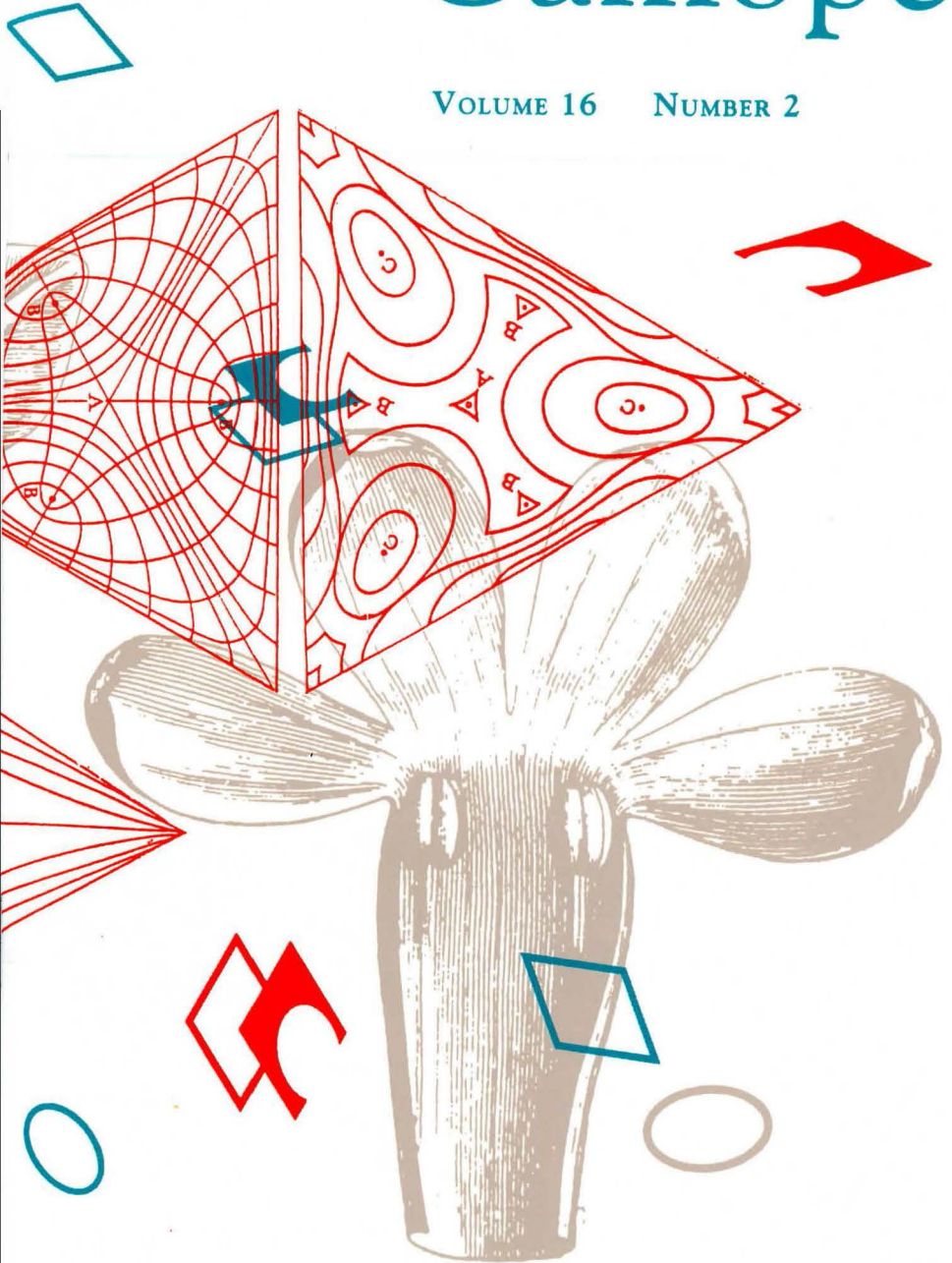


et al.: Calliope 16.2

Calliope

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 2



Calliope

Volume 16, Number 2
Spring/Summer 1993

EDITORS

Barrett Brokaw
Aislynne Bronk
Julie Chandler
Christy Church
Dave Cole

Kimberly C. Eaton
Sally Ladd
Karolina Nuñez
Taryn Potter
Mikl Sweeney

Advisory editor: Martha Christina

Cover design: Merce Wilczek

Screenprinted by Kathleen Hancock at the printmaking facility at Roger Williams University.

Copyright by *Calliope*, 1993
reverts to author upon publication

Indexed in American Humanities Index

Calliope is published twice a year, in December and May. Single issues are \$3.00; a year's subscription, \$5.00.

Submissions of poetry and short fiction are welcomed from
August 15 - October 15 for the Fall/Winter issue and
January 15 - March 15 for the Spring/Summer issue.

Manuscripts received at other times are returned unread.
Manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Simultaneous submissions accepted.

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

Address all correspondence, submissions and subscriptions to Martha Christina, *Calliope*, Creative Writing Program, Roger Williams College, Bristol, RI 02809.

