

A FREE VERSE QUARTERLY

VARIEGATION

AUTUMN 1952

A reading edition from the complete issue

28

ISSUE 28

V A R I E G A T I O N

A Free Verse Quarterly

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.)*

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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

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

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*.