Kristen Gallagher and Standard Schaefer for their suggestions regarding contributors; to my wife Susanna and John Parker for all their advice; to Kerry Sherin and Heather Starr for all sorts of timely assistance; and to the whole crew at the Kelly Writers House for their continued encouragement and support.
A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

In thinking of how this second issue of COMBO took shape, I’m reminded of something Nate Mackey wrote: that “creative kinship and the lines of affinity are much more complex, jagged, and indissociable than the totalizing pretentions of canon formation tend to acknowledge.” Good. There’s hope then for a community which doesn’t resemble a club. I wanted my own editorial predilections to be mediated as much as possible. It wasn’t cacophony I was looking for but some pattern based on antiphonies. The community implied by our first issue was a place to begin and then maybe we’d just see what happened, what sorts of conversations developed post-distribution. Not to imply passivity - O’Hara’s warning: “One must not be stifled in a closed social or artistic railway station waiting for the train.” Creeley’s prescription: “any ‘we’ must, willynilly, submit to the organic orders of its existence.”

Kristen Gallagher had gone to New York and returned with stacks of poems. These were passed around to various people at the Writers House in Philly with talk of inviting some of these poets to read. I received it all by mail, and email allowed me to put my two cents in. Out of that came poems here by Ange Mlinko, Heather Fuller, Brett Evans, Prageeta Sharma. Philly itself continues to be a wellspring as the poems by Pattie McCarthy and Chris McCready testify. The translations of Rubinstein’s notecards came from my old friend Phil Metres and immediately reminded me of Grenier and Davies. Then there’s the Buffalo Poetics listserv, a community without the usual constraints of geography, where I could meet Standard Schaefer and David Kellogg without ever meeting them. And I should say, lastly, that the generosity of long-established poets (DiPalma and Robinson in this case) is evident again.

The missing element now is audience. These are difficult poets who care about readers - a contradiction to those who do not see the poem as a participatory arena. But I would say this: any static between interpretation and intention is less like scraping friction and more an issue of distance between radio and signal; one imagines space being the variable and deciding factor between noise and reception: music becomes a matter of moving on, adjusting the dial, directional guesswork. Difficulty, then, is related to poetry’s potential agency, its ability to affect, set in unanticipated motion, an audience: the difference between “eating that fig newton changed my life” and “eating that wrench changed my life” is what I have in mind. Let there be a few wrenches between us, a series of necessary adjustments, in the getting there.

COMBO

PATTIE McCARTHY

Three Poems

the Insomniac’s Ethics, from and to

You will wish you did this differently.

if il coeur is the choragus, if icarus knew something about solar aeronautics consideration against the sky, chiffon. The boy suspended, squirms the split between ground and the muscular rush, wiry strain—

(what does that sound like?)

what wings we resort to—

our meniscus literary urgent chanson

In the crescent we forget

the skyline found in lucidity. If icarus knew something, it was deliberate.

The choragus elucidated over our heads.

fire clings to fire— even unlike things.

[if echo is always looking over her shoulder, write from Paris or Mykonos, write from sleepless spots and— Looking over her shoulder. “You are useless alone.”]
Arabesque less interesting than its arco techniques.
Play each others’ ariosos.
  we are cellos.

What music—an invitation.

Perihelion pendant flirtation.
We pick, pluck each other—a lyre tenebrous. Tendons strung, strings earned, taut. And the boy, his wings deliberate
in sky’s orisons.

Myths of self-absorption—
the high lore’s in the mail.

“If two of you play, one has got to win.”

If il coeur the boy voices
  is this a chorus antiphonic
or our second winter with bad breaks?

If echo, vehicle for sound—
  (this is both from and to)
the insomniac’s badge of honor,

  do you recognize yourself [X] here?

add the following
to the list of things never to be said again:

Precipitated Rubric

SATURDAY mornings had hoped
whole houses—we are nearly curled in a figure of speech, whatever half-lives before we wake.
Hours loose—unfretted. I beg to differ, or,

Priam’s daughter takes the hint: chokes her pockets—turns to favor, to prettiness—drops ceramics, not for the break but to see their last moment whole.
Purposefully fine night.

Episodic variation in a long dozen hours.
Decreased entreaty death by water.
The light appears to change—cinematically, not realistically. Carefully composed, a crane shot.

My face, as if slapped, or yours noticing the time. On the tapis: our museum whispers—this is my last tender. Think, then,

HOW TO SAY IT:

A perquisite elixir—miscellany funnels
to narrative fundus. Priam’s daughter takes the hint, finger tipped blue.
Lapidated, a fusillade of variable stars.
Hersperus’s harlot charms, city.

"before we wake whatever half-lives"
This winter, our only snow a Connecticut weekend.
A pantomime of morning lapsis linguae
  tangerine kitchen open weather, open flue—

Miscellaneous Museum Pieces

something : heavy suitcases on train platforms
nervous meticulously recount every word at the edge of the mouth, incarnate.
maps in my head, eyes open thinking of fire I
imagine a house where I’ll have no sense of time, until then I’ll count on considerable hours on middle of the night
  couches—you were supposed to remind me of
something : heavy suitcases on northbound train platforms
shadows on the wall and ceiling and you’re so
sanguineflowered you’re so sublime and you’re so and so
and so

and so on

a banjo while Troy burns
soliloquies submerged— your metaphysically speculative
hour of the day

he is listening in the dark he is at least pretending to
listen in the dark my voice sounds much like a man’s
who warned you about the wings? or has you felt them
extend?

were they first noticed in the mirror or a photograph—

its dramatic

bent head, the hair braided (‘to break’) rain in the

bend of an elbow

choreography— economical in its accidentals

comminglings in a mirage emeritus, this impasse, this

inquiry—
the shelf life of culpability it exhausts me.

museum pieces en suite —we were walking out of Duchamp, crowded Sunday

-yellow he looked again, he is listening in the dark

Psyche flips

the light switch ascent as well as decent this time the words
the metaskeptical portion of today asphodel your self’s

Iscariot

hyacinth

girl in a taxi a banjo while

Troy burns there was no

snow, there was no Enter Ezra there was this hybrid ambition
the book comes off its hinges.

