

otata 17 (May 2017)



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otata's bookshelf

Gary Hotham, *Fifteen Haiku*

David Giannini

POWER OUTAGE

Old horse wearing snow
steps into the doorway
of a dark barn.

Owl sounds you, too, too soon.

You, too, too soon—as a struck
match held up for a glimpse
in the darkness,
into it. Through.

MARCH

Old distaff loom mayhap—tension
of warp with weft—teal scarf
woman below doors-decorating-ceiling
of this store at hoary end of winter.

Looking up at knobs—she rises
dances cracked
floorboards singing.

ANOTHER SPRINGTIME FUTURE

No mate yet for the Snowy
Owl on the jasmine green

car roof, or
 (we guess)
for Sage-grouse on the lek—

no one's flying—all strut
as magic locks in another's charm.

SOMEHOW, THE IMPOSSIBLE

To Ed Baker in an email
and now in memoriam

To meet the maze in
the Minotaur and not

the other way 'round, Ed,
is poetry—step up and

step to—collapse
stone walls and

breathe through
your horns!

AS POETRY STALKS YOU. . .

Wop-bop-a-loo-mop alop-bom-bom
—Little Richard

To be initially uncertain, or only as certain completely submerged desert lizards can swim through sand to escape some surged predator known, not seen, but sensing you to catch and ever so slowly devour, almost as ion with ion, as glass dissolving in water (it eventually does)—to remember as you attempt to sing: keep your vowels close, and your consonants closer: Wop-bop-a-loo-mop alop-bom-bom.

TO YOU, READER

Did you really think
you wouldn't have to pause
and savor silence before
and after these words?

And after such silence
(as your eyes lift from the page)
won't you need to become
what you have to say?

John Levy

next to the big cemetery's parking lot
it's too quiet in the florist shop
no one in the humid space flowers

finally spring
shows its head its neck its
torso-deep greens

playing with matches the
forsythia
next to the grey library wall

standing on a flowering cliff
over the sea decades ago
now falls off

WE ARE ALL MADE OF STARS

We have distant signs based on a Chinese horoscope. Also, your Jupiter is almost in Leo... But in which position was Jupiter when we met? Virgo? Libra?

insomnia
the silence
of stars

SLOVENIJA

Leaving Kobarid is never easy to me. The peaceful atmosphere of this place is addictive: many things all around seem to emphasize this particularity.

crossing the border
a nightingale sings
new melodies

TO FRANCE

Someone has committed suicide on the railway between Liege and Lille.
We must wait.

They tell me that's quite normal here.

[...]

In my head, still the last nightmare.

train across Belgium
after the nap

Lee Nash

a blackbird
on the factory eave
heaven's portal

a man
redoing his ponytail
thin spring

a splinter
from the new swing
explaining date rape

a stranger
is whistling
spring begins

bankruptcy
the busy industry
of wasps

birch sap
in a plastic cup
paper cut

chasing
my floaters
happiness

daphne
in a closed space
embracing mother

holiday snap
lilacs open
on a tourist's skirt

invalids' outing willows along the river

no sound
from our tween's cocoon
silkworms are sleeping

open fields
of rapeseed flowers
yellow patch

shift's over
evening shower in spring
on my face

thunder in spring
thirteen minutes
on my surge protector

we pass
the same row of daffodils
rekindled flame

Karma Tenzing Wangchuk

March 9, 2017

One of Us

Like a body
covered
by a shroud,

someone
asleep
on the dock

in a wet
mummy bag

this quiet,
foggy
morning

For Annette Rusicka

March 10, 2017

like a turtle,
carrying his home on his back--
the homeless man

March 16, 2017

A New Life

A new life
coming into being
inside her

how joyful
to be so borne,
to be born

beautiful
the mother, beautiful
her gift

may all beings
have happiness, and the causes
of happiness

For Z and M and All Their Relations

March 20, 2017

Six Words

written with chalk
on the blackboard
of a downtown
cafe's bathroom:

“Please
Help
Me
Find
My
Playce”

March 22, 2017

without wind
they wouldn't wave at us . . .
spring flowers

For Kenna

March 23, 2017

It Must Be Spring

These March winds
might be strong enough,

some days, to knock me over,
but this afternoon I'm floating

high above the ground,
so all they can do

is push me around a bit
like a cloud.

