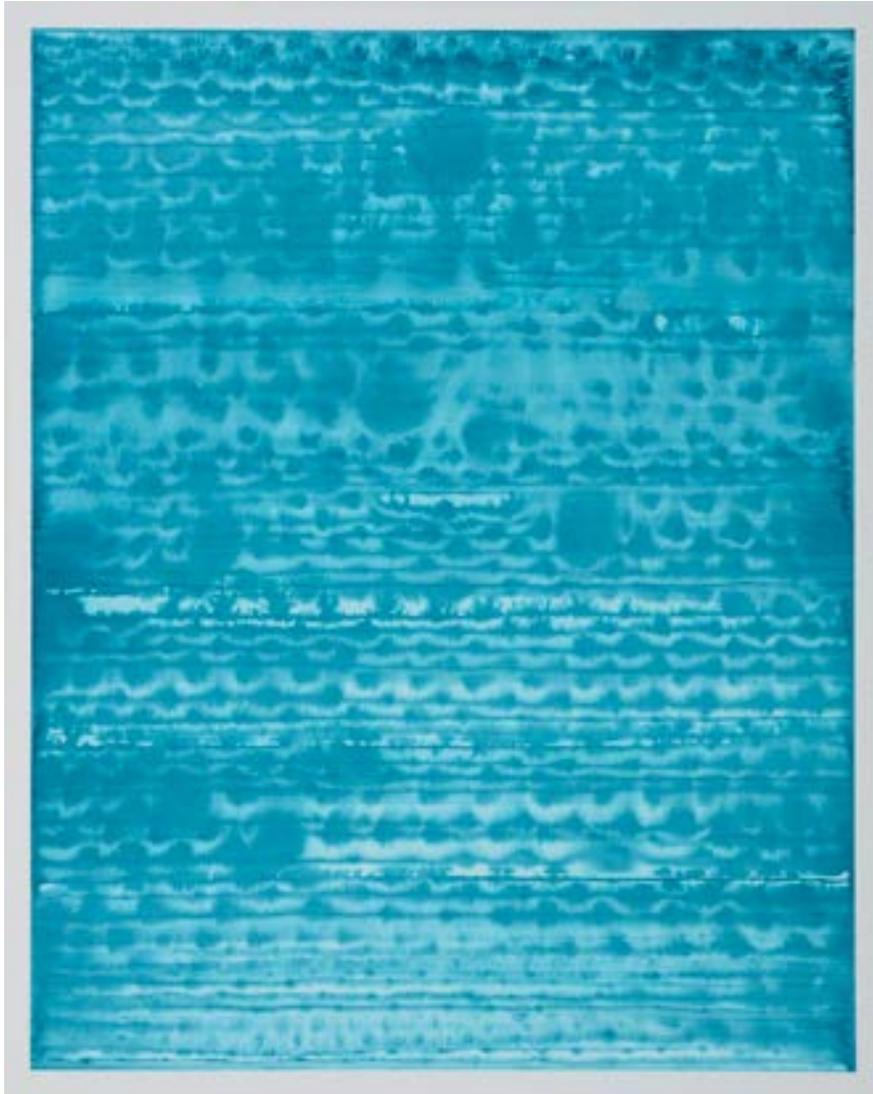


Otata 13



January 2017

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.

