



et al.: Calliope 10.1

# Calliope

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# Calliope

SPECIAL ISSUE: *SLEEP*

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Manuscripts are discussed with the writer's name masked so that beginning and established writers are read without prejudice.

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*Mark Cox*

MOON

One boy points a flashlight into his hand,  
pushes hard, as if the hand isn't his,  
as if the cupped hand is a cave  
and he's finally going in.

There are figures on the wall there.  
One idea after another rears up, all  
in red and orange, the crushed powders  
of berry and clay and blood.

So the tent is for keeping everything inside now.  
And if the other boy holds a candle beneath his chin,  
if he makes the most important face he can imagine  
without seeing himself, this is for you.  
If his eyes become small moons,  
this is for you.

I will stay sprawled here on the porch, watching  
the trees and wondering which limbs are whose,  
because there is no laughter now.  
The dark is holding its head just so  
and inching back from the neighborhood.  
Because it knows you are there.

Guys,  
there is a flap in all we know,  
but it's closed now,  
you can sleep.  
In the morning there will simply be a place  
where the grass must try harder to rise up,  
and we can say, yeah, night was here,  
but it's gone now and took nothing.

WHAT IF WE BOTH CRY OUT AT THE SAME TIME?  
*for Andy*

	-thing
You fall	about the body
asleep	gone
too quickly	before
leaving me	we know
the worry	what's left us.
of the house.	Awake.
I listen--	Who will
for clocks	clean up,
collecting night,	piece
for doors	together meaning only
remembering	sleepers know?

locks, *Calliope, Vol. 10, No. 1 [2015], Art. 1* You

for windows should  
waiting for sleep

weather in my head

of any kind-- --no bed  
wanting to make

a household no worry

sleep. when we  
You sleep

cry out-- no worry

sounds when  
like a message to wake.

some-



*Carol Dine*

AT THE RIVER

There is no comfort under the trees,  
nor in sleep, where, instead of sleep  
I dream.  
I am desolate in a clover field.  
It is hard  
holding up my end of your absence.  
The slim grasses bend in the wind  
like the legs of small beetles.  
Bare branches  
reach across the slope and touch.

*Kate Dougherty*

FLYING HOME

My son sleeps upright  
though by now he's relaxed  
into the contour the plane offers;  
his head on his hand, his digital watch  
against the window.  
My girl sleeps curled around herself,  
her head on my thigh,  
her hair falls away from her face  
and cascades over my legs  
in ways she'd love to know  
but can never manage awake.  
The voice calling itself "the pilot"  
says we are now over Arizona.  
I study my children, imagining  
they are missing the state  
we once lived in.  
When I look for myself  
I see nothing but cloud.

*Mary-Lou Erpenbeck*

SOMNOLENCE

1) Shipwrecked, she used to spend her days awake, searching the waters for some sign of hope, but the sand was so hot, and the sun was so bright, that her eyes always begged to be closed. Sometimes she gave in to them, letting them shut while she leaned on a tree and listened. Often she slept.

2) The night became a friend. It was easy to stare into a cool, black world, and she found companions in the moon and the stars and the planets. She would wander in circles as they spun from sundown to sun-up. At night she could stay awake.

3) One night a new star hung low over the horizon. It worked its way from left to right, and then she realized it wasn't a star at all. A ship! The running lights of a ship! She stood and waved. She screamed and jumped and threw stones into the black water. She called and called until the lights disappeared over the horizon.

4) She began sleeping at night.

5) At sunrise she scavenged some food, and then slept on the west side of her sand. At sunset she found more food and slept on the east side of her sand. If she woke inbetween, she tried hard not to think of anything. She tried hard to take a nap.

Mary-Lou Erpenbeck/SOMNOLENCE

6) One sunrise she woke and thought it wasn't so bad. She had become used to the sand fleas and the heat rash; the dark moist nights and the bright dry days; the taste of raw fish and the smell of seagull dung; the wet slosh of the ocean and the constant sand in her pants. She felt lucky to be alive. She thought she could express herself-- put into words or paint the glorious feeling of being alive and human. But then she fell asleep.

7) She knew she would think more about rescue if she had a child at home or a dog or something, somewhere in the world, but all she had was in that little sailboat she named *Rhapsody*. There were pieces of it out there, floating in the tides with pages of books she wanted to read, and a brand new compass, and a snorkel, and a damned expensive bottle of imported champagne, but it wasn't enough to inspire her--it was easier just to sleep.



*Raymond Fausel*

HALF THIS BED

Curled in sleep  
like a question mark  
body wrapped around where  
I should have been  
with only half this bed slept in  
my absence almost wakes you

I watch your face  
from this corner  
an insomniac's pleasure

The weird hours I keep  
trying to dampen my soul

*Raymond Fausel*

INSOMNIAC

The clock ticks on  
towards awakening  
in matters of sleep  
you were always precocious  
and so up hours before  
the script calls for it  
On the set like an  
actor before his cue  
out of place, tired  
with no lines to say

*Raymond Fausel*

HOLLOW HOURS

What wakes me  
in these hollow hours  
the thin time  
between dark and dawn

I am up  
as the air  
turns gray with relief  
and birds  
shrug off darkness  
as if they know better

This is a time  
for monks and madness  
a time  
when noise travels  
unhampered to your ears  
and silence is a song

*Julie Cooper-Fratrik*

DORMANCY

*for jerry*

I find you in the garden at dusk  
where you kneel among newly-sprouted  
spinach greens.

Your fingers drop seeds  
lightly into the compliant earth, nudge  
them under the soil's dark crevices  
where they will germinate like a memory  
held in the lacunae of a mind.

You labor patiently, knowing  
that there will always be green  
shoots, blossoms, some fruit.

