Kristen Gallagher, Standard Schaefer and Jacques Debrot for their suggestions regarding contributors; to my wife Susanna and John Parker for all their help and advice; to the Fund for Poetry and the Young Poets Publishing Initiative for their financial assistance; and to the whole crew at the Kelly Writers House for their continued encouragement and support.
A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This issue, the fourth, takes COMBO into its second year. So far so good. The generosity of contributors, solicited and unsolicited, continues to make things go. If on the one hand there was Lorenzo Thomas’ warm response to my zealous emails, on the other their was K. Silem Mohammad’s work arriving one afternoon to knock me out—so that I wrote back something to the effect of, “So, how is it that I’ve never heard of K. Silem Mohammad?” I guess no one will be asking for too long. Then, the sense of heterogeneous inclusiveness I’ve been after seems finally home to roost, nowhere more present, perhaps, than in the juxtaposition of Paige Menton’s “Bulgarian Voices,” Carl Martin’s uncategorizable music and Jacques Debrot’s Confusion Comix. This was work all the more exciting for being so new to me.

Not to ignore the familiar: this issue is in many ways intended as gift or thanks to Kristen Gallagher who recently packed her bags for SUNY-Buffalo, leaving big shoes to fill in Philly. Several years ago now, when the Writers House was liminal, it was Kristen who insisted that Philly itself was not to be ignored, that rather than lament that it wasn’t NY or what have you, we ought to ground ourselves in it—and this, for me anyway, opened up avenues whereby things as diverese (or related?) as the jazz being played at Ortlieb’s or the activities of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (w/ whom Kristen, Mytili Jagannathan, and, coincidentally, my wife were involved) could be treated as actions/activisms which might mediate/integrate-with the symbolic action of poems. For me this was, as Creeley might say, “fire of a very real order.” It accounts, somehow for why I continue to consider myself a Philadelphia poet. Given all that, I can think of no better “established poet” to include in this mix than Gil Ott, who was doing it all before it was fashionable, and best yet, continues to do it. This is me hushing up before nostalgia overpowers the prophetic.

COMBO

MYTILI JAGANNATHAN Two Poems

nationalism redactor

when agitation and remorse are present in us who is aware? agitation and remorse present us to ourselves but only sometimes sentient. when they are absent in what fields do they hide Monsanto green? when agitation and remorse begin to arise are you wearing the right armor? in Ayodhya: Brindavan: does it rain redress explain: Bombay? or soldier flare fulfill the Vedas and Pokhran will they pay you in coin or in salve? the sign dissolves the camera solves resisting bodies India day parade.

when already arisen agitation and remorse are abandoned the country slips into the disputed river. saffron clash supplied defiance depends on women lining up for water. clamor: breathe: it’s august nineteen ninety eight the desert holds. suffer in what attribute whose skin? worship did not divide us but now
the lord and headlines tell us
so. becomes a fact,
accomplished.

fold over fold over

already abandoned
agitation and remorse. who is aware.
torn cloth of subsistence, a flag. agitation.
mercy. will not arise,
the future. already,
remorse. already
abandoned.

nationalism redactor: This poem is a meditation on nationalism, structures of violence, and the nuclearization of South Asia.

Monsanto: multinational biotechnology giant pushing the use of genetically-manipulated seeds and foods worldwide. Monsanto’s influence on agricultural policy has been the target of farmers and environmentalists fighting to preserve local control of the food supply.

Ayodhya: city in northern India, considered by Hindus to be the birthplace of Lord Rama; Ayodhya was the site of the December 1992 mob destruction of the Babri Masjid, instigated by an aggressive campaign of the right-wing Vishwa Hindu Parishad to revive an old claim to the land and to build a Ram temple there. The destruction of the mosque touched off communal (Hindu-Muslim) riots across India.

Brindavan: considered to be the birthplace of Lord Krishna.


Pokhran: desert site of the Indian government’s underground nuclear tests in May 1998. Pakistan followed with its own tests at Chagai Hills shortly after. For a cogent anti-nuclear policy analysis, see MIND’s pamphlet, “Out of Nuclear Darkness: The Indian Case for Disarmament.”

Textile Notes

with what makes me unkillable though killed

—Adrienne Rich

alarmed for
departure I
rake words for
fuel—
can’t hold
you full
prior to sight
a trust
composed of
hand and
fist—

but only half-
steering that
skyline swerve
flooded street
mesh of mind that
pulls down blind
constructed dark—

what startles you
is so much worn
on the body
—not lightly
but literal, as if
accumulation
were a saving

strategy—you
don’t know my
clothes so
take them
suffusing off
to bloom—

what if this room
were ghosted
bird cries the throat
rattle-pot
humming drum
can't hold (don't know)
you full caress (my clothes so)
adjacent to
women elsewhere
next door
textile subjects
gap factory
“cage wages”
no outlet
mapped in a riddle
of surfaces our own
disowning
image distortion
turn
the TV around what if we
were broadcast via satellite
signals of national disaster
to foreign geography classroom
where children understudy cooking
script or scripture
chemical milk—
what resistance could
unfurl here solidary
to you in love brief transit
like daylilies—the first time I plucked them—flame orange
roadside stain—and tucked them in a vase—I didn't know

***

New Delhi, March 1999:

PRIME MINISTER UNVEILS “RAPE INSURANCE” SCHEME FOR WOMEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 10 AND 75

“for an annual premium”
“of Rs. 15”
“the state-sponsored General Insurance Company”
“policy will provide”
“compensation”
“or rape-related injury”
“according to degree of disability”
“physical, emotional, and”
“loss of virginity”

***
to ratify
to ratify
to ratify

white sheet:
to make: a template:
tablet
or counter

***
the purchase of green flashes
green—talisman or advance messenger—we slip into
one hundred percent cotton—because
it's “natural”—the fabric “breathes”—
selhood or hooded self—
she: translate: she:

under the	housedoor
red

coconut coast the stalls
unstuck in the key of heat
stem-snapped sunflash
unsettled unpetaled sums

“feminist praxis”
“must account for”

warp and weft  
“global patterns”

“and local rips”  
“which are occurring”  
“closer and closer”

***

don’t know my clothes my stumble my forest of fear failing eyes favorite fruit my suitcase of yesterdays—ash passion patchwork grief jacket backward accent inflection so—

how to spell word to act word to her you

***

convection:

