

Otata 15

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otata's bookshelf

Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah

much of it

TOKONOMA



Hakuin Ekaku (1685-1768), Two Blind Men on a Bridge

Rupert M. Loydell

A SERIES OF AMBITIOUS MISTAKES

'Even in a state of geometrical grace
we cannot see time as it is, only as
it passes.'

– Rosmarie Waldrop, 'Water'

Soft scab,
the blood
hardly clotted.

'I've been
missing her
for years.'

Moments after bathing
he was in his studio
and smelt of turps.

CONFESSION

'Your body told me in a dream it's never been afraid of anything'
– Richard Siken, 'Detail of the Woods'

Damaged history

a glimmer of goodbyes
an index of moments

Activate the ground

activities, ideas and exchanges
outside the whirlwind's path

Hesitate

lingering gaze heart flutter
morning song evening song

Wolf at the door

somebody I used to know
somebody I used to be

You wear me out

the art of reinvention
no sense of the original

A love song
stuck in time

silenced music
follows me

How am I to know?

NO TIME LIKE THE PAST

Somewhere in the memory zone
there was an ocean only you could see
and set sail on, waving goodbye.

Antonio Mangiameli

the blacks mulberry
the shadow of a branch
on my desk

rainy night
overflows the bowl
of a begger

David McMurray

TO OTATA, THE FISHMONGER OF MATSUYAMA

After two days and several stops we arrived at our destination, a fishing village on an island in the Seto Inland Sea, the final stop made by the ferry. The sun was already setting, when a foghorn announced our arrival. Two local officials and a small group of villagers greeted us and showed us the way to a family-run inn.

The sign of the cross--
greener on its other side
undulating sea

Sound of goats
grazing somewhere, there
misty moors

Misty rain
enters the hot spring bath —
unannounced

After washing up, it was time for dinner. The alpha male rose from the tatami floor to make a toast with sake: “The fish of this Island are the finest in all Japan. When you taste the fresh raw fish here, you won’t be able to eat sashimi anywhere else. ” I thought the man prone to exaggeration.

Vernal moon--
light steals across roof tiles
slides through paper doors

What remains
of this hair grows white
blossoms on a bough

Jellyfish float
we’ve become islands
the wide summer sea

Joseph Salvatore Aversano

a terra firma of seabirds' cries

god the aperture wide

no choosing the spirit guide the wood

all all along sun haloed

iced fish head shining from real life

in &
out of
this
a fire
fly

THE DESIGNATED DRIVER

Sprawled out like the Barberini Faun. And as drunk. Able to sleep in any position. And in just about any spot. On a rock, a ledge, or the limb of a tree. And it no longer matters what one has on. When in the moonshine. When all is marble white.

by nature the hand drawn lines

John Levy

so I read Issa to find
words to give this
house fly landing in my century

the mountains enter the clouds
in bed

alleyway's torn mattress
a stuck crow feather
flutters inside it

thinking he can tell
by the noise that this
cricket is also a senior citizen

is one place with no death
inside a stone
even on the journey to sand

if my late mother and late
father can still hear
me later

outside the fifth floor window
of the college library a house
fly studies the glass

TEN FIRST LINES FROM LORINE NIEDECKER
(for Arthur)

I suppose there is nothing
How impossible it is
Comets you say shoot from nothing?
Sorrow moves in wide waves,
I was the solitary plover
I left my baby in Forest A
Horse, hello
Look, the woods, the sky, our home.
"An acre of music"
Van Gogh could see

Mark Young

Fell so far out
of favor with

himself that
he got written

out of his
autobiography.

Have been reading
Heisenberg, but

am uncertain what
he's trying to say.

Sometimes intuition
& sometimes simply

idiosyncrasies of the
eye. Rules do not apply.

Whatever arrives first
is declared the winner.

Why I became a painter

Only if they could
also sing were rhythm

guitarists part of the
bands of the sixties.

I have eaten
the icebox
that was in the
fruit bowl

& which you
were probably
saving
for your next trip

around Australia.
Forgive me. It
was softer
than the plums.

Text or text-
ure. The feel

of words as you
push them into

place. Braille
for the eye.

