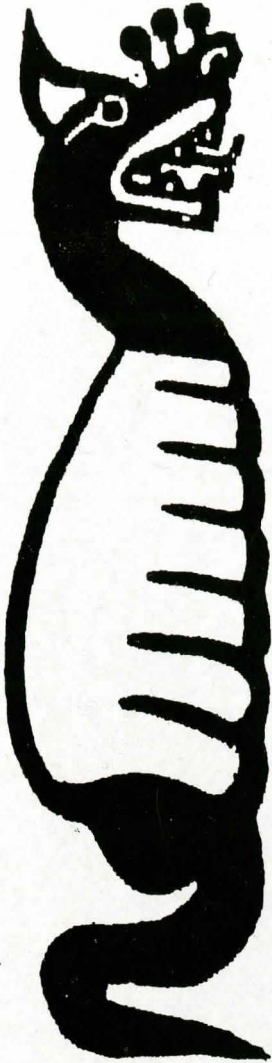


Calliope

Volume 21 Number 1



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Until further notice we will not be accepting fiction submissions.

Submissions of poetry (3-5 poems) are welcomed from

August 15 - October 15 for the Fall/Winter issue

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. **No simultaneous submissions, please.**

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

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Andrea Vlahakis

REUNION

God does not leave us comfortless, so let evening come.

—Jane Kenyon

It's the smell of this winter
evening, subtle and sea-like,
that draws me out. On this

the longest night of the year,
when the wind is seduced
into calm, and quiet floats around me,

I can close my eyes and find
the faintest scent of the Aegean
in the air. Here again is

the azure summer of heady
lemon days and honey-scented
nights, the spicy waves of warmth

that lapped against my skin,
the echoes of Byzantine liturgies
billowing like incense.

It's always the smell of an evening
like this that carries me back
in streams of memory,

and returns me to the place
I long for—all the days spent
in your shelter, the precious time

nourished by your strength. Here,
in this the briefest, rarest moment
of a lifetime, our world stood still.

Andrea Vlahakis/**Reunion**

It is the smell of this winter
evening that sets my soul at peace—
it is effortless like the ripples

on the shore, and constant
like my missing you.

S.Stephanie

SEPTEMBER

At the harbor the sea's grayness
cuts the sky at an angle
and already the weather's intentions
are seeping out from under the leaves,
empty lobster traps and the peeling paint
on the boat house doors.
In the town square the sun
seems brighter, but no
this is still not the world of my Grandfather's.
Those kids leaning like metal
against the front of the cafe
will not be helping him
pull his boat in for winter.
They will not be watching him sort out
the lines and lures,
each according to size
meticulously placed in green tackle boxes.
No one will be taking steel wool
to the small spots of rust on the hammers
and tools, rakes and brooms all hanging
along wide wooden walls.
No one has done this in years.
My Grandfather's world has shrunken
and is so much smaller than a planet now.
Last night it was Canadian geese flying South
that resembled flakes of rust and iron rakes
crossing an odd path of moon.
And today I saw his black, woolen sweater
hanging off one of those kids in the square.
It was half covering an arm of tattoos.
Dragons—double dragons the color of blue snow

Kathleen Hellen

KINDERGARTEN, THE FIRST GOING

He wants to go
but holds on
(small fingers
count all
possibilities),
trusting
I will lead
where he needs to go;
not with me
but without
he becomes the man
—even now
he is going;
a space opens,
a space closes,
many spaces, like dominoes
collapsing;
he will learn to tie his shoes
like all the others;
he will learn to keep his place in line;
he will ask the questions
they can't answer;
in his hair when he comes home
I will smell a strange perfume.

Scott Withiam

SNOWY VILLAGE

Daylight the interstate is only there in sound.
And somehow a belief
that huge shadows from you, travelers,

move through us. And in their wake
leave behind a pure white stuff.
It floats down endlessly on our fields.

Tonight, stopped for the moment,
and glimpsing the surface out our windows,
your stories stick out plain to us,

sparkling, irresistible in the moonlight.
Maybe these aren't the stories of everyone,
maybe they are. Beneath,

there are bits
of anger, envy,
something easy as boredom.

Good for packing, and so simple to make balls of it,
a bunch of us will
soon venture out into the fields to lob them

at your streaky lights. One never connects.
The cars go so fast, and our arms are so slow.
Whoever you are, be happy.

It's starting to come down again.
You'll never know the depths of these fields.
We have to live with them.

