

RAGA

ALSO BY GAIL SHER

Prose

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*From Another Point of View the
Woman Seems to be Resting* • 1981

RAGA

GAIL SHER



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For Brendan

CEREBELLUM OF THE TALL GIRL

Cooing portamentos (patent) as a grasshopper is.

Where palaces were ochre, ecru (flocked velvet).

What's that *prana*?

He'd bailed. He couldn't remember.

The Dervish (his howl tidy).

He hears and hears and hears to the crusty depths of sand.

Mama of the pale ship.

Chew the fire. Call the boys.

But will they?

The fellow played her sad.

Buckling of her seldom-in-touch-with.

Sad robin (crumpled with crêpe-paper).

Upanayanam.

Once rice (of above) me.

Languorous and huge.

Crepuscular light steadily and unbiased.

O Jammu by the ocean.

Player *sri* (he was a dear).

“Yes’m” said sparsely.

Take Sufi. Froth (dribbling) down the swan.

Punjabi bells.

Awakening to alms handed through the trees.

She was twelve.

Sparrows of Lot. Bull-red and singing matter.

Ring a ling a ling.

Cow soft. Plethora of joy and milk.

“Have a talk, my friend.”

But her tone was rude. People felt her heaviness.

Gas and bees.

The steppes of Providence (dreams).

Her suckle whence the body attire.

Thrown and thrown passed.

The ants heard (siphoned off the jetty).

Musk seller'd cut sheer to the text.

We embraced darts (the cherry-colored stall).

“Gathering together we offer thanks.” (But it sounded off.)

Distal bucket.

In the sanctuary of his music, I play lace.

A Catholic person objects.

Lettering his dollar. To me to her (breath).

Snake of tide.

Pasted god to his forehead and can't see.

They say the chassis . . . well, animists say.

Mustachioed (and sulk) the stonemason red.

Yes. It's them.

Clay bangs.

Tantalized the sung.

Though her legs were short, she didn't cry.

Yeh grass.

Poke through the fence whose birdy almost died.

I thought it was a leaf (at first) blow'n in a gust.

Flick. Flick. "That's a bird!" I'd said.

Man of Khan. Bolt.

Probity striking (say) the apple tree in the backyard.

No force.

She'd shuttered, flew away.

Hush Solomon (the kin await).

Slim minarets singing themselves (huskily).

An old source, now uprooted, now baking bread.

The spud speaks of a similar offering.

Hot spell.

A Parsee maid amongst the screw-pines miffed.

Telemachus will die. (As he'd said.)

“Anyway . . .” he'd repeated himself.

“Für Elise,” her rag-doll cried.

She'd sat on a tuffet waiting to be fed.

Om Mani, Om Padme, Om Shanti, Om.

Diwali lantern (hot red).

PAKAD

Pakad: Set of notes (turns of phrase) by which a raga's principle characteristics can be recognized.

I hear the rock.

Hummmmmmmmmmm. (The embrace of color.)

A bull (humped) ripping at my chest.

Now I am a tiger as it was bequeathed.

Cotton gauze. Yes!

The pads of my toes soft, premature.

A dress hugs my knees, giving weight. Planting me.

Hey Ram (Guru-shishya parampara).

Pluck. Pluck. Pluck.

Fretless neck. Wooden knobs thud.

Trajectory of me (the king, the sage's student).

His chasuble from shell.

The bowl of my sarod.

A hollow vessel. Gushing dizzily of infinity.

What's me, I say. I stay steady. Or tabloid of Him
(its shaft of hen sound).

Sing a hymn of glory, fox.

Prince throat.

Young hair parted in the center.

Father please (before the striped-cotton curtain).

I want to dawdle amongst the piebald man.

Tongue, a jest.

One frog mouth, from Kansas, so to speak.

HE let me borrow him. (It's hard to guess the motivation.)

My compass of big bags.

Socks. Jesus wore them.

Yes, when he got cold. I seen him put them on.