March 25, 2017

A Two-Fer

shelter nights--
even a bad cup of coffee
some consolation

*

It helps,
knowing someone out there
loves you--
long months of shelter life
can wear a body down.

On week till the shelter closes (April Fools Day, no joke).

March 28, 2017

old-age benefit--
I get to wave the bus down
with my cane

Did that this morning on Washington with the Number 2 as it was passing me by on its way to the Haller Fountain stop, and while I was hobbling along fast as I could 50 yards from there. Our bus drivers are pretty darn nice.

March 30, 2017

Just thinking
of her is a comfort--
someone I love
and want to care for
the rest of my life.

*

a fool monk
once upon a time,
now just a fool

(Front-page story in yesterday's Port Townsend & Jefferson County Leader on the shelter closing April Fools Day and reopening in about a week as a bare-bones year-round shelter. I'll be on board.)

April 1, 2017

the shelter closes--
tents, tarps, and sleeping bags
for the outcasts

I'm among the "chosen ones," selected to reside in the new, year-long shelter opening up in a week or 10 days. meanwhile, I'm housed with several others in an OlyCAP cabin site near the food bank, a good location and comfortable. But many brothers and sisters are now camping out. And it was raining this morning. No April Fool.

April 4, 2017

Delicious

Was paid twenty bucks
for some poems printed
in a local news tabloid,
plan to spend it on tea
one afternoon this week,
a frivolous expenditure,
I suppose, when you're
as otherwise broke as
I am, but the friend I'm
having tea with is dear,
the tea room warm and
cozy, and the tea? . . .

Delicious.

April 6, 2017

that moment . . .

when you try
to clean
your glasses

and you
discover

you're not
wearing them

April 8, 2017

The Door

a drab day
the sky
the bay
the shore

and me
till she
steps through
the door

April 14, 2017

rolling and tumbling--
my clothes in the washer,
and my silly life

Prompted by today's "Daily Issa," a haiku by Kobayashi Issa translated by David Lanoue. Also by doing laundry yesterday at Mom's Laundromat, thanks to a voucher from OlyCAP.

<https://www.olycap.org/>

delightfully the beans
roll and tumble...
a cold night

1816

.おもしろう豆の転る夜寒哉
omoshirou mame no korogaru yozamu kana

<http://haikuguy.com/issa/>

johannes s. h. bjerg

Poems on watching Bela Tarr's and László Krasznahorkai's 'Damnation'

Digte om at se Bela Tarrs og László Krasznahorkais 'Damnation'

at the beginning and end of the world rain

ved verdens begyndelse og ende regn

:

one foot and the other on you go

den ene fod og den anden videre går du

:

wet floors what's left of Eastern Europe

våde gulve dét der er tilbage af Østeuropa

:

you could be like that: a dripping tap

du ku' være sådan: en dryppende hane

:

in the noise of rain wild dogs chase past Titanic Bar where she sings

i støjen af regn jager vilde hunde forbi Titanic Bar hvor hun synger

:

a de-tuned piano blends in with the wallpaper of loss

et forstemt klaver falder i eet med tabets tapet

:

the fog in your lungs in your mind and the Old Testament thrown at you

tågen i dine lunger i dit sind og Det Gamle Testamente smidt efter dig

:

the man with the broken hands and the accordeon locked in Purgatory

manden med de ødelagte hænder og harmonikaen låst inde i Skærsilden

:

only room for shattered windows and long ballads in the old empire

kun plads til smadrede vinduer og lange ballader i det gamle kejserdømme

:

the town in the puddles more like that

byen i pytterne mere som dén

:

(is it like that? the empire survives in cheap plum brandy?)

(er det sådan det er? kejserdømmet overlever i billig blommesnaps?)