CONTENTS

Randall R. Freisinger	
<i>Dancing School</i>	5
<i>The Drinker</i>	7
Marcelle M. Soviero	
<i>On New Year's Eve</i>	9
<i>Sisters</i>	10
<i>Four Years in Water</i>	12
Joseph Hutchison	
<i>Standing By</i>	14
<i>Late Rain</i>	15
Taylor Graham	
<i>Old Dog Comes Home</i>	16
Allison Joseph	
<i>Worldly Pleasures</i>	17
<i>"Dance Fever"</i>	19
Paul Nelson	
<i>Lorraine Mills, the World's Largest</i>	
<i>Discount Fabric Store</i>	21
Helen Frost	
<i>Our Eyes in the Middle</i>	24
<i>Lawn Mower</i>	26
Matthew Murrey	
<i>Against the Routine</i>	27
Julia Wendell	
<i>Altman's Van Gogh</i>	28
<i>Lullabye for the Sun</i>	30
James Salsich	
<i>Before the Snow</i>	32
Francine Witte	
<i>Left Only with November</i>	33
<i>How Good You Have It</i>	34
<i>When a Lover Leaves</i>	36
Jon Lavieri	
<i>How We Stand Up</i>	37
<i>Mammals and Otherwise</i>	39
John Flynn	
<i>A Dilemma for Each Certainty</i>	40

David James Smith	
<i>In the Sierras</i>	41
<i>Veteran's Day</i>	42
Penelope Scambly Schott	
<i>Somebody at this Address</i>	44
Joyce Odam	
<i>My Ghost Stories</i>	46
Jon Tribble	
<i>Lunar Eclipse</i>	47
Michael Burkard	
<i>Driving through Her Father with the Desert</i>	49
<i>Duration</i>	50
Catherine Turnbull	
<i>Going Out</i>	51
<i>Electricity</i>	52
<i>Overlooking Hemlocks</i>	55
<i>The Infestation</i>	56
Contributors' Notes	57

Randall R. Freisinger

DANCING SCHOOL

This morning rising from the basement,
stomping cold from my shoes, I see
gray footprints traced on kitchen tiles
from where I have just left off stoking
the wood-fueled furnace. Winter mornings
my father left such ashy traces when he rose
up from tending coal while we boys dozed
over cod liver oil and plates of fried corn mush
smothered in Karo syrup. So I have followed
in his footsteps after all, as if we had been partners
all along in one of those dance-by-mail
schools where you learn each new sequence
from footprints pasted in rhythmic
patterns across the floor.

In this my fiftieth year, close as I am
to his last dance, I still feel like new
wine. An old bottle, perhaps, drunk a bit
too soon, before its time.

Once, at a fold
in my life when I had reasons to be sad
and alone, I stood high up on a balcony
in the atrium of a pricey hotel
and watched far beneath me graceful couples
at a Tea Dance, teachers and students,
as I recall, of an Arthur Murray school,
exotic flurry of feather, sequin, tuxedoed poses,
polished products of self-conscious practice,
step by tedious painted step: rhumba,
fox trot, bossa nova. It was dreamy, unreal,
like that dance scene in Bertolucci's
Last Tango in Paris, the couples so stylish
they nearly make you want to forget
the violence of butter and sex.

Freisinger/Dancing School

My friends and I dance less often now,
but because we have been through it
a long time together, some nights—
New Year's Eve perhaps— when need rises
in us like hunger's sacrament we dance,
twos or threes or fives or even alone,
our bodies like small scrums of prayer,
signing what we have won and lost, the ones
on this or the other side of the river, our lives
more and more returning to that first room
where we pressed ourselves shyly by gender
against opposing walls, divided by nothing
but space, music, dimming light, and tongues
tied into knots by desire.

This morning these traces my feet leave
say I am still moving, so while my children
watch, spoons of cereal stopped mid-air,
I move, hot and nimble and raw as my half
century will allow, jiving to a new tune,
one of late getting a lot of play in my head:
great lyrics, a beat you can dance to
better if only for knowing the score.

—for Jack Driscoll

Randall R. Freisinger

THE DRINKER

No one could ever explain to him
the meaning of *enough*. Evenings
he would come to us down the sidewalk
from the city, from the work he hated
to love, a bottle in brown paper
from Lafferty's Liquors gripped
in one hand, his thumb tucked beneath
the fingers of the other as if it were
some small final thing to hold onto.
Conversations of ice in a glass
of bourbon were more familiar now
to us than his voice, which he left
mostly at the office or saved
for fighting late at night with Mother,
who long since had moved sex
and other silken things out of their room.
His talent and art were the drinker's:
He knew how to slip a thin reed deep
into the dark secret earth to sip
from its coolest pooled spaces,
or kneel to suck sweet droplets
from a tuber when what would slake
his thirst had vanished from its normal
singing places. No mortal's thirst
moved him. Only divinity perhaps
could fathom such need, could rise
for work each morning at five,
unencumbered, while what he had made
from his breath and blood and seed
lay dry and wasted all about him.
Only divinity could lie and dissemble,
seeing always beyond a world's immediate
pangs and cries of defeat to the millennium
when no possible thirst would go unappeased.

Freisinger/The Drinker

For this reason, that July of great drought,
record heat, when fish leapt from Missouri's
scalding streams for relief and the city's
stinking airless rooms and alleys betrayed
their aged and impoverished dead like a dream
of apocalyptic plague, we jabbed
his cold body into the parched earth.
For this reason, we returned that evening,
climbing the tall cemetery fence at dusk
to rain whiskey on his grave's cracked lips,
just to say with hearts dehydrated
by grief: *Father, Father,*
forgive us.

