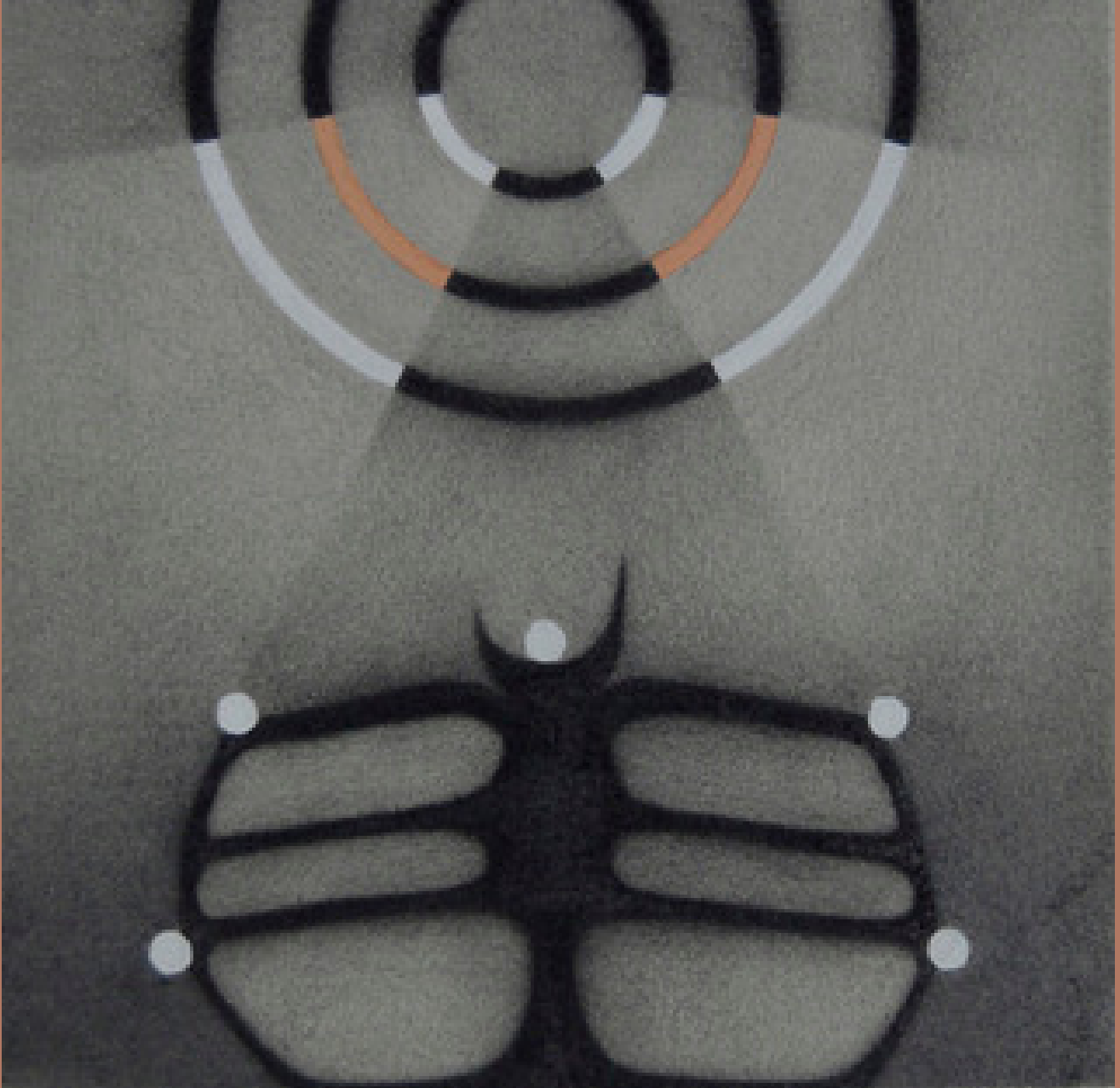


TRANSOM ISSUE 4: WALKING BETWEEN SAW AND WAS
[wherein we hitch our hoofing-it bone to our mind-bone]



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A conversation with translator Kurt Beals

Transom:

Who are G13 and how did you first encounter them?

Beals:

I first met some of the members of G13 after a reading at Lettrétage in Berlin – it's a small venue for literary readings in the basement of a pretty but somewhat ramshackle old house. One of the G13 poets was reading along with Ulf Stolterfoht, whose work I'd first come across in the English translations published by Burning Deck. As often happens, once I'd met them there, I kept seeing them around Berlin at other readings. There's a good series at a bar called Damensalon where a lot of younger poets read, and there are several larger poetry festivals throughout the year. After I'd seen them read a few times in various combinations, I decided to try my hand at translating some of their work. Most of them hadn't had any of their poems translated before (into English or any other language), so it was a good opportunity to experiment with new voices.

Transom:

What particular challenges and/or pleasures did translating these poems offer?

Beals:

Several of these poets (Natt, Scheffler, & Westheuser in particular, but others as well) use abrupt semantic shifts that can make it difficult to establish exactly how the elements fit together – e.g. in the Westheuser poem, “a cowboy ground down at the top / or these two cows- they carry milk / in their teeth, badly / transplanted wings on their backs // (and the data towers, in the shops, etc.)” As a reader it's easy to let passages like this slide, to read them as suggestive or allusive without pinning them down to a specific meaning. But as a translator you inevitably have to come to a conclusion of some sort that you can put down on paper.

So one of the pleasures of translating these poems was working through these ambiguous passages, getting to know the structures of these poems and the stylistic differences between the poets, and also corresponding with the poets to ask them questions and get their feedback on my drafts. I appreciate a translation process that involves dialog, give and take.

Transom:

In Westheuser's poem, the word "cowboy" appears in the original German, and you leave it as "cowboy" in English. We're fascinated by the choices translators make when translating a text that partakes of the target language (in this case, bringing into English a poem with English in it); can you walk us through your thought process when translating this passage? (Or [oops!] is the word for "cowboy" in German actually "cowboy"?)

Beals:

The word "Cowboy" is pretty firmly entrenched in German – German does have "Kuhhirt" (like "cowherd"), but that doesn't really bring the same image to mind. But that does raise a broader issue, namely the fact that English is so prevalent in contemporary German, both in literature and in everyday usage. Most of the young German poets I know make some use of English in their writing, at least slipping in a word or phrase here and there, and several of them write poems in both languages. Of course this can present translators with a dilemma, since an English word doesn't stand out in an English translation the way it does in the German original. One classic option is to put the word in italics in the translation, but I think that's a decision that has to be made case by case. In practice, I'm often inclined not to mark it, for the simple reason that English is so widespread in German popular culture that it doesn't really have the feel of a "foreign" language; it's become integrated into the contemporary German idiom. Of course you could take the opposing position and say that if the prevalence of English is such a characteristic feature of modern German writing, then it should be expressed in the translation, too.

But my feeling is that highlighting it in the translation would place disproportionate emphasis on something that's almost unremarkable in the original. With a word like "Cowboy," of course, the job is somewhat easier, because the American context comes through even without any specific linguistic markers.

Transom:

In Glamann's poem in particular, the compound words that German allows reappear as neologisms in your translation: "mouthstand," "thunderflies." Do you feel any obligation as a translator (following Schleiermacher in "On the Different Methods of Translating") to expand English with the richness of German?

Beals:

I don't like to take the Schleiermacher approach too far – if the German text generally stays within the bounds of standard usage, then I think that the English translation should do the same. But certainly German does sometimes suggest interesting coinages. In this case, "thunderflies" actually is an English word (though not one I've come across often), and it's an almost perfectly literal translation of the German "Gewitterfliegen" (lit. "storm flies"), so that one was easy. "Mundstand" isn't common in German, but it does turn up here and there (on websites about acrobats, for instance), whereas "mouthstand" only seems to occur in English as a typo. Still, it's easy enough to make the connection from "handstand" or "headstand" to "mouthstand." So I thought it was appropriate to introduce an unfamiliar term here in the English, since the German is fairly unusual, too. In general, I do think that one reason to translate poetry is to discover new possibilities in the target language (or to rediscover possibilities that are rarely used, like "thunderflies"). My reservations concern the suggestion that the innovations in the translation would necessarily come from imitating the original language. In some cases this may be true, but in other cases I think the original text can be seen as an impetus for experimentation or invention in the target language without necessarily restricting the form that that innovation would take.