Come spring... you say. I am amazed  
at your unfaltering belief,  
your readiness to trust implicitly  
in every seed you plant.



*John Gilgun*

HOW TO FALL ASLEEP

*for Susan*

Say the word Katmandu one hundred and forty-seven  
times.

If your mind wanders, start again.

Katmandu. Katmandu. Over and over.

The house you purchased in Katmandu is light  
and breezy.

A Siamese cat sleeps on the patio under your  
hammock.

You are lying on your back in the hammock.

You can smell the hemp in the rope.

The tiles in the wall are blue, which rhymes with  
Katmandu. And you

Are totally relaxed in Katmandu.

The silk coverlet is cool

Against your cheek. Your eye has focussed lazily  
On the paisley pattern. Serenity gathers

Over the mountains of Katmandu. Serenity has a face  
Like the Buddha. Let your spirit be absorbed  
In that face.

Some of the blossoms on the banyan tree are white,  
Others are purple and a few, those closest to  
the trunk,

Are a color you have never seen before. That's  
the way things are

In Katmandu.

Seven shamans are at your gate. They tell you, "You  
are forever safe

In Katmandu."

*John Gilgun/How to Fall Asleep*

You are slipping into a dream state in Katmandu. If  
    you walked now  
over the sharp stones in the road, your feet would  
    not be cut.  
They would not bleed.  
You are a milkweed seed in motion. You are floating  
    over Katmandu. You  
look down at the little men in the minarets. You  
    hear them calling  
other men.  
To Prayer.  
You can hear your heart beating. You can hear  
    yourself breathing.  
A blackness is gathering.  
That blackness has a blessing for you. Accept it.

*Malcolm Glass*

CRAMP

I wake with a cramp in my ankle, muscles  
trying to bend the bones, crush cartilage,  
wrench the joints out of socket. I'm up  
and tugging to pull tendon muscle bone back  
into line. I massage hard to persuade  
the pain to loosen its grip; and the spasms  
quiver, weeping as they let go.

Who designed this little prison with its subtle  
alarms and warnings of gravity? We know  
blood and breath best, and deepest, in pain:  
When entropy speeds through us, spiralling,  
worming its way into the fabric of our flesh,  
and we stare, dumbfounded, enthralled  
by this careful explosion slowed  
so drastically we call it life.

*Malcolm Glass*

DREAMING

One never knows the cost  
or profit of this watching, as the mind  
plays to the dance of iris and lens.  
The sleeper holds distance and drinks  
in the ravelling images. Under dry ferns  
a procession of tired soldiers  
slogs into moonlight, and the mind,  
waking, knits meaning  
to the soles of their shoes.



*Malcom Glass*

THE SPIRIT OF THE BONES

Deep at night the spirit  
of my mother's bones  
enters my body. My own

skeleton sleeps while  
my mother settles in.  
I wake in felled darkness

to find my foot tapping  
the blanket loose. I rise  
and swallow a handful of pills

from the wrong bottle  
while my cold marrow flies  
to Madagascar in the psychic

vision her skeleton gives me.  
I sleep again, but dream now  
of foster children moving

like sleepwalkers in the dark  
hallways of a gray house  
by the sea. In the morning

I wake with her dull headache  
and the queasy echoes  
of an antibiotic in my throat

*Malcom Glass/The Spirit of the Bones*

I am sick unto death. My blood  
shakes in my veins, unable  
to sing my own song.

But I wake knowing this new  
life has been with me always.

*Marcia Hurlow*

WHAT WE TAKE TO DARKNESS

In hypnotic monotone, Tim counted  
backwards. I tried  
not to envision the beige  
Siskiyou range behind  
the house, to rest in that darkness  
he hummed.

I float down  
to a cave, perhaps  
in France, candle yellowing the earthen  
outlines of hands,  
bison dancing.

*Set it loose, he chants.*

Through catacombs  
hung with stone black  
tongues, layered and pendulous, I sink from  
the light. Some rich  
grace has sung here. Even as my hands tense  
to rise, I may hear cello and Milton  
when those tongues loosen.

*Relax. Be still.*

*Go back.*

*Marcia Hurlow/What We Take to Darkness*

Man-made cave  
above ground, the walls  
curve slick, glay yellow, rust. I hover  
near the ceiling, look down as the room darkens.  
The brush pile is no longer branches.  
The angles are bones. The stench of old  
blood, acid and gas. Something  
hushed comes clearer  
and screams with me, up-raised.



Ruth Moon Kempher

A PAGE FROM BETH'S DREAM NOTEBOOK

*The aether seems at first to have been rather a region of space than an element, but with Homer it became a shining substance, fire.*

W.E. Knowles Middleton, *A History of the Theories of Rain*

Rain, I thought. Rain on the palmettos. And sea smell, salt like the northeast wind in the dawn, coming over the water, bringing in a small shower or no. Fog.

I thought "I am asleep, but waking up." That's generally the signal for falling into deeper dreaming. Something interesting is probably coming up, other than rain. It will be in the beach house again, where palmettos rustled continually under the bedroom's awning windows, and Jonah may be in bed beside me, still my husband. Lately, however, he's not there.

Ha. It is the hall of the beach house. I have walked up the steps from the bedroom. But the house is disarranged. The rooms are backwards? Mirrored? Alice again, for Heaven's sake. I must stop that. Why am I looking out the front door? No one is there.

Step, step carefully, bare feet out to the landing. Out into the thick dawn fog. I knew it had to be fog. The wooden stairs are slippery wet, fog beading in the redwood stain. But I am surprised--the bottom step is now concrete, as it never was before. My bare feet feel it prickle. This seems extremely important. The beach house steps were wooden, down to the bricked parking area for the cars. Rotten now, those stairs. It was the

Ruth Moon Kempfer/A Page...

big rented house at Surfside that had concrete steps. I sat on one, one Friday, drinking beer.