Marcelle M. Soviero

ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

the man in the wrinkled blue suit and black socks and delicately striped tie
checks into the Holiday Inn on the left-hand side of Route 101.
He is tired of missing her. He is tired of never having anyone.
The room is born twin—twin beds, twin paintings in plastic frames,
bedspread, bed ruffle, curtains, all rolled into one muted color.
"You're a case," the man says to himself
passing the reflection in the mirror,
"a thirty-three-year-old case."
Today, you should know, the muffler on his '78 Maverick went.
And Sheeby, the fat girl at the office, asked him back to her place
for Shepard's Pie, "*for the New Year*," she had said.
This was just before he checked in, alone,
with two six-packs of Coors Light. Two cans already empty,
lined up on the plastic bureau,
like two tin soldiers, shoulders touching.

Marcelle M. Soviero

SISTERS

When I was born you rode your bike up the block
and slammed into the tree on Mrs. Carmichael's front lawn,
screaming I had finally come.
Each day you raced home from school to feed me
and each night you pressed your ear to my chest
to see that my heart was beating.
You read me *James and the Giant Peach* and *Charlotte's Web*
from the rocking chair beside my bed.
When we came in from the woods
you checked my hair for ticks, tender fingers scrubbing behind
each ear
When I started to bleed and asked if it was devil's blood
you took out that gold-backed book from the basement
to show me illustrations of the egg traveling
and said one day I'd be able to make babies because of this.
It's different now. You went away. First to college, then to
the hospital.
They said the chemicals in your brain were unbalanced, they
stapled a plastic bracelet
around your wrist and said we could visit on Sundays. You
played the piano there.
You sang *Sweet Caroline* and made necklaces out of macaroni.
You made me tin earrings shaped like doves.
You built a fantasy life beneath the porch slats; you dug tunnels
to China.
I told you I wasn't going to let them hurt you.
I lied. I lied and worse, I hurt you,
I went on with my life and left you behind,
like bread crumbs leading nowhere. One child on the seesaw.
I took off, Sister, I didn't know what to do,
because you told me never to forget we are sisters,
you taught me the word, what it meant. How you pricked your
finger

Soviero/Sisters

with the needle, and then mine, how we pressed our pointers
together then,
and you kept saying it, over and over: *sisters, sisters.*

Marcelle M. Soviero

FOUR YEARS IN WATER

You led me on my merry way.
There were balloons, shrimp,
two party hats.

There was a calico cat,
the horse on the merry-go-round
had fur.

You took my hand and we swam
into water,
floated for eight months.
Then you said, "*enough.*"
You wanted to be detached.
You swam back.

All while you smiled from shore
cooking shish kebabs
over the stone-fire
glad to be free of me—
my feet were becoming webbed.
I grew slick skin,
could go under water for days.
I talked to oysters.

At night, when it should have been hardest,
when fear should have gripped me,
when I was supposed to say, "*why me?*"
when I should have drowned, unnoticed—
Someone invisible held me.

We floated belly-up
above the bellies of dolphins.
We were kissed by fish.

Soviero/Four Years in Water

I came back as two, not one,
while you, my love, had turned to bone.
All those shish kebabs
and you still starved.
Are starving still.

Joseph Hutchison

STANDING BY

This woman who has lost so much
—mother love, job, pleasure in her body—
kneels by the grave while I stand by
in case I am called. Now she is speaking
toward the earth healed over by grass.
I am moved, but wonder why she speaks.
“The one you seek is not here.” I watch
intently, standing by, but it’s no help.
She is as alone in my looking as I
am alone in the shadow of her loss.

Joseph Hutchison

LATE RAIN

Water raveling down a gutter woke me,
or the breeze stitching its silvery web

across the night window. I didn't
need to glance at half of the bed

to know it was empty, but did.
How often our divided life seems

like a dream! For a moment I lay there,
tangled in longing, trying to believe it was.

Taylor Graham

OLD DOG COMES HOME

The way smells like
trash dump, then
a mile of winding eucalyptus
topping off (so tired)
at a pullout steaming
off the valley and its thin
slow river that slakes
a dog's dry tongue
unraveling the road.
Running home. Whoever
thought to let an old dog
die incognito, so the kids
won't know? Ten miles
out of town for a King
who couldn't get out the door
in time and messed the family
room. The kids
have not stopped calling
and those brittle lungs
ache but keep pumping
to their call.

Allison Joseph

WORLDLY PLEASURES

My skin's summer-burnt,
body roughened by heat
threatening to shrink me dry.
I long for patient hands
to lift this fever, ministrations
of cool towels, iced tea
in tall, slim glasses,
fingers to massage my neck,
shoulders, easing the days
away. Life isn't easy
here on the chaise lounge—
sun glassy and slick
above me, humid air
holding me to earth,
longing for your body
caught deep within me,
unsettling as this heat wave.
I could pretend to feel
nothing, content to laze
the whole day through,
never letting on to what's
beneath my silken caftan.
Could neglect what my
muscles say, ignore their
lingo of tension and acquisition,
the sparks of sensation
they re-live whenever
you make your appearance,
clothes falling to the floor
as you stand before me,
inviting as the blue waters
I dream of. Crazy
from the heat, I'm parched
as those deserts I've seen

Joseph/Worldly Pleasures

photos of: shifting sands,
brutal winds, little vegetation.
Darling, when you return,
I'll have tired of this life
of ease and leisure.
Seeking much more
than temporary pleasures,
I'll be looking for you—
every inch of skin,
every blessed wrinkle,
each bone and bruise
that I can soothe,
every pore apparent
to my naked eye,
knowing hands.