Son (the boy heard). Listen with ferocity.

The dogma of gear. Don't let it get you down.

“Oh gross,” sighed the child at the old man’s bread
and butter.

Pickled egg. A slice of wing. The radio blared,
“Hey daddy!”

And me with my sock. Feet slender, calm, (pious).

“Splay your right sacral notch!”

His toes are not cupped.

The outer arch rests stick-like on the rug.

Pulling the wind (the agile neck of God)

to his gown's empty attention.

Without words (booty).

His name fissionable. Like a vestment or cloud.

Each sucker readily yields.

“How many am I?” asked the *jina*.

“Pay heed,” warned the late *Ustad*.

“A brook which . . . you know . . . glistens.”

His *madhyam* flashed. (Her armature ran out.)

Tooth of feet. (She’d dressed like a sister.)

The slung. Carp.

Each interval a chasm.

A chain (slung) the tame one (triumvirate).

Now we. Druids in thrall. Fulsome eye, tie, catch.

The stone of him. It's green.

I hid the ring (the quick to stop the strings).

My sound. (A shell dismounts.) Jet black waves roil
through the fission.

Nails and space by my use.

Beam empty.

Ennui. That among all other diction.

Butter of land half bent in plea.

Hey Ram (Guru-shishya parampara).

Ramkali. Ramkali.

My heart, *sarodiyas*. I will ask the king to help.

He's the *badshah* of this land. He will save the poor *Darbari*.

“Tabla?” (The *tehzeeh* of the *darbar*'d felt.)

Like the slit in his shirt, chest to neck-button.

A gourd was all. A boat (a craft).

Hung from rafters along with calendars and bracken.

Telling palms (the lines and rhythms of noon).

A son's goatee (without umbrella).

Please sir, but his smile gave it away.

A song (a plea) in my sky-lit *tayakhanas*.

Tame eyes. Big, yes, but tame nonetheless.

Khayal in two (the grains of your black beard).

Sarod (of port) a scarf.

I feel me through the nape of your umbrella.

We drink, eat, smile like geese.

Cousin. Do not smirk.

The beauty of laughter quietly through the flowers.

Abba Abba comfort me. Let me rest by your feet.

Cirrus minion (noxious hands) pulling truffles of gas.

Near the *dargah* a tamarind whose leaves bestow resonance.

Gemini claw. I am me (humped).

Yet I. Ticklish. In the rain carnival poppies.

My legs are brown. My *chador* floats every which way.

“Wouldn’t it have been smarter . . .” a turbaned one began.

Urban bars, fretless like I said.

“*Veenas, gottuvadyams, esrajes, surbahars.*”

“For dregs of song, journey to the world of *thumris.*”

Calling calling (the tusk in smithereens).

Hail again. Steps are made by a person.

He shrieks notes as a gull shrieks rivers.

We had you. What happened?

Peacocks cry my daily *riyaz*.

Bangles and silk jubilant by the fairy books.

A gabled roof, a pane of sole, truce of my ear's solace.

Alone, terrified, aching for the bird.

Cloth of white.

Doveness. Oh her. (A tribute to the night.)

Your gown embossed. The thumb accepts.

Looking squarely through three thick glasses.

My little gourd plays *da*.

Raising my chin from the rattan carpet.

Them gigs of reprieve. (A public avowal.)

Sons in triage . . . *shishya*.

We gest (rose).

“Try wiggling your pinky. Suck it out. Inhale.”

Her dot contempt. Her brocade maw.

“I put him in my pocket. I didn’t know what to do.”

Disparate.

Nib of intelligence scour the pier.

I am fed. I grow. I dilate pretty.

But the Ferris-wheel was getting to be uncomfortable.

Stork. Listen.

Naked wood of vast implementation.

Chador-studded I (on my stair throne).

We wish you . . . saying . . . shortened by my breath.

MEANWHILE THE RABBIT

Meanwhile the rabbit.

Kalashree. (He'd named the home.)