There were connections there, too complex for me. I used to be so mad at my mother for braiding my hair. I wanted it loose like Alice in Wonderland, my favorite heroine. But most of my adult life I wore my hair in a braid down my back--which my mother disliked, because it didn't look normally grownup--and I wore it long, and braided in this dream.

Maybe in some other life, some other dream, Jonah had fixed the rotten step. But I doubted that, as you would too, if you knew Jonah.

Deeper into this dream, I puzzled over the disappearance of the garage doors. I should be looking at garage doors, but here I was in some sort of boiler room, with vast machinery and huge inter-twinings of pipes. Dynamos, or great heaters stood where the garage should be. I wondered where I should park the old Ford now, forgetting that it had long ago gutted itself into rust. The bowels of the ship--a strange expression. And strange it had occurred to me.

Shafts. Pipes. Asbestos wrappings. Handles. A thousand valves. The walls were a strange glowing orange stucco. But I felt at home. I had been there before. It might have been the boiler room of my father's ship, the old T.J. Or was I part of the machinery?

Now I discovered what I'd been looking for all along. Directly in front of me was an old-fashioned ornate couch. I thought "couch," but immediately scratched that out and changed to the more accurate term, "love-seat."

Two men sprawled on the love-seat, apparently fallen asleep waiting for me. On my right, nodding gently, was C. And on the left--sinistral--was Jonah, of course. They were both dressed in Marine Corps

*Ruth Moon Kempher/A Page...*

greens, fatigues, or what is it crosses my mind? Drills. This is proper for C, who was a marine in the Korean War which was our War; Jonah would not like this, as he was in the navy then.

"Manouevvers" comes to mind. Works of man. Ha, again. I wish C would wake up and creep away to me, but I am afraid to wake him. Besides, I can see now that Jonah is awake, and has been awake all the time, watching me. His body is tense with anger. How could I have thought he was asleep?

That is a grave error I have made, too many times.

"Which one do you want?" asks Jonah.

I consider lying. But there doesn't seem to be any reason left, for obscuring the truth. "I want him," I said. I say. I keep slipping from past to present feeling. Hard to follow myself, too. "I've had you thousands of times, years and years ago."

It was not the right thing to say. Jonah, furious, climbs up on a ladder and turns a huge, heavy iron valve. The machinery that had been sitting quietly springs into violent, threatening life. Flames gush from the shafts. Motors whirr. Fans spin.

Now I'm mad. "Why didn't you let well enough alone?" I shout at him. "You've destroyed us all."

Now I'm on a bicycle, pedaling into town. Fog still, as it is still early morning. Obstinate as ever, I go the wrong way down a one-way street. I fly north up Aviles, which is a south-bound traffic lane, bouncing over the covvle-bricks, under overhanging balconies, vines and petunias in baskets swinging overhead. This is the wrong direction for coming in from home; no matter. Like Alice's White Rabbit, I know I'm late.

I have to get to the Library before it closes. Before it opens? I'm not sure. But there's some-



Ruth Moon Kempfer/A Page...

thing terribly urgent about being at the Library on time. I fly past alleyways, tumbling lantana yellow and white blooms at me, and wheel a sharp turn into the Library's cool, tree shadowed patio.

My bicycle falls apart. I realize the back tire has been flat for a long time. This seems basic to my life. Everything wants to disintegrate. O Herr Doktor Freud, where is your practice these days? Surely not Vienna. The seat falls off into wet grass. There is no point in trying to pick up the pieces. The sprockets. From the grass. I should never have ridden that bike: it was against the Law.

All the books in the Library are out of reach. Story of my life, I think, but I seem to be laughing, all the same. A young man leans against the Library stair-well wall. It might be Ra. He has that veiled, sensuous expression about the eyes. Scorpio with Scorpio ascendant, or so he says. He tells me it's a good thing the bike fell apart when it did. Otherwise, he'd have had to arrest me.

It was undoubtedly Ra. No one else I know would be so amused by my discomfort. A young, young man, indeed.

"You talk too much," I tell him. "Besides, you aren't the Law, to me." There's music playing, out on the street, and I want to go to Fiesta. The celebration. It must be August, I tell myself. The City has its birthday in August, and the Fiesta always used to be on Aviles Street.

The ramshackle booths, tacky red and yellow paint, with doodad banners, have moved into the street as I spoke, and strings of colored lights criss-cross overhead from the balconies. There are only a few stragglers. Too long at the fair. But there's excitement in the air.

If it's late night, Fiesta, I know where C is.

*Ruth Moon Kempher/A Page...*

In the J.C. Garden, mixing drinks. He mixes the punch that punches, quart of vodka, quart of bourbon, his stubby hands that can be so soft around the cool bottles.

Behind me Ra whispers, "Watch out for snakes, in that Garden, Lovie...."

Indignant, moving away, I tell him. "Tell that to Eve." I'm really annoyed to find my dream so full of cliches.

"I'll tell you a poem," Eve whispers, from the bushes, smack dab out of the lantana. But I know it's she. "Is your pencil ready?"

"Stop it," I say. "You know I'm asleep."

Someone tosses a ball at a pyramid of bottles. Guitars play. A juggler now, incredible, with knives.

The J.C.'s Garden is behind an old stone wall. I can see the cement crumbling between old grey coquina bricks. A tangle of trumpet-vine almost closes off the archway. The blossoms are brilliant oragne, silk-soft, fake.

"Varmints'll git you," Ra whispers, still behind me, though unseen. Something familiar about his whisper, strange.