Michael Steffen

LOSING

I could run for hours under a tight spiral.
Spread your hands across the laces,
My father stressing basics,
A three-point stance. Stubby,
Thickly muscled, cursing every Sunday
When his Bills blew another lead, he drilled me
On Schiller's practice field, feinting
At the goal line,
A high arc toward the flags,
The ball in flight even before my break,
Curling high over my shoulder,
Settling in that brief pause of space
My hands reached for, sometimes fell short of,
A long, looping grin.
What was there to smile about?
I wanted to say *winning* just once
And not feel ashamed. We sat in end zone seats
At War Memorial, watching Art Powell haul
In a long one from Kemp, that same smoky ball
Suspended in the white sky,
Its flight slowed, almost stopped,
A featherless bird held in the breeze,
And the field always hopeful and green,
Flurried afternoons,
My father nursing stadium beers
Before the early jog toward the exits,
His steel thermos banging the angry fences.
If you're going to get along in this world he told me
You better get used to losing. And I believed him,
His hollow voice rapidly dissolving in the din,
Like my desire to pursue without purpose
His dark rainbows in their vast,
Empty moments of flight . . . the promising season lost
And no hope to salvage it.

Linda Nemec Foster

THE SILENT ONE

My mother never told me fairy tales.
They frightened her and she was certain
they were true: fabulous beasts that talked
and, by a word, changed themselves into men;
magnificent castles that became thin clouds;
evil sorcerers that turned straw into gold
and dried dandelions into dead children.

She remembered the stories her grandmother told
but tried to forget them, always wondering
if she wasn't someone else—an untamed
firebird covered in jewels, a princess
bewitched into marrying the wrong man.

My mother was afraid. Afraid that once she
spoke the tales to the air, the air
would listen and bind them to her.
All the foul-smelling monsters, gnarled
witches. But also those handsome princes,
magic gowns, fiery necklaces encased in ice.
For her, these tales of beauty were the most
dangerous: soft words that enticed,
that seduced, but kept her at a distance.

My mother refused to speak the words
of myth, of the small hidden heart
waiting to be discovered. I tried
to discover it myself—in the wind
moaning at my window, in the tired
branches trying to reinvent the sky,
in the singing moon that found my eyes
wide with brown, blue, green. Colors
of earth, heaven, ocean. My eyes
the same colors as hers, the silent one.

Jeanne E. Clark

LEAVING THE FATHERS

He doesn't dance, he made the daughter who's dancing.

—Cesare Pavese

I. The Haw Is The Berry

I am frightened
To boil fish,
To set a good table:
The fish eyes
Shine back at me.
Still I do as I'm told.

One summer
My father,
Walking the park,
Took a thorn
From a boy's foot.
He worked it slow
Between his fingers
The way he took
An apple
From a small pocket.

I walk the same park.
When fields are summer,
My father takes me back.
Touch the iris, the wood violets,
Straw hats, he says,
The color of crickets
And spiders.
This is the way
I become his:
Rising bread
The hard wood
Of English Hawthorn.

Jeanne E. Clark/**Leaving the Fathers**

II. The Eccentric Beauty

after Erik Satie

I collect snails
At night,
Set out grapefruits
Half-moon traps
Hollowed out.
The snails
Are gray lips
Over these breasts.
They push small circles
Of brown earth.
By morning
The fruit is full
With their bodies.

The house
Has no floorboards,
Only pots of geraniums,
Wicker furniture
Untroubled
As our small town,
Which doesn't wander
Far down its road.

My father
In a new linen suit
Is Satie's beauty,
A gardener
Pruning camellias.
His cordovan loafers
Are caked with mud,
Bits of garden stay.
Well-trained butlers,

*Jeanne E. Clark/***Leaving the Fathers**

The trees
Accept his shirt.
They nod their heads.
It is their nature,
It is summer, they say,
When night girls
Open their windows.

III. Music Night Plays

Small trees
Begin to shimmer.
Nothing walks away
Or returns.
No one stays for supper.

The hawthorn uprooted
In the park
Is a rough arm
Ripped from its origin,
Its fingers pressing
Against the ground.
It is the black
After-fire
Of a woman.

She braids back her hair.
Night can no longer
Surprise her
With its long walk,
Its tails shining
Up the stairway.
She hears music,
Which is
Its own skin.

Dennis Rhodes

WOMEN'S WORK

My friend Anna's poems incubate, she says
on her kitchen table, around the margins
of everyday life. They are scattered
alongside hot apple pies in winter
and salads in the summer which burst
with the fruit of a modest Cape Cod garden.