A sprig of rind, its blemish obtuse.

What not to tell the pilgrim.

My ribs protrude. I cannot twist.

Papa *kirtankar*. (She'd stared at the reef.)

She a shell. The turtle quiet.

Last light trickling down the hill.

Dust voiced. Yeh. (The soup isn't quite ready.)

Steam YEOW. Apple melon.

Strung out. Whence . . . well . . . the crippled boy
kept staring.

*She sent me a picture of her horse. (I'd asked for a picture of her.)
I said I understand the importance of your horse, but you don't
understand what it's like to be a mother.*

Radha danced disporting my young mind.

Reindeer (verdant) amongst the marigolds and cane.

For *me* (the shadow puppet) wiping grease from the
confection.

Tendrils on the cob (which were well-washed).

Feet and am I?

“I’m jealous,” she’d told the hemorrhaging person.

Its knee was bruised. A yellowish scar slashed its lower thigh.

Fellow tulip. (The scholar’d looked it up.)

Of heart plant.

Dome-child blossom.

He feeds. I expel essence.

Which wing will he call his one day?

“My car has food,” the young woman said.

Her eye fell to the porch (as if its cradle were invisible).

The day was green. On the parapet (on the shoddy backdrop).

Grim leaves purred (absorbing three buckets of water).

Was she like Ashoka? (Lavishly smearing butter.)

Her hacienda hugged a courtyard full of palms.

Ladybird (harbinger) bake me a cake.

Ethereal cream . . . (she'd put her hands in the *snana*).

Plum subsides (though twigs, rabbits . . .)

Rain beyond rain. (Locks of gray.)

Remember dawn, the day of her son? A fat-bellied dove
hustled a meal merrily.

Slow-waddled bird. In and out between the rungs.

Gwalior city. Gwalior *durbar*. I am an exclusive rat.

Wine-colored, golden-eyed. My maker, thick-skinned.

Inwardly we prance. *Bhajan*. *Tambura*. *Namaaz* from a nearby mosque.

Pony, stay alive (please).

Demetrius of trees. *Kalpavriksha* of the lengthening day.

Doe-eyed virgin, on the mat, like Mary.

She squeaks. (The silver cradle tips.)

Ambrosia only works for kids.

Banyan of sorrow. Will she cry?

She went to the river (singing bad lands of youth).

Autumn luv. We've had our words.

Mandir of hearts. (Votive. Celestial.)

O *Ram*. I (the Talmud).

Maladies of children yarmulke or no.

(Sari-clad) festooned with swags, hollering beneath the coverlets.

“*Panchamrita*,” cried the deity, mahogany voice cascading from the poster.

Boy, where are you going?

The sun is raw. Graupel coat the backyard lot.

Icy peas, though the vehicle hadn't wobbled.

Hinged in three. Drifting from the sky.

Quickening kid. Taker mid-fox (scurrying to the riff).

(To raft glee). Put his head upon the pony.

“Tell me your name, ma’am,” the knickered being
was saying.

But it was late coming. Seemed each morning to
be more and more of a struggle.

I am the pretty one. (Overheard, though a train
was passing.)

Length of curl or upper hair of whisker.

Rough sir. My insignia quarrelsome.

Of righteousness between the walls, towers and so forth.

Tally marvelously. (She'd dropped a pin.)

A group of hair popped up from a little lei.

Impish. (I am eleven.) Proud of a meal a season.

Which tub? How many halves?

Mammy! Mammy! (The hands of the woman held
a kerchief.)

Pearly-white her taffeta (shinnying).

“Daddy, that slave woman looked at me funny. See her eyes?
They follow me.”

Louis fish (alt). She’d sat in her frame for years.

“You cheated,” said the teacher. (Waving her hand, she’d been so excited.)

“Are we women.” (Tuck-voiced her.)

A manger of holy (logs, bells, clay bell).

“Tell me again, mama/la.”

Say bread (sputtering wheels hologram).

She (aye) what vision intent.