There are huge crepe-paper roses; fat black bugs of paper-mache. There's at least one real mosquito. And C.

Bob Talton, looking on, asks me a question for which I have no answer. I can't answer. I don't know what he asked me. He's too tall.

What matters is how happy C is, to see me. He asks me why I'm shivering, and when I say it's because I'm cold, he tells me I never need to be, now we're together. But a crowd of gypsies comes between us.

When the crowd vanishes, I ask him why he changed into his business suit. He doesn't answer, but Eve

*Ruth Moon Kempher/A Page...*

in the bushes cackles and Ra beside her says "It's for his magic act, of course."

"Poem," Eve announces. "Listen to me." Her voice sing-songs. "When you think you've done the worst thing in the world. When you think it's the end of everything...."

"That's a terrible poem."

"This is a terrible dream."

But C saves it. And I feel he saved it just for me.

There is a birthday cake, with hundreds of candles, for the City, but we are the only ones there. And C behind the cake is lighting the candles. Magic, he lights them by simply rubbing his fingers together over the wicks.

For Heaven's sake! I am turning ten again, and it's my best birthday yet. He thinks it's glorious, too. We love it!

He keeps looking at me, to be sure I'm seeing it all, to be sure I approve. He lights one candle after another, covering the cake with tiny flames, but O. The best is, after all the cake's candles are lighted, he goes on, where no candles are. He makes a whole new circle of flame stars that orbit, dancing in the air.

*A Page from Beth's Dream Notebook* is Chapter Twenty-three of Ruth Moon Kempher's novel-in-progress, *St. Augustine, Sunday*.



*Rod Kessler*

ON THE EDGE OF IT

It is early now, not even six,  
And sleep is something that happens  
To somebody else, to people we don't know.  
The street starts to fill with traffic.  
Each car and truck strikes like a match, flaring  
Across an asphalt matchbox, burning away  
Into silence. I am watching. The arc-lamp  
Street light is orange. Twenty miles off  
In another town you lie, unsleeping, eyeing  
A digital clock. The blue numbers  
Knock the minutes off with the glazed  
Indifference of a gas meter.  
You count the worries of your life--  
The job, the kid, the rent-control board,  
The empty, other half of the bed  
I still think of as ours.  
You sit on the edge in darkness.  
If either of us were a smoker,  
Now would be the time for it. We hold  
Nothing in our fists but our fingers.  
You're switching on your light now.  
I, mine. We're switching on lights  
In two countries. From a spy-plane  
Or a hot-air balloon, someone  
Could take us both in, could fit us  
Into the same frame one more time.  
From above, the earth seems to be burning,  
Not in flames but in embers. Morning  
Birds are screaming. The land between us  
Stretches out, glowing, a bed of coals.

*Nancy Lagomarsino*

SLEEP HANDBOOK

Sleeping takes unusual energy. Sometimes you wake up more tired than ever, body so heavy you seem to be climbing from deep water onto a raft. A good deal of effort is required just to go to sleep, a misleading phrase since you must wait for sleep to come to you. The waiting can be made easier by pretending to be far away, so sleep stumbles across you--if sleep trips and actually starts to fall, your arms automatically will jerk out and you may even cry in terror, the terror anyone feels at being pinned down. To think of such a clumsy oaf as a lover would be ridiculous, but some people lie in the most suggestive poses, waking up hours later with a stiff neck and all their money gone.

*Nancy Lagomarsino*

SOMNILOQUY

I wake to an ardent declaration of love.  
Hopefully it's for me -- I've always wondered about his dreams and why he never remembers them. Sometimes his breathing changes, body tenses, and I'm tempted to wake him but I never do, his face so sealed and self-absorbed. I lie in the dark listening for the next dream to move across him like a flame igniting pieces of the day. When he reaches to save something, his arms twitch and he cries out from a shadow throat trying to find its voice.

Nancy Lagomarsino

LOOKING BACK

Each morning I assemble myself out of images from my dreams, the way I will after death when things I hardly noticed stay with me like old photographs of times no one can recall -- someone told us to smile, touched our lips with red, sharpened the wheat, filled in my grandmother's hair, my grandfather's cheeks, until it hardly mattered that we were together. But in one dream last night my true grandparents beckoned from the twilight pantry and I followed, youth clinging to me like pollen. Everything seemed familiar, both to the child moving forward and to myself looking back, remembering.

*Nancy Lagomarsino*

FINALE

All night I trapeze between the husband in my bed and the stranger in my dreams. Miles apart, both men sleep lightly, arms spread wide on sheets taut as safety nets, anxious crowds murmuring in their throats. In that split second while my body decides to go no higher, I look at the one below me, his eyeglasses balanced on tired hands, and I think, "that is my husband," or "that is the other one," in his namelessness more powerful, like the shy acrobat who finishes with the whole troupe on his shoulders.

How can I stay still, down where I'm wanted? And what do I want, besides performing for sleeping bodies? Besides men? Besides the bodies of sleeping me, innocent in spangles and tights? Never mind, as long as someone's ready when I plummet from the top of the tent. It's part of the act to need someone that much.



Kate Crane McCarthy

NIGHT PATROL

I am leaning, arching, my arm cocked, my hand curled around a splendidly turned spear which I intend to plunge any minute into the heart of the Tyranosaurus Rex who menaces me. The Rex tightens his green reptilian lips, bares his ugly, unflossed teeth. I arch another inch, search for dinosaur solar plexis. And then, bingo, offstage: a dog yips! I arch again, but it's no use. I've lost my concentration, lost my place. The Rex shrivels away. The dog yips again. And I open my eyes on a dark and thin Los Angeles night.