—transfer of heat—

—in a gas or liquid—

—by the circulation of—

—currents—

—from one region—

—to another—

from convehere

—to carry together—

***

four years of minutes and minutes gather a blanket over Boston five colors staggered double stitch—a whole thing, a firmament,

blue red pink purple green incandesce—salvaging space in nightmare’s intermission—

her mind the harbor split composing against clicks his voice the subway tracking the basement or her across the Common discarded cartons or place into place—

a whole thing a heavy thing pressed into gift I blossom open this morning in Philadelphia apprehend and am undone—

composure: compose

a blanket for winter to console the story specific to my skin held close

her staggered text of friendship a series of stairs predicting gradient to stars five colors double stitch four years of minutes

***

who would disarm this policy of street and bedroom grid of submission and speechless nightgown and English-only shot at patriot gates who else to slap pacify wear down from her moving refusal her making a
city open ocean black she: translate: she
each thing touched

the body this country

absorbs the consequence don’t know my

combo
The poem’s second section is a commentary on the “rape insurance” clause in the General Insurance Scheme unveiled by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the first anniversary of the BJP government. The scheme drew fire from Indian feminist groups and was subsequently dropped. See The Hindu, March 19, 1999.

LORENZO THOMAS

Flash Point

This useless clairvoiance
Is embarrassing
What good is it to know
The motives behind manners

And worse, the so what stares
Of those upon who you manage
To inflict this wisdom

There is more space
Awaiting exploration
More clouds of gas
That need their picture took

Magnetic Charms

I’m saying
   I have outgrown promises
Not you

Call it
Reality because there is
   No better word
To call our secrets
Falsity that haunts us
With the fear
That what we know and hide
Is all we are

But if false actions
Haunt us
What faith
   Old women in small villages
   In backward lands
Could possibly find resonance
In words?

When I touch you
That zone of heat
Beneath my hand-
Trust that

What do you call
A trouble shared
Check “strength” or “weakness”
The cancer patients
   Smoking on the patio, for instance
Incorrigibles
Roaring, indignant, daring the world’s end
With love of laughter
As if to say
“We lived and live our lives
this way
And won’t regret it
   Even when we change”
I do not think that I can
Guarantee the truth
By plan or force of will
And fear that disappointing you
Will undo me
Not you

What I have given
In majestic arrogance or quiet need
Does it glow in you?
Does it calm or warm
Or furnish afternoons
With peaceful hours?
I am the one I do not wish
To leave bereft
Not you

I’m saying

The last time I walked on Lake Conroe
It kind of gave way

SERGEY GANDLEVSKY
(Tr. from the Russian by Philip Metres)

“When ripening hops sway like waves...”

When ripening hops sway like waves
I inherit their ferment.
But goosefoot, wormword and nettles
Fill my ear from within, thoughts in a tangle.
The white window, bed and chair of Van Gogh.
The open notebook: words, words, words.
Reasons for rejoicing comparatively few.
Daily life is categorical, simple as two plus two.

O tempter snake, drugstore viper,
Answer me, please, solve this riddle:
Why did I trust delusive soul
With the rhyme and meter of the soul?
I could’ve been a pilot or sailed the seas,
Not up to my chest in danger, anger, and weeds,
Skipping pebbles in an unknown creek,
Counting the circles on glossy water.

Soon I’ll be taken, dressed in sack,
Shaved, the executioner’s lash straightened.
Another—a/ready not me—will mount the saddle
Of Mt. Ailar, look down until dizzy.
Protect me, Lord, in my parents’ apartment,
The hour for punishment has not yet struck.
My soul, my brother, we grabbed the small straw.
And I’ve forgotten again what I wanted to say.

[n.b. The opening line is a conversion of a line taken from a poem by Mikhail Lermontov which begins “Kogda volnyuyetsya zheltuyuschaya niva...”; Gandlevsky replaces the word “niva” (“field of grain”) with the more comic word “pivo”—beer. Thus, perhaps, from “crops” to “hops.”

“Van Gogh’s chair” refers to Van Gogh’s paintings of Gauguin’s and his own chair, so imbued with the absent presence of the sitter that they are almost like portraits. Van Gogh’s painting of his bedroom has the same effect, although the feeling is more claustrophobic and unsettling.

“Words, words, words” is a taken from Hamlet’s response to the logorrhhetic Polonius, who asks what Hamlet is reading (Hamlet).

The final two lines echo a Mandelstam poem, which ends “I’ve forgotten the word I wanted to say”, Gandlevsky again plays off the rhymes “slovo” and “snovo”—“word” and “again.” Thus, the poem begins and ends with riffs on the Russian poetic tradition.]

“Standing alone in the wild north...”

Standing alone in the wild north
The writer, with unshaven neck,
A tie in his cheek, prepares to howl.
Alone he heads out on the road;
The wild margins hearken to God;
Stars chat with stars—closed quotes.

[n.b. This poem relies on two very famous poems by Mikhail Lermontov. The first, about a palm tree, is allegedly a translation from a Goethe poem, and begins “Standing alone in the wild north...” The second is a short four line lyric, which Gandlevsky tweaks in the last two-and-a-half lines. The Lermontov poem runs like this: ]
Alone I go out on the road.
Through mist the stone path glistens;
Night is quiet, the wilderness listens to God,
And stars are talking with stars.

One of Gandlevsky’s most allusive poems, I don’t think it’s a mistake that it works as a metapoem, a poem about the act of writing on the page.

“The lynch law of sudden maturity...”

The lynch law of sudden maturity:
This spectacle of mediocrity
Lacks the general pleasure
Of walking the shore of a quiet river,
Reflecting in rhyme. Silence
Too long has guarded my words.
Surely the great grammarians
Are gifts from the gods!

There is a custom in Russian poetry
Of breaking mirrors with disgust
Or concealing kitchen knives
In the drawers of writing desks.
A guy in a hat spattered by a pigeon
Reflected in a mirror, stolen in the War.
Don’t starve me with creative hunger—
That’s come quite on its own power.

It was like a ship, a yawl,
Sparrows in an empty hammock.
Is it a cloud? No, it’s an apple,
An alphabet in a woman’s hand.
The alphabet of tender habits,
Scraper of oarlocks on dacha ponds.
She licks a scab, asks to be held—
I won’t give you up to anyone.