Allison Joseph

"DANCE FEVER"

There's that couple again,
spinning beneath the massive
disco ball, competing for cash
and prizes worth more than

they'd ever seen, more than
they'd ever know. That couple,
of course, is us, an unlikely
pair moving under hot lights,

dancing toward the edge
of the stage and back
again, hoping there's no
trap door, no sudden drop

from the disco pop and
sizzle. Tonight, I'm
the girl in trouble,
the one you might like better

if you slept with her,
face void, tamed under
make-up for a studio
audience. I'm spandex,

sparkle, a flash of leg
beneath a neon pink skirt,
silver lamé top, a hustler,
a freak, an endless vibe

that knows how to smile
for the camera, faking
the pleasures of nightlife
But no matter how I try,

Joseph/"Dance Fever"

our dance is always off-beat,
and you're moving away from me,
through the 70's, 80's, and 90's,
leaving behind this bad girl,

this Donna Summer devotee
who could never master the art
of slow dance, shy glide.
You're moving to your own

rhythm, to the whine of wheels
inside your head that won't
stop for anyone, a shuffling
two-step you learned

in dancing school, bad luck
streak intact. And when our
minutes on the floor are up,
we'll pace those small rooms

of our own, cloisters
where there's only
skin on skin, try
for the passion music

can't provide, can only
hint at, our fever subsiding
to a pulse, a good beat
that's easy to dance to.

Paul Nelson

LORRAINE MILLS, THE WORLD'S LARGEST DISCOUNT FABRIC STORE

Swinging in, we arrive on the vast tarmac,
a few cars huddled near the door.
She strides inside as I loaf aimlessly the other way
to the billowed chain-link fence under dreadlock willows
ministering a stream that vanishes beneath the avenue,
beneath the warehouses and dead mills bulked against the sky.

How crystal, sliding over slate silt, rocks wearing wigs.
Sunlight bounces on scales of chrome,
a bike like a pair of wrenched spectacles,
shattered and jammed at the culvert.
On the bottom, a car battery squats,
Pandora's box, or a tablet from outer space.
A pop bottle gasps, trapped by a branch
trailing a white plastic bag. Fat end full,
a dog-chewed, neon plastic bat wags.

I go into the mill looking for her green hat
bobbing above the banked rolls of Brazilian,
cockatoo'd cotton, polyester zebra hide, San Diego day-glo,
dirt-colored linens and furred upholstery stuff.
There she is, fingering remnants to vanish with,
at night, croned above her peddle Singer's slow jig,
from which she will hold to light a new garment,
same old earthy color and fit.

Wandering the racks, my weight
squeaking the heaved hardwood floor,
my face heats. . . hanging around
where women for a hundred years
did some singing, some coughing before the tall,

Nelson/Lorraine Mills. . .

belt-drive jennies burgeoning bolts and bolts of virgin
material, laundry baskets at their feet
with babies whimpering, hacking, laughing
where men loosed tubercular chaws.

Survivors gather in clutches above the bins,
stare into the folds, hold colors to the jaundiced light.
One by one inspect zippers as if they were
foetal vertebrae dangling from hooks.
They whisper, mock-quarrel, in tongues,
Portugueses, Puerto Rican, Vietnamese, Italian
nodding, shaking their heads, laughing in miscible grief.
My wife turns sideways sliding by, excusing herself.

My eyes ache. It's the colors, or just
the idea of dry goods. I can't stop yawning.
In a wing of the British Museum
we stood around until our feet died
among the tiny, wrapped royalty
in open sarcophagi. I couldn't stop yawning.
She hovered above a glass box where a commoner lay
curled on a strew of sand, just as they found her,
somewhat covered by a 3000 year old rag.
I did avert my eyes. . . ribbons of vellum
spanned the varnished ribs, the pelvis,
tipped like a cradle.

Back in our sealed Toyota,
her string-tied bundles
swollen on the back seat,
she sighs, lifting off her hat,
re-fixing hairpins. For a moment
her hair falls as it did thirty years ago,
and a flute concerto on WGBH lifts
and its as though we were just starting up again,

Nelson/Lorraine Mills. . .

somewhere to go, something to do in passing
by the brook beyond the herniated fence
that is still running through limbs, over stones,
through a paint can's lodged, partial smile, still
swizzling a white plastic spoon in slow arabesque
below a raquetball bobbing on the spokes.

Helen Frost

OUR EYES IN THE MIDDLE

The last days with my father like the first
days with my son held us who labored
towards them in tenderness in tenderness.

Deer came to the salt he had set out.
They licked it, looked toward the window
where he sat, looking too. Chickadees and finches ate their seeds.

That first night his hair
smelled of cinnamon. Is this the scent
of the inside of my body?

Two owls came. One in the pinyon pine,
one on the roof. My mother heard its voice,
saw its shadow on the roofline, on the snow.

Would I love my stepson less
than the baby? The birth
gathered us all into a circle.

My sister flew out the day I arrived.
When I left my brother stayed. We saw
bobcat tracks outside the house.

I tried to step out of my dreams
at the first small cry, to let my husband sleep.
I slept during the daytime with the baby.

His hands were warm. They felt strong
even when his strength was almost gone.
His eyes were full of love and jokes and sorrow.

Frost/Our Eyes in the Middle

While I fed him the aurora crossed the sky,
green red silver white curtains shimmering leaving
sky dark above snow.

When he said goodbye he stroked my hair.
His heart was beating, he was breathing. He stroked my hands.
"I probably won't see you again."

At first he cried a lot. One book said, "Maybe
they're just sad to be here." Then he got interested.
Little fingers tangling in our hair. A smile.

Helen Frost

LAWN MOWER

His voice was in my hair, his legs
tight around my waist.
His hands a knot
behind my neck, his eyes
closed, in my hair. My eyes
were open, my ears
open wide: Something was coming.
Bigger than people. Noisy.