:

dance to forget the fog lingers

dans for at glemme tågen bliver hængende

:

at times your language gets wordy
then you can leave it
in the sea fog

til tider bliver dit sprog ordrigt
så kan du efterlade det
i havgusen

:

if
it's a good
melody

it can take
being repeated

over and over

hvis
det' en god
melodi

kan den tåle
at blive gentaget

igen og igen

:

don't mind
the rain on the floor

it's your heritage

tag dig ikke af
regnen på gulvet

det er din arv

:

Hungarian melancholia

everything
can be tinned

ungarsk melankoli

alt
kan puttes på dåse

:

dispassionate sex coal wagons go by her eyes still empty

sex uden passion kulvogne kører forbi hendes øjne stadig tomme

:

still empty
(or empty again)

her eyes that see him
squash a pickled
cucumber

stadig tomme
(eller tomme igen)

hendes øjne der ser ham
mase en syltet
agurk

:

the size of the fog the size of it all paralyzed

størrelsen af tågen størrelsen af alting paralyseret

:

does it make sense to speak at all? The water in the bath remains black

giver det overhovedet mening at tale? Vandet i badekarret forbliver sort

:

inside her
there's everything
he thinks
he needs

she doesn't want it

inde i hende
er der alt
han tror
han har brug for

hun vil ikke ha' det

:

between showers dogs enter his heart

mellem byger trænger hunde ind i hans hjerte

:

part coal part rain and fog the fabric of a nation's mind

dels kul dels regn og tåge stoffet der udgør en nations sind

:

it's a men
tality breaking off
the filter of a ciggy

det' en men
talitet at brække filteret
af en smøg

Eufemia Griffo

warm day
grandma knits
wool scarf again

sea...
we're like the waves
just passing by

coming home...
from the windowsill
smell of mint

dandelions...
I see spring every year
time to go

bansha tea
a firefly swims
into green river

wind...
the branches hesitate
to embrace the flowers

white plum blossoms
the spring and the snow
the same color

spring equinox
the sun and the moon
dance together

rural cross-road
the bleat of a goat
It shows me the way

herons' flight...
the reeds of marsh
shaken by the wind

goodbye...
also the leaves whisper
farewell

Hansha Teki

Enunciations

I

word-flesh
is this
bloom
the in-
carnation
of your yes-
terday

II

with the breath
of darkness
the word
becomes

III

dawn herald
the wordless prepares
its nest

IV

in the East
a still point escapes
its birth cry
the long wait of a falling hush
maid in silence
her eyes brighten
with a word

V

'fiat lux'
an empty nest blooms
full of grace
a yes word encircles the snake's hiss
luminous dawn
night's immensity
immanent now

VI

a call
quiet enough
to ignore
a womb entombing silence
am o
am as
am at
am en

VII

in pure water
a word incarnadine
footfall
by lamp light
the all fleshing out
its path

VIII

the sound of
a word barely conceived
utter sense of being
enunciating a 'yes'
bone by bone

IX

at this hour
when the word is yet
to be uttered, its breath
barely a whisper
when brooding wings
overshadow you
with a stillness, far beyond
any possible eavesdropping
when your waiting
rises to it,
enfolding
its mystery
when, for all time,
all waiting
comes down
to this:
a sublime silence
putting its roots down
into the earth of you
a cloud
of unknowing, now,
so irreversibly
your flesh

X

spring awakening—
a hyacinth overflows
night's immensity

Helen Buckingham

green city
cardboard
in the rain

river in a jar face staring back

worm moon no match for a mackerel sky

mackerel sky mirrored in the mudflats

fumbling for a firefly in the fog

dog moon
splashes
his bedside boots

another
bad tooth
box set

all change
pondering swatches
for the bunker

winter leaf-fall
seasons
buckle

leaving him without a word distant thunder

Adrian Bouter

speak no evil my mind a sax

on the slope
a group of oaks
inhabits the moon

evening
six fallen stars
in the foxhole

still the boulder speaks for ages

rugged lands
the stones the river
polished

Christina Sng

morning chill
finding them gone
breakfast untouched

volcanic country
again I ask myself
why and why

small closet
the comfort of sitting
in the dark

Sabine Miller

Variation on Celan

The sea that
looked at us,

the sea the ground

slaked in us.
I heard you call

ocean refuge.