The woman looked. Ate an apple that was green.

Brats spat (hopped about the aisle.)

The child sighed, “My lovely bra.”

Sing to me mother. Fix me chocolate tea.

She’d said “dog.” (The *pooja* was rescheduled.)

Hooligan sirens turned out to be stop-lights.

Sugarpie. (Her pencil sharp.)

Of jubilant quantity. The whore.

Who sucks songs. Rapidly gyrating forward.

Sucking her (throat). Swallowing her throat.

Hail from land with sheep, mice, cheese.

The booty awry with salt.

Negligent urchin. (“I’m tired of pancakes.”)

And he Saturdays, sucking his raw egg.

HER (TO) EXORCIZE (HAIR FLICKING)
GABARDINE

Allure. Her gentle huskiness.

She'd moved, studied, wandered in the night.

This *gharana* (*dosha* of the beaten man).

Troubadour. Wild wind. Shivered the wireless (*gherao*).

A pheasant ring.

Cow dung (bracketed). Took a poop (which instills me always).

Beaten girl. Several satchels humped her side.

A muscle shirt her scrawny thighs.

Cities of wind. So many within a day.

Tambura. Four (till midnight).

Stems broke. Celestial dust scattered.

The elves of Harlem sleep less and less.

We dapple (cow).

Shellac vase, yes.

Penurious round (Dublin) to the quick.

Sorrel (while eating potatoes).

Saigal (pilgrim). Hailed from London.

Isaac, broker of falseness.

As of jacquard . . . but he's gone.

Savage yard among the Dutch.

Galaxy (wailing).

Oooooooooooooooooommmmmmmmm.

Oooooooooooooooooooooo beat with their feet.

Nestled in a gulch (brackened hip of boats).

Dip here. Dip here.

Saffron mizzled off the wreath.

“A pantheon of ink,” he’d read.

Shesham is a kind of wood. The *dhurrie*’s of pistachio.

But his eyes blurred (which the rain enhanced).

Sweet Sue. I mean Sweet Sue.

Barley and (fish) jumped.

Landing like the dead. (Her ring was made of tarragon.)

His mouse. His room. Only the canary saw what was happening.

That's the point of alabaster.

Wild tree (kept behind) hidden behind plinth.

Where tobacco rolled like pearls of living (dew).

“We’d played in the sandbox” (felt each other whisper).

Counted on the teacher not seeing her panties.

(Was) prince. However long it was.

Her dress (marvelously) shed the pale wheat.

Long-lasting whorls wintered on lawns of crisp
(warm) leaves.

At twilight a few of 'em on her tummy.

Lips of palm chewing gum-balls readily.

He'd died the other day. At least that's
what someone said.

But her *tendus* . . . he'd beamed a few days ago.

The man said "trots." (Nibbled at the cream.)

Clemency of sand. No doubt it's a Christmas thing.

“No seriously.” The woman’d missed her train.

She sees stars basking on the brink of day.

Miles of road for the pony catchers.

Saying rotund (a pitta form).

Soft, round. Nestled in steps.

A little bit of flame. See the bangle at his elbow?

His underpants are white and sure.

Licking it blue. The slit (sweat) like an animal.

Well her friend said so, but she felt calm.

Some people were swimming. Flip-flopped
the junky streets.

Convection clouds steely (ineffable) rose
and fell across the glade.

*Plum nut. Many many plums. (The room
Was getting warmer.)*

He'd slipped off his sweater. Laid it on the bed.

A hole scratched by pigeons. (Product of the desert.)

But he only thought of toothpicks.

“Let’s talk,” said the tribes-girl.

“Where eels wave at the bottom of the ocean . . .”

Corpulent (fleshy). To made (the back body).

Green green boughs well-hidden from the animal.

Talons touch a tree. Gesticulate a horse-run.

The tassels of her rosary ruffled in the windless air.

Climb high. (Let me stiff.) Staring at the shirt in
utter recognition.

We bask. Butterflies and worms also.

