

# V A R I E G A T I O N

A Free Verse Quarterly

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*Autumn 1952*

*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.*

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*This number prints no contents page and no title leaf: inside the wrapper it opens straight at the first poem. The page above is made from the leaves themselves — the titles, the poets' names and the figures are the printer's, but the page is this edition's and not his. From 1952 he numbers his leaves continuously through the volume, so this number's folios run 63 to 79 and not 3 to 19; the figures are his and are kept.*

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GROVER JACOBY, *Editor*

## THE ISLAND OF SEVEN CITIES

*Peter M. Urquhart*

---

### THE FIRST CITY

This was her city: the plazas are dead for her  
Whose blood was as deep as Eastern suns.  
The walls know it, the empty houses recall:  
Shadowed by blistered shutters,  
A thousand rooms wait and whisper.  
But the sky is blank, harsh as its blue, and empty;  
No vultures carve the air of desolate squares.

The colonnades are like racks of memories;  
Each pillar steps into the next blue pool of shade  
And the floors of the temples are vast  
With the lingering spaces of homage,  
Outside three sycamores are dully green,  
Drugged by a weight of sun: the bronze hawk's head  
Glitters against a brilliant pain of whiteness.  
The streets span out the desolate spokes of despair;  
The green sea murmurs and laps the marble steps  
But no white footfall breaks the translucent film.

Only when breeze suddenly traces the streets,  
Like an idle hand in a lover's hair,  
Does the city stir and seem to remember.  
The trees moan softly; a small spiral of dusty hope  
Dances around the dry fountain; a single dead leaf  
Skitters across the great, vacant terrace:

Then all the buildings sigh and the tall vaults echo,  
And the centuries echo retentive stones.  
And the mists of her memory form:  
She who was seed and fruition,  
    And the hosts, the chants, the priests and the twining  
        couples,  
    The throngs at the palisades and the deep, rich ores,  
    The cries of ten thousands in praise  
    And the bright ceremonial fabrics, brocaded with  
        vivid death.

Almost, for a moment, the lips curve again,  
Beyond all cruelty in desire,  
And the bright sails form down vistas of time,  
And the lyre sings in the wind's throat  
Like the last vibrations of clear glass.  
Then the wind fades and the dust gyrates  
Slowly, once more, uncoils, and dies.  
The broken strings curl up, grotesque,  
Like the fingers of frozen dreams.

And the walls are blank: the sun's hard circle  
Pulsates against cracked facades; the eyes,  
Once more, are stone. The streets point out  
Their unloved arms and the blinded windows  
State like the fixed sockets of madmen. Only the  
    heat  
Slowly beats the insensible dreams of stones  
And the city of the betrayed is alone,  
Locked in its rigid moment: waiting—  
Silent, silent, silent.

## THE WAR NOVEL

*Marie Erwin Ward*

---

The dark voice of November  
strikes the gentle hill,  
the dark voice trading  
summer dreaming  
for cold principles.

Men with pen and paper  
tell no tender word,  
(no kindly writing hands spell out  
the essence of feather-floating stillness),  
rather with ruthless impulse  
deal the sharp account . . .

## GALE OF ANOTHER WORLD

*Marie Erwin Ward*

---

A wind swirls the snow  
making a smaller blizzard  
within the mighty one raging.  
Here in this world held  
in the gale  
of another world  
there is no reality.

I am denied landmarks of the familiar;  
all is blotted out  
in the whiteness.  
As a lonely kitten  
I lap at the bowl of memory  
savoring with a timid tongue  
a remembered bit of blue.

## THE VILLAGE

*Marcia Masters*

---

This is such an amiable village.  
Flowers go calling—  
you find some neighbor left them at your door;  
And workmen sleep at will,  
Dropping themselves like tired fruit  
Beneath the hawthorne trees.

And yet, this summer I have seen a change.  
The bluff where all the prettiest houses stand  
Is crumbling beneath the pounding of the lake,  
And great rocks and roots  
Are quarreling brightly on the shore.  
Where shall we walk when winter comes,  
And only seagulls can descend  
Upon the heedless shapes of ice  
That cover all the beach?

## AWARENESS

*LeRoy Burke Meagher*

---

Autumn  
daggers the mind  
with time's disintegration  
brittle music  
of leaf and blossom  
pierces the cooling heart  
a blue wind  
stumbles over feet  
nervelessly.

## GROUNDLING

*Neeta Marquis*

---

Earthborn, the grub  
measures lengths, not heights—  
penetrates grassblade forests that impede  
progress beyond roots  
and refuse.

Unspectacular,  
tenacious,  
he keeps patiently crawling,  
pestered by the itch  
of wings.

## ASSIGNMENTS

*Aveline Perkins*

---

*(Continuation of the poem wherein each numbered  
Assignment covers a different industry or science.)*

17

Far from its exercise  
Is the energy of machines,  
Where the dam conceals the monstrous water wheels  
Whose drive is pressure, not velocity.

Diversion structures  
And desilting works  
Restrain the river's paranoia.

Altitude gives the mountain  
No escape from His Immensity;  
Enslaved snow serves time  
In the extraordinary treadmill  
Of reaction turbines  
Whose mechanized whirlpools reap  
The electrical whirlwind  
Of the rotor.

Intake towers and giant penstocks  
Feed the mouth  
Which is hungry with a dream.

The motionless messengers  
Grasp charged lifelines.

