

# Otata 13



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otata 13 (January 2017)

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from otata's bookshelf —

John Levy, *In the Pit of the Empty*

Fred Jeremy Seligson, *The Dragon's Palace*

## Tokonoma

If a man is crossing a river  
And an empty boat collides with his own skiff,  
Even though he be a ba-tempered man  
He will not become very angry.  
But if he sees a man in the boat,  
He will shout at him to steer clear.  
If the shout is not heard, he will shout again,  
And yet again, and begin cursing.  
And all because there is somebody in the boat.  
Yet if the boat were empty,  
He would not be shouting, and not angry.

If you can empty your own boat  
Crossing the river of the world,  
No one will oppose you,  
No one will seek to harm you.

[...]

Who can free himself from achievement  
And from fame, descend and be lost  
Amid the masses of men?  
He will flow like Tao, unseen,  
He will go about like Life itself  
With no name and no home.  
Simple is he, without distinction.  
To all appearances he is a fool.  
His steps leave no trace. He has no power.  
He achieves nothing, has no reputation.  
Since he judges no one  
No one judges him.  
Such is the perfect man:  
His boat is empty.

# *Sonam Chhoki*

## *1. How to retrieve meaning*

Drifting in and out of anesthetics I return to the mountains of my valley hovering like the last traces of cloud the fierce winter sun burns away. The oracle, whose songs healed me in childhood, stands on a snowy crest gathering the seeds of stars in her lacquer bowl. She casts her ivory dice into the sky in a swirl of indecipherable patterns. I wake up pleading.

*sirens through the night moth in a jar*

## *2. Inheriting the dark*

The front door bangs, crash of crockery on the kitchen floor, strident voices, screams and sobs. Heavy tread on the stairs. He bursts into her room.

It is lightless and cold in the pit. Dank smell of lichen. She can feel her hands and feet but she can't see herself. It is almost as if she has stepped outside her body. A silence so deep she can hear the blood pulsing in her head.

Is this what the grown-ups call the *bar-do*, she wonders.

*flickering lines of flight fireflies*

hospital window  
the shadow of roses  
on her face

shaking off the rain  
the old man watches  
a crow

New Year dawn  
Buddha on the cliff  
watching the pilgrims

Touch Me Not  
in the rain ...  
everything I touch  
too is closed

winter offering  
black-necked cranes gather  
at the river shrine

## *Elisa Allo*

the alarm goes off:  
tight in a jar  
bad dreams

sunrise in fall —  
a leaf caresses me  
then glides down

Virginia creeper:  
finally inflames  
the wall

I return home late —  
my only companions  
the mist and a cat

white sheet —  
the same color  
covers the horizon

dawn of December —  
even cobwebs  
look like crystals

Elisa Allo blogs at <https://tanzaku.wordpress.com>



# *Stephen Toft*

dawn start -  
i warm my hands on  
the foreman's coffee

our first kiss  
the stars  
looking elsewhere

in the dumpster  
a tiny bike with  
tinsel on

first snow  
what  
is holy?

deep winter  
I make  
another hole  
in my belt

midnight snow  
the way the sheet  
has settled  
on our bodies

a breeze  
through the blinds  
your body  
has its own  
language

# *Hansha Teki*

pond ripple . . .  
the one I am  
no more

moonlit sea  
bound to me in this ditch  
of ownership

after rain too  
the sea has no colour  
of its own

up, down  
a leaf adrift  
or not

midnight hunt . . .  
every pulse pledged  
to the prey

grave silence –  
a distant fantail  
barely heard

night falls on  
night falling on  
a dark sea

still life . . .  
all my colours  
from dusk

dead silence . . .  
an ancestral wisdom  
in so few words

still us –  
sounds aflutter  
enter the light

awake again . . .  
has dawn recreated  
the am I was?