BRETT EVANS & PRAGEETA SHARMA

Two Poems

pick the Deliciouses
because no
it started when we were both

born

of Amer. origin, variously

yellow market apple and

bare champagne doorprize

we part on the square
liked you so much

I bought the company
and so the Deliciouses
the Demerol the easin’
the arb and the king float
it takes NY-large
to fill their emptiness
mine in Portuguese

“leave me alone to cry
and smoke my cigarette”

what I’m saying is fine

thatched huts came to

thistles now

But perhaps fortuitous, it is 2:45 pm
and you are thinking of me, or the

jacket of me, what started out chipped

blankets into this art, this dreamt
response.

***

but behavior this, for where does NY
end dreaminess and patchwork make
contemplating this difficult, the psy
chiatrist office surrounded by a moat
concurs but to realize, seep into
drinks with cranberry in them...

instead whatever lemonada

cd ring from the copy

of Nobody Nothing Never as the town
center arrow on a whitened concrete
block always outweighed by much
bigger orange-eye flowers.

So how to escape
with the crucial information in yr locket
to a place so sunny its sunless and no
words like information, just bra straps
and brown the new blonde hatchet

I asked
for the P.I. and they sent
a forest fire, while holding a tree
I stand over here. you just go thru
the muscle car devo— deco sky
scraper needle, it becomes beached
backseat.

BRETT EVANS

sipped on the suds do a fountain
4 main food groups: job / art
apt / boy or girl [not in sd. order]
so addle stitches, think tank on
my tanked account of no-count
meet you there anyhows, yr birth
day verse missy, have
I told you parliament o yeah
we call it congress here
convenes in the jeans

{Calgonomics}

Sweat My Details
bluebells build up
around the pat missiles which dont
assuage my spirit/spirit twat-
-o-meter? mais, Cegeste, group
therapy in yr slightly-belled-
bottoms? I sd to my selves I can
go {so boardwalk and Hall and
Oates spoken here} in lieu of Cod
rescu's Cuba reportage: naked
gals suscep Aime Cesar hard by
the sea
shore had me a river to tie me
over shark on a newfound bread

HEATHER FULLER

3 Urban Legends

Press-On Stars w/ Instructions

but because I myself am afraid of
in the leisurely night
dog choked on Sirius Orion
child-leashed in unkempt malls
where the satellite probation office
shopping is a one-hoodlum job
and I had said I hated
the clerks there who watched
migrant workers but not me so
there it is that I have hated
then Gray finds the dirty
constellations and somehow
laughing for days at
the porn price-check
but it was just martial arts
porn and everyone at ease I
again am eating crow in
the Pegasus night coughing up
Cassiopea dreaming I told Rod
the Italian word for lapiz
then the highbeams die

in a park I thought named after Yeats
but it was just another Irish province
walking the big walk big
waste of human composure and I
again am eating crow

because Gray keeps me
one foot on the ground I
have stopped entering traffic in
my love engine the damnedest
things empty into the street
from here we visit
the unappraised instrument in
a shop of innocents and pay out
rent to squirrels occasionally
ample laughers we are
giftgivers among token rodents
and looking up in the winsome
parse of heaven
I said I am liking this
country living hale setting off
car alarms not knowing
the hellbent kickstand in
for drugs and modems
the persistent state of
having to be apologized for
tho' the unfazed clerks
on-behalf-of enters the mall
where I'm in eternal exit
Leo Libra I hate to
see you go and there
what my sisters call
virile night

Notes for Planners
in the germ terror
very spacesuit and poly this
all over dented cargo skin
I woke because the shark
outside I'll be back man
then stole away
in the decade I made out and off
grinding gears and lovers to
leave the Oz monkey decade
base and unbundaged and I
said terminal this
then Smitty spoke
a chorus of doors slamming
across the country and
the sextant lost its cool
from the decade the dead slipped out
and Jihad and Jewel held on
to shoulders stable rayguns
then bottles leaked and
couldn't avoid closure
I'm going to the 80's
select a uniform
chemical bath
or victory garden
and not New York
where I've no truck
the beggar stalls
the ratio of birds to
razor wire and
D.C.'s one blonde mother
I'm going there are
decisions to make and no one
will tell what anybody has so
here we are in the decade
erasing targets from our bodies
and swarms of fairy stories
the boy on the corner is losing
his pants that's fashion and
I should enjoy the lyric moment
yet this concept of filling
warheads with active tense
somehow seems a grammar past
due in sick anagrams
in the decade I didn't go
off and kept the electric slide
clean don't sweat me
poets on porches
Power Lunch

if in the very love language
I take down annotate the arbitrary
date I do not know until it
present itself forced behind
the blondeheaded engine of poets &
poets since I left the wigged
and pawned mortar-gifted street
I'm no longer annoyed

because no city is elegant
the every conversation inelegant
legs and legs and laundry issues
tho' Buck & I stand mystified in
Downtown Business Improvement Districts

not party to part of
voting or improving
one strategy is to change
your number another to slap
it on a billboard but I've lost track of
where my dues are going
and where they're going

for arguments sake
trains ride less elegant
and every boutonniere rider less
elegant since the trains
fill up with ¼ who left
the city the people left
are mad at those who left and
there's some explaining left

she was not mad at all
she made believe

the woman in love with the Kaiser
was not mad at all she
made believe I believe
the gritty people get to
the bottom and work a mutually­
agreed subsidy do nothing but
do it well so I will take this lunch
roll heads later and see if Doug's around
to lay it down about late capital

DAVID KELLOGG

From A to B

I lose you with the road in my right hand,
line of the palmsole that supplants
the vector of driving to get somewhere,
house in the suburbs or deep jungle,
the choices America makes for us
in its pale promise of open spaces
and children. I've forgotten all
about searching for pots in the rain.

