

# Calliope

ALSO BY GAIL SHER

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# Calliope

*Gail Sher*



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*For Brendan*



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HIGH-ON THE NAME TAG



*there are three throats*  
three seeds  
that say

these are the syllables  
of the cross

\*

a collared one shouted  
but his collar was black

he's going to die  
they said

\*

and I too  
die in the word

and I begin  
swallowing that consciousness

\*

falling  
to their meaning

at the crossing  
one is left

one word missed  
in the styrofoam

*and in its eye*  
a word

spilling from the cup  
a mountain  
of three skulls

the lady danced  
her curly knife  
assailing the tongue  
of the heavy man

\*

the acreage of him  
bloody and in turmoil

from the eyebrows up  
she said

\*

how from my waist  
I chop

how the word was severed  
like a blip

three baskets full  
slipping through my toes

*yojanas* below the  
enchantment

*she had it in her mind*

certain colors as they would  
protrude into her

the longing to taste

think it  
to stone

\*

to actually ask  
go to the door  
politely

\*

the throat of the poem  
set serenely adrift

telling it  
in the end

as if light existed

\*

my time in this throat

plunged in a room  
of stuff

*high-on*  
the name tag

as he with the school  
snapping off heads

I wade  
walking over turtles'  
necks

\*

who sleep upwards

pink from sun  
pink from the pain  
of this exposure

\*

yes we derive  
the burden of fatness

from a mold  
we are stood  
in a dark wooden box

a fruit grabs sun  
from the shadow  
of its sisters

*her tattoo rose*

as if  
out of the word itself

dropping  
in plea

in relic  
of lighted waist

\*

her name aloud  
before the sirens

\*

in a fountain  
in a circle

the she of my face  
of this entanglement  
solidly

\*

in the crease of her eye  
the butter  
from before

that spot in salt  
where they embalmed  
my body

*doves slept there*  
before the snow

bringing sound  
to her

her relevance  
among the trees

\*

repellent of her  
repellent of  
all words

\*

her white chin  
lay there

brown as a tongue  
(twisting in tongue)

on prickly sand  
little tufts of height

\*

she didn't swallow it  
immediately

placing the bet  
in her throat



from the caution  
of her throat

she perched on a branch

then gathered the lawn  
in her body

*snow feathers was how*  
the papers described it

bowl of bone  
anchored in desert sand

swaddled in cloth  
(though at sunset, it said,  
the mirage shifted)

\*

words  
in the pit

in the  
high pink air

in the lace

in her Asian  
play bell

\*

the crust of his word  
from his downy  
young chin

stealing it  
from saying itself

a vowel  
and I tame  
its way

backwards to their  
people

*slicing flesh*  
he speaks of eyes

thus she disrobed

digging holes  
claiming them  
with flying stones

\*

climbing from the pond  
(whose eyeballs leave hollows)

columns of cars  
swallow the morning hill

\*

three stages of dusk  
streak the child of cement

a mother wheels a carriage  
across a sidewalk crack

when I undress  
it is still there

*I am a cobbler*  
a skeleton in chinks  
dangles down my back

\*

I am you  
seated  
  
nailed in you  
resting before you

\*

old head  
I swallow you whole  
  
lick my plate  
with hairy tongue

I feed you agony  
I feed you  
my only child

\*

I am so full  
eating it from  
behind myself

*China bloodless boy*

people of mast  
here are some

if we are dumb  
if we are dumb

so puffed and  
slobbering to themselves

\*

shouting it  
down the mountain

lugging the beast  
back to his people

\*

over hills, over fields

the moon's condition  
come to pass

*come home stars*  
*lay down your heads*

nailed to the earth  
across the pasture

*on the hull*

we die in a  
cauldron of talk

lungs  
grown out

give me what you hold

\*

*quit it, quit doing it*

*look bitch!*  
(they were in a  
yard)