Slavery, jealousy, and torture,
Theemes spilling drop by drop—
I moo, mew, eat dry crusts without water,
Holding my head in my palms.
Why must I have as my inheritance
A mask with an ambiguous mouth,
The tragedy of a one-act life,
A preacher’s dialogue with a fool?

Why, my unsteady music,
Explain to me when I die
Why you sat with an unkind smile
At an unendless feast
And fooled the dreamy child
Who plucked at a holiday tablecloth?
Is it an apple? No, it’s a cloud.
I don’t expect you to have mercy.

MICHAEL MAGEE & NATE CHINEN

Trading Fours

1
okay, to make sonic
logic of phonic plodding
CLASS ACT / CLASS TRIP
the scene, say, Tonic

2
say it: superseding
CLAP TRAP / TAP STEP
with limbic iambics
scenic four to the bar

3
trap door escape hatch
all limbic systems go,
baby, and, as for
bars — the scenic tour

4
seen it all before
(limbs akimbo on the
traps) clapping
jambalaya go-go (where)
is a real event —
agreed on the day-old
bread — yet, akimbo: then,
go aiming at something?

a greedy pigeon perched
on windowsill a potted
plant falls 5 stories! were
you saying something?

ah! pigeon akimbo, I
got it? or ‘ve heard
stories anyway: something...
“that were Icarus drowning”

made her cry and hard
to live with! “the eyes
like two stones return
straight to earth”

straight return, then, this
previous: one sec. of four
as in AABA cry? —
“Ain’t Misbehavin’” “Budo” “Body…”

& last night atop the World Trade:
“Dancing Queen” (ABBA rears
its ugly & no escape hatch!) O
budobudobudobudobud

& in he walks
as if conjured — the world
worlds, “takes turns in
turning” — a nice trick

an ice tray crackles &
“Dusk in Sandi” & eyes
trickle thinking, tinkling
arpeggios. con jobs.

when “Dusk in Sandi” becomes
boney “Dust in the Wind”
I’ll take the con job —
Three Card Monte on 46th

affording stints of phony
stereophonic: what you
see is what. the scenic tour
has deflated oh get up!

and get get get
down, or, “get on
up” antiphonal — here’s hoping
th’soul don’t go t’heaven!

dishes clichés thunder-
claps: get up on the
downstroke, gripping pen-
nies from you know
what, or, who? where
the pennies are from?
gripping Lincoln, Indian Head
they don’t buy nothin

butting in excuse me
dance a penny for your
tots (tautology: it
will rain tomorrow or...

tomorrow or tomorrow: “there
would have been a
time for such a
word... the last syllable”

is “bull” — the pose
of Goya’s matador is fabled;
at such a time, he’s feeble,
lasts as long as he is able

and can a dam in eve-
nung seem “long-lasting” merely
in act of contrasting:
bull matador, bullshit artist

cans a crock of it, cracks
a case of mistaken
changes (rattling around in
empty pockets), charges —

mistaken duties, a crock attack? —
“Can I have my
pain in your foot?”
Lud Wittgenstein’s good question

a bastion of sense, anon,
scents: “one is often bewitched
by a word” / “on the other hand a
language-game does change with time”

the length to (end) B —
stretching as on/in a break
in a word, A begins otra vez
an(other) anon-time is now

& now’s the time for con-
firmanion of phonemes,
phony dreams — sym-
phonic mise en scenes

funny you mention rec’vd
today Ayler’s Live in GV
his open letter “To Mr.
Jones — I Had A Vision”

versions of versification
(alto: SKREEEEEEECH!!)
on Leonard St. the sex-
tet rages in & out of form
four bars and out a
forum of sorts, the new,
maybe, rising at the foot
of Congress St. Pier, Brooklyn

re: union — local haunt-
ings, tide lapping at the docks
O sluggish dawn! every morn-
ing making it new

O wimperbang! O local key!
dah ploidal Sun’s determined
re: turn — edahua alba
all about on all fours

an off the record concern
with concerted efforts,
concentric circle of fifths
of tonic, yes, have another round

A NOTE ON “TRADING FOURS”

The poem was composed antiphonally (the odd numbered sections are Magee’s the even numbered sections Chinen’s) according to the following rules: 1) each section will be four lines long; 2) each line will contain four words; 3) one must use fours words from the previous section in the section currently being written; 4) all rules except number one may be broken. We had no prior discussions regarding content and only these “rules” regarding form. The poem was improvised without revision via a series of emails between May 4 and June 23, 1999.

**RANDY PRUNTY**

**heardit means all something**

(for gray)

might is to be bored from all top down to all steel points. all tv is to be blank. no low backbeat. all world to getworking. mightnot know wherelearned all words. it sounds funny.

stand in front of mirror might pull on hat. tug all brim low and from all bedside drawer. might be of a taste. know which would to prefer. might is to be one mean tippedhat. might all chamber and place all cold snug against. it makes a little o.

might be of a forgot to bring. had known might would be staying at a hotel especially one without a little plastic bag. might also all little shampoo. might is to be naked but forboots and hat. movefeet. thudshuffle. be of a teach him to. mightnot like to but old wants him to so does. might make people happy butnot seem to work too well.

might turn from all mirror to all bare window. it is to be and full of finger prints. all curtains are like made of stiffgreen material with plasticbacking. all are like industrial curtains. might wonder what happens to old curtains. do not know if all things are recyclable. all curtains in all rooms mightnot know if hotel is to be part of a chain. like things are same and standardized. is to be efficient.

all window is to be emptyspace filled with a glass building. of all window all glass reflects outside like sky. everything is to be only reflections. might see into all windows of all outside building since all things just reflect. all skygoes on forever. not forever into outsidespace but forever back and forth.

all floor is to be wood. around all tack is all to be dirty. might like dirt even though know a lot about dirt. just because you know something does not mean you have to like it. thats what might.
dull light filters into all room. all sun is to be tired. it be of a not been on holiday in a long time. thats what might again.

might runtongue along all front ofteeth all inside all back. runhand overface and wetfingers with spit. all lay on all mattress. all sheets are smelly and wadded in a pile in all corner. might sit on all bed and slideback against all cool wall. crosslegs raise all brim of hat. alonealp might show because all things be of a long homcurve and turn into a lawman with a law. lawandorder are important. might know that. you cant argue withlaw. all law be of an all even though all outlaws be of an all too.