The coffee is incredibly cheap where
you are, and floats in the chipped glass
we both drank from at the site.
Those gorgeous sacks of beans are always
being loaded. You've left
before I arrive. That was metaphor,
like contemplating ladies from January
to October, or maybe December.

There's a mop, a crock pot, a popcorn
popper. The labial stops of absence
multiply. — Are you married? Not yet.
— Children? Not yet? I have not yet
I have not yet embraced The vocabulary
of the fridge is poverty and pictures.
Memory's remainder settles in
the attic, under the driving sleet.

You were the friend of my brother, or
I was yours. I am no longer your elf.
Though I have not yet heard the beautiful
violinist, I intend to as soon
as I can get down the driveway.
The name for what has occurred must
be as imagined as our malarial cabin,
as orangutans coupling in leaves above us.
Entrance to an Imaginary Villa

The enigma of infinite convergence

1. SMALL FIRES AND FALLING OBJECTS

Faulty incandescence
a theory of the spectacle
black ink on silver paper
dasein oder design
order ordnung oder odor
a clue for the made-up mind
dozing murderous and well-meaning

2. PIANO NOBILE

The narrow door lost to the wide wall
the dry white painted line of the door
incised in the bulking sprawl of tapestry and brick
taut thread of white silk faking the corners beneath
a shallow swag of ornate lintel

3. SMOKING GUN

A diamond ring on every finger
gold teeth and an emerald hat
many fingers had a hand in this
he scratches his ass
extending his empty hand with
stochastic accretions to share
and Sparky—looking for something
to talk about sniffs the vestigial
pheromones of an incontinent
quinquicento duchess

4. SPIRAL NOTEBOOK & PAR AVION

Gas jet flame writ double torched
azo apricot ebonized marcasite
plangent and descriptive locodeuced
the destiny that got that way
badges of the ring
circular credo of
hour day and place
crisply numbered
in watered ink bends sinister
struck from
most confident italic to
lean and hungry sans serif
can you see the disappointed sentiment
etymolog the carboned words

5. THREE MEN SHIFTING AN I-BEAM

Mentors of the angle
quarked to their outposts
utter remoteness
and strange vicissitudes
reclaiming the assertions
of lost unities
chastened dancers
encyclopedography

6. LES HASARDS HEUREUX

Another snake
another flower
in the basket
a snake and a pearl
all that the water
has given back
until the fourth river
7. AROUND MIDNIGHT

Backward from another to every the angle of the take

disconnected...merging the double ring finger next to next

nothing is in person except the transient at the borderline

in the drifting shadows numbers on a screen in a wrapped bundle tranquillizing and insubstantial

8. CHALK CHIMNEYS

Trace and outline dust on the tongue reciting long answers a small dull ache under the right arm dutch music and red silk draping rusticated limestone

a loose filament of nickel alloy trails the outline into focus economy by meridian that old black magic in amber light a virus—twice the difference the difference twice

toxins lure the warmest colors from the spectrum

9. THORAZINE FOR HARPIES

Vrwh by name gritted and groaned NOT Ihrwv, you bastard—by nature

turned inside out one rises to the occasion and squats corrected

the knees bend the mouth opens the words for *begin*

he runs away over his shoulder pursuit is the done deal

thumb in the nose tongue protruding

**Leather Hinges**

1

The end changes detained against the facing weight the end has changed imposing its tracked loss its imperfect translation spun out of the foreign rhythm to continue the gesture the shadow of a hidden profile where the line runs its edge

2

Assembled trajectory its smoking points beaten discernible out of the vis-à-vis vulture jackal and hyena ever the shifts in points of view separated *sed ipse et aller* from the forgotten the hesitant thickness voiced against the executed odds aoutie euotia iauteo oiteau uitoae fledged moons of a scheme blown into the eye
Searchlights klaxons lacquered surfaces static electricity palazzo façades silk-tulle draperies plazas and skywalks meters trapezoidal windows a row of rhinestone-studded medals a floating shantytown immersed in newspapers, poetry and dividends in the shadow of a mantel clock he has forgotten his own name photograms and a Mozart divertimento in an ornate lobby speaking of lies he conveyed the essence of the structure pretend the revolutions, wars and epidemics elliptical orbital ceremonial and distressed *as ghosts are said to do*

Green numbers overprinted with black triangles the thick pen strokes site the derelict pyramids reduced to a scatter of crisscrossed accents which way is the east the lamp tilts is there at least a version that might be shared knowing now only the critique the gloss that subverts the pursuit excerpted counted and discarded through what through whom like something once left behind in a theater elegiac conversations in an elevator notes on extended meditations cadence nuance and phrase pertinent verbs random surds

La Narrateur the line extends an approximation of the dream 9, 90, 99, progression built upon the interchangeable prosaic gestures babble and callous scorn what else a cunning reexamination provides and supersedes the word after the idea in/after flex of dot to line and line to arc set in higher relief *beneath* the music originating, directed, apart from QQ, Q, QQ the circumspect voice of deliberation

Knife cut circle knife through cold regions and intricate occasions that exist further east that exist in that history rooted in discipline completely cut off develop one blood and observe together in fact provenance snares and traps *de la forêt* that exist in that story in the eye of the tangle what the mountains forgot the blunt outtakes ancient anonymous codices twisted casuistries black red green and blue inks spartan works on paper