\*

how we  
locked in

how we  
from the beginning  
face this land of water

this conch  
spiraling  
right

in the yard  
for a second  
I see sky

I

*my face is sound*

I dress  
in puddles of  
snow

the road leads to water  
says the man  
and I scoop it up

\*

o woman of meat  
from today on  
(from today on)

inside your wound  
from your heart's  
deep water

\*

inside her  
was a quiet place of water

the subject of water  
its private spot  
in birds



occasionally in trees  
one might  
yelp

II

she asks and I  
take this to heart

this line and me

how far towards head  
can I breathe in

\*

mutt  
you are here

wearing salt coats  
in darkening host  
of trees

lay down your pack

on invisible land  
assail the bird

III

in the relapse  
was the bird

the tail of the bird  
lugging its mist

watchword come back  
I want to hold you

\*

the vase tilts  
the eye  
of the peacock  
winks

\*

o loud one  
she said swallowing

they turn upright  
propped by the door

the sky disappeared  
and I alone  
pulled downward by my head

*the stars were out so*  
I began again

at the temple  
encampment  
a bell rings

*this is soft*  
*this is gentle to the touch*

\*

cloudscape spilling

inside rabbits  
chewing themselves  
in my bed

*keep me whole*  
murmurs the tin child

\*

so as they sat  
in death

here  
on my pride

and again  
before the tree

*the swimmer and I*

it took place  
at my foot  
under the toe-pad's soft

I woke early  
to plant new trees

universe of flowers  
before and after rivers

\*

the name of them  
each with its signature eluding

\*

vowing  
as if this place in him  
were empty

tendrils of fish  
drift dangerously close to shore

not a colony  
but a behest  
to the white man

*once I shed skin*

like fruit I peeled  
back

I spit seeds

who sprout  
the yellow tree-flowers

\*

I shed eyes

contrive my seeing  
in stones

don't cry stones

I will throw  
the red fish  
back

\*

I shed breath

parting air  
I lay glowing

light in earth  
rumbles  
beneath me

breathless

*wash your name*  
in bone

o my god  
break the day  
to pieces

your head in pain  
thankfully on a  
rosebush

\*

bush to bush  
the face of the child

the skin on him  
this winter's seventh  
month

\*

he whispered up  
my burning

he said that this  
is a moment of lace

to pick a favorite  
from my skin

a sanctuary of shards  
spread like seed  
all over the land



*my bones are in*  
that mountain

in the vale of flowers  
beyond its southern pass

slipped down  
to me

by the sky  
how long ago

\*

who wander broken

a coterie of lambs  
thought of as a bush

\*

the land was yellow  
and contained a tree

a man tied to a pole  
looked up

he is praying  
and others too  
are glancing eastward

\*

o house of cans  
I squat  
wind blows

\*

to replace its word  
is why I gather mushrooms

in sticky sun  
I squat

peaceful juice spills  
on my gapping pant-leg  
finally (finally)

the mountain  
becomes a cloud  
sloughing south  
following the man

*having eaten fish*

I open myself  
to make them  
more comfortable

I pet the fawn  
twisting my calves

\*

two fish leap  
kiss and die

\*

fish, fry here  
(o my fish)

sway grass  
in coin of rain

so far we kill  
the awl of fishes presides

while I walk by  
covering my head

*you enter the room*  
of his eyes

they laugh a person  
you can't quite grasp

o Timothy, my son,  
wan one

\*

a head had  
its eyes lowered

\*

still the view  
like the shadow of a bird

sealing it  
so that it would  
belong to her

how low  
can I arrive

how much particle  
can I detect  
across the border

1

*so she*  
and now  
the voice from the kitchen wall  
  
whose are the shadows  
falling softly  
  
as they dissolve  
  
she, mother of the turned corners

2

waist bestowed  
again  
  
susurrus of sound  
(a rodent sniffs  
daytime)  
  