Nothing is made to a recipe.
Nothing is written to anyone's taste
but her own. She tells me that Stone Age women
planted and reaped and pulverized grain
to bake ancient loaves of bread
which have been found charred, but intact
in the old ruins of Swiss Lake dwellers:
mute, petrified relics of women's work.

"The story of bread is the story
of civilization," she says with a smile—
her hands thick with flour, her poems
swirling around the table, one woman's work
leavened with love, impervious to decay.

Mary-Lou Brockett-Devine

RED POPPY NO. VI

A poppy as big as a window.
Yet I see less of flower
and more of you—satin
edges, bright colors
stark contrast of light
against shadow.
Small black pearl
at the center of the burning.
Lion mane petals
protecting the soft round heart.
This is poppy. This is you.

This is every woman dressed
in red with a cooler self inside,
or who surrounds herself in anger
to defend a tender secret.
This is the fire of a woman
strong enough to be alone
in the desert, gentle
enough to need a love
by the sea to come home to.

The rhythm of reds throbs
on the canvas—not just red,
but the orange-yellow-pink reds
that make the poppy glow—
a pulse that makes it more alive
than flower, more real
than O'Keeffe, more poppy
than any plant pushing
against a summer breeze.

Marcelle M. Soviero

BEFORE PREGNANCY

Along with the folic acid and the custom closets made to fit little sleeves
we have eased the preparation of conception with song,
and in the evenings my husband plays *Lalo's Symphonie Espagnole*
while I lie on the fat white couch facing the front of his violin.
He is playing for me—for our first eighteen months of marriage
jammed with ups and downs no parent, priest or rabbi told us about—
Still, on dusty April nights we eat English muffin pizzas on the Oberon china
and make an assembly of two in the music room;
the love of my life stands before me in his shorts and T-shirt
gallantly playing his violin for me, for the decision to stay together forever,
for the possibilities that exist so wildly inside of us.

Kristine A. Somerville

SPIRITS

The woodpecker is believed to call up rain, I read in my field guide the cool August morning the camp counselors called us together. They were sending us home after only two weeks. It rained steadily as we boarded the bus, rain drumming on the roof, drowning out an early round of "Beer on the Wall." The book was right. Through a porthole I rubbed in the fogged over glass, I watched a woodpecker hammer at the trunk of a tree. No one talked about the drowned boy whose body had settled to the bottom of the blue-tiled pool, unnoticed until Sammy Simanski stepped on his back. The lifeguard's smooth dive didn't erase the wavering image of tanned skin, the red swimming trunks. With his mouth pressed to blue lips, he tried to breathe life into the boy we called Red Beard for the pimples he wore from ear to ear. But his eyes stayed wild, locked in place. No one went swimming after that. Instead, we looked for signs. Six of us sat in a circle of lawn chairs, eyes closed, as we slowly said his name. William. William. William. The bug zapper sizzled a june bug on the eerie blue strobe, and then, the bright light decreased to a single spark. I hold a small stump I decorated in arts-and-crafts, a stump I covered with moss, lichen, acorns, and leaves. The bus hits a bump, and several small regal moths sputter up from a split in the wood. "It's his spirit," someone says and follows the moths' frantic spins with the yellow beam of a flash light.

Matthew Murrey

SI'S FIRST LOST TOOTH

It came out
with a bit of blood:
little lost bone
small as a tear,
shiny as a pearl,
painless as sleep.
Time's easy
with him now,
but a speck of blood
clings inside the hollow
of his tooth, sings
a red song there
where it joined the jawbone,
where the nerves lived.

Francine Witte

OCTOBER

and I'm back
with its sweet,
heavy branches,
A time
a mystery,
and I learn
can crack and split
a distant scent
the cold

in Vermont
wide maples
brittle leaves.
when life is still
before you leave
how hearts and trees
and love becomes
that floats above
and empty air.