might shuteyes. keepeyes closed and all inside opens up all mind.

granules and all ridge of spackling pastes spot on all wall. granules and spackling and all words and things are like hardware store words and hardware stores smell like nails and sawdust. is to be good.

all light in all rooms is to be lighter. red is to be no breeze because all windows can be opened. is to be for safety. might not jump out a window. high places make nervous and whenwalk up stairs might to be of a holdrailing. whenwalk over bridges starestraight ahead.

might put all on all bedside table and wipe all sweat from forehead beneath all to see all outside brim of hat. drop of sweat trickles betweenlegs. bitetongue.

all floor is to be stick y. all bed is to be bare. all of to be sheets are wadded in all corner. all window is to be a rectangle. all tv notwork though might be of a not shot. it like one in all trailer.

pull offboots and set all of against all wall toes pointing outward. might be of a heardit means something when all toe of boot point in a certain butdo notremember what it means.

might by all bed withknees pressing into all floor. crossfingers all inside uncross arm. is to be for good luck. stand up and all see in all mirror. might bendknees and straightenup. do it all of again. is to be callous all nights. might know plenty about callous all nights. callous all nights keep you fit.

that all things say. stay fit.

might lean against all window. little specks alongstreet below. those might are like people. might lay down and look under all bed. had done it all. dance and might know all floor is to be thick with dust. all bed is to be metal frame with coiled springs.

might be of a seen all world. all reds are like lots of thick cobwebs. might onback on all hard floor. lips are like dry and might be of cracked. sometimes all things get so dry all things crack and bleed.

light bulb shines from behind all frosted fixtures. it is to be gold-rimmed and etched with flower. might turn onside and press cheek into all floorboards and see a vague reflection can not recognize. stare up at all ceiling. all light cast a dim shadow. pushhard against all floor withfeet and slide back onto all mattress. it is to be stained. mattress in hotel should not be stained. all things should be clean. if all like are stained all things should be changed. thats what might. you be of a to have standards.

might archback all inside relax. arch relax. tilthead sidetoside. all things be of a taught how might to relax and how to stay fit. you be of a to be fit to run and carry heavy loads. you be of a to stay fit to do your duty. buddy is to be polite.

might lean forward and grabankles. thighs are stiff steel bands. all barrel of all points toward all wall. might see dried paint on all wall.

all picture is to be famous. it is to be in hotels and offices all over all world. thats what might guess even though had seen only on calendars.

might pullbelt frompants and buckle aroldwaist. all to see all outside is to be cool againstbelly and all slope otback. walk to all window. all light is to be dimmer.

cloud and siren all mume growl of cars.

all air smells to be might of bad. it be of a not been used of a long time.
metal key is to be in all door. might go to all door remove all key slide up thigh. press it hard into skin. it leave a little mark but not an o. shrug and put in all lock. hotels use plastic keys now. plastic is to be all key to life at least of all to see and be. might is to be up on things.

might open all drawers and put all back in. all good books to be inside. it is to be black with a little gold fire. might be of all good book but not read but would. it is to be supposed to be good. all letters are pretty small and all read a lot of numbers in all book. might not like that. books are all for all words. just not speak in numbers. at least might not think so.

all light is to be bright again. all sun must be burning through all clouds. all sun is to be explosion. its fire is to be everywhere. might to lie in all sun without any clothes. might not want to cook like that. had seen skin burn. skin blackens quickly. might lay down and put hands behind head. eyes are like open. might is to be always thinking even if thinking gets nowhere.
By the time Cynthia Harland returned to the living room, the strange youth had killed off his 3rd martini. She plopped heavily onto the divan and hand-signal for him to join her. Which he lustily did. The woman's desire for this mystery male stirred her leg muscles and added a twinge around her heart muscles plus a fiery sensation to her lovely face and neck. She picked up the youth's calloused hand and pressed it to the inside of her naked thigh. The firm leg was hot and its body heat promised more goodies to come. A light whimpering issued forth from behind the female's toothy grin, an animal purr which did not belie the enjoyment her shapely body now possessed.

"Take your clothes off," Cynthia cooed harshly. "Now," the tiger-cat barked. "Now! Take them off now!" It was then that the youth shuddered silently, for instead of stripping he pinned to don a feathery negligee, red satin brassiere and black fur-covered mules. Only then could he obtain that extra stimulation he demanded of himself during sex-partnering. But how could he go about it? Without ceasing his octopus-like embrace, his searching mouth...
Perhaps it was not to the exact rules of the book of life that such thoughts raced through anyone's grey matter in such a position, but it was those thoughts which gave the sultry youth all the power and sex-provoking demands which pleased any love-partner he might be with. Without the clothes and without the thoughts, there would be only another set of flesh on flesh. Anybody could do that. It was the little deviations which made it all so worthwhile, so demanding that each would rather stay in bed than do anything else in the world. And there would be so many more nightgowns and negligees... The youth was in a dreamworld.

What moonlight, logs, why ponder bottles on the premises? Attrition says demand permission this mission, and too, a kitchen. Like a bingo error, the tennis egg flies off the handle. Fist muscle, limp lasso arcing, a pyramid on its tip, or cigarette hat pining smoke. Distended like a tongue? Lazy like a lazy eye? Tiny firecrackers tinkle venom. The tail precesses the comet, beautiful manners bring sugar to lemon, queen of the scene.

The pure disdain feel snails its way into my touch, blunted on summer's fat tongue, pig motion unbuttoned. What is happiness? These emotions between us, those raw totems, flair like sharpened pencils on a paper of knots. The blank impetuous dangle jealousy, screwdrivers, hammers, and cigarettes flirt with the accordion speeding towards the heart.

**THE ETERNAL STUPID**

The origin of Formica uncertain, your heel suffs a paradox.

Logic tells a person what to think, though the prose of fast deflakes in an effort to accommodate, losing paper falseness in tighter clothes.

Draw a line for possession.

Its stillness is a stone

dropped in water to assign zero a value over minus one.