*Around the wheel, hanging like a bell.
(Wheel) of green pine.*

Snow fell from the pine's white boughs.

We talked and except for the all white world . . .

Even the tree's bells.

“Dish!” she’d cried. “Cherry” (to the white face).

(To be bellyful.) Tummy out *en bas*.

Booing Purcell whose . . . (wanting in Cartesian spirit).

“What train did you . . .” (but the loud speaker muffled the rest).

Hunted gamefowl near the brook.

“Sweetie, could you move so your mama can see.”

Warden (petunia) whose scrotum . . . its vein varicose.

Detained in the bush. No flying wisps.

*“The barre (the Grecian-crisscross) rose,”
crazy Susan most lustily cried.*

Creature of five (duck, buns, gale).

Each fork thrust as if she were born today.

Breast (stretched) crucified the claw.

“Naif!” (The old man humbled.)

Silo (acuity). He’d named the brand.

Roiling from Egypt. Fix me (fix me) as were a meteor.

Ducklings (goslings) throbbing throats of peace.

*Hostile grasses plugged the river swathing
Jesus in her mind.*

Trembling clouds covering billboards (swish swish)
languorous and cool.

The dodo (carved) sobbed by the finial.

“The size of my ring happens.”

Thai pop. Yule log bluesy.

Factious seraph bidden (classical) sandy (shrubby) fields.

On the wall was painted a sun. (Young girl skating alone.)

A bunny hobbled over. (It was a man in a bunny suit.)

Savior, tour the throne, please.

(A plaintive chord) rank and still.

Make sure the madams . . . hieroglyphs reek mutiny.

Through her crinolines, the lady's wobbly legs.

Picture-show (follicle).

Crowds on the wing at their lessons of dance.

Hunchback dames (with a) tall (lithe) body.

A fetal parody, which the Balkans, as their steps show . . .

Make a star. (Tides are narrowing.)

“Dig ’em out! Dig ’em out!” He’d heard dreams.

Acres of bottles. Caroling whorls. “Did he use a ladder?”
someone’d asked.

The girl woke just as he was leaving.

From the plum (savage) of eagle.

Pristine mist accomplished over snow.

She'd scurried to the stage. "The king will come!"
she'd shouted.

And his queen. (He thought he was.)

Trumpeter (an) anchor.

Tide-like crawl, which the pharaoh, well . . .
it angered him.

“I was on a day-trip.” (She’d squinted in the sun.)

Elpenor didn’t care.

So he'd died (the kid's father).

Her leotard (like a jumpsuit) crept across her thighs.

“Heavens!” she'd said. “Usually I wear two t-shirts.”

But the boy continued working with his crayolas.

Thrown horses oblique to the storm.

Lucky moon (the) blue-eyed (a) fury.

“Will the oysters be sorry? I hope not,” called the child.

A small bump on her lip, gnarly, hard, the same
color as her lip.

Tender aperture tenderly shedding bulbs.

Bitter seed, anyway, at the full moon's end.

Barreling, honey. Closing the (tuber) years.

Dipping into music, gigue (bourrée) Rigoletto's *ritornello*.

Slow blown and harm.

Transit of season, lured, provocative.

“Shall we dance?” he said. (He understood calamity.)

Olive oil bubbled amidst little sprigs of parsley.

Ponytails fly. Giddyup! Giddyup!

A ringmaster to his circus trills.

“Your philosophy, sir?” But his lover couldn’t stand the noise.

“Hats!” she’d said. “I make hats.”

Tea collects viz. Grand Central Station.

Why stop? Why sell soda?

The frog laid eggs (which came into existence).

They'd crawled around the boat/bottom,
heavysset (hungry-looking).

Yoked (the hoofbeats) clickety-clack.

A circle of stone trussed (an inner circle) of light.

Red lanterns in the lobby smelled ruby-red (garish).

Blood-thirsty bush thorns.

To hear from borrowings.

Sad Joe reaching death.

