in Oakland, California.

ADA DAVIES lives in San Francisco, California.

A poem by ALAN BROWNJOHN in this issue concludes with a rhyme. Its inclusion may be viewed as a gesture toward Recurrence. He is a British poet.

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.

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