G13 (issue 4) is a loose collective of Berlin-based poets, founded in 2009. The members, all between 20 and 30 years old, meet regularly to present and discuss new works, and also contribute to a blog. After taking part in numerous readings and a workshop to promote young authors, the group made their first joint appearance in print in a special issue of the magazine *Belletristik* in 2011; a G13 anthology will be published in Fall 2012 by luxbooks. For two tours in Germany and Switzerland and an appearance at the Zeitkunst festival, the group worked together with directors and musicians to develop a stage program that integrates reading and performance. Members featured in issue 4: Max Czollek, Paula Glamann, Maria Natt, Can Pestanli, Friederike Scheffler, Linus Westheuser, & Ilja Winther.

Kurt Beals (issue 4), b. 1980 in Columbus, Ohio, is a doctoral student in German literature at the University of California, Berkeley. His translation of Anja Utler's *engulf – enkindle*, published in 2010 by Burning Deck, was a finalist for the Northern California Book Award and the Best Translated Book Award. His translation of Regina Ullmann's short-story collection *The Country Road* is forthcoming from New Directions.

Max Czollek (issue 4) b. 1987 in Berlin, attended Jewish school from 1993-2006, studied political science at the Freie Universität, Berlin from 2006-12. His first book, Druckkammern (Pressure Chambers), was published in 2012 by J. Frank. Additional publications in magazines (poet, randnummer, Belletristik) and anthologies.

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anniversary

shadows wander
through my apartment
drinking to yesterday

behind the walls
voices cry for them
could be: silence

oy, i've emptied
bottles for the sea
i'll be going tomorrow

but first my fathers
will die in white
you won't understand

*

jubiläum

durch meine wohnung
wandern schatten
und trinken auf gestern

hinter den wänden
ruft es nach ihnen
kann sein: schweigen

oj, ich habe flaschen
geleert für das meer
morgen fahre ich hin

vorher sterben
meine väter in weiß
sie werden das nicht verstehen

Paula Glamann (issue 4) b. 1988 in Kiel. Studies sociology in Berlin.
Publications in magazines (Der Greif, Belletristik).

TRANSOM ISSUE 4: PAULA GLAMANN
trans. KURT BEALS

don't give them away, they pop up
when nobody's looking dripping straight
down from their balconies
a goatee, accordion
sweat, onto the evening's people, luckily
skin halfway holds her ankles together
while she's down licking the ground
doing another mouthstand something's still
sticking loosely to her lips
tongue hesitates, fires it out
floorstands, all the rest, cozy
potatoes, asparagus child
a taste for raw food, don't give them away, you're indigestible
think they'd sit there chewed through
in the synapses of every bovine eye
give them a kiss on the hand every now and then for support
to pull things together, accept these gestures, fine powder
little joke, tiny fairy, a softish humming, yellow fever
you're hooked you twist your firm grip, smell the air
the thunderflies are proud, you all smile knowingly

TRANSOM ISSUE 4: PAULA GLAMANN

trans. KURT BEALS

*

verrat sie nicht, sie stoßen auf
wenn niemand hinguckt geraderaus
von ihren balkonen tropfts
ein ziegenbart, akkordeon
schweiß, auf die abendlichen, zum glück
hält haut ihre knöchel halb beisammen
wenn sie unten leckt am grund
noch einmal den mundstand entspannt
bleibt etwas an der lippe kleben
zögert die zunge, feuert es aus ihr heraus
bodenständler, all die anderen, gemütliche
erdäpfel, rohkostbesonnen
spargelkind, verrat sie nicht, bist unverdaulich
meinst sie säßen durchgekäut
im synaptischen jedes kuhauges
gib ihnen, ab und an, einen handkuss der trägt
setzt zusammen, gestatte gestic, feinstaub
witzel kleine fee, ein gemäßigt summen, gelbwut
angefixt verdrehst du deinen händedruck, riechst luft
die gewitterfliegen sind stolz, ihr lächelt klug

Maria Natt (issue 4) b. 1988, lives in Berlin. Publications in magazines (Belletristik) and anthologies.

TRANSOM ISSUE 4: MARIA NATT
trans. KURT BEALS

I

i have a suitcase
i use on difficult days to carry
thumbtacks across the river

my tool shed is full of
the usual things they
go by the quarterly reports

i have a transistor radio
and sometimes forget how it starts
i listen to the grass grow
when i'm allowed

II

i live in a house
where every hour roof-
beams break from the garden fence

in the kitchen paper clips
collect under the coffee
service – i know that.

a big lion lives in
my bed sings all
the seamen to sleep

III

i found something
that never stops
knocking on the door

stuck crêpe edging
around the window
pretty new world

the room wrapped
in columns of blue
holds the air in out

*

I

ich habe einen koffer
darin trage ich an schweren tagen
reissnägel über den fluss

in meinem geräteschuppen
lagern gewöhnliche dinge
richten sich nach quartalsangaben

ich habe ein transistorradio
und vergesse manchmal den anfang
wenn es erlaubt ist
höre ich gras wachsen

II

ich wohne in einem haus
da brechen stündlich dach-
latten aus dem gartenzaun

in der küche lagern büro-
klammern unterm kaffee-
service – das weiß ich.

auf meinem bett wohnt ein
großer löwe singt alle
seemänner in den schlaf

III

ich habe etwas gefunden
dass hört nicht auf
an die tür zu klopfen

habe einen kreppsaum
um das fenster geklebt
schöne neue welt

das zimmer von
blausäulen eingefasst
hält die luft ein aus

Can Pestanli (issue 4) b. 1980 in Kassel, lives happily in Berlin.

we touch each other differently

we were in the forests

the billboards were silent

RTL was off the air

there was dirt on your face

from the forest

that's what i saw, that's what i kissed

*

wir berühren uns anders

wir waren in den wäldern

werbeflächen schwiegen

RTL war aus

du hattest dreck in deinem gesicht

vom wald

das sah ich, das küsste ich

Friederike Scheffler (issue 4) b. 1985 in Berlin. Publications in magazines (Wortwuchs, Belletristik) and anthologies.

needs like molluscs, curled in
and conjoined, a part of you makes it
through the winter in the shoe closet.
only emerges when you show some skin,
wear things that you like.
without judgment. so that the day
doesn't grumble. because what did you do.
for the course that uncoils.
nothing really obscured. wrong horse,
same road. better to bridle your own neck
than to stand in the hallway,
scratching your hooves, your sneakers,
by the uncompromising door.

*

bedürfnisse wie schalentiere, eingefaltet,
verwachsen, ein stück von dir überwintert
im schuhschrank. kommt nur raus, wenn
du haut zeigst. dinge anziehst, die du
auch magst. ganz ohne fazit. dass der tag
nicht mehr blökt. denn was hast du getan.
für die richtung, die aufgeht. nichts weiter
verwischt. falsches pferd, selbe strecke.
hättest wohl besser den eigenen nacken.
den vollen besatz. statt im hausflur zu stehen,
mit den hufen zu scharren, den sneakers
daneben kompromisslos die tür.

Linus Westheuser (issue 4) b. 1989 in Berlin, currently studies sociology in Berlin, after living in Oldenburg and London. Poetry collaborations with Tristan Marquardt since 2011. Publications in magazines (Bella Triste, Wortwuchs, randnummer, poet, Belletristik) and anthologies.