“I hung it on my chair, put a bear in it,” she’d said.

Her husband’s seed (a self-pursuing shrub).

Lay me down, Sebastian. I cannot rock.

Her tooth was black like the old Japanese.

Gargoyle shout. Shriek from your arraignment.

Gallery of blue, laden with altar/blue.

Lion's position obscure. Sanskrit (of) obscure.

A meadowlark riding the sun bareback.

Its sermon on the grass. Flummoxed by the other birds.

“Where’j’ya get . . .” but the ladder’d tipped.

I heat (I wait) legs.

Which the rocking horse cannot subdue.

Plain man Francis. (Shelling) peanuts for the mob.

“Dig I! You get where I’m at!” (He’d tampered
with the boots.)

Born of gruel (off) the balalaika.

She'd hemmed and hawed (under brown and yellow cloth).

O Rangasayee orbiting son of wind.

Of course he was concerned fearing the worst.

Sweet Sue. I mean Sweet Sue.

Nimble than jelly bones.

A feed salesman played ragtime tunes.

“Was he Welsh?”

“In tandem,” she’d said meaning cinnabar (literally).

Ideogram for retching (rocks, bones, sticks).

Stacks of sticks. Funny you should mention it.

The aqueduct was under spring blossoms.

Deer and ant arose.

Wench of brine caromed through iniquity.

“Toby one. Toby two. Train yourselves, cellarer.”

Wandering. (Had her eyebrows plucked.)

Make the shells collide.

“I hate conflict,” said the woman quietly.

But her teeth rang. (Smelled of vinegar, basmati rice.)

The earth opened. Fields of birds whispered.

Tala, *he'd said, is a rhythmic mold.*

Hebrew vowels sizzled. (He held the yardstick solid.)

Climax two: the father buys a hat.

Even so the house was peaceful.

A Madeleine smelled milky white.

Yet its shell. The grooves of its humpback.

Sweetie cry. The froth of (high) tea.

Caress its knee like a duckling.

Singing Now I am alone. (*I walked quickly.*)

Jester of met. We fell together.

Jelly at two. Pigs feet at five.

Parsley man. I sing and eat stalks of it.

Wolverine and tips of them.

She'd lovingly wrapped their mustard-colored box.

The day burned. Mind on belly (tangled).

It glanced off the mossy rock.

Without motion. (Without props.)

The legacy of squirrels' long reddish
Elegance.

Be ready, egret. (She'd felt the tug.)

Wet earth'll grab even your footsteps.

Laios (oracle) whom involution.

Ganglia difficult to appease.

Like Zeus whose tendons . . . (enigma) of three pool.

Philoctedes, Achilles, all were damaged.

Hollow bells of Christmas rang.

“I am moved,” said the man.

Stocking floated from the ceiling.

Ribbons dangled from my teeth.

Seedling wrung greenest.

Baby frost coats the dropping pines.

Half shed like fairies in the night.

Red bridge (cedar red) twice.

I am a boat.

Goats plea (hither) making ready also.

Slam. King slam. We be taken godlings.

Esplanade. That match arcane.

Facing silk flowers.

Tides and multi-waters digress.

The plait of her forehead, the small of her neck.

I kiss its locks to freshen it.

Box (off) the winter doll.

Comely *shul* gentility.

Cyber-chat (windy) high.

“Naw! It’s only a game. Come on.”

Cat of stilt. (Local cur.)

Kicking lustily. Nick.

“The languages of Brij . . .” she’d begun in
the vicissitudes.

Grid (say) lineament. The berries are stuck.

“What day is it, Mel?” she’d shouted from the car.

Buoys on the rocky coast gyre upon gyre.

Woe-begotten, fending (wending) “Can I eat, Ma?”
whimpered to hay.

(After) the nag. “My day is ruined.”

RAGA

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by Linda Davis at Star Type, Berkeley,
using Poliphilus and Blado.

Poliphilus was copied using a roman font cut in
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The italic font Blado is based on a font designed by
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