It didn't knock us down.
It turned away. But turned again
and, noisy, came towards us.
I kept saying "It's o.k."
I keep saying "It's o.k." Eyes
open, ears—open wide.
Bigger than people. Noisy.
It doesn't knock us down. It turns
away. Turns again, keeps on
coming towards us.

Matthew Murrey

AGAINST THE ROUTINE

Getting dressed for fourth grade
on a morning like so many mornings:
first black socks,
then navy blue pants,
then a white, button-down shirt. . .
suddenly, outside my window,
from the backyard
came the loud crack of gunshot.
I ran through the house
to the kitchen where my sisters
were staring out the back door.
There on the back steps my mother stood
strong and calm as bronze,
still pointing my father's revolver
at the targeted yellow sky.
Then he came up behind us,
pushing his way through
with his startled and sleepy face.
She just slowly turned and said,
"I don't know, Matt—
I just felt like shooting the gun."

Julia Wendell

ALTMAN'S VAN GOGH

Toward the end, he painted crows
where there weren't any crows,
tacking them to the glowering horizon
of a blonde wheat field.
It was only a painting, after all,
anything could have happened in it.
Another scene
and sunlight leaning on the canvas.
A wingless streak
slid from his brush across
the empty cloth, before he lay down his tool
and took the gun to his side,
just where Adam's rib was taken—
not to his heart, nor his head,
not meaning, really, to put an end to his life,
but to wrestle a little more with it—

The book I have tells me
he was not painting at the end, but only stepped
behind a manure pile and shot himself,
before making his way back to the inn at Auvers
and to his small spare room,
where, 36 hours later, he died.

But when I look again
at the version I like better,
at the screen and the workingman flickering there,
I see that his lips are blackened
from wetting the paintbrush,
as if paint were a food not a poison.
I see oil mixing with blood
and the mouth moving with intention,
as he staggers back to the easel
as if to take up his brush

Wendell/Altman's Van Gogh

(so that I become a little hopeful,
momentarily),
but then back into town and into the arms
of history, no crows wheeling overhead.

Julia Wendell

LULLABYE FOR THE SUN

People ask what am I doing—
how am I living my life, what am I up to—
and lately, I haven't much to say.
Peace is like that,
it is so quiet, so
unflamboyant.
The seasonal depressive knows
the contrast; in his mind,
the earth tilts away from the sun
each fall and winter. Consider
the setting sun
as it kisses the horizon,
it loves what it touches,
yet strays so far afield each day.
At what point does the Earth
know the greatest peace? At 9,
when the coffee's smoothest and darkest?
At quarter to noon when things are almost
half over? At 3,
when the children traipse home
with dark secret shapes in their pockets?
Or now,
as swallows dip and twirl
carving the present
into the autumn dusk? We know
that within each day
is a lifetime,
that each bright moment contains
code for despair.
But do we know
what the swallows know,
as they dip and twirl,
their wings as busy as a baby's hands
fluttering at the face,

Wendell/Lullabye for the Sun

as dim and furtive
as an old man's thoughts.
What will we take with us
that we didn't already bring?

James Salsich

BEFORE THE SNOW

In the distance
Someone reads in whispers
from the book of storms. . .

And the night rises up.

All things are still,
like leaning trees.
waiting,
I can hear
almost as if it were nothing
the breath
of a thousand ashy flakes.
And silence
streaks past,

bringing the cold
that lights fires
within us
and bleeds the clouds
of their wintery
voices.

Francine Witte

LEFT ONLY WITH NOVEMBER

Leaves, the color of crushed pumpkins,
crack under the heels of warmer shoes.
Only the hands of forgotten lovers
ever get this dry.

The earth must be on that part
of its circle away from the sun
that spins season into season
silent as a landscape
made from the bones of trees
and the hard November floor.

This reminds me of the Christmas
I opened a gift
and it was mostly tissue paper.
I wanted to clothe it back
into its silver wrapping
so I could once more believe
in its promise.

I don't like the gust of my own breath
being the only reminder of life,
that startled second each year
when I see it for the first time,
or realizing again that
what I saw in the leaves of October
weren't really colors at all.

Francine Witte

HOW GOOD YOU HAVE IT

You just don't know,
my mother says,
meaning someday
I'll look back
and laugh,
meaning
I'd have to.

It's her way of saying
that yes, men are creeps
but it's nothing personal,
and that it's okay
to work in an office, where
at 40, I'm still the girl.

It's fine, she says, to sit
all day with an advanced degree.
It's tough all around
and the proud don't eat.
There's so much time,
your whole life ahead,
which is really
what scares me the most.

You're young, she tells me,
you'll heal.
You think I had it made?
Raising you girls, and it's not
like today. I couldn't just leave.

In those days,
a woman stayed,
even if he lied,
even, if he—.

Witte/How Good You Have It

I think of all the years
since then, years
that have left me alone,
adult, where even now
neither one of us is laughing.

Francine Witte

WHEN A LOVER LEAVES

it hurts in an old way

like a song
my mother hummed

way back, before
I knew how young

she was, or even
that she had

music.

Jon Lavieri

HOW WE STAND UP

Nora, I couldn't tell you how to stand up
to a stiff breeze, but I know
pockets of unimaginable force
find a purchase inside us
and draw everything that makes
whatever it is we are
back to those little graveyards
we carry out of the womb. And I know

you must have infernal evenings
when your good blood darkens with radiant metals
and this language you never wanted to speak
leaves its stain on your tongue.
There will be a fitful brawling
between your body and the body inside,
one wanting to bolt upright and howl
every misplaced cell into the air to suffocate
and fall; the other wanting to give in
to its mortal exhaustion
and leave the world to spend itself
on all its curious activities.