Effronteiry to duck what closes a door if the closet it defines can sufficiently inclose a bone of enticement.
CARL MARTIN

Salt Aquarium

So idealistically, sanely courted:
The gifted few, the polyphonic IQ
However, it should be remembered,
Perverse constipation of Poverty's wheel.
O sweet, hot teacher, O jealous headmaster
I'm a luminous jester, glowing with gin.
See how I swim in the polyglot soup.
By "degrees" I'm lacking, zygotes
Shit in front of my eyes.

The Happy Sinking

When the sun dashed us
Gracefully into the waves
And the silver Hittite leaves,
The Navy of sand fell ill like
Molten vomit at the feet of a grub
And we knew the jig was blind,
An ambidextrous salute
From one much the better,
And the men began to sing.

Evening

The door's shadow looms repellent,
Precise: Corsican hair drowned
On the forehead of the conquering ruler.
Not as slickly outlined, wit's lit for us to fawn
Over its bust: Dummy torso and candle.
Like leaves Atget photographed,
Callotyped in the forest
With his early apparatus, this darkness
Is prescient: Veins singular as roots
Entwined in Fontainebleu's forest.

Rosseu, Noble Savage

New freedoms of discovery:
The drone's wax shed of "Confessions."
And quaint tools of honeyed neo-logic
Whose humped system of trees purely confounds.

So what delicate Noble Savage,
Strained hand and plaster profile,
Dear Rosseau, reaching through your ghostly visage
Could give to anticipation it's face of pure anxiety?

Synthetic a priori Forms

He was the most charming insignificant
Scarecrow who had passed allergies
And varied hay fevers through correspondence.
The pasture bent, as if seen reflexively
At arms' length, "in relation," to a solid
Glass tube, for it is true that it had
" Appropriated" the crows, their independent flight
Which is much misunderstood by the apodictic
Hay, which clearly grows in tall rows of corn.

Landscape it's "OK" to Sleep With, Really

The vexing crater is weary and astute,
A molten ox eye, a chute of dreams. My blackened mouth
Testifies to its will, its twisted rider, its Cretan maze.
This thing I seek & avoid, genius of chaos
In the green tunnel's metal, underground, to the school
Is merely an entrance, a twisted disturbance, distortion of trees.
Knife of breath: the pretext of self itself mere image
Or rhetorical sign, wavery mirage, meaning unearthed.
The blank tube of reflection, path of reduction, will feel no excess.
It should go on, shocking, with reason. Let fresh
Clichés swim in green continuity, Taut words are amazing
In their overabundance, their rummy cadence, their dissatisfaction.
Rogue Hemlock

My powdery stuff’s in the air. Lean here,
Split blood of the split Apollonian ear, head
Where mice spatter hay’s scent, a sweet summer’s rain.

Run, girl, through willow and marsh,
Knee-hoops, their stars sewn into opiate wisps
Where a donkey nibbled and dreamt, foam soft on his lip.

His death-dream the pubes of red haired ravens,
Huge bird cries of maenads naked in air,
Womb-sattered sheets: Love’s uctuous strife.

No pastoral couch laced his braying innards
With lice: My twisted root seeps into the eye,
Infects its layers of rose with a definitive deep.

My Lustrous Pet

I’ll feed it hard tack and coffee, like the wounded
Who lay in the blasted wheat. I want it to remember
The harp & spinning wheel, the subtle web of beauty.
This is good for the servile morale.

It lies sleeping by the Chinese lattice, painted panels,
Coat more smooth and sleek than the Barbary Coast.
The sheen in its eyes seems to ripple like the Bay
When their solitude reveals its companionable need.

If my contemporary attitude holds worldly conclusions
Match it to spinning spokes of flame the Orient first lit.
Pouf! A man disappears. His soul makes no objection;
Murder’s magic springs like wild onion. For ages

The reign of iron rusts in the body, an implanted demon
Whose weeds wreck the heart. A sizzling minnie-ball pierced
The ear with its round, lead spirit. The gossamer drum rent
Beats still, like a ghost, or moths in a skull.

An inheritance grows in this marble age of gold. Something
Seeps out of the potted palm’s green, the walnut & teak;
But I didn’t plant the spider, whip the sweat into the soil.
My leisurely diversion is bloodless as sugar and tea.

I train my lustrous pet well, already dangerous, shrewd.
Luminous spots in its eyes rise from the dark
Like comets or fasten on fish trapped in a weir.
My shining hound lives on the gruel of vision.

PAIGE MENTON

Bulgarian voices:

wedding

through light ices fallen we lay
dumb any junction known we run
stop at crevice young coco man
blaze eye blaze school every sun
nature below pushing me far
sand eye sun below star
blaze eye blaze below star
blue fine stock
rest beside me quiet below star
stray tea service marsh
I gave alms turkey store
who brings me soap
tea service alms
no prayer all mount
sardonic poetry he pays

Haiduk
Polegnola e Pschenitza

home and love they say
share each with another they say
record heartbeats for me
her murmur guarded between me and snow trill she
profound
kettle drum quiver lost I say
we sole stay there sheep stand they
move night scene long sleep
they sleep movement keen
nor pain
see young
see your sleep
nor fine hear seat

Dancing

we feel little people
my chin resting upstairs
my chin resting upstairs
from hope to a full plate
from pride to mystery
we dance without ceasing
not giving our eyes to wild seas

why a jelly sundae my feet
are aching why not jelly rain
dance shoes polished Monday

last cherry will I give you
no freely won day
no freely won day
dance shoes polished Monday

Song of Schopsko

dom dom dom dom dom
eight bean
incredible
he took care of all of that
all is certain
night without room
given to us
given to us
he took care of all of that
made for planting
who said better
he took care of all of that
my whole family
moves winds each
night in red
domain mine
he took care of all of that
seen in double
host external
he took care of all of that

Todora

moment Todora
hold the song
one might slip
oh might slip
one moment Todora
pieces of fine time
three pieces to grasp
a moment Todora
strain not this night
moment Todora
music through the senses
through three lines
follow one fine moment Todora
Simony

Never was Junius at the experiment
(one of those experimental gatherings)
mixed up with stocking fetishes—
The Mexican person deserved an explanation
but was met with bizarre glances
Night courses on botany at the city college
an extreme example of parsimony
or parfumage—heh heh