Chris Forhan

LAND EDGED BY WATER

I'm tired of being charmed by winter,
I'm tired of gnarled limbs, sullen leaden nights, pick-up trucks stuck
 churning in deep snow, headlights dimming,
I'm tired of death, the great parade, the great hymn of earth, scythe-faced
 Cortez and his sun-dazed entourage,
I'm tired of land edged by water, the wearisome ever-approaching ocean
 waving its promises,
I'm tired of wringing the wheel, knowing brakes fail, veering between the
 lip of the cliff and the center line,

I'm tired of more than one thing at a time, of all things emblematic: ashes,
 cradles, phone poles, willows in strong wind,
I'm tired of the wobbly desk at which I labor over this long division,
I'm tired of the priestly nodding way of roosters and the cloistered hen,
I'm tired of death, tired of his henchman: deathless love of deathlessness,
 shrill angel in the dumpster,
I'm tired of desire,

Tired of heaven's hill's height, the heron's flight, the luminous ripe orange,
Sick of bending to hear my ticking wrist,
Sick of the sleep I nightly seek and consent to,
Sick of phosphorescent summer, forest floors black and still beneath broad
 green-yellow August leaves,
Sick of sun-streaked gulls wheeling eastward over the swollen irreducibly
 blue and wordless sea, of scrambling down to the docks and setting
 my own ships ablaze to keep from sailing.

S. Stephanie

ACROSS FROM THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL PRISON

When the town empties of tourists and their stories
the prison stands alone and ominous
out there on its small island of rock.
And I stand here, season after choppy
season, listening to the waves
beating the coast as though it were a table,
as though they could make that prison tell us
what kind of crimes sailors commit or why
Those sailors in their boats that went rocking
and rocking with the waves at the helm,
the wind at the stern and nothing to see
for miles through the portholes but blue.
Rocking the way I rocked James, eighteen
years before he fell, face down in the street
as if he were calling, "Somebody,
I need help!" Rocking as though rocking
could ever keep him from places as dismal
and gray as this. After the rocking, before
the bad checks, booze and wrong women,
he was only seven when he came home crying
and his lip was smeared with blood. How easily
I said, "If you want to survive, punch
the idiot back!" But that was how things were done
back then and on my street—with rocks and wood,
scars and no money pushing us into standing up,
daring anyone to call us a coward,
daring anyone to shut us up.

Jeanne E. Clark

THE GARDEN'S WIFE

Along the clay tennis courts
Beside the carriage house
A woman
Who is not a mother
Rides a tractor.
I call her
Helen of Troy.
She lights
A cigarette,
Then takes off
Her shirt,
Smoke rolling on air.
She wears a belt mark
Wide around her middle
Like the furrow
A plow makes. Wide,
The way my father kissed
Along the nape
Of her blouse,
Dragging footsteps
Along the hedgerow.

Bill Garten

FRAME 751
THE REFLECTION

Of fenders
In mid-evening
Traffic

Shine within
The gray
Shadows

Of gutters
And down spouts.
Angelic,

The sunlight
Mirrors itself
There in the

Dim darkness
Of houses
Echoing

The oncoming
Traffic and
Tires toiling

Bill Garten \ **Frame 751 The Reflection**

The pavement
As snow,
Like chipped paint,

Soars
Spreads
Its wings

For the
Flight
Back home

Jeanne Bryner

ART IN THE MILL

From the beginning
you must believe
it hammers in silence

and has its own
routine of faith,
even the smell of a cigar

might become a poem
or a man's reflection
in his lunch pail

wearing a hard hat
can cast some light.
Because a flannel shirt draws

warmth from a man's trunk,
you must acknowledge
his soul possesses fire.

In the kingdom of coveralls
you have to imagine pines,
a forest where it is Sunday

forever, a clearing so full
of morning, you want to pray.
There's nothing wrong

with pretending ore pellets
are grapes ready for dancing
feet or a huge vat.

Jeanne Bryner/**Art in the Mill**

Communion flowers everywhere.
Because a tow motor
is the exact yellow

of mustard seeds,
you must pay attention
to the fields.

Because art whispers
you must listen and trust
your eyes. One Tuesday,

I visited a steel mill,
a rare thing today,
all the men seemed hopeful;

their hands and faces
were covered
with sculptor's dust.

Jeanne Bryner

THE DEVOTION OF BROWN LIVES

As much as anything
the song of men pressed together
making steel
is a miracle in this valley.

See, the warm bars quiet down
stacked careful and cooling,
they are red candles in our grotto.
These brothers want to believe

their lives are more than a magnet
dangling from chains, traveling
back and forth like a gray sun
to eat the scraps of what stays piled.

I think how our language
starts with screams, then tears,
how men learn early to wait
their turn at the fountain.

Tonight the shift whistle
has a rhythm of bells,
and light from the furnace
is a smokehouse in a village

where everyone works,
and the men don't hate their houses
in the distance
or the spaces between them
blessed with trees.