TRANSOM ISSUE 4: LINUS WESTHEUSER
trans. KURT BEALS

The World's Ports are Mourning

beneath the day lies something scraped-off
in the nettles a perfect turquoise
squeezed by children's hands
that morning: two missing calls
we or i climb into the capsules,
down down, the sea battle
a memory game of opened wounds in the car
in the hull outright – acrylic in my eyes,
in the mourning ports, in my ribcage the felt
legs flutter

i'd like to reach you
give you something that says goodbye
morning and night and offers substance
a cowboy ground down at the top
or these two cows – they carry milk
in their teeth, badly
transplanted wings on their backs

(and the data towers, in the shops, etc.)
and then to be beset by the clouds at the door – we
are everything that we've forgotten
our mouths store up scraping rights
a thousand hollowed-out blossoms
the color drips from the canon the hand
passes over it and brakes:
turquoise, turquoise

*

die werften der welt sind traurig

unterm tag liegt etwas geschürftes
in nesseln ein restloses türkis
gequetscht von kinderhänden
am morgen: zwei abwesende anrufe
wir oder ich steigen in die kapseln
runter runter, die seeschlacht
ein memory aufgeklappter wunden im auto
im schalbau, rundweg – acryl in den augen,
den traurigen werften, im brustkorb federn
die beine aus filz

ich möchte dich anfassen
dir was hinstellen, das morgens
und abends goodbye sagt und stoff gibt
ein obenrum abgeschmiergelter cowboy
oder diese zwei kühe – sie tragen milch
in den zähnen, auf ihren rücken
liegen falsch transplantierte flügel

(und die datentürme, in den geschäften, usw.)
und dann vor der tür von den wolken befallen sein – wir
sind alles das, was wir vergessen haben
unser mund lagert schürfrechte ein
tausend ausgehöhlte blüten
aus den kanonen tropft die farbe die hand
fährt darüber und bremst
türkis, türkis

Ilja Winther (issue 4) b. 1989 in Elmshorn, lives in Berlin. Writes poetry and dramatic works. Publications in magazines (Belletristik) and anthologies.

TRANSOM ISSUE 4: ILJA WINTHER
trans. KURT BEALS

loose-woven cloth around the chest, wraps
- what part of that was planned? violence,
a ground coffee, noise in the park
three blocks away, the children's eyes

demand attention, soft snow fields
of central asia. picture it, the sauna's
packed and someone pours on
more water. inclinations, a fight –

anything at all can cause a break-
down. the woman flings whatever's
within reach. i made a note of that
in march: true, the question is wrongly

posed. in her childhood her father met
several colleagues at a bad time. like
a stone that breaks loose and a single shout isn't
enough. when the light changes, everyone goes.

*

grobmaschiges brusttuch, überwürfe
- was davon war programm? gewalt
ein gemahlener kaffee, der park drei
straßen weiter lärmt, die kinderaugen

fordern aufmerksamkeit, sanft die
schneefelder mittelasiens. man stelle
sich vor, die sauna ist überfüllt und
einer gießt auf. neigungen, streit –

jedwedes kann zu ausfällen führen.
die frau schleudert um sich, was sie
zu greifen kriegt. ich habe das im märz
notiert: ja, die frage ist falsch gestellt.

in ihrer kindheit traf ihr vater mehrere
geschäftskollegen zur unzeit. wie wenn
ein stein sich löst und ein aufschrei nicht
genügt. leuchtet die ampel, fahren alle.

Recent poems by Ryan Collins (issue 4) can be found in H_NGM_N; Jellyfish; Handsome; Spork; DIAGRAM; Smoking Glue Gun; Forklift, Ohio; & the Hell Yes Press cassette anthology 21 Love Poems. He is the drummer for Healing Power & lives in the Illinois Quad Cities.

Transom:

In this fairly serious, politically-engaged poem, there's some jokeyness: The line break after the first line, and the shift from "The good book" to "a good book." Do you think it's possible to speak to politics without humor anymore?

Collins:

Not without crying, perhaps? Too much political discourse in this country often seems to me in shambles at the moment, when we so desperately need it to be fierce & critically acute. I guess I'm trying to find humor in common delusions—vanity & self-importance are examples here—to take them apart without being too violent. Violence is one thing that seems to trouble much of our political discourse, directly or indirectly—I hope that poems like this diffuse some of that inherent violence & try to find humor & strength in the endurance of different kinds of violence, rather than to further exacerbate their consequences.

Transom:

A number of your poems are epistolary, or in the 2nd person. What opportunities arise from writing in this mode?

Collins:

It gives me a conversation, and direction. When I use direct address I never feel like I'm just writing into a void. Whether I'm being interrogative or directive with the "you" in the poem, I feel like there's two-way communication there, even if the responses of the "you" are implied—that questions can be answered sincerely or with bullshit, and directions can be taken or left. I suppose that's not too different from how audiences react—they either buy into what you're saying, or they don't. If they buy in, then they respond to the questions & conflicts the poems hold in front of them, they allow you direct their attention. If they don't buy in, they turn the page or click away. I like trying to engage with audiences (& poems) in that way.

[You are not as handsome as your mother]

You are not as handsome as your mother
Led you to believe. We are led to our
Beliefs like cows being corralled toward
A bolt gun, never knowing going under:
Head bowed, heart crossed. We kneel &

Pray. Don't go down easy, New American.
Don't know how. You have only dust &
The butcher's respect to show for beliefs
Someone must understand—but not you.
Some secrets are not for us to understand,
The good book tells us, as it accepts us in
The way only a good book can. I write you
From the great plains of apathy—where
Everybody yawns—to warn you to get your-
Self prayed up & fight until you're forcemeat.

Mathias Svalina (issue 4) is the author of one book of prose, *I Am A Very Productive Entrepreneur* (Mud Luscious Press, 2011), & two books of poetry, *Destruction Myth* (Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 2009) & *The Explosions* (Subito, 2012). With Alisa Heinzman & Zachary Schomburg, he co-edits Octopus Books.

Transom:

You have suggested that these absurdist poetry prompts might be helpful in a genuine pedagogic context. Do you think absurdity is an important thing to teach beginning poets?

Svalina:

I'm not sure if I was serious or self-deprecating when I said that, but yes I do think that the absurd should be a tool presented to beginning poets. Partially, I think that all available tools should be made possible & that a beginning writer should feel a sense of permission & adventurousness with these tools, as opposed to a prescriptive approach to what makes for effective/efficient poetry. When I say tools, I'm thinking here of Bernadette Mayer's tour de force list of journal ideas & poetic strategies. But beyond that, I feel like the art I'm most interested in actively skirts audience control; the absurd is one way to manifest this. Often I'll see beginning writers feel overly intentional about their work—it reminds me of Tolstoy's aesthetics of emotion-in-artist directly transferred to the audience via text, which might be for some people a fine way to read, but it seems like a dull way to write. A conscious recognition of the absurdity of both the project & the process of poetry circa 2012 is, perhaps, one way to go about resisting a dreary intentionality.

Transom:

For all their list-poem contemporaneousness, these poems seem to participate in older traditions as well. The end of each poem presents a reflexive turn like a Shakespearean sonnet. Do you think of these poems as straight lines, or as curves?

Svalina:

I'd like to think that I think of these poems as knots, the kind that when you pull them get tighter & then you pull them really hard & they become small turtles for sale in Chinatown, so cute with their stretched out necks, destined to a future of outgrowing the little plastic bowls & being surreptitiously dropped into the Hudson. I do love a good Shakespearian couplet, though. I love most zippy rhetoric.

Transom:

The end of “Twirlsy Horn” seems to lead whoever follows these steps not to a poem, but to an ars poetica. Do you think of poems as arguments?

Svalina:

I'd say yes, all texts argue as an extension of ideology/libido. Amid the stasis of conflict & violence & transformation even the ignorably rarified hobbyists of po-town make public arguments. But poems argue how a reality tv show argues or the choice between granite or quartz countertops argues: it's entertainment. One of entertainment's implicit arguments is what it means to entertain, an ars poetica, another concerns what one attends to for entertainment, the self in relation to a socio-political situation. But arguments don't inherently make for development. I might read about atrocity to entertain myself as I participate in a system that commits or allows those very atrocities; the act of entertaining myself in this way does not make me more moral through the process, it only delineates taste. That taste & how it inspires me may allow for action in the world, but in itself it is merely an action of consumption. Poetry is inherently political, but so is brushing your teeth. And there is also the argument that has to answer an implicit question in any niche market like poetry, which is “Why the fuck do I spend all my time on this?” And the argument of the role of art in general & what its uses are. And then somewhere between dozens & thousands more. But I'd say these arguments are a reading strategy, one can just as easily read a poem & think that it is a marvelous work of individual genius. So, I guess I'm saying no, a poem is not an argument but reading is argument. So, in short, as some Germans say, yein.