Hortensia and Ludwig
represented by soap-bubble figurines
A whole tenement crashes around them—
It makes perfect sense, but it's not explicable
It makes some real good sense
It's your sixth vaccination this week
a testament to your sanity,
or your sane appearance

brattily seated
with your head to the war

Jonquil

You fantasize about this

eleander place
settings and hemlock chandeliers

three courses of vibrant error,
a petunia writhing
an argosy
and clairvoyant lettuce—

The Ape

codici
fear the ape

he'll do a terror flip
at the doll trap there

practice a docile face

the police are afraid
of peripheral rape
the fetal coil

brigade
the word mine

weirding the integer
an amber or brown term

he entered the bride

her womb grew big
we began emerging
the Arabian tribe

Torn passages from the dreambook
show you piloting early swandives
through leafy treasures in hell

your coattails gangrenous
and pincer-like

Believe what you can
in what cadences are available

more shiny and black
more geometrically papal
more medallions for the devoted
wanderlust
first path gone

there are feathered huts
fronds of threaded grass

a dull patina of teeth

the ape ate the father
he thought theatre
was hereafter

Drant

A whole
swift, dissembled
inveighed via peridots
An abyss And beseech,
of Radiance
an ember &
Fustian rheumatic
those rooms

Uncertainties are whose
songs that Echo
columns reached.
Of air: flame
you saw, see not

substitute Mirror for
it is your flat prayer;
ink and paper there,
Counterfeit in lace, Swan
nigh the Offices
through those despair not,
remember.
calcified wombs—pole to
from teach of
Those patronized Sprite
Each epitaph
sycophantic
of a clear
of speech
Seven Poems

ght

What I began on foot I haven't
passed the opportunity to mediate
as tempers cool, and age,
more solid than a fish's swift encounter

begs calcium, from boyhood to a certain
indirection, oppressive detail, given

the yield of one small pond persisting
through rain and thought.

ai

Her disfigured face a near
manner of illusion, tear and inability
to smile, to fear or otherwise

to her most trusted. Take

a look at a long, hypnotic

moving in the unkempt grass, invite
the unexplained up whose leg,
whose skirt, who substituted

you for her? In the presence of God
I am always green.

ht

When suddenly the vista
squatted, henlike, pained

and roseate astride my window,

if you will, a smorgasbord

of feelings, poised

like an enormous letter "H"

for my camera, my truculent
perceptions, vied.
For once and always, my noble decoder insists - it is her right - the knot unlike, say, hunger, of a self-inventing game, can only tighten. Contesting two: monkeys, donkeys, acupuncture turns a poem to a kid's advantage.

Indirection, riddle and pun, pure fun.

Dumb assesses places the blame on a bomb gone wrong and yet afar, pain's twins luminous and balanced up top a tick-tock crystal logo in either hand, arms outstretched

pleads, "Me. I'm over here, Under the imaginary village. Don't shoot!"

I will tell you this. The woman gives herself to God and the man, anticipating the convergence of death and service. No food should be taken after sundown. I represent God's agency on an earth infested and corrupt and so can speak with authority on all subjects but cannot utter the Name.

Power to trans-
form men to dirt, spun thrice as a spider, all woman, all girl at the gape a place apart, nether. In whose hidden pocket the little finger people plot an algorithm? Mine. All paint and gesture, tranced by the dancing spindle.
The Given

clarity, & calm assonant
asphyxiation
It is a shunned soft
out-cut
eclipse decrease

There's no way out
by my death or consciousness

lying on the frivolous ground
wearing frivolous gowns
babbling about wands and pucks
inside the musculature hush

Floorboard

mist is similar to certainty. alas
& discover, a calming
earlier
half-lit
committed quitter bottoms out on the mad grub.

& wince to speak
sepia.

& oppression.

looking for daddy in the burn again I
was born & read up on
consideration.

listen. not on your life—
but in.

human in the brew.
pitching like a bottle.
minutes.

mannerism... and the river

fear-coat
at me, and I
begin and turned
talk-drunk, and could
ear
blood

or affection, then, I will give it to you when you go & when
you go I will
talk-drunk & go
ear
blood--

& go
transact fear-coat blood of stones down affection

a subtle insect

sound fills and could
diaphonous
insert meaning
in which the output may know ear
blood & viz:

the mental events
let go &
give indices & free write ear blood & go

& when a subtle insect
you go
insert meaning & affection & give
meaning
mannerism
& the river
for you to solve
TOM RAWORTH & ROD SMITH

aux alouettes: the prose of patrick drevet

not then, light, under cage
presorted lonesome dove undone
splint the middle finger for car trips
like Proust's enigmas of
the annoyable relates to that, but
to pierce the Platonic
butane, black marble, cyan
or else some
plosivity. identikit drama, now
"separation" of looking at
another sheet unstained and lined
dodging?
was it the comet or a misty moon
located in a narrow valley
other gains and losses (attach)
but that was all a dreamshow
antibiotics work best with beer
brute facts what?
no, he needs his rest: sore
w/ you (page 7) Form CRB 818 (4 - 94) etc.
a big hand, please, for the traveling assholes
they keep drawing pictures of it
problems of decipherment, easy to say
zero
an antelope, dried: no raccoons knocking
now pull that drummer out from behind that bottle
speak to the ectoplasm without inhaling
critics tend to see post-war french literature as dominated by
unleavened cake attracted to mis-shapen
falling in place
nothing to remember. my phone? my floor?
they droop
we could tape silence and not play it back
birth-mirrors of
elements are uneasy thinking
all three, it turns out
innumerate (missing)

KRISTEN GALLAGHER

Poem for Beginners

You know, how you can have one baby that cries all the time and one baby
that never cries. Perhaps the baby that never cries is crying all the
time, in secrecy. Maybe the baby that never cries is crying everywhere.
Under the arch, where if one is not sure of oneself, self-incineration
takes place. Premature birth turned to pits. Bits of bone burned but
where else would the detection of elsewhere? How does that one baby, who
sits in the corner, never self-aggrandizing, not appear? That appearance
may be the home of forgery, the drama of dirty diapers. As when one baby
made an interesting sound and now all the babies are doing it. Was there
ever a silent baby who did not speak? Was there ever a baby who truly kept
to itself? Was there ever a baby who did not emote just to get what it
wanted? In the anxiety of ventriloquism, must all babies share? Maybe the
secrecy baby is just growing up to the tune of broken cups, still able to
hold. Maybe that baby is holding a volcano in its little baby unknown cup.
Maybe that baby will be gone before leaving ever reaches the others.