Marcelle M. Soviero

INTENSIVE CARE

The Jevity Isotonic Liquid Nutrition

the color of coffee with milk, the way he likes it,
drips into his right nostril.

The Quantum 4000 clicks as it controls the flow;
gives him more food or less.

When you sit close enough the clicks sound like a hum,
and, because you are tired from sitting, watching him not move,
the blue tubes of the respirator turn into a butterfly—
You are bleary eyed, of course,
the Quantum chimes three times:
medicinal lullaby that sings him to sleep.

He who could eat a bag of marshmallows in one sitting,
is now kept alive by fluids that drip;
drip drip of Dopamine, drip drip of Dobutrex.
He who just yesterday snapped the twigs in the backyard,
stuffed them in green sacks preparing for spring—
even his tulip bulbs, planted upside down,
have come up, risen like kisses from a cold April dirt.

He who has known fifty-seven springs—
is now temporarily paralyzed
so he can't pull the tubes connected at his trache,
trache that has been stitched to stop the blood, seal the artery
two stitches actually, sign of a cross.

But you know now, they've told you,
his heart's sleeve is damaged; three valves leak.
The mighty aorta pumps backwards—
it will require a mechanical fix—
and there's an infection so thick
the ribs are not readable on the x-ray:
pulmonary edema, they say.

Marcelle M. Soviero/**Intensive Care**

On the wall behind his bed there is a sign.
You read it over and over when you sit on his left side,
window half-cracked to let in the cool air;
so serious a sign to hang above your beautiful father
who you know, have always known, would do anything for you:
patient receiving neuromuscular blocking agents
cannot move or breathe independently.

Patricia Fargnoli

THE DECISION

It was autumn, and I sat at the kitchen table
making lists for yes and no
on the backs of envelopes.

Early evening
and already dark. The dog stretched out
by my feet, and I lifted my head
to stare out the window
where the interstate rushed and roared

—a great river.
I rose and leaned my forehead against the glass.
Rain from the storm just past
shook in the leaves as the wind

swept through them.
When I was a child I would go out
in the fields and lie in the waist-high grasses,
imagine I rode rain over the horizon.

When you called, I sighed
and said *yes* and *yes* and *I know*,
but my heart
was already loading cartons, stacking them.
It had been raining on and off all day—
wavering lines in the gray mist, then
hard and straight.

Meg Gold

DEATH, THAT BRUTE HORSE

one year galloped through my house,
hot and ragged flank
grazing my side, breath confounded
with my breath.
Once it bore past, a man
I loved was no longer
anything.

The sum of the world's words
cannot tell me what he was.
Now he is less than the tiniest
ant, the tiniest cell.
We commit him
to memory, which is to say
we change him; he is already
changing; his truth goes
up in smoke, just as
his body.

Against this there is no defense.
What it comes to is simple
enough: no one to call my name now
in the echoing house.

Chris Forhan

ELEGY

I was born of my father's aching back
and tottered along behind him down our one path

learning to walk by watching his shoes
hauling around his crooked shadow.

The day my father cursed the earth and took it
for his bed, I felt my own breath shorten.

I inherited his thick skull, tilted spine
crow's laugh, house, and week-long silences.

I sleep and meet him on a crowded ferry
back in this world, and he wears my face

and when I wake and stand, his hands
dangle at the ends of my arms

and when I fall and hug the earth
when I feel my own knees buckle

I pick myself up, being not my father
and think twice, being my father's son.

David Thornbrugh

WINTER CROWS

Winter evenings the crows
blow across the sky
in parades of black tickertape,
every bird the star
of its own heroic epic.
They open their wings
like newspapers made of coal,
the words of their deeds
raining in sooty streaks
upon slanted mossy roofs,
backyard fences and
the long droll car hoods
clicking as they cool.

Compressed clumps of darkness
the crows congregate
in tree branches and clamor
about mountains they have
overflowed, the rivers traced
under black unblinking eyes,
the clouds
they have climbed like
spiral stairways of granite
shifting in the quarries of the wind.
To hear them tell it
lordly and dark among bare
branches of maple and elm
each crow is a warrior
after battle brightly lit
by glory's blaze, the
crow voices a rattle
of spears and clatter
of armor.

David Thornbrugh/**Winter Crows**

In the alley behind a restaurant
plastic bags ripped open
by clacking beaks
spill egg shells, ketchup-
reddened knuckles of fries,
the skull-boned poppyseed bun.
On oil-streaked asphalt
a single crow worries
the flattened carcass of a squirrel.