losing its balance, extending its neck  
  
in its rock  
loose of their call

3

tablets stand among the lambs

sun spills

as a tree is from the inside

my skin is that tree

and I, in my eyes,

cannot stop the voices

*north of here*  
is dawn

a little pink girl  
trips and falls  
laughing

she raises her elbow  
to the brim of her  
hat

the certainty of that moment  
when her elbow  
hit her hat

\*

though her laugh was real  
the image was  
like her dress

\*

so break  
so turned upon the pestle

we write columns  
from the moon's sleeping rabbit

in holy pride  
we lay our bath

o town of birds  
circling spires  
chewing calamitous meat



*a flare I am*

ark to ark  
a sparkler

belly be full  
belly be full

\*

whistling a tune  
my teeth sing

*tune, be careful*

\*

the coming of blue  
being born then

I hear your sound  
in my far away  
hill

stout verb  
swinging in air

I arrive with wind  
trailing from my fingers

I

this land, once a field  
held a lake that could be read

letters for the oracle  
in the shape of a green man

fury red  
fury green  
take it all

so the oracle left

\*

in my throat  
in my long green throat  
he put a straight-backed chair

\*

no one saw the book  
that lay open on the water

ground of cans  
piled by the wall

tell the water  
tell the lake

my face before  
the me of this  
gold time

II

later, emptied of people  
emptied of all wanderings-  
of-mind

so that the patterns shifted  
running more to clean rows

\*

a tree fell  
a branch lay by your side

\*

the carrion of fish  
pinned the hour  
to your footprints

nosing air  
a colt limped home

be little  
o one with the coat

till you are safe

*headstrong boy*  
but she sees him

crawling by lineage  
stomping his thick foot

to bind dawn  
to your foot

your sleeve and  
that night

\*

from the endless parallel  
of my swollenness

from the cause of me  
from such acts as the man  
left on my chair

\*

licking the dog  
whose maggots are  
new maggots

to see them  
(from my cry  
to take me from them)

touching them with my  
lips

offer myself to the little heads

*why did she care*  
she wondered  
laying aside the book

a dim light could be seen  
possibly from a cabin

reaching in

not for the word  
but for the space

which had a time

\*

fat drops driven violently sideways

\*

the man's mind

into which she  
tossed herself

becomes a bird

*fly away bird*  
*fly south where you are needed*

\*

letters moved  
(she could barely  
make them out)

the sky moved  
hanging bluntly

a circle swayed  
toppled to the sea

*to you, sea, I chant  
and to the one with ears  
hearing you into me*

*good kalpa*

when old was ten  
the deer forgot to graze  
one became quite lonely

a mare lost its footing  
on the way to feed its colt

the toes of a bird  
ascended like a spire  
before which she knelt  
a Friday afternoon

on the counter  
was an egg

\*

the postman slipped

the egg upon the roof  
waiting to burn  
waiting till he  
is blindfolded

\*

the bird in its kindness  
dropped a feather in a rock



yielding thy worms  
arising in my mouth

I want cow  
I want butter

\*

the belly in calamity hawks  
a mere existence

we among chimps  
sanding circles  
back

the land dissolves  
(the plain becomes a shoulder)

I am black  
my horse is black  
its colt is black

*he blew her a kiss*

that night  
of long sound

each year  
the fat of him

in his guest  
gulping them down

just as the sky wants

\*

a heifer in need  
cuddles its milk

in rolling grass  
guests spill

\*

o monk of size  
orange and walking

I wave  
do you see

or do you simply  
(chewing meat)

on the rug find  
a broken moment

*in my clothes*  
as though that had appearance

sharply I thought of her  
straggling through snow

half of her  
of bed

body of spleen  
I am the red father

\*

o little girl  
your Mary Janes are mine

your skirt soft and brown  
I have carried with me  
everywhere

do you remember the exchange  
that startling light-full dusk

perhaps you thought  
I was dead

\*

here  
on the wall  
I dance

there is a  
crystal-clean bathroom

our plight through the orchard  
its crocodile flares

I am that  
rolling my eyes

*a raw man*

blue against  
the day

in closed shirt  
may he rest

older than man  
older than what  
is alive

\*

bird woman  
in a squat

she smokes  
and he, from his hands  
at the table's white head

\*

swinging the pipe  
(it rests on a pillow)

dirt prods its bed  
stoneless in the  
sky

will I cry  
to feel the pale trees

I

*jagged midnight burns*

covers the veins  
of this blousy man

(I place the lamp  
on the damask carpet)