Light in a Dark Tent

Step one: Sleep in a dark tent.

Step two: During the night, be woken by a sound that is probably not a bear, but could be a bear.

Step three: Lie awake while your loved one breathes heavily beside you & your little dog sleeps cuddled between you two inside the sleeping bag. Listen for the sound again.

Step four: Write a poem in your head that makes the bear go away.

Step five: Think the poem is actually pretty good & that you should write it down, but that you don't want to turn the light on for fear of waking your loved one.

Step six: Repeat the poem over & over in your head, so as to commit it to memory.

Step seven: Repeat the poem so many times that a light appears in the tent.

Twirlsy Horn

Step one: Twirl your hair in one hand until you become an animal with horns (not antlers).

Step two: Do animal things. Do not let the other animals know you are not an animal.

Step three: After the animals trust you fully, sneak into their bedrooms while they are off doing animal things & read their diaries. Copy down everything that surprises you.

Step four: Return to the world of men. Publish the things you've copied from the animals' diaries under your name. The animals will never know.

Step five: Grow increasingly dissatisfied with the world of men.

J.P Dancing Bear (issue 4) is editor for the American Poetry Journal and Dream Horse Press. Bear also hosts the weekly hour-long poetry show, Out of Our Minds, on public radio station, KKUP and available as podcasts. He is the author of eleven previous collections of poetry, and his honors include winning the 2002 Slipstream Chapbook Prize, and receiving the 2010 PEN Oakland-Josephine Miles National Literary Award for poetry. His work has appeared in hundreds of publications and anthologies. His twelfth book, The Abandoned Eye, will be released shortly by FutureCycle Press.

Transom:

This poem is full of things that have both literal and metaphoric life, and their relationships get more and more elaborate as the poem progresses. Did you start with the abstractions (Inspiration, love, pride, beauty) and build the world, or start with the world and build toward the abstractions? Or both?

Bear:

I do both, but in this case, the world came first. I started with the painting “Komposition mit Wespe (Composition with Wasp)” by Mirko Schallenberg and then went beyond the painting, which has no male or female in the frame and the poem is not bound by the moment of the painting other than as a starting point (hence no attribution to the artist).

Transom:

Is love a city?

Bear:

I think love as a city is a really good metaphor! —It contains all the complexities that real love has.

Inspiration

a wasp trapped in a clear dome
confused by the wood
that was no longer tree

the man was contemplating love
like an insect's shadow
on a bookshelf

let's build a city together
she said from the other room
and upturned a vase

they drank more wine
and watched their skyline grow

he loved how the light through glass
made the wasp's shadow blue

the bowl above—a sky to the dome—
a curve of cloudlessness

his white vase juxtaposed her
black foundation

she felt as lightheaded as a tipped-over glass
he felt like sloshing against her walls again

how each element played off the others
swelled the couple with pride
even as the wasp grew more impatient

this kind of beauty has a price
she said and lifted the dome
still echoing an angry buzz

Ray Succre (issue 4) is currently an undergraduate at the University of Iowa. He is married, has an awesome little boy, and is in his mid-thirties. He has a handful of novels in print and his poetry can be found in hundreds of publications spanning a variety of nice countries. Now he has decided to go to college. He does most things alarmingly backward.

Transom:

What's the difference between a world of assembly and a world of resemblance?

Succe:

This mostly addresses the nationalistic nature of civilization, and how the machine of society is staffed and fueled. The expectations of culture, both material and mental, are unavoidably riddled with milestones and the decisions of our priors. Flags and rule denote sectioning, border, and belonging, and while these aren't necessities of life, they are necessities of cultural identity, our "worlds." The material items of belonging, the wares of the Jones', change often, and the caste-n'-creed tastes by which a region builds its cultural nuances and accents is an assembly of wares, attitudes, and behaviors. "The world of assembly" is the portion of living that focuses on putting a self together and launching the skiff out on the cultural waters. We assemble ourselves for myriad reasons (to match better with neighbors in the weight of belonging, or to self-ostracize, to build our sense of things, or even abandon our sense of something), and this is typically the world of youth.

Expectations assemble things, things assemble stations, stations assembles lives, and lives assemble neighborhoods that change with each group of youth to come of age within them. Fads and attitudes and trends develop (some being but recurring, exhaustible systems that come into and out of favor throughout history). This symbiotic relationship between materials and attitudes is a hallmark of community.

Because our own country is considered a vast melting pot of cultures, creeds, religions, ethnicities ... we devour differences between people and call it "tolerance," while seeking to section-off each difference for a designated homogenization. While these differences are tantamount our melting-pot nation, there is a definite expectation that some differences will give way to the American mode, which is an individualistic mode, but gauged communally. Each generation is in flux and accountable to the changes of its materials and modern world, however, and communities are in constant mutation, slowly growing to resemble the communities nearby.

Homogeny is the communal mode, yet we both accept and fight it individually, singular terminals making up a network so vast that it gains its own individuality. “The world of assembly” is the world of gearing-up, being weighed, and preparing to take part.

“The world of resemblance” addresses the middle-age, the center, when we are all most alike, when we have learned to hone our concerns and activities. The middle-age is the time in which we are not only expected to staff the machine, but to run it. We’re at the console, and before us are all the buttons and levers, each having been thrown, pressed, or ignored by our priors. We are to reconfigure some of it, and we have become as if buttons and levers, ourselves. We are finished with assembling and have become the machine. The assemblers behind are waiting their turn.

Transom:

We want to ask you about time. Time and the dissolution of barriers. Your poem suggests that homogeny is a way of understanding our similarities across generations. But your poem also suggests that one of our similarities is that we are all similarly fucked up. This is an overtly political poem. Is it a hopeful one?

Succe:

We pass along our notions to our young, who pass it on to their own, and so forth. We pass along our rocket-sled progressiveness and our hermit-crab conservativeness, our inventions and refuse, our whatnot. We can better understand how our minds are geared by looking at what they have in common with past minds. We’re looking for hierarchies that repeat, recurring symbolism, cycles of myth and activity. Time is a good way to measure change, of course, but if a person wants to track culture and the change of ideals or attitudes, the metric best suited for this is based in reproduction. This poem tracks time more through generation (as fuzzy as that can be, nationally) than Gregorian increments.

That we may favor war intermittently indicates that we will favor it again. We will continue to have loving or angry gods, or some such substitute for that pleasure or necessity. In time, my values, no matter how hard I try to express them and give them pasture, will be overwritten by my son's values. The cassette tape of our culture gets recorded over again and again, leaving behind but a few clicks and pops, a bit of hiss, as the new song goes down and the old song blends back. Eventually, my values are overwritten by a new generation's values, and then those, too, are overwritten, as the tape grows old and each of us, long dead, become indistinguishable from the era in which we lived.

While culture does shift somewhat to accommodate its people and their interests, those people and interests shift more to accommodate culture.

Given time, we tend to erode the barriers our ancestors designed or weathered, but we're always building more of them, and we're only the next ancient history.

The poem, itself, is neither hopeful nor belligerent, but based more on subjective observation. It attempts to be neutral.

Homogeny

If by flags in homes the family is met,
then the world is opened in sections,
each person on morsels,
each person near wares,
and their children are assembled;
they must open up on a world of assembly.

The dilemmas of grandparents
transfix the wars of grandchildren.
Dilemmas by flags and land
are sectioned, just as the
grandparents and forechildren
are sections themselves,
and do not overlap but where
parents are children—
 a diplomacy,
 an anchor,
 and a flag,
they must open up on a world of resemblance.

Bill Carty (issue 4) grew up in Maine and now lives in Seattle, where he teaches at Edmonds Community College, 826 Seattle, and the Richard Hugo House. His chapbook, *Refugium*, is forthcoming from Alice Blue Books in the fall of 2012.

Transom:

Your poem draws language from diverse sources – Kazakh and akim come from central Asia, whereas jellyfish velum is a pretty obscure part of the creature’s anatomy. How important to you is it that your reader have access to the literal meanings of this somewhat idiosyncratic or private language?