The Fire Reached Down

To earth And was extinguished
“in a gesture of touching”
Where small things breathe
Where rocks take
root Where trees tap
water If we have that muscle
Subject to phases The moon
never leaves the sun, clouds, clods,
you The earth shines on the moon shines on

Between Heaven and Earth

Can you gaze at the cloth until the dye takes

Does it stain inward or outward from emptiness

Can sunlight be heard through the heart

Does it leave the body as a ring of air

Can the tide speak with mathematical precision

When you lie on the floor or ceiling, depending

Is there a chalky place where joy enters

Is that a lute playing, somewhere in the room

Johnny Baranski

Baha'i temple
the firefly's path
of light

wedding sari
her husband gets lost
in the folds

LeRoy Gorman

clouded moon
Junebugs loop & bang
the solar lights

a shooting star
the long & short
of desire

fall viewing
ornamental grasses
shush us in

Taurids die
then Mother
darker now

toy train
the farm boy fills the engine
with dirt

David Read

my fingers
dimple her thighs
light rain

Marta Chocilowska

old pear tree
blooms in a concrete desert
there was a village

black dress
on my mother's bed
white lilies

Maria Laura Valente

(Three from the color scale)

meal for one –
your blue toothbrush
I never threw out

gray day –
my mother calls me
mother

black horizons –
in a void gaze
all that remains

Angiola Inglese

nuvole
gonfie di tramontana
buste di plastica

clouds
swollen of the north wind
plastic bags

ripostiglio -
un vecchio cardigan
dietro la porta

storeroom -
an old cardigan
behind the door

fermata del tram-
scende da una nuvola
l'arcobaleno

tram stop-
descended from a cloud
the Rainbow

*fiori di glicine -
sul cancello in collina
quanti boccioli*

wisteria flowers -
on the hill gate
many buds

*persiane chiuse-
sono fioriti gli iris
fra l'erba alta*

closed shutters
iris flowers
in the high grass

*vista sul porto
nel volo d'un gabbiano
fiore d'agave*

agave flower
in the flight of a gull
harbor view

Margherita Petriccione

pink tufts
at the hairdresser's —
it's spring

mother eyes
beyond wisteria blooms
the scooter's echo

in burned forest
the daffodil's perfume —
two moments

Angela Giordano

old farmhouse —
the cuckoo clock
the cuckoo mocks

a beggar —
the dog bowl
full of rain

over the wall —
the scent of roses
salt for the moon

commuter
the first polishing
of the pavement steps

video call —
on grandma's hair
a red flower

light rain
on dry manure —
flowers bloom

clouds in the hills
the bells
stretch out

Elisa Allo

unexpected —
scent of primroses
in the fog

peach flowers -
kids at school are
much more distracted

reawakening -
a lantern flies softly
in the wind

after Memorial Day -
Anne's diary
back in a drawer

drowsy city...
a bee buzzes alone
on the pinwheels

March wind
the mood of my son
promises rain

Ed. note: Visit Elisa Allo at her [tanzaku](#).

Michael H. Lester

I squeeze the snapdragon - she sings Hallelujah

W. Brian Hall

he gave me a book . . .
the smell of paper mill
on his slicker

sea touched with sun . . .
a garden of fleeting
silver flowers

Tom Montag

The color of
bone, the red-tail's

breast. His eyes
the color of death.

Morning, and the river
overflows. The sun
lights a thousand eyes.

Let this water sing.

ENLIGHTENMENT

Hold the stone
to your ear.

Wait to hear
of wisdom.

WATER

outlasts the mountain.
Ice breaks stone.

Everything is lost
but time's motion.

YOUR GOD

Your God is a spider.
The beauty of the world

is dew on its web
as the sun comes up.

You sing your praises,
caught. Something is
coming.

