

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

VARIEGATION

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A reading edition from the complete issue

15

ISSUE 15

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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GROVER JACOBY, *Editor*

PAINTERS

Noel Gibbs

Though the wind has all the clouds
For pigment,
The sky is not his alone
A canvas to paint.

Our walk beneath the maples
Is stroking for us
The voluptuous leaves against the blue
Where, in the season of frost,
My solitary walk will trace
Only the chastened branches.

FOR A BLIND MAN

Mary Pearson

Green is the clear sound of streams,
Green is the sound of running water,
The cool, pure sound of a hidden spring,
A hidden spring singing quietly to itself
Under a taut, pithy screen of reeds.
Green is a sheet of water,
A smooth sheet of water, lying still.

Listen, listen, listen,
You will hear it speak of light,
Soft, dreaming, lucent light, light which comes
With the fresh smell of wet leaves.

Green is the dry feel of crisp linen, it is sliminess
of weeds
Sinuously gleaming in the depths of stagnant pools.
Green is a rebirth, an awakening,
An uprush of new life, a flight of the spirit—
It is the polished surfaces of the world, and the hard
eyes
Of cold, smooth-skinned women with sleek hair.

Blue is the quiet whisper of the water lilies.
It is the time when the dusk is falling,
The moment of silence between the day's chatter
And the night's soft singing.
Blue is the tender murmur of the sea to the drowsy
headland,

When the sun's clinging warmth heals and caresses.
It is the colour of a sudden sweet fragrance
Blown from the garden on the gossamer wings
Of a mad breeze.
Blue is serenity and the cool touch of things,
Soft summer warmth, and the sharp sting
Of the radiance of life caught in a morning frost.
Blue is the tripping sound of modulated voices,
And wistfulness, and searching of hidden mysteries,
The smell of the smoke of a woodland fire,
A sense of infinity,
The gentle breathing of a sleeping child.

Do you hear the sound of the flames, tearing and
singing,
Dancing, and destroying? Red is the heat of the
flames,
The welcoming warmth of a friendly room,
The touch of a warm hand outstretched
In welcome.
Red is the warmth of life,
The force and the power of man.
Red is the beat of oncoming drums in the stillness,
Throbbing of pulses, the quivering nerves of life,
The dance of the storm and the maddened heat of
the desert ...
The supple fold of a velvet gown
And the frenzied rustling of sere leaves.

THE FLOWER

Mary Pearson

Shall not my love thrust up its flower?
Deep in the earth it is an alien world,
Close, layer upon layer of darkness
And the mould of centuries pressed like a damp
mouth
To the lips of life, no sound
But the tramp of rains
A perpetual drum
In a night dead to the stars.

In a little while . . .

And time is measured

By conviction: surely the green core of life—
Thrusting aside the accumulated sods,
Though the weight of weariness lies thick—
Surely the green core of life
Shall pass in faith its time of growth?
O the song of the young blossom in the sun!
Joy that shall be born in the newness of light,
The dancing under the moon's hand—
O light, O joy, O warm singing life of the flower!
Softness of tears, and the wild music is fulfillment.

PRELUDE TO A STORM

Mary Pearson

Heavy the sky hangs, swollen with cloud.
Walls of damp heat press in upon me, closely,
Like an impenetrable mist approaching slowly,
With clinging arms outstretched.
The fingers fasten on my throat, round my throat
 immovably
Fastening; I feel a choking pain. And heavily
I fall through steaming spaces where the red stars
 dance.

CITY WORKER

Orian De Pledge

The dull elves of her hours
Tie no rainbow knots at her window.
She hangs on a trolley of disillusion,
And night swarms
With the damaged vocabulary
Of the day.

FOR THE PINES

Scott Greer

Gaunt flower, breaking the sky,
ploughing through clouds, towering on
through the grey of the wind-swept dawn,
from the duff on the death-soft floor of the forest
out of the icy dew of old shadows
sweeping in wave crests of rustling green
out into the heart of the sun—

Atoms swirling about you,
blind worlds of the light, diving inwards
out of the seething dark of space
to alight in a death of fire,
while eons swirl up through you
—ageless waters from before our time
come out of the secret throats of earth
and into your sweep of spire.

We grope through the days, and our movements
crawl like white slugs to their deaths;
we spread the thin slime of our living
over the rotting floor of the forest
to mark our decay on the final stone;
we spit our breath on a dying air
and split our soul into time,
divide our mind into meaningless cells
only at last to find

blocking the streets of our endless city
blind blank face of our terrors rising,
grinding us down to shred and splinter,
the stripped trunk standing, and we are alone.

While out of wild heavens, immaculate, quiet,
on massive roots of eternity in time,
springing from night and the ice into sun
great mane of the green and the seed going on—

Harsh fronds shatter the light.

NO RESPITE

Joseph Joel Keith

The woman lived
in a half-world,
in a corner of quiet.

When the traffic,
rushing,
caught her,
she was whirled—
driven—
to the safety of trees.

Even the small oasis,
pinned like a butterfly
in the city's heart,
could not suffice her:
the green was imprisoned,
the flowers
only to be borrowed by sight,
and the bench to be shared.

THE MAGNET

Joseph Joel Keith

The rain fell,
touched
like a vast pity
the hungry earth;
and the ground drank,
sucked the life down.

The growth,
urged and compelled,
rose
higher and higher,
saved from assault
of a seared season.

VILLAGE BUS

George Moor

Past the window slips
The soft Spring evening
As the road deepens
To a den of leaves:
A submarine greenness.

Drowsily rising
And sinking sit
The red-faced women,
As the bus splutters
And sighs and sleeps.

In the air hangs
The scent of daffodils
Golden cold kissing
The warm legs of a child
Doll-limp in repose.

ALABASTRUM

Neeta Marquis

Within cool confines of alabaster
essences of summer remain
unspent.
My wish to pour the perfume forth
grows strong at times;
but I am stronger than the urgency.

Only a heart not proud
may sustain
the chrism of love.
This votive sweetness must wait
for a worthy god.

NEW LAND

Jean Burden

No, I am not lost.
Put away your logarithms
and your graphs—
this is country I have seen before as though
through water. Now it is my country newly found.
I live here.

To sniff the season's chill,
to feel the stones smooth-faced
or rough with moss,
is knowledge enough for travel here.
It is better in this land
not to have seen the inked charts;
so one remembers
what one never learned.

UNFINISHED

Jean Burden

Now do I turn from a future of this:
from the vision of laughter on canvas;
from the word frozen white in air;
from the gesture suspended;
the tableau of fire.

I turn without tears
from the Greek runners in bronze
and the lifted foot.

TEA PARTY

Hanson Kellogg

The hour, steeped in laughter and conversation,
Deepens its color, grows strong, pours heady into
the cup

Of hills: the patio beyond the patio.

The secret, still-curled leaves hold evening,

Evening and tomorrow in the dance of their design.

The flurried tinkle of sleeve-caught silver

Flinches from flagstone in the drained dead light.

From this we go to face the shrieking mirrors,

The radio dripping symphonies, the neutral cud of
time,

And the day inevitably called tomorrow.

OLD MAN, ALONE

Hanson Kellogg

He has the transfer clutched in his hand,
But the rails were torn up for scrap
A war ago, and that in another city.

The membership cards bulging his pocketbook
Are all inscribed on palimpsests,
The far past creeping out through the grimed
designs.

He is buried deep as Herculaneum,
His artifacts strewn about the midden of his person.
No shaft can pierce and be shored against
The soft resettling ash.