The intricate articulations of the latch mown fields and spirit door idle paradigms murdered by robbers terse forlorn allusions with a warning no truth to restore *nonetheless the word in spite of its place* the image of Artemis in twisted perspective pressed into a disc of salt grants a mirroring of resolve gold and salt consequent before origin beyond return

Neither reflex nor identification beyond the measured interiority of extent restitution entered to its calculated and determined run unsure enough to conclude in the paradox of its limits mitigated desire
Riposte ambitions
written to a nonsemantic neglect
grey shadows on a dark mirror
enough light lost
sufficient for blanc sur noir
modalities of divided intentions
wo breathed into who
brick in the mansion of exemplum
frozen in the light
assimilated parasite and rapport

February 1-6, 1995

LEE ANN BROWN

Loaded Terms
Communicating Rooms
(for Matteo)

being a part of

Language

Long may you age
Longing for your age
Langue glue asia

A Long Guage,
loaded and propped in the Corner

Communicating Rooms

Are
We living in communicating rooms

on separate islands connected by
    electric wires and bodily visitations?

Alarms go up when lines go down
Paralyzed by fear of possible
Desertion Abondment Abandonment
I want to keep the door open
Death shuts it so

Death of Love, Death of Death
(This is not the best soil for Trust flowers to bloom)
So: Be Gone Fear of Death!
Let me Be Fearless in my Communications!

(But stay, memory & respect of its Power—Let me love all those here and now
and Let me love and let go

the others

Death cameras provide little
Windows on other rooms
Past rooms, rooms fading
    from existence
Except in human art and memory

A room is a stanza
in which I can live
A dimming Zimmer I must illuminate

With words that stay on
even when people don’t

The frame of my film is a room
rapidly flashing on a porch,
a particular peculiar take
through my little viewfinder
that opens out and contracts in time and space
(( It was never like that— really
But I put all the colors in a container
to hold their active compounds,

their vibrancy holds
superimpositions of rapid eye flashing
their emotional headgrip
their fan-shaped balance
of sparkling fireworks
their nudes in streams of
watermelon newspaper reading parking lot improvs of sky

A film can suggest the complexity
of living, the many openings and stills of black

My Cycles of Desire
want to be deepened slowed so I can
understand them

To communicate:

a bell goes off outside your window
I open the shade and look down
see nothing
then notice a motion right across from me
a human is ringing a little silver bell out their window
(in a red brick building, old West Village style
wrought-iron curving bellshaped bulge of the balcony curls
contain the view)
the human rings the bell for the third time
calling the pet, a cat?
but no one appears
so they snap the window shut and hurriedly shut the blinds

ke myù ne kat (vb)
to impart
participate
SHARE: archaic
make known (~ a story)

I told you the story of the silver bell because it happened as I was writing this poem, and it must have some bearing on the topic. (I trust chance). The lesson of the story to me is that humans need relation to survive. They crave it they seek it. I need to be in relation, sometimes close. When it's distant, still calling out over the vastness to you. This requires a bigger bell. Sometimes I am deliberately difficult or oblique in my poetic communications in hopes that the other will make the effort to figure me out. It will prove their love of me I think? I also have a distrust of clarity since it hides the other side, the unspoken reverse underbelly side of the mutter at hand. Or does it? The human in the window obviously has a complex and coded relationship with their pet. I wonder if it is in addition to

more equal relationship with other humans, or does the person pay so much attention to the animal as a result of a lack of satisfying interaction with another human? Or do they treat their human companions with the same types of coded boundaries as they do the cat? Or does it show real care and attention to have figured out a system for letting their cat roam free in the city— trusting it to return when it is ready? Was the human disappointed or angry with the cat for not showing up? Why did they snap the window shut so suddenly? Did they see me looking at them?

Communication: to reveal by clear signs
<his fear communicated itself to his friends>

I sometimes trust the sexual too much as way of communication and neglect the clear signs of speech, the human verbal process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behavior {see: the function of pheromones in insect communication}. I feel I am lazy, or not practiced with language as pure denotative communication, so I roll the language dice hoping to come up with music or texture to say how I feel— that the hearer will get it, and make something of their own out of it, out of me. A generous but potentially self-effacing act to “leave one’s self” “open to interpretation.” The body can be a fine tool for telling someone they exist and should feel good about it.

a system (as of telephones) for communicating

If you want to communicate, use the telephone – Jack Spicer or Frank O’Hara said something to this effect – not to use the poem – but why not? Poems can do anything.

all these things plus

$co = with + muni = mean + reverse the “ca” in cation = action$

moo
moon

moo
dine

SF city transportation

So communication must = to “cation”
the action of meaning
moaning
mooing
moonning
"mu"ing
dining
and taking the city bus
with

YOU

CHRIS McCREARY

Three Poems

Whirlybird

Among Friends: the will
o’ the wisp. Grin and bare
it. Lies in the eye:
behold’er. A show
of hands. Take a number,
give her a whirl. Slight
of hand, stacked deck.
Doubly suspect. Take
a trip around
the whorled: a bird in
the hand. Mistakes, mis-
givings. (Miss
be gotten?) Underhanded.
Try to define intention,
culpability. Just suppose.
Impose. Decode, de-
compose. Sin
tactical. Whirling dervish,
caught red-handed.
Show down: wash one’s
hands of it? Left with no-
thing but a hand-me-down?
No. Dunno. There. Their
eyes. A void.