\*

the chair  
at rest

of wood beheld  
on (soft) drop of blood

\*

her foot  
'neath a lamp  
raises (lowers)  
slowly

a baby finds some lace  
and is sucking on it

who is now a deer  
chewing razor-sharp leaves

its cry from the hill  
in the pale light

II

so he  
edgy

*I will make you a  
tourniquet, brother*

\*

soldered to dawn  
her bare voice  
drops

\*

each thorn  
tells the breadth

holds a column  
of its bereavement

a mountain moves to the right

a residue devolves  
and I too  
rise with the sun





CALLIOPE



*calliope*

grass in chasuble descends  
towards the sea

chafed, the animals in a circle

o one of tooth  
to whose halls perched below  
that orbit

\*

may I not  
as the plant  
scream

\*

*o bewildered hotness*

\*

is what I've heard from the embers  
is what homunculus

no telling  
how  
the pieces

*be exact*  
said the floating maroon lady

she laughs (entwined  
with her laugh)

sea water sounds  
tossing fish high

*hush my love*  
*for once*  
*in space*  
*to wring our necks*

\*

so that we fly  
toward ourselves

hand it to others  
freely

being animals  
the noose dissolves

the eel lies within the string  
hobbled & queer

*astride*  
the toads

to the tuft  
to the tide pool

you stand fresh  
in a girl  
of nothing

\*

a good deal of sky  
pours through the roof

\*

rest sky

I who rest  
am the mind  
of the stone

\*

its precision among  
me

as if she were sleeping  
in breath

*for the loss of that second*

when I  
humbled in my blankets

her shoes  
smoldering

as dead as me

\*

click! each chaff to its earth-mate

I, fallow, fall below

on a tiger rug I sit

in you  
content in you

\*

*papa, accept me!*

allow me to please  
the earlier saplings

a moment appears  
like a tree

I wake in a forest  
of cedar legs

*I am now a wigwam*

who started yesterday  
when I swam

*I make magic*  
said the man

he is old  
of frail bone and teeth

\*

in my toes  
I am a poor thing

tell me again  
how to dance

\*

the belly pulse  
the vale of scattered bread

the pending of me  
from behind the mountain  
sill

these lines that I cross  
to die

near a sharp sharp  
rose

*my mush is dressed*  
so I rise with dawn

brown cow, come  
(raising eyes, curious)

we live under sky  
yellow, blue dots

a paper thing  
from which blood  
drips

\*

the cloth of this body  
the chime of this day

bleat for me  
who need nothing

\*

a Dalmatian eats  
fruit

white food (in white cloth  
arms)

*allow us to eat*  
which is done playfully

munching bones  
wrapped in ribbon



*as a tree*  
to make a drawing

paint myself black  
in this soft soft body

nudging day  
*begin, day!*

\*

a weather patch  
(the first gray  
morning)

*coo coo* says the owl  
sobbing in its hole

dawn nuzzles the highway  
lays the rye straight

\*

o swollen mouse  
(cream of yard)

chewing mouthfuls of earth  
you crawl between the peas

day wanders to its fields  
(the turnpike grows small)

mustard flowers yellow  
the pale noon

*savagely by the bush*  
she knelt

o queen, my death,  
my live-wire

the muzzle of the rock  
fastens in strength

to the crux of our skin

\*

pieces of cloth  
flounder

being of nature porous

\*

I wash flowers  
I dye weeds

making rain  
if the oracle asks

*winter is coming*  
*winter will be here soon*

*be with me daughter*

borrow my history  
beyond the crumbling fence

in my nest  
in my hollow living of life

pink  
in the trade  
of smelling quickly

\*

spring-sweet pink  
(I stand  
in wetted silence)

\*

being crawling in it

a monk's three robes  
throb in air

so long your chain  
(o salad of living threads)

*the robin awake*  
though the tree is quiet

on the brink  
one eye

so shortchanged  
and breasted blue

\*

splendorous fowl  
the gawk of you  
(the gawk of your wake)

we are wands  
we are of your section

\*

shriveling before the  
stripper

her dress  
her fatherless apron

*devolve my son in*  
*the eyes of the fowl*

this dusk  
the dust is broken

*a quail moves*

quickens  
in the welling night

*the bird is I*  
*dug into blackness*

\*

the dust of the dog  
having been being

having been  
as its torso

\*

*dharmata* so pink

so many birds  
equally spaced on the  
pole

*ask again*  
make the ants talk

in calvery  
in block of dangling feet

blood drips  
*is it in your eyes?*

*will you write with your whole body?*

\*

breathless ant  
uphill on the maul  
where once we stood  
impaled in a cloud

\*

doors align an  
empty hall  
inserting inserting  
in augury  
of the palid one  
to dye the knuckles  
green  
sun is caught in my  
sparkling forehead