Elisa Allo

loneliness...
stick is the pen
snow is the sheet

hydromassage:
in muffled winter
water music

Peter Newton

first snow
the thought of it
before opening my eyes

last snow
what we have
and for how long

snow globe
the perfect day
to stay inside

Sonam Chhoki

THE OTHER VALENTINE

On a night
when the sky is an empty rice bowl
he weaves a spirit trap
with spikes of cane
and skeins of red, green and black.

In this cage
he places the effigy:

charcoal for eyes, no mouth, no nose,

stolen human hair for mane

and a garland of ox intestines

still writhing in the last throes.

He etches

the name of his love

in blood

entreating the wandering ghouls:

'Feast on this life force and have your fill!'

HOW TO DISOWN REGRET

In the origami garden no snails streak the grass or bees loose their way in the ferment of jasmine. The wind barely ruffles the feathery fronds of the tamarind and rain is alien. 'What about song?' I hear you ask. A butterfly flies from my heart.

each morning
louder and louder bird call -
end of winter calm

.

night of storm he leaves her blue-black face

gathering wild poppy seeds spring wind

bougainvillea stained purple prison wall

Tse-chu* sunrise
long-horn trumpets compete
with birdsong

*Tse-chu: Spring mask dance festival

solstice dawn
mist in the fields rising
to greet the sun

reticent neighbour
all over the neighbourhood
his dogs pee

New Year offerings
at the mountain shrine
lammergeier hovers overhead

night of super moon
long gong of the temple
echoing in the ravine

Tom Montag

The old
monk wants

to give up
wanting.

The empty
bowl sings.

Not a metaphor
but a real tree,

he says, an oak,
holding its leaves

all winter.

Breath and
the shaping

mouth. His
hope is for

wisdom.

He steps from
the shadows.

He has come
to see the stars.

Speak, he says
to silence.

And silence
says what it

always says.

Christina Sng

snow moon
the sun stays up
a little later today

morning fog
the shape of
all things

vanishing
into the leaves
leaf insect

beveling
with the wind
sand dunes

malaise a half moon of stuffed animals visiting

icy breeze
the warmth
of her concern

constantly returning the birds I keep freeing

Guliz Mutlu

old pond
a stone there
as if a frog

i'm asleep
the stars
behind the sun

a brush stroke
the bright shadow
of a cherry tree

Agnes Eva Savich

a murmuration
over traffic
Paganini

theta waves
my brain deconstructs
into pixels

patio umbrella flutters a cloud creeps out

water lilies
the primordial pond
that birthed us too

half moon
the band shifts
into a darker number

I lag behind
to check out a huge snail
late summer

hangover
I close the blinds to make
sunny side up eggs

the way petals
swirl in the wind...
nothing to write with

deep winter
the weight of stars
beyond stars

pregnant leaves into mounds

dendrites virtuoso makes me frizzy

oars
shimmer
squint
diamonds

shortcut to art gallery trip on a root

coloring in the shadows hoot

weaned...
bluebonnets the size
of little pills

Lucia Fontana

immaculate
even the grey of roofs
shines in snow

how many cups
the old ladle has fulfilled
winter rain

icy blue
I take into my arms
a candid moon

night snow
the silence echoes
under my steps

worn out pockets
frost bitten fingers
grasp the sky

size three
on light snow
the first steps

unknown flower
still winter and spring
blows

old lancet
still on the cold hour
of your leaving

rustling leaves
I can't recall my father's
last caress

kitchen garden flowers
and a fresh watercolor
same fragrance

Ed note: Lucia Fontana's blogs at <http://chanokeburi.it/>, where she and others offer haiku as medicine, cure, silence, road, rebirth, friend, companion, nature, magus, and stream of clear water.

John Hawkhead

snowmelt
dripping
sunlight

slicing onions
remembering her words
with my eyes

drifting mist
the path ahead blurring
between her words

tumbleweed
rolling down main street
the town drunk

harbour mist
under a veiled moon
shifting tides
behind her eyes
dreams of lost youth

autumn wind
red and gold flickers
in her hair
the resonance
of stars

Ed. note: John Hawkhead's *Small Shadows* is available from *Alba Publishing*.