Something comes for all
of us.

WHAT DO STARS

know of fear?
What do I know

of the emptiness
among atoms?

The pointing finger
becomes the moon.

From there to
the farthest star

only hope's breath
and dark matter.

The great clock
re-sets itself.

NIGHT AGAIN

Around the fire
the eyes of flame.

Who am I to
sing of stars?

Lucia Cardillo

*Stelle e lucciole
frantumano ora il buio
In riva al lago*

by the lake
now in the darkness
little fireflies

*Curvi nel vento
Tenere spighe verdi
e fiori d'erba*

kissed by wind
tender green spikes
and grass flowers

*Profuma agosto
La lavanda a testa in giù
ad asciugare*

summer perfumes -
lavender's bundles upside-down
to dry

*Un vecchio e un gatto
sonnecchiano sull'uscio
Ultimo sole*

an old man and a cat
doze on the door
last sun

*Spente le luci
sui tetti delle case
silenzio e stelle*

lights off
stars and silence
on the rooftops

*Giovane madre
Così la terra germoglia
a primavera*

young mother ...
as earth blooms
in spring

*Luci dell'alba
Volti segnati e stanchi
i pescatori*

lights of dawn
wrinkled faces and tired
fishermen

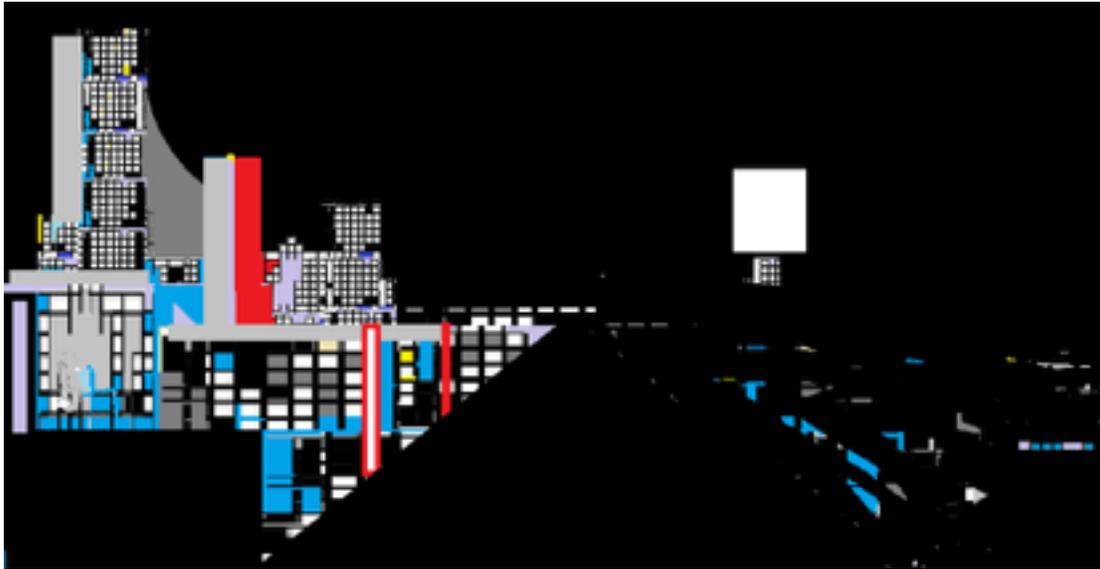
*Brezza leggera
Un fiore di ciliegio
vola da solo*

light breeze
one flower of cherry
flies alone

*Indecisione
non si dà pace un'ape
tra rose in boccio*

shilly-shally ...
a bee up and down
among roses in bloom

Jack Galmitz and Fotis Begetis



— *FB*

I remember a bridge
that spanned the bay
close to where I lived-
the bridge that a schoolmate
(climbed along the catwalk)
and leaped into the bay rocks
and was instantly killed.

It was where I fished.
One winter night I went
in my overcoat to think.
Ice covered the ground
and the incoming waves
were frozen in their crest.

It was bright
from the lights of the bridge
and the small houses
at the fringe.