Blame it on a universal scapegoat.
All diseases and riots, every fall
either to or from grace. Even when the world fails,
can we crave anything but survival?
Once, I'd have told you all about victory,
word by meticulous word. But tonight,
by this lamp burning its hole
in the dark of my basement,
through which I can see your face
poised under a waterfall of milk,
the best we can hope
is to stand up to our reflexes,

Lavieri/How We Stand Up

to grow old knowing nothing,
and leave the posing of questions to our spines.

Jon Lavieri

MAMMALS AND OTHERWISE

Now that she has taken up
her broken wing residence
in these woods, I cannot imagine
life without this turkey vulture.
I'm trapping mice and leaving them
for her at the tree line.
A little closer every day
until I see her come out
like an old Sicilian widow
in a heavy, black cape full of shoulders;
a calcium limp
and coarse, thin hair on that pate
with its comical furrows.
I can hear the soft clacking
of her hook tipped beak
wordlessly opening and closing.
Petersen's Guide to North American Birds
tells me she would appear headless in flight.
She looks me in the eye
before pinning the mouse
to the grass with her scaled knuckles,
tearing it up by quarters
with her hook.
I sit back.
What a good human being I've been,
killing one thing, smiling on behalf of another.

John Flynn

A DILEMMA FOR EACH CERTAINTY

Downwind from the lighthouse at Pemmaquid Point
a boy walks slick obsidian ledgerrock
discovering between pauses in the sea's wrath
a tiny pool clear as a camera lens.
The boy thinks of a mouth studded with ceramic molars
periwinkle, barnacle, silver snail.
At the pool's bottom shift a pair of starfish.
They tilt against a bedding of rust-colored kelp.
A wave momentarily erases the pool
gradually spreading with a hiss before it retreats.

Rolling back the sleeves of his windbreaker
the boy plucks from cold chaotic foam
one horned and slimey starfish. Treasure.
Balling itself up, dangling
between his thumb and index finger
round and lumpy as a walnut, wet and sharp
its red dot bloated with spit.
The boy is dazzled. This is conquest.
Another wave again erases the pool.
An enchanted boy vows to keep his find forever.

David James Smith

IN THE SIERRAS

In the blond grass
of the meadow
light weaves
over the scarred pebbles
and the blue atoms of lupin
swarming on their stalks.
Here beaver have toiled
all day like monks
along the spine of the river
where ancient fish
purse their lips and drowse
in the shadows
of an outleaning oak.
The last of the sun
cracks on rocks of granite
as dusk bats swim away.
This is how night comes,
with an opossum's furious eyes,
with fire and the pine needle snap
of the many soft hoofed creatures
mapping the forest floor.
Without sound white spiders crawl
across the unplumbed blackness of sky.

David James Smith

VETERAN'S DAY

Uncle walked home
by moonlight, smoked
in his chair until
morning grazed the
lamplight circling
his shoulders. Asleep
in the thick air
of afternoons that
cushioned a dog's
far off bark, the
leaves spiraling
down, he wrestled
a pillow, moist
with dreams. Then
the sky would pull
its swords from
the Venetian blinds
and he let evening
come over him, lying
back, listening.

When the Motorola
crackled with news
of yesterday's winners,
*Seabreeze, Atlantic
City, Trouble's Boy,*
his eyes would stir
like coals inhaling.
And he'd describe
in his voice, scarred
by nicotine, the photo
finish he imagined,
the horses' necks
straining, ears flicked

Smith/Veteran's Day

back, dirt clods
exploding, *Silver*
Pockets, Nike,
Redemption!

Now
in a slate bay
backlit by sunlight
steel strands of rain
are falling. On the hills
above in gardens
of stone, a few flowers
tremble in the grass.
The little the ground
gives the wind will
take. Here is the
angel that lost its
arm. My uncle
never had a chance
to marry. See his
house without windows.
How small his door.

Penelope Scambly Schott

SOMEBODY AT THIS ADDRESS

1

"Somebody at this address
has swallowed a lot of pills."

"Is it you?"

"No, not me." Not today.
It's Mary, Mary, Mary,
my sad and sensible friend.

My sad insensible friend.
She is getting sleepy.
She is getting very sleepy
and smaller and smaller—

Cops rap at the door.
Uniforms swarm up her stairs,
luggers and lovers of white machines,
of gages, hoses, secret places—

and smaller and smaller.
As they swing her away in the hammock,
she is so tiny

she has become a flower:
one pink blossom
off the hollyhock stalk.

Where they convey her
is not where she is going.

Scambly Schott/Somebody at this Address

2

Inside this ward of ordinary light,
joy is a lamp.
Every color has fresh edges.

A woman come back from the dead
is whispering hoarsely:
everything she says
is amusing.

She walks carefully, balancing herself
as if she has swallowed a treasure,
walking, I think, as I walked

after each new baby; and I,
even knowing what I know,
would serve another twenty years

just for these days of mystery,
for such another resurrection.

Joyce Odam

MY GHOST STORIES

I have no siblings. I am in their dark.
I am the one with no mirror.

Mother broke the glass.
Mother took it away from me.

She hid it in pockets
of tiny dresses.

*

I cut my hands. I blamed others.
I said others threw glass at me.

She believed me.
We moved to a new country.