am I to be the words no more

open hand . . .  
her call curls out from  
the unheard

advent silence  
speaking our language

my heartbeat  
on mesolithic time  
once more

heaven-sent . . .  
vernix enfolds the word  
whispered in doubt

midsummer night  
the moon hangs about  
like a suicide



*a sequence for my daughter*

jigsaw child  
fitting words  
fall together

only this  
the flicker of blood  
barely glimpsed

singled out  
by silence  
our mutable feast

in the world  
if only of it  
daughter buffalo

echoing  
what has no voice  
daughter of mine

*notes towards an end — a sequence*

always now  
before it has a name  
morning light

does it live  
the other I think  
in the word

vital signs  
the form conforms  
to the word

eye to eye  
what comes to pass  
with a yes

no room now  
light without end  
fills the night

to be  
what is hidden  
and seen

*David J Kelly*

finally under control group

sea sick  
a strange colour  
to the algal bloom

around the lighthouse at Alexandria behemoth

beaten  
benign  
before

a ling rook  
rilliant uttercups  
a land with no bees

# *Tom Montag*

WINTER SOLSTICE 2016

So the light  
turns. And so

we let go  
the old, or

don't, who can't.  
Some must sing

their same song  
all the way

to hell.

Red-tail turns  
against winter

blue sky. What  
it means is:

Take the long view.

Friend tree  
shows me

how to  
hold on.

No word for blue  
who cannot see

this sky.

The form  
of form,

these words  
sudden.

# *Johannes S. H. Bjerg*

another tooth gone  
that's the taste  
of a hole

*endnu en tand er væk  
dét er smagen  
af et hul*

goes on into winter the smell of apples

*fortsætter ind i vinteren lugten af æbler*

:

those quick remarks to show you're cool crow

*de dér hurtige bemærkninger for at vise du er cool krage*

to bend one finger  
and be a contemporary  
of whales

*at bøje een finger  
og være en samtidig  
med hvaler*

fog full of fog full of rooks

*tåge fuld af tåge fuld af råger*



granddad's birthday  
this year the cigar  
comes from Brazil

*farfars fødselsdag  
i år kommer cigaren  
fra Brasilien*

a pot full of night at night the ninja turtle's not by the manger

*en potte fuld af nat om natten ninja-turtlen er ikke ved krybben*

*Christina Sng*

morning sun  
my little girl burns  
with a fever

the owls quiet    hunter's moon

fourth coffee  
my hand tremors  
finally stop

her voice  
an octave higher  
hungry cat

old pond  
even the swan  
looks weathered

# *Maria Laura Valente*

midnight moon —  
deep distances  
in our bed

Orion rises -  
your silence  
unfathomable

wedding night -  
a firefly  
in a jar

*Komorebi —*  
<https://marialauravalente.wordpress.com>

# *Guliz Mutlu*

back to where I started  
until  
I become a memory

a little blue  
with doves  
all the promises

steam of the samovar  
day by day  
one more cloud

green or red  
which way do I fall  
on this autumn day

honey and the moon  
grandma telling  
a no name story

singing low  
not me  
a nightingale

not a crowded family  
a rose  
from one name to another

*Please find your way to these books by Guliz Mutlu*

*Lisa Espenmiller*

at home  
small stones  
in my pocket

she sings a song  
against aloneness  
aloneness sings back

everything  
gulping -  
long-awaited rain

# *Jack Galmitz*

on a leaf strewn path  
where fish once swam  
I gulp the air

At the bottom of the sea  
where the sun doesn't shine  
strange fish find their kind

All that clamor in the bar  
the swordfish on the wall  
says more



When our fins  
developed into limbs  
I cringed

Talking to you  
eating a salmon roe roll

From the shower head  
lathering my chest  
flopping fish

Be careful  
where you step  
you might slip on the fish

# *Giselle Maya*

## *I WAIT FOR the last SUNRISE of the Monkey Year*

I.

further down the temperature drops each night

not a fit night out for man or beast especially not in a small boat

dwindling wood stack I keep lighting the fire night after night

so many kinds of solitude some can be fun

most leaves but not all have fallen some cling to the oaks

summer plants dried and stored for winter breakfast tea:

stems of cherries, camomile, yarrow, mint, verbena

2.

drifting bottles a poem inside folded into an origami crane

sickle moon ready to sail away on this small skiff

don't calculate just let it all be wavelets in the sand

how many bottles drift out to sea how many have a poem inside

hollow words can't float, don't arrive, they may sink

crackle of wood fires blue and orange flames all winter long

3.