Goddamn dog. I was rather enjoying the challenge. Spearing dinosaurs. I'll have to write that one down. Combatting old problems at last, perhaps? Or wasting my time poking holes in moot points, extinct threats?!

Goddamn dog. He yips again. He or she. What's the problem, anyway? Why don't they let it in? What kind of person keeps a dog out all night? Don't they know some of us are trying to sleep? I'm really awake now. Good for two hours at least. Two good hours on the night patrol.

I thought I was getting over this insomnia nonsense. Wouldn't you know as soon as the kids start sleeping through the night, I stop? That's motherhood. If anyone would ask me what motherhood is about I would say sleep deprivation. But now they say sleep deprivation cures depression. That's a good one. I suppose that means depression's not my problem. Something else.

Insomnia. Christ! It's like constipation. One of those symptoms of personality disorder, deep-seated Protestantism, low stress-tolerance. Stress. Christ. That's what they'd tell me.



Kate Crane McCarthy/Night Patrol

You're stressed out, honey. Loosen up! Don't be so anxious. I run my fingers over my face, searching for occult signs of anxiety.

But what have I got to be anxious about, really? Besides money. My body, maybe? My cardiac-pulmonary inefficiency? My deflated mush-stomach? My breasts --poor beaten, elbowed mother's breasts that David *claims* to so adore? Or my children--sweet, pure things waiting to be traumatized no matter what I do? Or because of it! I am The One, after all, the Big M. Years from now they'll be telling people --psychiatrists?--what I was--am--like. Of course, by then I'll be different. I'll get over my aerophobia. I'll be svelte, self-confident. And I'll have my career. I'll be a grown up. I'll polish my nails and wax my legs and I'll know what to do about pubic hair when I wear a bathing suit. Maybe by then the styles will change. Maybe by *then* the killer bees will be here, or the earthquake will have struck, or no one will give a *damn* about pubic hair because nuclear winter will have blackened the world!

It looks like nuclear winter right now, it's so damn dark.

Now that's a thought. What if the Russians attacked in the middle of the night, say, at Vegas? Who would know? We'd sleep through the explosion and wake up to nuclear night. I look at the clock just to make sure it's not mid-morning, but the clock--goddamn ugly green digital clock--is blinking "12:00" over and over. The power went out!

I hate these clocks. Whoever thought of clocks that blink "12:00" instead of stopping should be shot. This clock nags me: "Fix me, you idiot!" it blinks. What's wrong with stopping? That's the trouble today. You can never just stop, take a moment. No wonder I can't sleep. I'm like

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this clock, my brain a blinking blob of liquid crystal. If I weren't so tired I might get out of bed and reset the stupid clock, but what's the point? The kids'll wake us anyway. Goddamn ugly green blinking clock. I roll over and stare into David's back. He begins to snore. And the dog yips on, a mournful tune.

I close my eyes, then open them wide. And what's the matter with *circles*, I'd like to know? Can't have circles anymore. Oh no. Not on clocks, telephones, cars. You never see them. Circles are out. Squares are in, rectangles, trapezoids--anything that has a *point*. The day will come when circles are antiques. People will start collecting them, swapping them. Then we'll go through circle nostalgia. Then finally they'll discover some form more basic than the circle--something that's been here all along but got lost. The Mayans had it, and the Druids. And then they'll look back on us as "The Age of Circularity" and marvel as to how we got along. And I swear, I could tell them, I don't know. You just do what you have to do.

But now, it occurs to me, I still don't know what time it is, and that can be very irritating. Suddenly, I *really* want to know. For one thing, I want to know how much time I have before reveille. And for another, I just want to *know*, like when you hear a scream and look at the clock just in case someone was murdered. I mean, maybe I woke up for a reason, telepathy or something. It must be getting towards morning, I decide, because a bird is singing its sweet lungs out. I lift my head to look out the window.

The night is still, moonless. I look towards the hill and downtown, but tonight there is no red aura hovering in the sky, no Hollywood glow. This is strange. Times must be tough. Or perhaps Holly-



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wood is blacked-out, like we must have been. I look for stars, so rare in L.A., but the sky is empty, washed opaque with smog or fog. A chill slips through me. Whatever the hour, it is the dead of night.

David snores, gulps at the air. I feel reassured. I plump the pillows and arrange them all around me--one between my knees, one behind the small of my back, one under my head. I love my pillows. I could almost go to sleep if it weren't for that bird that keeps singing. Now why should a bird sing in the dead of night? A barking dog is one thing, but a bird?

Birds sing, I thought, to establish territory, or to sound a warning of some sort. So what's this bird's problem? What's it trying to do? Something must be wrong. Birds don't sing in the dead of night for no reason. And why does that goddamn dog keep barking? And why did the power go out, anyway? Santa Anas? An earthquake upstate? Or sabotage? Even, maybe, *local* sabotage, like someone fiddling with the fuse box!

I try to listen now. I shove David to get him to stop snoring for a moment. And I listen. Something is scratching. A possum? Cat's in, I know. So what's that scratching? A raccoon? A rat? Or worse? What *is* that noise? I hold my breath.

What was that? I hear the gate creak, and then--a footstep. A definite footstep! A little creaky squashy footstep in the dead of night! My heart ka-booms, and I think, of course. That explains it! Someone's out there! That's why the dog's barking' that's why the bird sings. They're sending signals, warnings. Animals do that!

I hear a rumble now, far away, the soft thumpa-thumpa of a helicopter. Cops must be looking for someone, a prowler, a crook, and here he is, found

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his way into *my* backyard! Fuck! A crook! I wish that goddamn bird would shut up so I could hear!