Nobody there
knew how dangerous we were.

*

I achieved power.
I became famous for my lies.

I wore dresses with pockets full of glass.
I would not look in mirrors.

Children believed
my ghost stories.

Jon Tribble

LUNAR ECLIPSE

Stretched back in a lawn chair,
I sat beside my mother rocking
in our gravel driveway, and tried
to follow the line her finger
drew to the stars, but the sky
was too clear, the points
too numerous. Where did the Crab
scuttle away from the Hunter's

club? What hid the seven faint
stars she called the Maidens?
They were fleeing from lovers
who chased them into the heavens,
and she said when she worked
with her sisters picking cotton
each September break Alabama schools
gave for families to bring in

the crop, her sister Helen told
the story of the Maidens and
their flight from love that left
them as dim stars on the horizon.
The story helped keep them going
as dusk came on and the bolls
left the girls' hands bloody, so
sore even the hour-long soak

in epsom salts her mother made all
the girls do didn't really help.
They pulled burrs from each others'
hair, brushed out the buns they
wore in the fields with a comb
of whalebone a great-grandmother
had left in the family, then
the six of them took turns by age

Tribble/Lunar Eclipse

at the mirror and basin, put on
their flannel gowns, and took
their places in the room's two
featherbeds. She asked me what
they'd taught us in school about
eclipses and I told her of Norse
myths, wolves swallowing the sun
and moon—something I'd read in

Bulfinch—but she said she thought
it resembled nothing so violent.
I woke as the last, white sliver
vanished. She was humming a song
I didn't recognize, improvising
her melody around the poor man's
widow's calls from back among
the pines. She leaned up, touched

my arm, said I should go to bed,
but I asked her to let me stay
until the moon reappeared. So
we sat in silence as a point
grew at the edge of the black
disk that had replaced the moon,
but the light wasn't what I'd hoped
for, only slight and yellow.

Michael Burkard

DRIVING THROUGH HER FATHER WITH THE DESERT

The money's too low and the time too short.
The woman didn't stutter her entire life for this.
The evergreens wear hooded vests in the forests of the snow
and that's more for her than a job. It's more

than the cages domestic birds arrive in, more
than the time she had no home.
What a life: she is driving through her father with the desert
and a soul who's inhabited the desert enters her.

Not painful,
not fearful.
Odd like a light
when you don't need one.

Michael Burkard

DURATION

A woman — a nun — in rain.
A duration of rain.
She is standing, she is standing.

An umbrella.
A nun.
A woman.

The trees glisten
they are that wet.
Green. And blue. Blue trees.

*

The next time my father speaks to you that way
I'm going to tell him to just fucking cut it out.
He's an old man and he should shut up anyway.
He used to do it to me, he's not going to do it to you.

*

Against the wide lawn there's a single lamp
glistening in the wind— the lamp has a light heart.
This is one of the two lights
which make up the world.

Against the voices there is a timing which is saying no,
there is a town which doesn't make any sense but
goes on breathing
year after year after year. None of the buildings has any lights,
it doesn't
seem to matter. No. It doesn't matter.

Catherine Turnbull

GOING OUT

She told her first psychiatrist
she was too sick for words—unable,
even, to read the paper.

He gave her a book, said *Take notes*
on the first chapter. He said,
You're a smart woman, why didn't
you become a lawyer?
Why didn't you go to Dartmouth?

And in my imagination, she tells him
Because Dartmouth didn't admit
women until 1971.

But the truth is she drove home,
and put her small head—woman's brain—
into a plastic bag, to see if
she could stand to suffocate.

When I called that psychiatrist
to tell him my mother got into the car
sometimes, after wine, and ran the engine
with the garage door closed
he asked me, *You mean, for the purpose*
of going out?

Catherine Turnbull

ELECTRICITY

My mother feared most the electricity
sent through her brain
on the third floor, down
she told me, with the real crazies,
wheeled into the elevator and out again.
She heard her doctor say,
Give her some caffeine
so she'll get a better jolt.
When she woke up she said,
They think cooking me is funny.

**

In the hallway, beside the bulletin board
(Floor Council Meeting Sunday 3:00
This is Your Chance to Get Involved!)
was an alcove for the pay phone,
as if the place were a bar.
Above it, a sign:
Respect our Privacy.
Do not say where you are. Only
say hello.

Over that phone at night
she breathed like someone was up close
behind her, all unfriendly, sudden.

She said, *Something*
is wrong with me—No
something is wrong
with them
They won't listen
when I tell them

Turnbull/Electricity

*something is wrong
with me.*

**

Sitting on her bed,
my mother's feet didn't touch
the floor. But her eyes
were on the floor all the time.

*She said, The mirrors here are plastic.
They're up too high for me to use.
They take everything
they think I'll do something with.
It takes me forever to put on my face.*

A tall woman came down the corridor.
Not anyone who lived there—she moved fast.
She threw her right hand toward us, said
I'm Mindy The Social Worker
—just like that, no commas anywhere—
and she said my mother's attempt
was a surprise because she had been able
to get out of bed, put on clothes: she'd seemed
safe, because she wasn't getting any worse.

Or any better,
but a woman who can wear her makeup
is doing all we ask.

**

*My mother said
I got myself
in trouble yelling.
I called the doctor
a pompous ass.
I told him*

Turnbull/Electricity

*First you said
I got sad because
I never got mad.
Now I'm mad
and you tell me
to shut up.
So there's a nurse
in a chair
outside my room
who follows me
everywhere. See?*

Anyone who can run a household
can plan a death.
My mother told me well in advance
where to find the letter,
what to take for mine,
and please, make sure the
next wife got nothing of hers.