Carty:

My process for writing is often an assemblage of fragments and observations, from both the physical world and what I've been reading. As best I can tell, this particular poem includes a number of such phrases and images that I have tried to piece together.

The first line, for example, is taken from a Zbigniew Herbert poem, “Farewell to the City.” Through visual association of “saluting smoke”, I recalled photos I'd seen of the Darvaza Gas Crater (which is actually in Turkmenistan). These photos reminded me in turn of the word akim, which I'd looked up recently in a dictionary (the same is likely true of velum). As this progression demonstrates, I'm not so concerned that the poem represents a literal truth as much as there be a facility and logic to the way the disparate pieces fit together.

In the case of these particular words, I think a large piece of their logic within the poem is their sound/rhythm, and I think that's something that a reader can approach without necessarily having the dictionary definition on hand.

Transom:

Writing that progresses through assemblage often seems to make intuitive or sonic sense, but rarely narrative or rhetorical sense. But part of what attracted us to this poem is that it partakes of all of those kinds of sense. In the second section, for instance, the last two lines strike us as simultaneously surprising and inevitable—as if they're the natural conclusion of what came before, even though their subject matter (the brother) is brand new. Is this effect an explicit goal of your process? That is, do you know what the hell we're talking about?

Carty:

I'm happy to hear that you felt that there was an organizing logic to the narrative of the poem, because I would say it is definitely one of my goals. Poetry that includes juxtaposition and surprise are appealing to me, but I also want there to be some sort of guiding logic or theme.

I think this is one reason that I find myself often writing serial poems—I think that the format allows a narrative, however disjointed, to build over the course of several poems without putting narrative pressure on each individual poem. Additionally, a large part of my writing process involves creating an imaginative landscape, something perhaps akin in spirit to the “triggering towns” that Richard Hugo talks about. My sense is that having gone through all that trouble of creating a place, why not stay there for a few poems?

The Watchtower

Heaven is a large and interesting place.

-Agent Cooper, Twin Peaks

Chimneys salute my departure with smoke.

The car engines too

and the breath of my friends who wave

in the street. The earth opens its vents,

blazing sores like the Kazakh pit

an akim aches to fill.

The flood finds every corner

of every filing cabinet, finds the crook

of each staple in all documents,

finds the space beneath the seawall and soon

the space where the seawall was.

Satellites plummet like enflamed hibachis.

Ponds double and triple, indistinct

from horizon, quiet, reflecting

our monuments. Above, stars disperse

and veil the sky, a jellyfish velum.

I check for signs

in the sink of an abandoned home.

Nothing prepared me

for the spray of moths

that fluttered from the faucet head.

On the crowded train,
rather than falling,
I touch lightly the backs
of passengers or steady myself
briefly by their shoulders.
There is none of the violence
of an overripe blackberry

fallen to the sidewalk.
There is no science to be read
in the charred home,
no motive in its black licks
or beautiful swoops of flame.
Feral dogs roam the fallout
and descend to subway stations.

We who had once walked
so many miles to be alone
were not surprised this place
was ruled by abnegation.
There were the chuckling creatures
on the rooftop we always heard
but never saw.

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Erika Jo Brown (issue 4) is from New York. Her chapbook, *What a Lark!*, was published by Further Adventures Press in 2011. Her poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Ilk*, *H_NGM_N*, *Anomalous*, *Spork*, and *Forklift*, Ohio. She currently lives in Savannah, GA, where she co-curates the *Seersucker Shots* poetry reading series.

Transom:

The end of this poem seems to reject the fundamental premise of the love poem: that you can send a message to the beloved instead of communicating directly, in person. Do you trust poems?

Brown:

I don't trust language at all, which is what makes it such an attractive tool for expression. That is why the dictionary is my silent boyfriend. We sext.

My poems do not privilege cerebral experimentation; my poems do intend to instigate (or at least address) feelings, as a way to establish empathy. So, you can say that all my poems are conscientiously love poems. The degree to which they are affective/effective is the degree to which I trust them. Plus, I love a good volta, which is why this poem has a little orphan reroutement.

Transom:

This poem bounces between sincerity and play, between earnestness and punning. Do you think of those as opposing forces, or are they related some other way?

Brown:

I firmly credit playfulness and humor with facilitating, for me, serious content. Both tonally and with puns, I rely on surprise and juxtapositions for a sense-making ambush. If a reader is bored to death, gravitas will not penetrate.

A letter-pressed edition of this poem, designed by Laura Capp and printed at the University of Iowa Center for the Book, is available [here](#).

French New Wave Cinema

Because I don't care for Godard,
I am the loneliest poet. Go,
dart, to the heart of my beloved.

Tell him: we mythologize each
other when we're apart. Tell
him: I'm a bit of a tweaker. No,

I don't actually sleep with
deers out here. Check yo
navigational chart. In fact,

a perfectly respectable club jam
came on the radio today. Tell him:
I'm sorry for accidentally kicking him

in the gonads. It's too bad, too,
I had imagined us on a gondola
in a scenic place funded carte blanche

with affection. Tell him: I don't do
goulash without meat. Tell him: of my love
for gorgonzola cheese: garbanzos.

Tell him: of my objectionable
tartness. Don't forget that part.
My goal is to go steady.

Although I'm rather cerebral,
I don't know shit about
beer. The avant-garde won't

protect me here. They'd dump
charred swiss chard on my head
&tc. If I need you, I know

you'd be available to hold my
mitten on a starry evening. Oh,
tell my love nothing. I'll do it myself.

J.A. Gaye (issue 4) is a preschool and elementary physical and special education teacher near Benton, Missouri, where he lives with Alfred, his Siberian Husky. Recently, he has become something of an amateur recurve bow archer. He appears in Super Arrow and Everyday Genius and can also be found in DIAGRAM and Arch.

Transom:

The word “smart” in the last line of "A Little Husky" seems to suggest intelligence and pain. Is this poem asserting that both registers of “smart” have to be earned simultaneously?

Gaye:

Yes, this is a fair thing to say. As I am thinking about composing this poem, I seem to recall tumbling over this word as if an imperfect fulcrum. Necessary and sore, I recall. Both to the poem and the poem's subject.

Transom:

We're struck by the abundance of “h” sounds in the last third of the poem, which seem to draw the reader into a kind of aspirated breathlessness. Is this emphasis on the sounds of your words central to your poetics?

Gaye:

Composing I think of lilts, of the voice and more importantly the chin (and the body) registering up and down, back and forth, an arc. Here at this point the poem takes me downward, speaking (bodily, out loud) to something smallish and quiet. For me, elsewhere maybe not, who knows, but here, yes, I think sonically this poem is acting that way. Hush now. I guess I could have wrote it that way.

A Little Husky

Pearled, where an oak root swept above frost & ground
To form a hovel. Rescue—and that which happens next.
A ting that pulls the ear's perk. Charmed plated kale.
Twenty-eight muscles fold to find a fish gone dry and
Here comes the day full towed under by fog and still-
Born instincts. Hollowed hearth. A home here. Candles,
Spies. A juvenile—no smart he has not fully earned.

Boyer Rickel (issue 4) is the author of remanence (Parlor Press, 2008), Taboo, a memoir in essays (Wisconsin, 1999), arreboles (Wesleyan, 1991), and a poetry chapbook, reliquary (Seven Kitchens Press, 2009). His poems have been published in such online and print journals as Antennae, CUE, Free Verse, The Gettysburg Review, The Laurel Review, No Tell Motel, Seneca Review and Volt. Information on these and other publications can be found at www.boyerrickel.com. Recipient of poetry fellowships from the NEA and Arizona Commission on the Arts, he has taught in the U. of Arizona Creative Program since 1991.

Transom:

The poems “Box 1” and “Box 2” remind us of Cornell boxes in that they’re meticulously crafted enclosures of language, but the language itself feels chipped from something larger. By what principles did you organize the contents of each box? In other words, what is the “thus” in the “dust thus organized?”