A crook! A madman maybe! A night stalker! A schizo! What did I read? There are something like ten *thousand* dianosed schizophrenics on the loose in California! And what about all the *un*-diagnosed schizophrenics? Must be a least a hundred thousand. And I bet they're all in Southern California to keep warm for the winter. I would be, if I were nuts. No wonder someone's in my back yard! Shit! A goddamn schizo! A stalker!

But Jesus, it was lucky I woke up! I must be in tune with the animals. We could have slept through this and been slaughtered. It happens. You hear about that kind of thing--an entire family, bingo. Throats slashed, bullets through the temples, blood everywhere. But now, I have to think. Where are the kids? David snuffles loudly and I shove him again. I just can't believe how men can sleep! Men and children. So trusting. That's why they invented mothers, I'm sure of it--to keep watch. What was that now? Rustling? Are they setting a fire? *They?* More than one?

Christ! Where are the kids? In their rooms, of course, but what I mean is, I have to make a plan. I have to sneak past the sliding glass doors without being seen--if the schizos see me there's no telling *what* they might do. So I have to be very careful. Then I'll get the kids, sneak back here without waking them--I couldn't bear their crying at a time like this--so that means *two* trips, one for each, put them on the couch. All without waking David. Men need to sleep. Anyway, he'd just tell me I was crazy. It's only the wildlife out there. But men don't understand these things. And then, even if I could convince him, he'd do something stupid like go outside with a flashlight--only to get



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axed in the back! A goddamn B Movie--Metro section of the *Times*! Jesus!

What next? I know. I'll trip the burglar alarm. But if I push the panic button I'll wake everybody up and anyway, you never can tell with schizos. They might get scared away, or they might consider the siren a sort of call to arms and start shooting blindly. So what I could do is punch out the silent signal--the one you're supposed to use when someone comes up behind you with a gun when you're unlocking the door. But then the company would call to make sure it isn't a mistake, and David would wake up and grab the phone and tell them yes, it's all a mistake, not to worry, and hang up before I could explain! But maybe what I could do is punch out the signal and then call *them*, let them know it *isn't* a mistake, they should send the big man with the gun and the stick and the light. *That's* what I'll do!

But first I'll listen some more.

I try to be still, but I'm not good at silence. Who is anymore? All this crap about speaking up, getting heard. No one knows how to be quiet. Constant noise nowadays. Constant noise and constant light. So much goddamn stimuli it's all you can do just to hear and see, let alone thing.

The bird sings. The dog barks. David snores. I breathe. The schizos scratch-scratch then stop. Now I think they're on the roof. Could they try to force the skylight? Or drop chloroform down the chimney? I remember hearing about a family who was chloroformed. They woke up with terrible headaches and an empty house. Well, at least they weren't *slaughtered*. At least the crooks who chloroformed them weren't schizos!

Suddenly there's a crash outside. What the *fuck* is going on, I almost say aloud, and sit up,

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straight up in bed, pulling the covers off David. That was no garbage can, I think, as I climb out of bed. Nope. That was too loud, and it came from the wrong side of the house! Jesus, I'm freezing! I have to put some clothes on. I can't go running around naked. The schizos might take advantage of me. They might take advantage anyway, but I wouldn't want to tempt them.

But first I'll go to the bathroom.

"Laura?" Oh shit! Now I've done it. "Laur?" he asks again.

"What?" I whisper hoarsely.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes."

"Can't you sleep?"

"No. I'm sorry I woke you."

"What's the matter honey?"

"Nothing," I say slowly, considering my options. "I just can't sleep. Did you hear a crash?"

"No. Come on back to bed. I'll hold you. Want me to rub your back a little?"

"I'll be there in a minute. I'm just going to the bathroom." I close the lid but don't flush. I climb back into bed and David puts his arms around me.

"David?" I ask. "Do you love me?"

"Of course I love you!" What a silly question. Now get some sleep." He kisses me and rubs my back.

A wind picks up and between the laughs and sighs of eucalyptus leaves and David's soft purr, I forget about the scratching. It's better this way, I think, as I drift away. If I go looking for schizos in the dead of night, what good can come of it?

In the morning the children race down the hall, throw open the door and climb into bed with



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us. I yawn and reflexively look at the clock,  
ridiculous clock, blinking patiently. The dog,  
I notice, has ceased barking, but the bird,  
sweet bird, still sings.

Walter McDonald

LEARNING TO LIVE WITH NIGHTMARES

No one's responsible  
for tricks the mind plays  
awake or sleeping. At night,  
I dream my life ends  
at Da Nang, but here I am,

watching my wife  
make breakfast for children  
who weren't born overseas.  
Who am I, a ghost? Safe  
on this side of morning,

no rockets, I've stopped  
reaching to check  
for wounds, I'm reaching  
to lace my shoes,  
my own shoes.

*George Mills*

NO ONE SEES THE SUN IN A DREAM

He has the dream down to one person.  
One man, one moon.

He has the notion darkness  
is a liberating color.

He's out in a boat  
taking a close look.

You might call this the dream  
of the close look.

His eyes absorb the darkness  
cast by a rogue sun.

Tick tick: the marrow clock.  
He rows

As toward a diagram  
of what's missing.

As toward a cup  
of neighbor's light.

George Mills

SONNET FOR FLORRIE

Last night for a long time hand in hand  
we watched the evening from below,  
the colors pouring into night,  
then slipped apart into sleep.

Now a hint of light at the windows,  
first light squared--  
your ankles buried deep in night  
in case the final dream goes wild.

Breathing in your sleeping sky,  
I want to seize your hand & run,  
on & on ahead of the light,  
pursued by the ineffable,

As far behind us day breaks,  
plate glass in a city street.