At Home with Sensibility

So I'm standing in the horizon as an absolute, right? And this thought
comes up to me – says – the bit of earth that supports me is my only
object. And to my right, a factory-ruin. From this vantage it seems I
have stood here since before it was built, or could have. I go home. My
sensibility is here, waiting for me, with the lot of our garden – all
tomatoes. We love tomatoes and eat them for all three meals every day. We
planted them, and feel lucky to have them. The seed which planted me was
more reasonable. He moved to a place that used weights and measures for
meals. But the seed which planted him, and those before him, was more like
me. And without tomatoes, perhaps none of us would have lived. We have,
except for him, lived in this house forever. We are able to see our
horizon from the front window. And every evening, for about an hour, when
the sun is going down, everything goes blank. Not one person in the
history of us has ever reported having had a thought during this interval.
And when it's over, someone always says "pass the relish" – and we all
breathe.
To His Surprise He Had Become Attached to an Outdated Theory

Why rehash everything. Stay home and read someone’s drug experience. Out for cock tales, cigars, without tarred hands. Mistakes were made. Distance, one never wants when acting. One never wants when one does not want. Which is one?

Towards a Theory of Non-Specificity-in-Trouble. The question dysposes. He claimed to have always adhered to a Theory of Silence. Perhaps a theory of sport based on discomfort, I suggest? No one can argue, I mean really argue with a good theory. Especially when one’s own, personal idea claiming silence is claiming the one true way. Silence has always had the upper hand.

Sure, there is silence between the machines.
Sure, we may be machines.
Sure, we are humans and it is difficult to say what that means.
Sure, it is difficult to say.
Sure, it is difficult.

Perhaps one feels silence can never be adequately filled, perhaps? The attempt made by speaking, that one might move toward and around with the softness of tongues. One might not be one at all. Sharpen mind.

Perhaps silence swallowing is connectedness longed for? If there were less happening—I would be able to sit with you. Openairy structure, reach. Otherwise, running? Fold up one’s pop-out and go home?

The wind now, with no poles to hit. Mind-roads, memories of sticks. No one unto themselves a community.

The Joy of the Blood of the Stars

The friend strikes anywhere.

CITIZENS OF PARADISE BURN OUT THE STARS

This is its very nudity, a gushing. Gush, country, Gush. Reference to system folds back on itself into black as a salesman’s table. Smile forwardly into its loss with the neighbors. cheap decorous plastic and empty pockets. truth’s barred windows and barbed manners.

Not what is lost, but the indigence of wealth itself. On one’s own feel pursue containment

circuit circuit explosion circuit dust circuit shooting circuit dust irrecognition humility surplussed immodest sacrifice
cold eschewed expulse, emerges things in question. Giving. Up. What one approaches in a dimension of height

the conditions for equality

To be spread thin over each other’s hands.

Evidence Against

Sunday. We were on the Universalist Humanist Highway—hoping to find bliss, misery, wickedness—anything accusations of subordination to an organic factor could forgive us. We were (brute)², short end comings.

Attempting to con instructions, we gave a robust account of what it meant to survive. Our friends were federations of genetic details and neighborhood. Every night a case of weather.
A candy store and hairdresser, evidence of a city planner with attitude. Asymmetry at the corner of every symmetry. In the neighborhood. It’s not okay to leave. Trees crisp barks hold tight. Store fronts plastic beats me. Into we.

A busstop called have you seen home. Crisis-sustained silence. All code leads to affect.

Place a rose on the dead porch. Have you been to clean buildings and courage? Some will take it personally, extract the fee per gut, form a cult of rejection of all that flowering is. Only details could shout it down. But we are out of those.

To engage a fairly regular basis. A sidewalk, a road, a hill in the chest. Why ask how many faces, when there are those particularly deprivatized, stranger than a strange land. Our home, and personal. Consuming and consumed. Attending the tests of location, taught by exclusion.

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**SHAWN WALKER**

**highway**

*for Kristen*

the wise woman embraces her wisteria
loves it as it grows
climbing among her plans and faithful alleys
loving that written weave written
for going for her wisteria so growing –
for she words a planter
she blooms in her books
weave seem papering roots her garden
for fun
looks

for precision
a reach-enthusiasm always growing over
into production spreading
into wish tearing a line
sun-shy vine records rewinds handwritten vine
hand-stitched vine stitched into our ribs
weave grown with her loving her wisteria
gathering sound weave
swaying into hardy conversation

weave seem the longing scarf entwines us
for hours along wisteria
fence around such hair leaving
the porch standing
the couch green
the room publishing
the best of our wisteria

for our spines are stitched and by hands
whose minds stretch whose
vines will trail after her
for we watch her watering why
her lovely wisteria as she goes
for we watch after long leaves from windows
we gather her under our arms from windows
we watch the long vine follow her feet

March 28, 1999
$8.21 various @ Dollar Store, 48th & Spruce
$3.21 socks @ Food Rite
$2.99 Camel Lights for Kristen @ Brown's Thriftway
$3.29 asparagus & grapefruit @ Thriftway
$215.00 April's rent
$3.25 Bugler & ice cream @ Fresh Deli

March 9, 1999
April 1, 1999

Writers House Highlights
3805 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6150
www.english.upenn.edu/~wh

Tuesday, 9/21 7:00 PM: Talking Film presents a conversation with Hampton Sancher, writer and executive producer of Bladerunner, writer and director of the soon-to-be-released film Minus Men, with Owen Wilson and Sheryl Crow.

Tuesday, 9/28 5:00 PM: Chaucer Performing Workshop with David Wallace

Thursday, 9/30 7:00 PM: The Play's the Thing: a monthly play reading and thinking group.

Tuesday, 10/5 7:00 PM: Jonathan Monroe, author of A Poverty of Objects: The Prose Poem and the Politics of Genre (Cornell UP), and two books of poetry, Hinge of Speech and Demosthenes' Dictionary.

Wednesday, 10/6 6:00 PM: Reading by Kathleen Fraser

Thursday, 10/7 Theorizing in Particular presents Carrasquillo Ramirez, speaking on "Lacan, Neurosis, and the Nation."