Crow voices rise into evening skies.

Jeff Hardin

AFTERWARDS WE DISCOVER

During and all along, she was leaving *with us*, small sections
inside where we hadn't been of late, where now we find
salvage, the stripped place of an embrace—
tremendous that she thought to enter us,
adding there a simple theft
nestled like the night, a different self to grow
that waits for us, due all we are: more and more less.

Eileen Favorite

MAGNIFICATION

At first I turn away.
I don't want to watch the video
of an embryo, unfurling like a shrimp,
black-eyed and veiny.

Buds become limbs,
digits undulate,
the tail is lost.

But,
the narrator says,
at eight weeks the human embryo
is only one inch long.

If I could hold to that image,
tiny bundle of cells, one-twelfth of a ruler,

then I wouldn't see the full-blown babies
rolling by in carriages,
as having anything to do with you.

I wouldn't have to pray.

I could extract a sample of my sorrow,
slip it between microscope slides,

and watch the mitochondria of grief
swim in the unflappable light.

Eileen Favorite

WHAT NOT TO SAY

It's so common.

My neighbor had one, too.

Now you know how I felt.

I know this woman—she had two—but now she has three kids.

If I had one right now I' be ok with it.

There must have been something wrong. You wouldn't have wanted
a retarded baby would you?

I just know by this time next year you'll have a baby

Nothing.

I don't really think of it as a baby until at least three months.

I think I had one once! But I didn't even know I was pregnant. It was
like this really gnarly period.

Everybody I know who had one got pregnant right away afterward.

Did you lift something heavy?

My toddler is such a pill! It's the age—oh—well, you'll see someday

At least you weren't too far along.

Joyce Odam

TRAGEDIES

gray
trembling with light

cripples
lining up to dance

women
weeping to themselves

love banging on broken tambourines
with artless hands

S. Stephanie

TEN MOONS OF SATURN

My nephew without knowing, tossed
a ball to the air. It came down
but the sky kept its shadow.

At his funeral, no flowers.
My sister planted a tree. It stands
at the center of mean cycles of weather

For ten years now—grief
has circled our house
like the smallest moon around Saturn.

Those stones on my steps, we gathered
from the ocean, but I can't bring them in.
I can't carry their salt.

The paper-boy throws news at my house,
hard rolls of paper clutter the walk.
I step over them as though they were bones,

Because if I see another warehouse on the dock
burning, I'll see everything my family ever stored
take flight again with the ashes over the city

Just as wind rattles the backyard hemlock,
the crow lifts its dark wings: two
tattered flags flap over my country.

In Autumn the sky is busy, filled
with what must be returned. Birds
to their south. Shadows going white.

S. Stephanie / **Ten Moons of Saturn**

They say in the eighth year, pieces
of the broken mirror fly back
together. They form a whole reflection.

They say in the eleventh year, we
will discover an eleventh moon, orbiting
Saturn like the eye of the crow.

Kristine A. Somerville

A BERLIN CAFE

Thinking about my father, I see him in a crowded airport, walking toward me with a garment bag in his hand, a trench coat over his shoulder, a rolled newspaper under his arm. Once he gave me the picture and the poetry of a German woman he had gone to see. She was maybe six, seven years older than me. I studied her brown eyes ringed with dark circles, her pointed nose hovering over thin lips, her hair pulled back, exposing a widow's peak, a face so different from my mother's I thought I understood. Her dress was a tropical design, brighter than the backdrop of lilac bushes in full bloom. The poems described moonlit walks around an empty square, swimming in the pool of their hotel while it rained, long drives through the twisting streets of the city. When my father came home, alone, I was left to imagine what had happened. They sat at an outdoor cafe, near a market, and drank coffee, maybe ate buttered rolls. It was fall. She wore a black turtle neck, tortoise-shell frames, her hair down, brown, falling around her shoulders, everything about her, at that moment, beautiful. There's the sound of traffic, people talking, some laughing and Ingrid (that was the name I'd given her) speaking perfect English: "I love you, Phillip. But I know that is not enough." My father smoked a cigarette—he did that when he was upset—and the wind lifted his thinned hair, exposing pink scalp. I married a man who reminds me why I love my father: the deep, hearty laugh, the refusal to hold back when we play racket ball, even the way he sometimes wipes his nose with the fleshy, inner part of his hand. And once, when I picked up my husband at the airport—the garment bag, the trench coat, the rolled newspaper, all there—I remembered the German woman's last poem, an odd meditation on hair and nails and how they continue to grow after death.