*Suzanne Owens*

trying to sleep after a goodbye weather change

my eyelids whoop open like flowered parasols shading me  
from summer fantasies of you  
and from its body I disconnect the phones  
howling head as I disconnect myself  
your voice wades through miles and  
miles in the teeth of rain  
arrives soaked I float  
on six honeycombed  
holes dimpled at my  
ear your voice  
splatters  
through them  
over me  
strange

how a hesitant work like  
a swerving weather front  
changes the direction of a  
hurricane determines the pattern  
tips the lip of the moon's bowl spills  
lightning crackles wire  
sparks brain short circuits eyes  
glitters arms forks  
fingertips  
illuminates hands  
furrows legs  
ignites body  
and spiked  
I am

*Suzanne Owens/trying to sleep...*

down  
have no  
insulation  
burn out like  
rain sizzles down windows  
drips off sills water  
water floods my head  
over you  
the melting phone keeps me  
afloat I tread water at sea  
fathom whirlpools through  
twisted cord run afoul  
no dock in sight and

even now in sleep my  
eyes drip like  
folded black  
umbrellas  
leaning  
against  
walls



*Christopher Parker*

ZHIVAGO'S GHOST

This morning before the sun rose,  
The empty trees surrounded the frozen lake  
Like the aura of a healer's hand  
And the icy fingers of each cove and tributary  
Wove in the uncertain light.

The neighborhood dogs were silent.  
They do not howl at this hour even at prowlers  
They just look up, waiting for judgement.  
The houses sang low: slow smoke, slow smoke.

Everything was frozen and the children dozed.  
And when the first mallard called a warning  
A baby's breath was shortened to a cough.  
The fish moved to the deepest parts of the lake  
Where the old Dodge truck sank last year  
When contractors drove it across the ice,  
The back filled with concrete chisels  
And a bucket of floats that won't.

Just before the ice fishermen walk,  
There's a glow off to the east  
And the mist of trees becomes a net for dawn.  
Then the somewhat welcome sound of motors  
Drilling holes into the ice.  
And those who must rise this early breathe  
In the zero air that settles in the houses  
Where the coal stoves have gone cold.

*Christopher Parker/Zhivago's Ghost*

There's a whistle in the window--  
Zhivago's ghost I guess, and you,  
Between the comforter and the frost that's formed  
On the vase with the frozen rose I handed you  
And another pressed in a volume of Pushkin,  
Utter as best you can this morning  
The words that let my eyes see you plainly  
Even as the sun blinds these eyes  
That peer onto this darkened pond in wonder.

*Cynthia Pederson*

FOUR A.M.

the reel of my dream  
ends.  
the crackling grey frames  
flecked with dust  
and strands of magnified hair  
come to a flapping finish

I untwist and find  
(as at the end of every  
dark movie)  
I need to go

the bare white beam  
of the bathroom  
blinds like a stage light  
in my eyes.  
my pillow-creased cheek  
is out of focus.

like a movie you've slept through  
I can't remember any plot.  
all I know is that my jaw  
has been set stiffly  
back into my face  
and the clenched rows of my teeth  
may have seen this film before

Melissa Peo

MY COUCH IS HAUNTED

I'm sure  
of it.  
If you sit  
anywhere else in  
the room, it invites  
you over.  
When you comply,  
it isn't happy  
with mere sitting.  
"Lie down," it sighs and  
you are powerless.  
Good intentions are not  
enough, this thing feeds  
on aching backs,  
sore feet.  
Expanding, its orange glow  
enfolds your pains,  
mesmerizes your mind,  
encourages the day to drift  
away.  
Hypnotizing, it purrs,  
"Close your eyes"  
and you will  
you will



*Marnie Purple*

GATHER SUNSET, THEN DREAM THE MOON AWAKE

Sleep against the North wall,  
where the wind will not find you.  
Pile blankets before dark  
and scatter mothballs in the closets.  
It is the season of retreat, of hope.  
What survives will be captured  
by sunlight and transformed  
while what is lost in the brief midnight  
of winter, will not be mourned.

Like the lost mittens of your childhood  
these present securities, vehicles of fortune  
will be discarded. You no longer will be afraid  
of dusk, the moment when the sun lends  
a pink mantle to the hills  
and the moon prepares the bath  
in the hollows. All the windows of the house  
will rattle, as you lie there  
in a nest of quilts. You are not dreaming,  
the moon is full, awake.

David Romvedt

SLEEP

At 8:30 the neighbors up the hill  
have turned out their lights.  
After wind all day  
it is calm. The kitchen fills  
with the smell of garlic.  
I am reading a book on memory,  
wondering what is the connection  
between the word *memory*  
and the phrase *I remember*.  
Noticing my left foot  
wrap itself around my right,  
I'm sure both have a life  
separate from my own.  
I look again and see the white socks  
my father wore, his tense face  
gone slack, his body lying on a couch  
in front of a television.  
Inside the socks his feet  
are in constant motion  
no matter how hard he sleeps.

*Marlaina Tanny*

A NAP

Propped against stiff pillows,  
semi-upright,  
I resist sleep;  
the speckled afternoon light  
absorbs all thoughts  
of unfinished work.  
As I glance at the clock  
I am aware that time floats;  
with a feeling of loss  
I fall asleep.

Time has floated...  
away; the house has become cold;  
night replaced the afternoon  
as quickly as a shade pulled.  
This time I run back to sleep,  
the feeling of loss for  
faces I can't quite remember.

The silence of the house tolls  
and I force myself back;  
the time lost is now irrelevant.  
I must awaken, busy myself,  
make sacrilege of the peace  
before the final loss,  
the absence of my children,  
descends.

*Marlaina Tanny*

TRANSCENDING DAY

As if a gentle reminder, the rain  
in seldom drops, breaks against the windows.