Evacuation Procedures

The wrong answer,
constantly. Yes
& no. Sitting here
at this desk, having
to piss so bad it shivers.
A system of checks
and balances. If,
them: consecutive
consequences.
Carpal tunnel vision.
Decoys deployed:
bait & switch (booby
traps). This embarrass-
ment of riches: a rock,
a hard place. Distressed
denim, hand over
fist. The body
in revolt, betraying
best intentions. A state
of perpetual emotion;
a model that comes
w/ optional attachments.
Staccato semaphore
over hallway floors.
Party to this occasion,
but otherwise engaged:
you can’t be long here.

Sublimation

Not archetypal,
but of an ilk.
Sweet nothings.
Liquor? I hardly
even know’er.
With a twist. Sub-
lingual: slip of the
lip (or is that
tongue?). Succor.
Misheard whispers,
lost allusions:
cinnamon vérité.
(Should have replied,
Chimera obscura.)
Chiaroscuro reveals
but a fraction
of the actual,
the sublime disguised.
This guise: enmeshed
in black netting,
but of the essence.
Subliminal: the milk
of human blindness.
Second large coffee,
extra-cream-and-sugar:
sucker.

ANGE MLINKO
Four Poems
The Difference Between a Ghost and an Angel

Harmless as couples the sense you get from this hiking trail for
natureloving neurologists (their mansions nearby); I touch nothing
as if in one of their living rooms, I’ve given our fig tree a haircut
for the journey up the street to cheaper digs: ho, there’s a desk in the forest!
They say poison ivy trapped under your wedding ring’s a common thing but
if I sit at it I’ll come out a folksong about couples disappearing in the pines.
The Queen Anne’s Lace snowy dropped handkerchief of a larger, nameless
winter;
staghorn sumac’s dirty red; if loving you means I’ll have to marry you I’ll do it
and suddenly the past is reassured it led to the future
the difference between a ghost and an angel a wilderness
of cat and cat litter, leaves dropping, mugs chipping, bottles, cans,
dirty dishes, laundry, garbage pails and dustballs.

You go to bed before me; I am too afraid
to touch things in the woods; but the new light after moving
stimulates blossoms in a flowering houseplant
the mania from the steroid in combination with
red wine, vitarin, tylenol and restoril the sleeping pill
I confess so much sap like the whites of eyes
where I lopped off whole branches made me think
that the tree was hurting, as an ancestor would’ve.
But since, dark green leaves have revived much and thrived.

In between it was maki, wakame, and red bean ice cream
across from the shark tank, should an evening dress
be made of shark the remora would come with an attachment
patterned like a brake pad to belly up blissfully for a snooze
while the eel looked on, perpendicular to sleep
as passed by the crowd going to the Portuguese saint’s day fair, after Mass
and dinner out and Shakespeare didn’t blot, so rot, you cop;
we are one under the weather; come eat your sandwich.

The Country Countess and the Special Characters

Tenderness come by as badly misremembered
as Queen Anne’s Lace develops a purple cedilla
in its prime, at the very center
eye that with field glasses confuses
the iota for acres of clearing
we’re not trespassing or shooting
hiking upgraded hills from diacritical
to grave and acute, you don’t
put it in your berry basket for acquittal
later between two owls, or umlauts.

Because we circumflex the stream with
ligatures of stems & sepals & a damselfly
of a tild run about phosphoresces
as lightning bugs looking for closing parentheses
the grass too dense to be parsed by anything
but a daddy longlegs I fillip carelessly
past ants whose page we peruse
til we come to a road, romanized by humans.

Bugs, spores, seeds, eggs, pollen
apostrophe no wilder, more alien!
Moving &

& there is no lightning in this town
if & we move we might go to a place with real lightning
like a & martini with un twist

& like lifting the lid of the urn
we've & all come to bury
in an & anonymity like Albany
I look into & the Help Wanteds

& I.e., e.g., q.v., c.f., etc.
Everyone & got married at once
& all & moving trucks in the city reserved
beneath the full & moon

I'm not in doubt & as to the old questions
¿Porque tu no quieres & modar a la campa?
Je suis jeune

When omelettes unfry themselves then & I'll be rich
painting breakfasts for the cook back &
even if life insurance is free we're & in medias res
Send out more resumes

Alternate imperative with present tense
Shut the door, Import the lilac
& of the zeugma

less influenza than chiasmus?
See we put the silverware & pots Mom & got us into boxes with newspaper
Look at the stories in the newspaper
We lost the money to go to Paris

& books go on & off the shelf

but & not to read
there's lettering & on the surface of boxes
We've moved so & many times
I have knowledge I & don’t know what to do with

There is a Fabulous House

Like a ballad altered from county to county
til no crime was original
purple spuds on Yukon Gold potatoes
shoveling Alaska out from under the boredom
mentally, as the bisque boiled, snappily
news that I was swept out to sea
for dropping my eyes from the horizon to your letter
(never turn your back on the ocean)

Well I must've lived to tell about it
lost the letter and the soup but got a new suit
even the stem of my wine glass fills with wine
with a ball in my hand to knock the clock off the wall
while shooting for the net or hoop or hole
I was told to go
walk on wild ornaments for something new to do

The 3% of an iceberg of nakedness
his head erupted from the covers
Like a dream’s needle inserted in the fingertip
nothing was made up
and it was just the tilt of his head
made me go transparent
chilis, tomatillos, frisson!