In the transmission relay  
Towering couriers race without a heartbeat.

## FALSE BALLERINA

*Curtis Whittington*

---

False ballerina,  
composite of grief and grease,  
pirouette now between the moon's  
vacant horns to the rippling  
harp of a wind-blown star.

False ballerina,  
so much is fantasy,  
figure and form to you.

Sparkle your fairy toes  
across the carpet of some dark,  
forgotten forest. Listen to the  
crisp whisper of the dead leaves as  
they whirl beneath your feet. Is  
this not better? Let the moon be  
your lover and the somber trees  
be an enchanted audience. Look  
up to them and become afraid  
to look away!

## NO COLOR OF WAX

*Ada Davies*

---

Seeing the instant honesty of animals is hard—  
Hard to dissolve, inviolable, distant as heaven;  
No net of language is there for coiling tongues;  
They speak quick as blood, straight as rain  
With no color of wax or shining,  
Essential as the dark salts of death.

## HISTORIED WOMEN

*Ada Davies*

---

Women there standing still beside the mountains,  
The sides of their faces uptilted like harps,  
Rain blowing blue in their steep grotto eyes,  
Their ears filled with a storm of bees;  
Oh, read the runes of water tracing ribs of sand  
Like tight-wound petals of the first May roses,  
Untwisting now, thin scrolls of scent from green jade  
    jars,  
As from the scattered edges of interrupted dreams—  
Their hands are pale wings without feathers, quiet  
    as bones.  
But they sing now, slowly, their long sentences of  
    glass  
Moving through bells with their shapes and tenses,  
Moving through water, silent as moonlight;  
Their voices are cords of rain, stretched against the  
    hills.

## WIND RECORDS

*M. E. Uschold*

---

The narrative of wind  
is written on rock;  
its notes are sketched  
on sand.  
How many stories,  
penned by wind,  
are lost  
on ephemeral pages of water?

## THE BIRTH OF BEAUTY

*Leah Bodine Drake*

---

In the gilt morning air, birds wheeled and dipped,  
gull, tern and peewit circling  
above Her,  
Her long smooth yellow hair darkened with sea-  
water,  
and Her long flanks unsheathed from their watery  
husk.

And gross-handed fishers all along the shore,  
seeing Her only as a curling wave  
a shaft of sun  
an eddy of wind-tossed sand,  
felt a swift pang shoot through them,  
pain and hard joy;  
and their youngest, a boy,  
clutched in his dirty fist a cast-up shell,  
a coil of rose and pearl, and cried:  
“Look, look! This shell!”  
and cried again:  
“Oh, look! The colours of this shell!”  
knowing as yet no sudden word for beauty.

But he knew  
that it was beautiful.

## MEASURE OF TIME

*Ruth Forbes Sherry*

---

I dip my palm in sand,  
sifting the raw stuff of time.

These grains of lava, silica, silt,  
wind-pestled in the metate of the ages,

remember slime of fin, unfeathered wing,  
stretch of skull, uncoiling spine.

They remember brave, free men  
running the hill.

But sands remember Cain.  
When love is done  
wind will grind silica, lava, silt—  
this hand—in the metate of the ages.

## GULL AND PLANET

*Grover Jacoby*

---

Summoning gravity,  
This skillful wing  
Contrives a nearly vertical descent,  
Making of flight and fall viewed counterpoint  
All intricate and instant.

Fate and will  
Can interweave their strands,  
And you and I  
Temper our directions,  
Each with the other's natural drift;  
But why should the great earth  
Compromise with a few feathers,  
Mingle forces  
With one bold crumb of life?

## CORRECTION RELATING TO THE SUMMER EDITORIAL

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The misprint in the first sentence of the second paragraph of the editorial on page 57 of the previous issue (Summer 1952) is a rather serious one, since it might convey a false impression of this magazine's policy. The sentence should read as follows:

“Some free verse with these tendencies does appear in *Variegation*, although a preference has been shown for poems without a set number of stresses to the line.”

## CONTRIBUTORS

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RUTH FORBES SHERRY is the author of two books of poetry.

One of them, "Hourglass in the Mojave," is particularly well-known for its vivid representation of the charms and aridities of California's desert regions.

CURTIS WHITTINGTON'S DELTA PRESS is in Greenwood, Mississippi. He is planning to bring out a number of volumes of verse by modern poets.

MARCIA MASTERS, a frequent contributor to *Variegation*, now lives in Kenilworth, Illinois, in a house ideally situated on the shores of Lake Michigan.

PETER M. URQUHART is a British poet. A poem by him appears in the Autumn issue of *Recurrence*.

NEETA MARQUIS of Los Angeles and MARIE ERWIN WARD of Little Rock, Arkansas, both give lectures at clubs and other institutions. Mrs. Ward has often used the editorials in the early issues of *Variegation* as a basis for her remarks.

ADA DAVIES writes occasionally for the *Berkeley Gazette* and the *Oakland Post-Enquirer*.

AVELINE PERKINS' "Assignments" is probably the only poem now appearing serially in an American magazine.

M. E. USCHOLD'S verse has appeared in *Poetry* (Chicago) and the *Saturday Review of Literature*.

Two of LEAH BODINE DRAKE'S poems were reprinted recently in *Poetry Awards* 1951.

LEROY BURKE MEAGHER is the first Utah poet to appear in the pages of *Variegation*.