They sent her home from the hospital
and she used everything they taught her.
How much electricity it takes to lose your memory,
how much it takes to lose your whole mute life.

She put the hair dryers with her in the bath.
And during the seizure,
which hurt but didn't kill her,
she could not unclench her fists.

Catherine Turnbull

OVERLOOKING HEMLOCKS

The first time my mother mentioned killing herself we were all outdoors, on the top of a small mountain we'd climbed before Thanksgiving dinner. There was a green metal railing at the edge of an overlook, and we were leaning against it. We could see the whole broad valley to Lake Champlain. The harrowed fields looked mossy. She said, *I bet you'd die if you jumped off here*, but we'd been up there so many times—and on other mountains, too—talking about how the blurred treeline, seen from above, can look hospitable. My father said, *I think you'd just break a few bones*.

Not then, but now, I see my mother clearly: She is against the railing, her gloved hands on the top rung, her hood up around her head. She's not looking out at the fields, like we are; she's looking straight down, at the rocks and at the skinny evergreens. She is thinking, would it be hard to swing up and over, would you feel heavy in the air, how much would the brush scrape. . . and then I can't see any more. Even knowing what did and didn't happen next, I cannot go with her past the first quick snappings of the tallest hemlock's branches.

Catherine Turnbull

THE INFESTATION

I am killing mice. Three,
sometimes four a day
in traps I leave under the sink.

Some of them die neatly—
Cabinet-muffled snap, broken neck,
and when I release them,
the stiff, easy fall into the green-lined

garbage. But some are caught
across the face by the quick wire arm
and when their skulls break they bleed,
viscous red, sticky, as if I had cut
myself here. I look

at every mouse I kill. Make sure
I see the startled round grey ears,
shade-darker whiskers,
the sometimes smashed black eyes,

for I have kept myself, these last two years,
from seeing the death my sad mother wanted.
Have kept myself from getting into the bathtub
with her, and lying there, under water, while she
switched the hair dryers on and dropped them in.

These mice have come into my kitchen
because I continue, casually, to take baths,
and callously dry my hair; and they
will not go away until I give in.
Until I face what I cannot imagine, until
I have seen it all.

CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Burkard's poems have appeared recently in *APR* and *Gettysburg Review*. His most recent book is *My Secret Boat* (W.W. Norton). He teaches at Hamilton College.

John Flynn resides near Worcester, MA, where he is an assistant manager at a bookstore. His poems and stories have appeared in a number of small magazines.

Randall R. Freisinger's recent poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Poet & Critic*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, and *Zone 3*. He lives in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where he teaches literature and creative writing at Michigan Technological University. He serves as Associate Editor for *The Laurel Review*.

Helen Frost's poems are from her manuscript, *Skin of a Fish, Bones of a Bird* which won the 1993 Ampersand Press Women Poets Series competition and will be published by the Press this summer. She lives in Fort Wayne, IN.

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search and rescue dog handler living in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Her poems have appeared widely in little magazines, including *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Bitterroot*, and *Poet Lore*.

Joseph Hutchison's poems have recently appeared in *Poetry*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *Zone 3*. His latest full-length collection, *House of Mirrors*, is available from James Andrews & Co.

Allison Joseph is the author of *What Keeps Us Here* (Ampersand Press). The poems in this issue are from *Soul Suite*, a collection in progress.

Jon Lavieri is a recent MFA from Western Michigan University.

Matthew Murrey lives in Urbana, IL, where he works as a mental health center counselor. Recent publications include poems in *Clockwatch Review* and *The Midwest Quarterly*. In

January he became a father to a second son, named Gabriel.

Paul Nelson divides his time between Maine and Providence, RI. His collection of poems, *The Hard Shapes of Paradise*, was published by the University of Alabama Press in 1988.

Joyce Odam is a frequent contributor to *Calliope*. Her poems also appear in *Blue Unicorn*, *Chaminade Literary Review*, and *Bellingham Review*.

James Salsich is a student at the University of Rhode Island. He has recently published poems in *Cicada*, *Frogpond*, and *Pegasus*.

Penelope Scambly Schott lives in Rocky Hill, NJ. Her full-length collection, *The Perfect Mother*, won the first annual Snake Nation Press poetry contest and will be published this fall.

David James Smith holds an MA from CSU Fresno. His poems have appeared in many magazines, most recently *The Laurel Review*, *The Quarterly*, and *The Southern Poetry Review*.

Marcelle M. Soviero lives and works in Manhattan where she is an editor for *Popular Science*.

Jon Tribble's poems have appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *Ploughshares*, and *Poetry*.

Catherine Turnbull has an MFA from Sarah Lawrence, and has been published in *One Meadow*. She lives and works in Providence, RI.

Julia Wendell is Writer-in-Residence at Goucher College and Editor at Galileo Press. Her first book, *An Otherwise Perfect History*, was published by Ithaca House.

Francine Witte lives in New York City. She has poems forthcoming in *Poet & Critic* and *Outerbridge*.

PRICE

\$3.00

POETRY & FICTION BY

Michael Burkard

John Flynn

Randall R. Freisinger

Helen Frost

Taylor Graham

Joseph Hutchison

Allison Joseph

Jon Lavieri

Matthew Murrey

Paul Nelson

Joyce Odam

James Salsich

Penelope Scambly Schott

David James Smith

Marcelle M. Soviero

Jon Tribble

Catherine Turnbull

Julia Wendell

Francine Witte