Rickel:

I write out of notebooks where I collect fragments of thought, words and phrases from my reading, images from dreams, etc. I begin most poems by arranging notebook material according to rhythm and sound, following associations, manipulating syntax as my sense of music and meaning develops. What is not said between the passages of what is said matters a great deal: that gap or space where the reader does the good work, through imagination, of making the poem. In the box poems I wanted actual physical space, something I’ve rarely employed, other than traditional line and stanza breaks, between utterances, as well as a rich musical surface. I also felt the need of a container, a limit or set of limits (the box in five double-spaced lines). Driven as I am during composition by sound and rhythm (including here the rhythm of various spacings), my sense of the poem’s actual meaning is felt, intuitive, developing over time. I trust the music to lead. As for “Box 2,” Mary Shelly said she hoped humans were “more than dust organized.” I suppose it’s accurate to say I was led by poem’s end to reflect on that hope.

Transom:

The poem “Metaleptic” is a complete sonnet—right down to the iambic pentameter. Yet its title directs the reader outward, into the world of “invisible sources.” If metalepsis is a linguistic bridge that connects the listener to familiar figures of speech, then what is on the other side of your sonnet?

Rickel:

Let me circle around my relation to the term metalepsis and see where we end up. I came to it first in Rasula's *The American Poetry Wax Museum*: "the attribution of a present affect to a remote cause." An online search led to Quintillian: "For the nature of metalepsis is that it is an intermediate step ... to that which is metaphorically expressed, signifying nothing in itself, but affording passage to something." I confess I find every definition of it somewhat illusive, the term tantalizingly difficult to hold onto, irresistibly capacious, describing an effect, in the adjective form, akin to what I aim for in my work: an intermediary (invisible forces) affording a passage to something not directly represented. Central to my recent writing has been the sonnet by Herbert which opens, "Prayer the Churches banquet, Angels age,/ Gods breath in man returning to his birth, /The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage." I've lived with this poem for over thirty-five years, and still the resonances hover and shift. Paratactic, yet exquisitely organized into coherent stanzas, obviously the lines and the discrete syntactic parts signify plenty. Each is a package of enormous import. Yet what they invoke collectively, what they point to beyond what is uttered, I find as large, unnamable and mysterious as the emotion that has overwhelmed me, a nonbeliever, when I've stood among Giotto's frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel. I wrote a sonnet sequence, ten in all, in an attempt to approach that form of mystery (and have titled a new manuscript *Metaleptic*).

Transom:

The abundance of sonic play throughout the sonnets "Aphasic" and "Metaleptic" has the strange effect of muting the end-rhymes that we expect from the form. It's a bit like putting a mute in a trumpet, but in your case the mute is made of other music. In this poem, what is the signal and what's the interference?

Rickel:

My ear has always led me to abundant rhyme, alliteration, various forms of echo, a musical density an early teacher urged me to moderate. Perhaps he was right, given the more “spoken,” narrative poems I was writing at the time. Compression in both sound and thought were among my motivating forces when composing the sonnet sequence. Line endings are always points of emphasis; the more complete the stop syntactically and, in rhymed poems, the more exact the rhyme, the greater the emphasis. Like sounds inside lines may well modify the effect of the end-line rhymes, which are now less unique, in effect less distant. Rather than think in terms of interference and signal, though, when reading poems freighted with such density (as in Hopkins or Crane), I tend to experience the musical texture of the poem more holistically, alert to, taking pleasure in, the sonic arrivals at lines’ ends, but hearing them as integral to the poem’s overall melody.

Box 1 (anthropology)

ravelled out of sand you see a face you see behind (as
sound?) behind

the fossil record, discontinuities the face its swift and local
traces its

accuracies a smallish (the stranger nearly dead, dies) regret
discomfort

(soundless) that grows in math and flesh: a memory
taken into account

the local traces: arm bones leg bones two sets
the smaller draped

Box 2 (curse)

outright to reach and touch (a figure conspiring) the ceiling
of someone's end

the skin's sensation of being watched this carving I make of you
this puppet

a figure I bury (if watched, then by a chaos the details conspiring)
to erase you

details wheeling the mahogany fall of cloth a song in no hurry
a body's one side

sadder/happier carved, hammered bits a solitude
dust thus organized

Aphasic

The body, helpless, confesses itself
in a stubbed toe, tick of the lip, wan grin.
An absence not unfamiliar enough—
its name felt but blank, a phantom limb—

imagination fails to fill the gap.
Like erasure's space of white left behind,
the dream trace, vanished, of a fever nap.
The said unsaid. Sound blown as breath in wind

that mottles the lake top's metallic face;
the wind a postcard with no 'name & address'
depicting snow reflected in window glass.

Not the cathode tube's pure void, not emptiness.
The spark, the synaptic impulse, frozen in place.
Silk touch of a loved one's glance—that silence.

Metaleptic

Emotions float. The fish's motion is
its thought. Unknown forms embedded in stone
invite our guesses at things, at origins.
Some ancients believed the soul adheres to bones.

Each surface is a depth. Like corpusants,
a glow that's cold, its source invisible.
Whispers at a wall audible yards distant.
Sea-bob of cormorants: a circling whale.

What we take on faith—that waves approaching shore
advance—is pattern, not displacement. Like wind.
The rose a magnet makes of iron filings.

Earth warms; fireflies no longer light a river's
turns. What shakes the heart at the scent of skin?
Love stings. Love swings. Love rings. Love strings. Love wings.

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Kristi Maxwell (issue 4) is the author of Re- (Ahsahta, 2011), Hush Sessions (Saturnalia, 2009), and Realm Sixty-four (Ahsahta, 2008). She lives in summer and fall mostly.

Transom:

Your poem, “Little More (11)” displays such compactness of form, and there are multiple references to folding (ex.: “I fold my voice/to fit your ear”). But even though this is a relatively “little” poem, the voice strikes some very bold and singular notes. How do you “fold” a poem without diminishing the power of its sound?

Maxwell:

The compact space seems to emphasize resemblances and relationships between words—both in their shapes and sounds. This makes me think of what the short lines (another form of compact space) do in Marianne Moore’s “The Fish”—I’ve always loved the moment in the poem where the “ac-” in “accident” is coupled with “lack” through her syllabics and line breaks. Compact forms seem to create these dense masses that show how words punch through one another—how they are bound. How they are folded into one another. Speech becomes a packaging that the listening mind undoes. I think poetry, insofar as it is willing (even committed to) letting multiple meanings emerge and exist, uses the strategy of folding consistently—in reading, the strategy of unfolding comes. Over the summer, reading an Emily Dickinson poem with students, one noted that her “Eye” referred to both the human eye and the idiomatic eye of the storm; then another student pronounced, “Close reading is sexy!” In the sense that unfolding is a kind of undressing, this makes sense; I’m not against seduction of this kind. This kind of seduction seems to facilitate attentiveness that can be usefully applied to situations outside of the poem.

But back to my poem and your question: the meeting of “voice” and “horse” in the poem calls to mind “hoarse” for me, too, which is a way the body folds the voice—makes it smaller, contains it—we are forced to ride this “hoarse” out. We tend to struggle for others to hear us in this hoarseness. We may find other ways to communicate. Perhaps the soul is the part of ourselves we can deposit outside us; I like the idea of living a lot of places at once this way. Of being held. I think of the phrase, “You were in my thoughts today.” Was I?

Transom:

The first part of this poem makes gestures toward the idea of union—toward a linking together of the “I” and “you”—but, in the end, the horse “carries us one at a time.” Do you believe that solitude is integral to communion?

Maxwell:

I think autonomy is integral to communion, just as I think the letter is integral to the word—a coming together seems to me to rely on a being apart; how can a merging occur without at least two separate things to enact the merging, or, to be subject to the merging?

This question makes me think of a conversation I recently had with my mom. My mom works with kindergarteners: after they learn their letters, the curious ones (which is to say, most of them) come to her with a series of letters on bright pieces of construction paper and ask, “What word is this?” Most of the time, she has to tell them, “Just because you put letters together doesn’t make it a word.” She says this without reluctance, because she is a teacher responsible for helping her students identify the specimens of language in accordance with legitimized forms. As a mischievous poet, I’m tempted to test her claim. This is to say, I’m drawn to new combinations and what we reject or accept; I’m interested in “to combine,” which presupposes a separate-ness and counts on a together-ness—a willingness to be made together. I want always to have a willingness to be made together.