It is sometime between late afternoon  
and night. The fog swirls in the grass  
leaving tidepools of light and shade.  
What is white looks florescent blue,  
what is brown looks black, what is green  
is still green.

Tree trunks, close by, are beyond color:  
areas of a void, they are the first to step  
into the dream realm of night.

After a silence, the cicadas  
begin their chanting; we are being prepared.  
Some of us will remember the journey.

*Alison Townsend*

METAMORPHOSES: THE DREAM I WOULD HAVE OF YOU

In the poem that comes just before sleep you tell me a story of a man, not unlike yourself, who stands at the edge of a meadow, and a woman, in whom I recognize my body and gestures but not my eye color or name.

In the story you are walking away from me. A plowed field echoes between us. The evening light quilts shadows into the brightness gathered by your yellow shirt. I am very still, almost a statue. When I reach to touch you my hands close on travel, the maps made by wind.

Just before you leave you hand me a stone - an agate, clear in places, but most of it misty, like a snowstorm brewing beneath glass. A red island appears in the stone's center. It quivers with a pulse regular as dreaming. Breath rises, steadies itself against my hand.

In turn, I hand you lilies, each one a thin scroll of possible endings which unfurl, like parchment, to reveal secrets rooted within us, memories dipped in green. In the heart of each flower smokey horns of stamen claim their pollen as simply the silence sown beneath our tongues.



*Alison Townsend/Metamorphoses ...*

We exchange these gifts. Lilies light the  
road before wilting. The agate gleams for  
an instant before it hits the field and dis-  
appears. Fog thickens in the air between us.  
In the forest some animal noise reverberates  
against the dark.

*Alison Townsend*

EVENING SONG

*for David Glycer*

Sleep now. Swallows dip low over our shoulders.

On the beach at Montana de Oro the wind slips to  
a whisper rooted between sweet plums on a slowly  
disappearing hill.

In our footsteps, the sea, blushing like a young  
girl in her own mirror, quickens for an instant,  
then shivers, wraps her face in fog.

Mimi White

MATIN

*for Helen Beglin*

Habitual the early riser  
listens for weather,  
the first green movement of leaves.  
The house an envelope of sleep; the fox  
nibbling elderberry shoots in the road's soft shoulder.  
She dresses against a chill,  
more than the room's;  
last night's dream  
a prison camp, each tent a cloister  
peaked and cramped. Faces  
crowding the openings like flies  
swarming dark meat. She moves quickly,  
in a hurry it seems, not to be touched  
by hands that open,  
her passage to the river  
slowed by those who keep falling  
only to drown  
in the banks of barbed wire.  
Nothing, she thinks,  
could be as bad as this  
and awakes. The dog  
in the one slab of light  
heating the cold night floor,  
the laurel a bell of tongues  
in the arbor blooming.

*Mimi White*

GREEN RAIN

That summer dryness grew  
like the stale air in parlors  
heavy, embroidered to our skin.  
We dressed in our mothers' laces and scarves,  
smeared lipstick thick as welts:  
*Midnight, Scarlet, Purple Passion* and played.  
The apple tree at the end of the drive,  
branches pendulous with fruit  
not yet the color of rubies.

In my friend's house  
Christ hung on the wall  
pinned in place like a butterfly  
I had seen once under glass--  
not a muscle moved, though I quivered  
above the long case of tethered wings and legs.

She showed me her parents'  
twin beds, white spreads,  
the long slats of bare wood  
between where they lay,  
like towels on a beach  
held still with stones.

That night I dreamt my house  
was falling--shoes, nightgown,  
even the dog racing past, ears  
as if they were on fire.  
I ran to my parents' room  
and hid in the corner  
watching them breathe.

*Mimi White/Green Rain*

There I slept and dreamt of the ginkgo.  
At the end of the playground  
it grew out of gravel  
and small tufts of dry grass.  
Like a tin soldier,  
like his one-legged ballerina.

Down the steep lot  
we ran for it,  
heart and blood pounding harder  
than feet on pavement  
until we could see each leaf,  
each delicate green fan  
flutter and lift in the wind  
its tender, dark-veined side.



## CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Cox has poems forthcoming in *APR*, *Indiana Review*, and *Poetry*. He will be teaching in the MFA in Writing Program at Vermont College this year.

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Marcia Hurlow's work has appeared in various literary magazines, most recently in *Poetry Northwest*, *Plain-song*, and *Louisville Review*.

Ruth Moon Kempher lives in St. Augustine and teaches at St. John's River Community College. Her seventh book of poetry, *The Lust Songs and Travel Diary of Sylvia Savage*, was recently published by American Studies Press as #10 in their Herland Series.

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Christopher Parker is a recipient of a New Jersey State Council on the Arts grant and holds an MFA from Columbia. "Zhivago's Ghost" is from his new manuscript, *Incidental Archeology*.

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Melissa Peo, originally from Poughkeepsie, NY, is a graduate of the RWC Creative Writing Program. This is her first published poem.

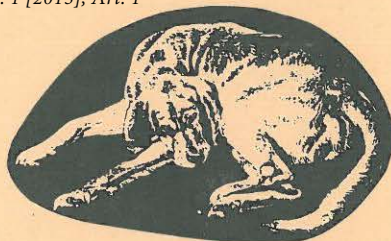
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Marlaina Tanny is a poet and dancer in the Boston area.

Alison Townsend's work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies. She teaches a writing workshop for women and was a resident at Dorland Mountain Colony in October 1985.

Mimi White teaches poetry workshops at the University of New Hampshire and also works for the NH-artists-in-the-schools. Recent work is in *Stone Country*, *The Crab Creek Review* and *Tendrill*.



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