Rustin Larson

IMPROBABILITY'S BEST FRIEND, REJECTION

Rejection sits in the far corner of a library reading
a forty year old magazine.
Rejection says to himself, "Here I am, so far in LIFE."
And people look at the buttons on
Rejection's shirt and say to themselves,
"Those are his buttons, that is
at least one way we can tell
who he is."

Rejection had a friend, Improbability, who shaved his
eyebrows (in an effort to be less than average,
or more— it depends on how you
look at it).
Rejection ate only raw white cabbage for each
meal. Rejection's imagination tells
him he looks like a cabbage,
a transformed fairy tale creature,
alive by virtue of repeating the story
each time before bed.

It's not good to be alone.
Rejection can't touch other people
because he isn't one. Rejection says,
"God has my paramour out there,
I know. I'll find her when I've learned
to be 100%. She wears a necklace
of wild carrot flowers. She's
known several men before now, but she
is so much like myself she shyly
creeps to the mirror each morning and allows
a shoulder's width space to stand near the vowels
of her breasts."

Rustin Larson/Improbability's Best Friend, Rejection

Each morning, Rejection washes his face in a basin of warm water
There is no life but rest;
the day glows and then falters
through closed curtains.
Rejection shuts his eyes and answers Acceptance's salutation.
Rejection says to the subtle face: "Tell
me my fortunate friend . . . I'll someday return the
favor . . . and give you a life of your own."

Ian Krieger

THE BEAUTY OF RAIN

All morning this mood,
 as if grey were a glow,
a growing season,
 a flower whose scent
the moon mentions
 when it is blue
and tainting the sky.

All she ever wanted was silver,
 a garden of silver,
an eye washed with silver,
 so purified with delight
that it would spice her conversation,
 show her the direction,
true as metal
 in a world of stone.

Ostensibly it's this world,
 its ostentation and sensualities,
its shivering winds and palpations of solids
 its matter all in vibration
solid as it seems,
 solid as it is,
solid like a clock
 or the drip of morning rain
on the surface of a tree.

Time can be made behind time,
 you make something split
taste its space, the deliciousness
 of its energy
as it winks in and out
 rearranges the ebb and flow
goes proudly into temperature,

Ian Krieger / **The Beauty of Rain**

a bird reposing in its nest
under sunlight.

Here is the song, this one calling, chittering, a twilight chateau
an elemental music no longer alone amongst the muses,
the long night having ended,
eternal day begun.

You can't be a peasant in the kingdom of simplicity
subsistence farming isn't done
it's not that kind of monarchy
not that kind of sum.

Every government can be a government of rain,
softening a morning not to be missed,
a morning whose playfulness is the main event
is wistfulness
spilling over into location
is matter, energy and the other toys
that the flowers wake to,
if it could be said the flowers awaken
when someone's eye remakes them,
as any eye can remake a world
supposedly lost in a storm.

Louis S. Faber

RIVER CROSSING

She walks with a stoop
dragged down by the burden
of an invisible weight of the dead.
Each time she drives
she feels the pull of the wheel
the beckoning whisper of a tree
and it is all she can do
to pass by in dreams.
By night she answers him
holding him to her breast
telling him of her plans
but dawn draws him away
and she wakes to a barren bed.
She pulls them close
grasping tightly, no force
will dislodge them
yet they run laughing
into the yard unaware
of her outstretched arms.
I would lift the weight
and carry it, for my back
is stronger, trained
in lifting such weight
for an hour or two,
but able to cast it off
into the steel pan.
I would swaddle it
in bandages, and wipe
its brow as it faded
in and out of the gauze curtain,
but it is her weight, and if I try
to hold it, its wings unfurl
and it lifts, spiraling
into a sunless sky.

Walt McDonald

UNDER THE FLIGHT PATH

*I squeeze another burst and he's blood,
a puff of smoke, bits of him like wafers,
communion for sinners in jungle mud
who died the night before. Rock and reefers*

helped my cousin survive in country
back with medals he trashed, wasting no words
on mercy. *That's how to strafe*, he taught me
jerking his shoulders, bending the bird

to jink away from tracers. Rockets burst
with faces in his sleep, but only his wife
told mine. Next year, in pummeled jungles
I dug my skull in the bunk under the whine

of Phantoms scanning for someone to bomb.
Not rockets crashing down while I huddled
with others in bunkers, not the dread. I'm calm
now, except at night, most senses dulled

to the roar of rotors flying hard
to the local hospital, like Saigon nights
under the flight path near the wards,
choppers racing someone bloody to the knife.