Now, fat squirrel, you are not as fat as my cat
You can’t be both seen, unseen, and safe
Branches lay blank on plank for you
Your thanks may be too soon
daring to throw a ball at a door from this distance
just to see at last the pretty face that opens it
Scrubtine Acres

Looking at fantastic ground
the realm starters
claim feasibility
lost count
the situation at a glance
par for the course
explanatory ways
and didn’t get back until late

Baby Jesus on my shoulder
I must pass over
Estrin memoir
scalability
speed is life
orgy of productivity
running on fumes
I came as I was
body boundary experience
grey matter by miles
awash in a sea of tubular waves

Trove of news
hit the light
functions like memory
fingers down the spine
they moved slowly out from under the trees
and turning to answer
she had the same sensation
a feeling of having been
moving in her train
the schoolchildren
the telephone when it stopped ringing
as if all that was and had been
were one
commenting in a report
STANDARD SCHAEFER

from My Pocket

Vacancy

1 Out of the blastula
into the gesture
structure of gas entering star silt,
the transmission was all texture
but no swing
stars fell and gas inflated
black holes, front matter
and an infinite hyphen
terracing up to
dismantle the face
that was a cloud
or recursive code
but was never content to cover the head
while that imperial whistle
fizzle on

a riveting song
we have no more
except in briars along the shore
and entangled in our hair
where the law of large numbers
constantly nibbles
at gas and grit

gusting in
like flu
and rhetoric

---

1 The sky. To you, blue. To me, bereft of content. Rest between roses and foreclosures as you would between worlds. Colors, like law, arrest what you say of them. Speak only of conventions—between places and wind. Green, for example, so colloquial and discontent. Time is rent. A hush shuffles the consent.

Particles have been accused of memory and monster's of leaving fossil records. But, all the laws of nature and the initial conditions conspire to make the carnival as interesting as possible. Thus, the bread rises and the atom is detected. Later, the nose is remembered as the origin of the word democracy, though in fact it was a result of having grown a face. An over-achievement, for the soul is still, painted still, an axiom, but not a proper material.

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1 With the invention of noise, the air was cleared of night, ocean, and immortality. On this point, only Purists, Madness, and Echoes object.
only a sexy-series of what-ifs dismantling the face¹, beneath the heap all was lost.

Pure unyielding light.

A terrace to

but not to return to

the hyphen dividing

autobiography

into heaps and doppelgangers

the egg or edge scratching toward a relation to the gesture

a fixation of the bird slanting against a scratch of air just born but with velocity a particle in a placenta remaining uneaten through the ominous clicking distant voices, adjacent rooms but never together only tugging like wormholes or leitmotifs²

¹ As a distant and approximative form of identity, the fossil permits resemblances to subsist throughout all the deviations traversed by nature. This is why natural history cannot be established as biology for at this time “life” does not exist, only beings that live. Later, the world will be a lesson.

² Bohr, in a series of speeches in Copenhagen late 1920’s, held that subatomic entities such as electrons have no real existence; they exist in a problematic limbo of many possible superposed states until forced into a single state by the act of observation. The cosmos, Wheeler said, is a participatory phenomenon requiring observation. Solid states, like fugues, are a fool’s purgatory.

poise or chime told backward a joke on the terrace implodes a current born where once a punch-line got warped up in epiphany reached at last through vibrations and guesswork.

Filing in decimals whistling descants demoting towers the moats sags

a vacant necklace flares every half-hour while molecules shower in secants but the toll is carried a loaf of bread arrives in the shape of a head as sure as the skin or double knot of a soul that collides against

the skylight
LEVRUBINSHTEIN
(Tr. from the Russian
by Philip Metres and Tanya Tulchinsky)

Rubinshtein’s Note

Each fragment of my text (in the original) is arranged on separate sheets of paper or cards. The majority of my texts exist in this form, beginning after 1975. The longer this “note card” system exists, the greater the number of meanings and motives it takes on.

This is the material metaphor of my understanding of the text as object, and of reading as serious work. Each small card is both an object and universal unit of rhythm, aligning any gesture of speech—from a developing theoretical message to an interjection, from a stage direction to a snatch of telephone conversation.

A pack of cards is object, a range, it is an ANTI-book, it is the offspring of the “extra-Gutenbergian” existence of possible culture.

Reading is work, play and spectacle.

It seems to me that authentic, that is the “ranging” variant of my text could, for example, correlate with the banal variant, like say, an orchestral score with an arrangement for one or two instruments. Most likely I exaggerate. But it’s desirable to take into account such a possibility.

from Catalogue of Comedic Novelties

1

You could engage in something;

2

You could engage in establishing conceptual unity and spend almost all your time on it;

3

You could engage in establishing cause-and-effect connections and forget about everything else;

4

You could engage in mediating between a leader and follower and not know what outcome would be positive;

1 There are many ways to leave a room, wrote the General, one is humiliation, the other carnal love. Whether to break the skin off or merely go dry from the heat of hairdryers or red ibises flapping in the sheets.

2 As Francis Bacon has stated, the other revolutions have better hats.
You could engage in classifying possibilities from the viewpoint of their level of humor;

You could engage in classifying passions from the viewpoint of how serious the consequences;

You could engage in classifying words from the viewpoint of their contextual meaning;

You could engage in classifying deeds from the viewpoint of their contextual motivation;

You could engage in classifying conditions from the viewpoint of their vagueness;

You could engage in classifying events from the viewpoint of their likely outcome;

You could engage in classifying positions from the viewpoint of their hopelessness;

You could engage in classifying doubts from the viewpoint of their difficulty of dispelling;

You could eliminate any doubts, just by finding the powerful rhythm-building catalyst of existence—but in that would be all the difficulty;

You could engage in some other task, not delving excessively into its details;

You could begin from whatever you wanted, being of the belief that whatever beginning in a given situation will be rife with possibility;

You could absolutize a minute weakness, elevating it to the role of a constructive principle;

You could bring any feeling—for example, wariness—to, let's say, cosmic proportions;

You could use all the rights you happen to be granted, not resorting to their proclamation;

You could teach a lesson of great patience, and in such a way that no one would even sense it;

You could bum around the border between self-mystification and self-exposure and reflect awhile before the forbidden zone;

You could stop before the forbidden zone in order to think about the so-called consequences;