Speaking more directly about the poem, I’m interested in what we take in and what/how language manifests in us—I like that proximity can be thought of both in terms of closeness and of distance; “you” and “I” have a closeness built into them because of classification as personal pronouns, but we know this closeness doesn’t necessarily manifest outside of language, though it may (and though you and I do not guarantee a we or us). I’m interested in hearing as a sense that brings together disparate things through the mishearing inherent there. It’s fascinating that we manage sound so well and suss out what one “meant” to say over the myriad things we heard in his or her saying: that “bike rack” and “buy crack” aurally resemble one another!

That they are siblings to the ear! That different senses find connections that can't necessarily be accessed by other senses: this is one of the most fulfilling things poetry has taught me. I try to think about this in the poem: "stall" really is after "all," alphabetically—thus there are multiple ways those lines "be" and "mean." I think this is what the last two lines hope to get at: the kaleidoscopic nature of language and being—"carries us / one at a time"—we are perhaps always simultaneously together ("us") and dispersed ("one at a time"), colliding and diverging. This poem, as are the poems in this series, is interested in attempting to isolate the intersection, be it fleeting or sustained.

Transom:

We've heard it said that horses and birds are the most poetic animals, and that poets find themselves writing more about one animal than the other. Are you a horse poet or a bird poet?

Maxwell:

A devotee of George Oppen's "Psalm," I'm a deer poet hiding in the verbal grass of "there."

Little More (11)

My soul's in your head
if anywhere. The song
said so or something
like it. I fold my voice
to fit your ear. I fold it
more compactly
and store it. Stalled
after all. What horse
is this—that carries us
one at a time?

Margaret LeMay-Lewis (issue 4) attended Barnard College and the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her poems have appeared in the Asian Pacific American Journal, Another Chicago Magazine, The Cortland Review, Little Village, and elsewhere. Her work was shortlisted for the 2007 Four Way Books Levis Prize and the 2011 Discovery/the Boston Review Poetry Prize. She lives in Iowa City.

Transom:

We're tempted to ask whether the phrase "Heir to," the references to black clothing, and the skulls that appear in this poem are meant to take us into the universe of Hamlet. Does this poem function as a possible answer to the famous monologue?

LeMay-Lewis:

This question is so generous and insightful. The poem was not intended to address Hamlet, but its central concern regards confrontation, literal and psychological, and the consequences of a similar inability to act.

Transom:

Your poem is full of repetitions and self-corrective gestures. Is this paralysis (your "similar inability to act") or propulsion?

LeMay-Lewis:

I'm sorry, I've gotten stuck in this question.

Thanks. "Propulsion" is an apt choice, as it suggests motion in fits, as a result of release rather than intention. Repetition is similar in that it builds force but goes nowhere. This maybe didn't work out so well in Denmark. Still, in a more positive sense, in the white space future of the unresolved anything is possible.

Autumn Linder

Why, yes, black velvet late
leaf plaster, scrobiculate chip and tar
and heir presumptive. Weight fleeting,
and how. And come back should
frost graves, arbor vitae,
frost mouthing concurrent full
and. Full and.

Heir to, I presume.
From within, the scar on the skull births
a staple, a disturbed, blackened
rice grain. Heir to. If I'd answered much
solidifying still

guileless, grave,
come back. Capture this, yes without
mind most moments
ribbon tie, claw,
and in. And in the way

in the hands. The way of the hands. Doubtless,
be the one still standing,
if pinballed, matching near-atonal plunges
akimbo. And the way in
falls short, a chip and tar
intended for everyone, as for an hour was she was
and as such not remotely

gingerly. Runs the frozen
rimming the canyon the fastest, fabric
way she was herself in your
raw greens and no one
considers it apt entertainment

I don't believe that.
You weren't there. Sturdily
wrong, friend or otherwise downfall,
the one on my mind the one not taken
to its logical
scant, consider this lit
birthday the making loss of
and if I were to talk in would you
call it a dream
a weed in the median
a vowel boot camp phlebotomy
we are port, lee, 451, we are as
the childhood vacations were trains.

Circa 1982, in a little Louisville neighborhood called Buechel, Jessica Farquhar (issue 4) learned how to write her name at the counter of Fanelli's, an ice cream parlor owned by her grandparents, which was regulated also by Muhammad Ali. You can find her work in recent or future issues of Catch Up, The Lumberyard, Word Hotel, and Sycamore Review.

Transom:

Many of the images in this poem seem to contend with impossibility and futility (ex, rectangular circles, empty fuel tanks, misremembered rhymes, etc.). Does writing a poem like this remove some of those roadblocks from the mind, or simply confirm futility as an element of the human condition?

Farquhar:

This poem is fragmented yet sequenced--and I think the ordering of the pieces was the most important part of writing it, regarding this issue of futility confirmed or denied. Ultimately, the choice was to move from an intention--why not learn something today--to an interrogative declaration--what if the whole world wasn't out to get you--with all those images of impossibility/futility in between. Then, it is a blissful surrender to these moments of potential frustration, which is what writing the poem felt like to me: seeking comfort in a warm bath.

Transom:

Oatmeal baths are a treatment for poison ivy. What is this poem a treatment for? (Feel free to include a prognosis.)

Farquhar:

This poem is a window treatment.

Oatmeal Bath How-To

1.

Why not learn something today, something about milking oats in a cheesecloth bundle, taking that kind of a tepid bath.

2.

Maybe it's noon or maybe it's something else. But the bells the bells the bells. Something about the number twelve.

3.

For my next trick I'll calm myself down. Next to the children I feel as big as a whale's heart and as hot.

4.

There was a pattern to that brick patio. It went in rectangular circles. It went somewhere poisonous, and lonely.

5.

I'm damned if I do, and I always do. Dear motorcycle enthusiast. Troubleshooting. Empty tank. Put fuel in tank.

6.

My first-ever bout of poison ivy or –oak started there; the grab, the brush, the oil molecule.

7.

What if the whole world wasn't out to get you. Not the mother otters holding their babies amidst the seaweed. Neither the river otters.

Jennifer Moore (issue 4) has poetry published or forthcoming in Barrow Street, Hayden's Ferry Review, Columbia Poetry Review, Best New Poets and elsewhere, and criticism in Jacket2 and The Offending Adam. She holds degrees from the University of Colorado and the University of Illinois at Chicago, and is an assistant professor of creative writing at Ohio Northern University.

Transom:

In “Domestic Study,” ordinary objects and spaces become light bearers. In attic-light and door-light, the typical feminine domestic moves are reversed: cabinets fill with dust, for example. In spoon-light and button-light (both of which are soft feminine shapes), the hidden pear ripens. What is the relationship between light and femininity in your poems?

Moore:

I wouldn't say the connection's consciously developed, but in this particular poem there's a kind of desire to uncover aspects of life that tend to get shut away or ignored. The link between the public and private self is a continual preoccupation for me: what we do when no one's around, what's hidden behind the bookcase. How we decide what to share with others. Light can be a source of relief, but overexposure can be damaging. Pears go bad, lives become subject to scrutiny.

This piece grapples with a need for exposure—opening notes, unfolding clothes—whereas in other poems there's a wish for escape or invisibility. A poem can be a way of negotiating these two impulses. It can also, I think, be a way of exploring the game of hide and seek we play with the world.

Transom:

“On Symmetry” feels elegiac in that it mourns the loss of a double. Is absence a part of all symmetry?

Moore:

Absence, disjunction, interruption—these are all things I think about when I think about symmetry. Something's got to disturb the mirror. Someone's got to stick a finger in the still pool, get in the way of perfection. I don't know why.

For me this impulse carries over to formal issues. I went back and forth forever about how to structure this poem—wanting it to be visually and logically symmetrical, then wanting to disrupt that impulse. For a while I even considered having the entire thing function as a palindrome, but realized that breaking my brain regarding form was counterproductive. It ultimately didn't matter; the reader will find her own symmetry, her own form. In this poem what's been lost is a sense of wholeness or completeness; what was there is not there now. A sense of a mirror that's disappeared, but that the body left behind can survive, can grow a new tail.