Wednesday, 10/20 6:30 PM: Marjorie Perloff, talk “Watchman, Spy and Dead Man: Frank O’Hara, Jasper Johns, and John Cage in the Sixties”

Monday, 11/8 4:30 PM: Robert Streeter, former Dean of the College of the University of Chicago, on "The Idea of the Experimental College" with Bob Lucid, Susan Albertine, and Rick Beeman as respondents.

Thursday, 11/18 7:30-9:30 PM: Poets and Composers: Listening to Each Other The first of two gatherings (the second will be at St. Mark's Church on 11/21).

Monday, 11/29 6:00 PM: PhillyTalks: a reading and dialogue between poets Dan Farrell and Peter Inman, with dinner to follow.

Tuesday, 12/7 7:30 PM: Ron Silliman, Bob Perelman, Jena Osman, and Brian Kim Stefans discuss contemporary poetry before a live audience as well as, by way of live "webcast," to fifty participants worldwide. Moderated and hosted by Al Filreis.

Saturday, 12/11 4:00 PM: Collaboration with Highwire Gallery: Webcast performance by and discussion with Edwin Torres, hosted by Al Filreis before a live audience. This special program, sponsored by Writers House, will be presented to a small live audience and will be webcast live. Followed by a reading downtown at the Highwire Gallery (139 N. 2nd St.), with Mytili Jagannathan.
HIGHLIGHTS FROM BROWN/PROVIDENCE, RI

Judy Budnitz and Heidi Julavits read from their fiction. Tuesday, 28 Sept. at 8 pm, The Russell Lab, TF Green, 5 Young Orchard

Michael Stein, MD, and Hester Kaplan read and sign their books. Friday, 1 Oct. at 4 pm, The Brown Bookstore, corner of Thayer & Angell Sts.


Jhumpa Lahiri reads from The Interpreter of Maladies. Monday, 4 Oct. at 5:30 pm, The Brown Bookstore

Samantha Gillison reads from Undiscovered Country and will sign books. Tuesday, 5 Oct. at 4 pm, The Brown Bookstore

Barbara Guest and Rosmarie Waldrop read from their work. Thursday, 7 Oct. at 7 pm, The Providence Athenaeum, 251 Benefit St.

Paul Maliszewski will read from his fiction. Monday, 18 Oct. at 8:30 pm, Russell Lab, TF Green

Michael Gizzi and Catherine Imbriglio will read from their work. Thursday, 21 Oct. at 7 pm, The Providence Athenaeum, 251 Benefit St.

Ron Silliman will read from his poetry. Wednesday, 27 Oct. at 8 pm, Russell Lab, TF Green

CONTRIBUTORS’ NOTES

MYTILI JAGANNATHAN is a graduate student in English at the University of Pennsylvania. She has been actively involved in the artistic and cultural work of the Asian Arts Initiative in Philadelphia, and she recently read at Diasporadics, a festival of South Asian arts and activism in New York.

LORENZO THOMAS was born in Panama; grew up in New York; was a member of the Umbra Workshop and helped edit Umbra magazine. His books include The Bathers and Chances Are Few and the forthcoming Extraordinary Measures: Afrocentric Modernism and 20th Century American Poetry (Univ. of Alabama, 2000). Recently, he edited Sing the Sun Up: Creative Writing Ideas From African American Literature (Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1998).

SERGEY GANDLEVSKY is the author of two books of poems, Russkaz (1989) and Prazdnik (Celebration) (1995), and a memoir, Trepanatsiya Cherepa (Trepanation of the Skull) (1996). Widely published and anthologized, translations of his work have appeared in In the Grip of Strange Thoughts: Russian Poetry in the New Era (Zephyr, 1999), 20th Century Russian Poetry: Silver and Steel (Doubleday, 1993), and The Third Wave (University of Michigan, 1992).

PHILIP METRES’s poems and translations of Russian poets have appeared in Poetry New York, Poughkeepsie, Spoon River Poetry Review, Visions International and in the anthology In the Grip of Strange Thoughts. He has recently translated Celebration: Selected Poems of Sergey Gandlevsky and is working on Note Cards: Selected Poems of Lev Rubinstein. He is a Ph.D. student in English at Indiana University and a member of American Literary Translators Association.

MICHAEL MAGEE is the author of a dissertation, “Emancipating Pragmatism: Emerson, Jazz and Experimental Writing,” from Penn, and a chapbook of poems, Morning Constitutional (Handwritten Press, 1999). He teaches at Wheaton College and edits Combo.

NATE CHINEN hails from Honolulu, studied poetry at the University of Pennsylvania and worked at the Kelly Writers House before moving to New York. A jazz drummer as well as a poet, he is currently working on a biographical project with jazz impresario George Wein.

RANDY PRUNTY is a therapist and social worker living in Atlanta. Part of the Atlanta Poetry Group (APG) he has recent work in Tool a Magazine, Tripwire and New Orleans Review.

JACQUES DEBROT is a PhD student at Harvard University. His first book, Confusion Comix, is forthcoming from Second Story Books. His work has appeared in Aerial, Arshile, First Intensity, and other magazines.

PAIGE MENTON is a poet and research assistant for Research for Action, a non-profit organization in Philadelphia.

K. SILEM MOHAMMAD lives in Santa Cruz, California. He has work forthcoming in *Rhizome*.

GIL OTT is the Editor & Publisher of Philadelphia-based Singing Horse Press. He is the author of 11 books of poetry, including *The Whole Note* (Zasterle, Canary Islands, 1998) and *Traffic* (forthcoming from Chax Press, Tucson).

ROD SMITH is the author of *In Memory of My Theories, Protective Invisibility*, and forthcoming, *The Given*. He edits *Aerial* magazine and publishes Edge Books in Washington, DC.


KRISTEN GALLAGHER is editing a collection of essays on and tributes to Gil Ott. She runs Handwritten Press and frequents Writers House in Philadelphia. She recently joined the PhD program at SUNY-Buffalo.

SHAWN WALKER lives in West Philadelphia. The first Writers House Resident Coordinator (1996-97), she returned to Philly after spending a year in England and now works as a staff member at Penn. Her first book, *The Purchase of a Day*, is out from Handwritten Press.