You could stop before the necessity of choosing, or you could break the threshold of an imaginary necessity;
You could get ahead of events, but you cannot predict them;

You could foresee every little detail, or you may just as well decide not to;

You could wander in thickets of emotional experiences, finding your way by fictive signs and ideas alone;

You could wander in a conceptual forest, not caring at all about the true goal of the trip;

You could perceive the mechanisms of different phenomena and not let anyone know about it;

You could believe the opposite of what you preach, or you could do otherwise, without risking being exposed;

You could successfully mistake one for the other and be delighted in your discovery, not risking falling into error;

You could successfully exchange one for the other, not risking falling into ethical heresy;

You could end forever a conversation just begun, then see what will come of it;

You could believe that certain questions will always remain unsolved;

You could complicate everything, or you may just as well simplify everything to such a degree that there’d be just nothing left to talk about;

You could mystify to such a degree that the very possibility of demystification begins to seem definitely illusory;

You could get tired of each other to such a degree that the possibility of new, unseen incentives for communication will emerge;

You could manage completely without immediate help from each other: a silent agreement is enough;

You could overhear other people’s conversations with immense delight, overjoyed at your good luck, as if it were a personal achievement;

You could resort to various tricks so your joy would know no bounds whatsoever;

You could get together to discuss the situation at hand;
You could get together to decide what is stronger:
- the necessity of the breakthrough into a new metaphysical reality or the pathological dread of a false step;
- the speculative understanding of a departure from an automated sphere or the emotional attachment to it;
- the clear foundation of the freedom of choice or the striving to recognize with the will of a usurper;
- the voice of desired peace or something else;
- etc.

You could speak about the danger of prominence, often disguised as importance;

You could talk about your fleeting impressions endlessly, but who knows how productive it is;

You could search for a nod of true salvation even in fruitless manipulations with memory;

You could perceive, in the very fact of comedic preconceptions, the secret sign of fatal numbness;

You could run from fatal numbness, if you could adopt properly a principle of comedy;

You could, on the other hand, fail to be imbued with the spirit of comedic novelties, but you really can’t do anything about it;

You could reject given possibilities and think that nothing took place;

You could continue in this vein;

You could cease all of this at any moment—and this is the good thing about comedic novelties;

You could wait awhile, then begin with renewed strength;

You could repeat everything from the beginning;

You could stop thinking about the consequences: their nature will be comedic;

You could stop worrying about tomorrow: its nature will be comedic.

Farther and Farther On

Here, everything begins.
Everything begins here.
However, let’s go farther.

Here no one asks who you are and where you’re from.
Everything is clear as is.
A place where you’re spared persistent cross-examination is here.
But let’s go farther.
Here the atmosphere is congenial and free.
   You can really relax here.
   But we should go farther.

Here whatever your eyes see is delightful, whatever your ears hear is sweet melody, whatever is said is truth.
   But let's go farther.

And here everything is entirely different.
   It's not important how.
   What's important is that it's different.

Here nothing's important.
   I only wish I could remember this forever.

Here the sharpest bout of nostalgia grips you.
   How it comes about is unclear.

Here one shouldn't stay here for too long. Later it will probably become clear why.

Here each has their own bottom and ceiling.
   Each has their own borders of falling and soaring.
   And not just here.

Here all reminds you of something, points to something, refers to something.
   But as soon as you start to understand what it refers to, it's time to leave.

Here it's necessary to cope with the temptation to ask what will be farther on. But what comes farther is meant to come.

Here it's written: "Passerby: Stop. Think."

The next inscription reads: "Passerby: Stop. Try to think of something better than that."

Here we read: "Passerby: Sooner or later—well, you understand...So—you understand."

Here it's written: "Passerby: Consider this—you might not understand anything at all."

Here: "Passerby: We don’t even know each other. What should we talk about?"

And here: "Passerby. Don't stop. Go farther."

Let's go farther.

Here someone in the half-darkness decides to part with hope and cannot; Someone, finding himself in financial difficulty, looks for a way out and cannot find one;
   Someone tries to draw a distinct line between what is past and what is to come. He just isn't noticed;
   Someone arranged it in such a way that everything he says fits the situation. It makes an impression. He's noticed;
Here someone over-attentive doesn’t notice the most important thing. Concentrating on small things, he looks a little silly;
  Someone striving for eternity slips and falls. A bright light falls on him. It’s quite a pitiful sight;
  Someone is unable to come to his senses from some dumbfounding news. So he just goes on living, stunned;
  Someone loses himself in the crowd. They discover him, greet him noisily, almost by force drag him out to the middle. And there he stands;

Here someone with a halted glance goes on and on, saying something more than inarticulate, then leaves, returns anew, again leaves, and so on many times;
  Someone with inveterate habits seats a lady in a traincar and waves after her for a long time. In his face are tender emotions;
  Someone remains alone. He’s totally confused. He has absolutely no idea what to do. In his face is the whole gamut of emotions;
  Someone, doubting, wants very much to ask something, but can’t bring himself to do it. An embarrassed smile;

Here someone in a quiet voice pronounces words of consolation;
  Someone, inconsolable, does not accept the words of consolation. He says that he doesn’t want anything from anyone;
  Someone, burdened by the need to impart to someone something extremely unpleasant, delays his decision. One can understand him;
  Someone, considering it improper to get mixed up in others’ affairs, constantly gets himself mixed up in them, and he does not even notice;

Here someone, caught on the fishing rod of existence, cries about his fate and doesn’t suspect anything;
  Someone in a half-stifled voice talks about how he is happy.
Everyone imperceptibly exchanges glances;
  Someone begins recollecting. It’s useless to interrupt him;
  Someone unsuccessfully tries to explain something to someone. Lack of understanding makes him crazy;