On Symmetry

Air has no twin: along the sill a film forms,
the window warps: a world translated twice
in glass, a world translated twice, then gone
when the pane clouds over. Without its replica
a thing flails, but adjusts to disparity:
in utero, the vanishing twin vanishing
into clear currency, an ocean swallowed by a sea
and in a blink, the coeval self reimagined
as simply self. When pain clouds the eye,
you see disruption not in a mirror
but as a word—a crab inscription,
a walking between saw and was.

Domestic Study

The house is a curator
of questions, it contains closets

full of board games
In attic-light, in door-light

she unfolds his notes, opens all
the clothing he folded

She empties the cupboards
of dishes she fills

the cupboards with dust
In bed she is a sentence

he mispronounces
In bed she pulls an orchestra

out of his mouth
then a pill box full of recipes

For last night's headache, rest
a magnet on the temple

or sip from a bottle of
maple syrup

At midnight she builds a room
of spoons she plants a field

of dishes and salt water
To soothe a toothache

place a whole clove between
the jaw and the cheek

Milk for a minor burn
In spoon-light, in button-light

a pear turns soft
in its bag

a snow globe unlocks from
its wooden foot

some glitter goes missing
the carpets sparkle for a hundred years

Morgan Lucas Schuldt (issue 4) died of complications from cystic fibrosis on Jan. 30, 2012, twelve days before his 34th birthday. Morgan earned an MFA in Poetry and an MA in Literature at the University of Arizona. He completed two book-length collections, *Erros* (Parlor Press, forthcoming) and *Verge* (Parlor Press, 2007). He also published three chapbooks, *(as vanish, unespecially)* (Flying Guillotine Press, 2012), *L=u=N=G=U=A=G=E* (Scantly Clad Press, 2009) and *Otherhow* (Kitchen Press, 2007). A writer of criticism, reviews and interviews, he was a mentor to many poets and a dedicated enthusiast of the work he loved, co-founding and editing *CUE (A Journal of Prose Poetry)*, as well as editing *CUE Editions*, a chapbook series. Author photo (c) B. Cully.

A conversation with Boyer Rickel, friend, mentor, and partner of Morgan Lucas Schuldt (1978-2012)

Transom:

The interjection “O!” ties each element of “CentOde” together. As a part of speech, “O” expresses pure emotion—we don’t always know whether joyful or sorrowful or astonished—but we are always directed toward the heart, or the gut. Was that space (ambiguous but full of possibility) one that Morgan frequently explored in his later poems?

Rickel:

The primary material of Morgan’s poems is sound and word play: homonyms, neologisms (often made by merging existing words), deliberately misspelled words (to suggest multiple possibilities), and so forth. The CentOde is composed instead of lines borrowed largely intact from a wide range of writers. So in sonic terms, the poem is anomalous. But the effect of Morgan’s other work, given the surface instability, language looking simultaneously in multiple directions, the reader kept somewhat off kilter—certainly the interjection “O!” and the initial emotional ambiguity of its import is of a piece with those poems. Urgency and ambiguity: these increasingly marked Morgan’s poetry in his last year as he faced the possibility of dying soon, the possibility that what he wrote now might be his final work.

Transom:

The cento can be seen as either the most derivative of forms or the most honest, since every word we speak or write truly comes from others. The cento acknowledges its connections to the world of language. How does this cento, with its register of 62 poets, reflect Morgan’s own poetic aspirations, values, or ideals?

Rickel:

I've never been close to a writer more aware of his forebears, more in touch with and in love with his aesthetic sources, than Morgan. He traced his work from a line: Whitman, Hopkins, Crane, Joyce, Berryman, Celan, and among the living, Charles Wright, Heather McHugh, Harrette Mullen. I've probably left out a number of important names; his sense of debt was deep to many. Both his book-length collections (the second, *Erros*, is forthcoming from Parlor Press) include homage poems, not only to writers but to artists, such as Frances Bacon and Cy Twombly, whose work moved him. He combed the pages of his beloved forebears for words, phrases, making original work with the material of kin. He spent many months absorbed in *Finnigans Wake*, filling several notebooks. Morgan thought the *CentOde* might be his last important poem. I believe that in part he wished to gather there some of the company he hoped to keep. Not all the writers he wanted to include are in the poem. He would have worked on it more had he lived. The poem reached a point, however, that felt whole enough to publish and include in a collection, should he die before he could do more with it.

Re-mantic CentOde

O air,
O death, sole kiss for silenced mouths unfed,
O wester wind let's not.
O the mind, mind has mountains, cliffs of fall
shaped by teeth O with O the letter O a howl
and O, I am afraid! Our love has red in it and
A black, E white, I red, O blue, U green—
O what a physical effect it has on me
in my life O this life. Yes, this one. O, it!
O, to release the first music somewhere again, for a moment,
o'er the disordered scenes of woods and fields,
o'er evening hills they glimmer; and I knew
"I FELL IN LOVE." O none of this foreseen.

O reader of the future,
listen to the night as it makes itself hollow. O stars
your power, like a language of whiteness, O Ocean.
O one, O none, O nobody, you,
O Walt!—ascensions of thee hover in me now.
O ruddy god in our veins, O fiery god in our genitals,
O speak of not enough.
O enter an apostrophe
to blaze O the bring of blood
into new bodies: O gods above, inspire
(-ologies be damned)
an interminable list of romantic O's.
O verb, O void,
O evidence of blood,
O, for a Life of Sensation!
Darkness, O Father of Charity, lay on your hands.
Make me, O Lord, a last, a simple thing,

op'ning the soul's most subtle rooms.

And O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson,
O diver, to be sea-surrounded by a thought bled white—a blankness as likely
as blackness.

(O we waited so long in the waves.)

Then O, through the underwater time of night—

O. O. O. The libertine bell.

You give, O lips, the supreme tortured moans.

O give me burning blue!

O help me through the fact of you, unfasten

O Eros, mangier than I, the nervous coils.

Send our delicately scented innards our O so small

presence O—

O, let me suffer, being at your beck.

O fluent one, O muscle full of hydrogen,

O now no longer speak, but rather seem.

O laugh it out roundlaughingly, the laugh of laughed-at laughians!

And this: ? < O

O caring and not caring outside me quiet,

turn us again, O,

to the O's collapse

and sighing. These lives are not your lives, O free,

O desire reclining.

O heart whose beating blood was running song,

blowing, blissful, open. O most immaculate bleached

of speed. O limit case. Why linger?

The beach ignores the power of words as words ignore the power of things O

stranger

behind me. O world that forces joy,

no is the O, the concentric; how to open the O, undo the easy-for-me round of renounce?

O causes,

O certainties,

O, vestiges that limit us, O, vast machinery of what—
call it a night. O soul. Flow on. Instead

NOTES

“Re-mantic CentOde” borrows and builds from lines taken from the following poets in the following order: James Schuyler, Federico García Lorca, Peter Gizzi, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Christian Hawkey, Ted Berrigan, Arthur Rimbaud, Kenneth Koch, Rod Smith, Robert Duncan, John Clare, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Berryman, Walt Whitman, Rainer Maria Rilke, Pablo Neruda, Paul Celan, Hart Crane, D.H. Lawrence, Andrew Zawacki, Christopher Rizzo, Alex Lemon, Ovid, Morgan Lucas Schuldt, Matt Hart, Karen Volkman, Allison Titus, John Keats, Charles Wright, Theodore Roethke, George Herbert, James Joyce, Andrew Joron, Frank Stanford, Jack Gilbert, Anne Boyer, Stéphane Mallarmé, H.D., Joshua Kryah, Lisa Jarnot, Olena Kalaytiak Davis, S.A. Stepanek, William Shakespeare, Heather McHugh, John Ashbery, Velimir Khlebnikov, Kristi Maxwell, Matthew Zapruder, Robert Johnson, Dan Beachy-Quick, Wallace Stevens, Barbara Cully, A.C. Swinburne, Harryette Mullen, Kiki Petrosino, Lisa Russ Spaar, G.C. Waldrep, Liz Waldner, Barbara Guest, Frank O’Hara, Nate Pritts, C.D. Wright