*rejoice! singing*  
smokestacks

cobblestones walk  
this dark night

*o fairest lady*  
*of the next frost*

\*

in the canal  
where we used to fight

in the hour they held

left to their  
fingers alone

\*

in earth blue

in lodging of  
cold verb

the mark of the bird  
wandering in air

to the high tall west

\*

I am its lot  
I am its endlessness

the land of cry  
in the bit of our grain

a cardinal sits  
cocked in chirp

my blood  
in the egg  
frosty & solid



*to be sky-full*  
once

a rag of nods  
as the tide  
seeps in

the camera  
of her  
(wanting numbers to fit)

now and again  
an instant will finish

*white book*  
white endless knot

out to my solitude  
behind  
this excruciating face

far away  
the sound of prettiness  
even

anyone fled  
as if countries exist  
over there

*my city moves sideways*

till I cry  
till I am backwards

water falls beneath my shadow

which I lick with my  
sour tongue

\*

wanting my hell warmer

wanting my own mothers  
back

mirror days down  
the ridge in pieces

at another lunch  
several years apart

\*

chiseled awake  
worn again to life

the nibbling of me  
under the nail's ridge

concealed in frost  
I lie abed yellow

*o windhorse!*  
*o mare of my old mothers!*

*waving at the train*

I grin again

night has passed into  
endless lighted stars

pushes dawn  
down its narrow  
blue ridgeway

\*

o chested ground  
of hills

sky folds in  
sad flowers

birds wail  
the king's three notes

\*

the life of its  
custody

she brings meat  
wrapped in  
dress

before the gate  
the essence of her  
children

daughters in red  
all animals  
shorn

*from times before our very sun*





*from times before our very sun\**

storms on the sun  
her day  
on the sun-ease

a yellowjacket lands  
on the jagged pilgrim  
wall

a child cries  
seeing it on the hill

seated in sun  
like death

\*

the feeling of calm  
as they swell  
into me

ground of rain  
relaxed

a white swan  
curls its neck  
in the mud

---

\*From *danger on peaks* by Gary Snyder

\*

I cometh on a camel

black in silence  
(ear in dawn)

black calf of  
black curled eye

*the birth of hair*

that day  
in the ski

one deer falls  
in shifting autumn  
light

way back (way back)  
done to words  
as I lay dying

\*

slipped beneath the nail

the bristle of her  
on ordinary stair step

a boy is whipped  
who becomes a  
metal leaf

by her hair-mitten  
(by the white elephant  
god)

\*

bandaged boy  
carrying fresh milk

you smell  
of yesterday's hemorrhage

the yell in the night  
in memorial of  
shoes

boxes and boxes  
of the dead man

*his (demon)*  
breakneck

no guy  
(o regent of the  
brass)

that cunt  
and now  
war

*to suck the mole*  
(its kid horse)

and I, in tow,  
next to the warming earth

bringing the speed  
dragging it from the  
hill

eeeking it from  
my lonely fingers

\*

o fabulous horse  
streaming down my back

in paw  
her flames of parrot

earth erupts  
to bring the queen  
to place

\*

shattered girl  
your home is lost

one penny in child  
crumpled history lost

the cornice  
where you jump

driving a stake  
in the hard-packed dirt

*she carved the line*  
on her scalp

clean of hair  
it reddened  
in pleasure

languishing by the water  
she (of death)  
watches her history  
fall

\*

the cradle  
where I land

for I fall  
from the tree  
(the wild sweet orange)

in awl (in plum)  
how we read mice

hearing my own  
mountain  
sob

\*

to hear  
(your mind to hearing)