Angiola Inglese

yellow code —
hearts of daffodils
along the road

one by one
a tuft of violets —
collection points

all around
the sea at sunset —
sun in your eyes

fibrillation —
the taste of salt
waves at sunset

Margherita Petriccione

summer light
in the shade of the pergola
Bread and oil

sleepless night -
the morning flowers
without dew

Rupert M. Loydell

EITHER A SNARL OR A SMILE
A triptych for Francis Bacon

OFTEN DISTURBING PAINTINGS OF THE HUMAN FIGURE

Put together entirely from prefabricated elements,
Bacon's more figurative shadows emerge
nourished by his passion and his despair,
disturbing images of anxiety and alienation
in the heart of his favourite stomping ground.

Grotesquely distorted faces and twisted body parts,
a metaphor for corruption of the human spirit,
capture the abstract forms of trauma and denial,
the intimacy that binds its inhabitants.
Intellectuals really are a hopeless lot.

Visitors to the exhibition were shocked
by the transmission of affect through touch,
the eroticization of the disciplinary gaze,
the absolute power of the forces of the past,
painful beauty, endless boozing and desire.

From global billionaires to art market fraud,
the frame of mind of those around us
is a powerful mix of disgust and fascination,
a singularly spastic rebellion where style
is replaced by token visual affinities.

And you, forgotten, memories ravaged
drank everyone else under the table,
synthesized ideas of the harpy, electronics,
skyscraper housing estates, animals and cars,
into a puzzling version of elucidated thought.

Nothing but specialised activities everywhere
dissimulating cacophonous manifestations
of recent revivals of interest, the kind of art
that often surfaces into view, unconscious
forces operating beneath an impressive facade.

ABSOLUTE MISCHIEF

spastic shadows replace the past
global despair's drunk disgust
human passions distort surfaces
thought now memory's metaphor
elements of Bacon's alienation
evidence of conscious mischief
forgotten forms of abstract nothing
body mix and disciplinary surfaces
distorted beneath twisted disgust
favourite memory transmission

faces more than hopeless
images of corruption and history
manifestations of erotic global art
blank forgotten memories replaced
stomping passions disturb despair
hopeless denials elucidate everywhere
past memories prefabricating culture
the human view in abstract surfaces
heart a drunken afterthought
improvised visual cacophony

affinities nourish shadow surfaces
gaze and alienation touch a face
passions twist around smashed coil
faces inhabit forgotten memories
powerful disturbing bodies blend
twisted forms of mischief mix
trauma manifestations of disgust
more ravaged body surfaces
figures shocked by intimacy
distort fraud's culture ground

beauty affects conscious gaze
stomping the disciplinary past
questioning mind forgotten
a puzzle figure once human
transmission touch operating
more stuff made from nothing
conscious ideas bind the grotesque
materials processed to deform
our history replaced entirely
painted beauty in denial

A NOTHING BOX

The pressure of exchange value and technology,
the idea of a self-contained subject,
encircles every form of conditioning;
the flat ground of the background colour
an essential product of the capitalist market.

The frisson to be found in injuries
emphasise sensation redesigned
in accordance with the development
of society as a whole: systematic exclusion
synonymous with utmost extremism.

The present as a historic problem,
reduced to torsos and mutilated heads,
Joe Soap intellectuals, pataphysicians, artists,
crypto-fascists and psychedelic impresarios,
offering us either a snarl or smile.

They look like nothing, foreshadowing
deconsecrated and fragmented myth,
imagery embedded within the origins
of animal and human consciousness,
cultural tradition meshed with cruel desire,

lurid scenes of violence and torture,
maws open as if howling or screaming;
everyone placed under the divine spotlight,
excited crowds watching someone who
has been driven desperate seeking

engagement with the ground, a place
where one makes oneself and a time
in which one plays: scrubby grassland,
blue ground smeared with a green tinge,
devoid of visible human occupation.

God was the guarantor of space and time,
a brilliant stage manager, not an original artist.
The end of all values is a nothing box,
a duet of paint upon paint.
You even get to like it in the end.