Here someone is depressed with what’s happening. An attempt to find out what exactly depresses him leads to nothing. One feels sorry for him;
  Someone consoles himself by waiting for something different. His path is despondent. Does he know this?
  Someone doesn’t see and doesn’t hear his very self. He really should: he would begin to look at many things very differently;

Here someone is unable to resist inertia. This does not bode well;
  Someone, resolute, is in absolutely no condition to control himself. That won’t do at all;
  Someone doesn’t want to notice the obvious. It’s obvious he’s doomed;
  Someone looks straight before him. In his eyes, terror froze: he’s not likely to be saved;
  Someone is raving, walking God knows where. You can still make him out. There he is;

Here someone is trying to save himself, by himself. How can he do that?
  Someone is trying to appear as if he doesn’t have anything to do with that. But he won’t escape either.
  Someone strives towards the present with all his might. But he can’t escape the future either;
  Someone’s on the threshold of a final decision. Let’s wait and see what will happen;

Here someone literally goes extinct without constant encouragement. Well, then let’s support him;
  Someone thinks it’s inconceivable that all of this will end sometime. Lord, give him strength!
  Someone said something and waits for what will be further. And what could be further?

Let’s go farther.
Here it's said: "All those thirsty and desiring, those fighting in vain and those scrambling out of the filth, those half-deaf and those forever hoarse—well, what are we to do with them?"

Here it's said: "All those striving higher, those sliding into the abyss, those climbing on and out, those hurting and those living through uncontrollable passions, those accustomed to everything, those interesting in their own way—what do they want here? Why should they be here?"

Here it's said: "All those guilty without sin, those burned and blowing, those intently pondering and those hardly attracted by a barely-audible voice of eternity, those stooped from the backbreaking puzzles of existence, those vainly agitated by God knows what news, those anxiously listening to what is said—where are they all heading?"

Here it's said: "All those not guilty but confessing, those seemingly cheered up but at momentarily falling into depression, those equally striving to make sense of what's going on, but not understanding a thing, those dragging the baggage of their own hopes and those affirming that everything is lost, that all those who are either too late or too early, those swaying in the weak breeze and those stubborn in their own delusions, those thinking that everything is passed, and those shifting from leg to leg waiting for changes—that's enough already—it's time to stop."

An entirely different voice: "After that he was a different person. He would just walk around quiet and graceful, smiling at something..."

Another voice: "Well just imagine, with that smile of his he just walked through all those circles. He's a very unique human being. I've never seen anyone like him in my entire life..."

Another voice: "By the way, he also can't stand her. So you really shouldn't..."

Another voice: "You're not bothering me at all, I assure you. Let me just finish this up."

Another voice: "The modest tread of clouds is obtuse.” What’s after that, don’t you remember? Yes... it was so long ago..."

Another voice: "Take a close look at his usual facial expressions, at those forced grins. Listen to those sad words. Perhaps you'll understand what kind of person I had to put up with all these years..."

Another voice: "Here comes the most difficult. Hold on, colleague...There...You didn’t hurt yourself? Well thank God. Well, then, I’ll continue. That very summer has been accursedly hot, dusty, drought-ridden. In a word, a hellish summer. Not a summer, but a simmer, forgive the pun...So...And I’ve managed to hurt myself now..."

Another voice: "Listen, your satanic fantasies give me the creeps. To listen to you, one would think that there's no reason to live..."

Another voice: "If you want, you can accompany me. Well, at least as far as the station. I trust you’re something of a gentleman?"
Another voice: “To start with, get yourself straightened up. Hey, you really look like hell...”

Another voice: “Listen up. First, you’re not going anywhere, you’ll take your coat off and return to the table. Second, don’t let me catch any of those so-called “yearnings” in your face. Third, to anyone who in your presence dares to even pass a distant hint—well, you know—they will have to deal with me. You’re alright with that, I hope? Well go ahead and take your coat off! Don’t be naughty, old man!..”

Another voice: “So where can I go now? I’ve been kicked out everywhere. I’ve been nagged everywhere... Should I just hang myself?”

Another voice: “So what now? What would you do? There’s no way back—it’s clear. Stay where I am? Well, no, that’s not for me. Should I go to meet my fate? Okay, then, I’m ready. (To the hall) And why are you silent? Why aren’t you stopping me? Or consoling me? Surely one human word can sometimes save you from ruin. But what am I talking about? Whom am I speaking to? Farewell...”

Scene: Night at the dacha.
The trains sound their horns, husky in the distance.
Very cold.

Another scene: The height of summer.
Offstage—the songs of village girls.

Another scene: A table, set for tea.
Samovar, ring-shaped rolls.
On the backs of armchairs, quilts and coats carelessly tossed.

Another scene: Dining room in a modest house.
Through heavy blinds, a muted light.
Many flowers in vases of all shapes and sizes.
The heroine rushes in, her palms pressed to her temples.
Almost unconscious, she falls into the rocking chair.
Sobbing.

Another scene: Veranda, fragrant with flowers of fruit trees.
Two swings.
One swing lightly rocks: it’s clear that someone just got off it.
Offstage, voices: an agitated female one, a calming male one.
No one has appeared on stage yet.
Sounds of nearing thunder.
It suddenly darkens.

An entirely different scene: From the arrangement of the scene it’s clear that the weather since morning has been excellent, and yesterday’s gusty wind has died away, carrying away the torn fragments of a completely hopeless gloom.

From the lighting of the scene it’s clear that the mood of the hero, whose steps are already audible behind the stage, is light and a little sad like in the best days of one’s youth.

It’s clear by the sudden silence that maybe the most decisive moment in the hero’s life is coming.

However, a noise born in the bowels of absolute silence grows imperceptibly. It grows ever louder, until it gradually becomes intolerable.

(Curtain)
CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

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