o lamb of purr  
the deer lies fallow

thrum of rain  
the sluice before me breaks me

one tear falls  
from the left eye  
of the statue



SKY DAUGHTER



*birds popped*  
in the coming  
of yellow

lady of ring  
of flowers  
rising tall

slow-land flocks  
gathering its wings

for the leaves twist prettily  
in their own quiet

\*

soft face  
on soft cloth

she weeps  
inside the yellow  
string

left to herself  
left to the ones on trees

\*

waking at dawn  
the notion of flowers  
giving head to a flower

(o god)  
calling it by name

a word in sedge  
holds red  
within itself

\*

a mother cries  
across a sea-bed

rose-o-rose  
o-robins in their beauty

to die on the male  
a king as you were promised

*draw it, dear*  
*draw me what you see*

*the fiction of her*  
dreaming herself alive

I dream  
(in her presence)  
carved by myself  
from a tree

stigmata, my life  
a single tree  
starving

to quietly save the calf  
o mother of six deaths

\*

your old friend calls  
knowing you are tired

who is her in chld  
who is my alive mother

the agony of grass  
meat of this dinnertime

the coziest name  
churning inside my  
stomach

\*

o basketry  
your lathe of wood  
cometh

umbels of maidenflower  
tremble in a breeze

in her vest  
a polyp of her death

why do I cry  
to see the pale seeds fall



*our tribe (our lake)*  
feathers from our land

o hand, you've taken  
it from our mothers

in servitude of kittens  
toggling one mountain  
away

\*

stoke the fire  
so the cat can die  
quickly

by this rose  
by this young sheep  
finally

vultures atop *salmali* trees  
gouge my eyes  
to suck the fat

*listen sweet mother*  
*of the fallen river!*

\*

winged-of-now  
clocking death

iron leaves  
pierce my flesh

day-in-and short  
my stomach  
in woolens

*behold the sky*

please

(I am myself  
pasting words to sky)

a bird-dog watch  
at Christmas  
long ago

o yellow boy  
(pup of thin  
arms)

here a topknot

repeat after me  
my short day

*queer dogs in dawn land*

of snow farms  
melting like history

o one of head  
of short (short) ears

\*

cur in snow

we are frozen  
our hearts are tough salt

*hawk-fawn of the high plateau*  
*doggy of the silent lips*

your notes of grass  
I lick

\*

the morning teams  
(sunny, cloudless)

I hunt and my dog  
follows birds

sing me quick  
(sing me up)

being wooden me  
spindle of three gleams

*raise yourself, Charlie*  
murmured the calf

*weasel be free*  
*breathe well*

from whose vase  
sprouts a ruby branch

bathing death  
in the rose-frozen  
evening air

\*

I lean up  
buried upright  
as a narrow fellow

my leopard sleeps  
(on rock of wool)

my long waist sobs  
as I touch you again

\*

*dress yourself!* she said  
providing him with cloth

the congress of him  
in homily

of his warmth to her

I shift in my seat  
the old man's paper falls

upriver  
leaves  
sever the city

*I'll sell you, she says*  
standing on her back

one sore hand  
nailed to a cross

the filly in her saber coat  
frees me like a pencil

roaring around the hill  
being eaten in it  
frankly

\*

to deeply knowing  
the pencil

the sharp back of  
bread

in scree slices  
in disk  
crack

*come dear*  
*be eaten tonight*  
*together*

*released of name*  
(o gods)

the town hall stands  
in simplicity  
like a monk-man

my golden bone of day  
in penalty  
in supreme bigness

I sit tall  
eating  
off the dead

\*

*and now you, mother!*  
and now me  
of the head

*watch son, as we die*  
(I watch her watch)

the petal of moons  
the tide of ten swans

one yielding fawn  
creeps away  
silently



*contemplative (your sharp  
sharp rose)*

started from her  
as the plum rose is

once before death  
the sound of spoons  
bringing me  
winter tulips

\*

bending me up  
to my open cave  
door

white-bellied swallows  
erupt from the barren  
cliff

cow over cow  
(sighs  
tall in the manger)

pure air  
forgives  
what my life is

\*

stacks of sticks  
(agony of sticks)

hold us in your hand  
(bloody nails can be  
removed)

the sky rolls on  
(on-the-prowl)  
once again

o wolf sky  
swirling beyond the hedge



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