Mary-Lou Brockett-Devine

REHEARSAL

I have been practicing for your death—
not because I want you dead
(though you think this is so)
but because the weight of your life
on my life—like a mountain pressed
against bedrock— seems immeasurable,
unending in that eons-of-time way
that must have made the first mammals sigh
when dinosaurs stomped through.

Imagine the furred-ones' astonishment
when the great reptiles just lay down
and died—no more burrow-shaking steps,
fanfare screams, battles for a bit
of land or meat. Think of the rat-like
creatures looking up at the sky
to see *only* sky or a few rough birds,
but no cold silhouettes blocking the sun,
no shadows blackening whole fields.

Perhaps it was more than some could stand—
this permission to live on.
Anxiety, like a lizard's claw,
must have gripped the freed hearts,
holding them prisoner (and even killing some)
long after the danger was gone.

So, often I visualize the world without you—
no late-night binges or morning pick-me-ups,
no tiptoeing around the edges of holidays.
I see sadness and guilt, but I also see the sky
looking brighter, feel the ground

Mary-Lou Brockett-Devine/Rehearsal

not shaking as you walk. I picture myself
coming out from behind the rocks,
taking deep breaths, pulling the whole world
into my lungs and then pushing it out again
so that my heart feels larger—a place
to move around, multiply, and grow.

Robert Funge

MEA CULPA

So I'll always be the hero
of my story, I forget
that I was the one who started the fire, that I stood
on the mountain while the floods came.

So I can go to sleep at night
I tell myself that the ones I love
are with the ones they love, and I drink
to their warmth until I believe it.

And when morning breaks the curtained
pane, in the quick prison of light
I hold myself, saying over and over
it's all right, it's all right, it's all right.

M.A. Sisco

DRAFT ONE OF I DON'T KNOW WHAT

lazy as a little dream in august,
i worship gorgeous white lights—
 unseen flitting—
 and whispering
rose voices, volumes of yesterday.

in the *Java Juice* cafe on the summer island
a soul screams through my murmuring life.

nostalgia's deadly for a celibate.
her brown eyes haunt me.

CONTRIBUTORS

Mary-Lou Brockett-Devine is a graduate of Roger Williams University and has an MFA in Writing from Vermont College. Her fiction and poetry have appeared in *The Eleventh Muse*, *Confluence*, and other magazines. **Jeanne Bryner** is a registered nurse and a 1996 graduate of Kent State University's Honors College. Her chapbook, *Breathless*, was published in 1995 by Kent State University Press. She is the recipient of a 1997 Individual Artist Fellowship from the Ohio Arts Council. **Jeanne E. Clark's** poems in this issue of *Calliope* are included in her manuscript, *Ohio Blue Tips*, which won the 1997 University of Akron Poetry Prize and is forthcoming from The University of Akron Press. Other recent work appears in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *5 A.M.*, *Quarterly West*, and *Fever Dreams*, an anthology of Arizona poets (U. of Arizona Press). **Louis S. Faber** is a corporate attorney, living in Pittsford, New York. His work has appeared or will shortly appear in *Footworks*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Negative Capability* and elsewhere. **Patricia Fagnoli** is a psychotherapist in a large medical clinic in New Hampshire and occasionally teaches poetry at The Keene Institute of Music and Related Arts. Her work appears recently in *Laurel Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, and others. **Eileen Favorite** is currently enrolled in the MFA in Writing program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has poems published or forthcoming in *Poetry East*, *Yellow Silk*, *Free Lunch*, and *River Oak Review*, including an interview with Billy Collins. **Chris Forhan's** poems have appeared recently in *Willow Springs*, *West Branch*, and *Prairie Schooner*, and a chapbook, *Crumbs of Bread*, was published by March Street Press. **Linda Nemec Foster** currently teaches poetry workshops throughout Michigan for the state's arts council. Her most recent book, *Living in the Fire Nest* (Ridgeway Press), was nominated for the Small Press Book Award in Poetry and the Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize. Her poems have been published in numerous journals including *The Georgia Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Quarterly West*, and *River Styx*. **Robert Funge** has work appearing in *The Literary Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Hayden's Ferry Review* and *Hiram Poetry Review*. **Bill Garten** has published in numerous journals including *Context South*, *The Laurel Review*,

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