With my scarf across my face
I looked like an explorer
looking for something that lived.

— *JG*

Tim Gardiner

wood bank
my son sees the snowdrops
before I do

Antonio Mangiameli

light wind —
a cherry blossom
goes towards the lake

Sean Burn

honeysuckle time (for avril & family). 1'20". 2016 c.e.

on honeysuckle time so we are
not the bindings of clocks
but berry, vine, late-flowering

late flower

poetry film at <https://vimeo.com/190031271>

fireflight (for dr heather clyne) 1'25" 2016 c.e.

sparks arc up
the fireflight
ceilidh firing nights

sparks are

poetry film at <https://vimeo.com/190013922>

[From the poet's jessie kesson literary fellowship 2016, moniack mhor - scotlands writing centre - both were prior to the jessie kesson 100 ceilidh, abriachan, october 2016. Go [here](#) to view all Sean's work on Vimeo.]

Mark Terrill

April Poem

A new bottle of Baron Otard cognac;
the new reprint of Malcom Lowry's
Selected Poems; three different cats
on three different windowsills
monitoring the spring dusk with
feline intensity. Uta on the couch
engrossed in her book about ants.
These things define you before you
even know who you are.
Nights without numbers,
days without names, the newsreel
of reality unrolling in the void;
who is it that keeps trying to be "me"?

Heaven & Earth at War

Emily Dickinson—
barely out of the womb—
already the dark meanings
are closing in around her.

It isn't long before
she's firing back her own—
toward what she reckons
to be the source.

Heaven & earth at war—
Emily caught in the crossfire—
an existential sentinel
in a thin white dress.

Idiot Savant

In a courtyard of fading nobility
or in a factory lunchroom—
on a barstool or a rough-hewn pew
in the church of unraveling memory—
under a tree of knowledge or in a
shit-stinking barn—
you learn to yield to perfection
and to embrace contingency.

Eye to eye with an animal—
no language in common and yet
nothing is missing—
while the beasts hunt other beasts
in the light that shines at night.
From which moment on
do all other moments
suddenly become subordinate?

Same Difference

By the time you get finished
thinking about the differences—
going back & forth from one
to the other, comparing—
they're already the same again.

The laws of chance
won't touch you,
won't leave you alone—
you never know
which way the dice will fall.

Pyrrhic Poem

In my dream I was an asshole,
but I was the main asshole.

Autobahn Poem

Two wind-thrust
skittering autumn leaves
chasing each other across
the internal-combustion-
roaring-metallic-
thundering autobahn
afraid of nothing.

Godzilla vs. Ratiocination

Riding the bullet train from Tokyo to Kyoto
on the Tokaido Shinkansen line—
Mount Fuji the only fixed point
in this 285 kilometers-per-hour blur
through which I am being efficiently hurled
with my skull-hammering-beer-sake-plum-liqueur-
kamikaze-hangover of Godzilla-like magnitudes.

I glance down at my ticket and flash fortuitously
on Tokyo being an anagram of Kyoto—
or is Kyoto an anagram of Tokyo?
Or has the age-old causality-dilemma
of the chicken versus the egg now become
some kind of baffling Zen-koan-feedback-loop
in the toxic slur of my thoughts?

I look up at resplendent Mount Fuji again,
as though the answer,
rising up like an ephemeral wisp of volcanic steam,
might be waiting there with all its
refulgent dispensation. And it is.
Mind trying to make a mountain
out of a handful of rice.

Being and Nothingness Redux

The body awakens the mind.
The mind is like an X-ray of a bird;
the wings are so fragile and thin
that the X-rays pass through
the fan-like filigree of feathers
without registering an image,
so that only darkness appears.
That darkness is also a lightness,
the lightness that allows birds to fly.

The mind awakens the body.
The body is like an X-ray of a church;
the church is so brick-thick-solid
that the X-rays bounce back
and becloud the eyes of the viewer,
the same viewer who is trying to
unlearn the blinding difference
between darkness and lightness,
between being and its opposite.

