

otata 22



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otata 22 (October 2017)

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<https://otatablog.wordpress.com>

otatahaiku@gmail.com

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otata's bookshelf —

[John Perlman, *Gathering the Backyard Seeds*](#)

TOKONOMA

at noon i went back to the circle in the field and drew more pictures. have developed a new interest in filling up the page. after making some spirals in different colors in varying relations to each other, i fill up the <background> — not really a background because the whole work is two-dimensional — with other shapes and with black lines (for example) which join the forms. whole page becomes a unit this way, the field of interrelated <energies>: the eye moves from one center to another in search of its meaning, a meaning inherent in the elements themselves: the meaning of a blue squiggle set between and at a certain distance from a red squiggle and a yellow squiggle. the meaning is in the color and the movement of the line and in its relation to other groups of lines. the mind organizes them (as a patient does in a rorschach test) to its own kind of unity: a unity the artist planned or felt and the observer slowly may (in some form and to some degree) rediscover. perhaps these drawings are mandalas, too. disorganized mind trying to reorganize itself (around formal principles of unity). there is a satisfaction in making them and, for me, in seeing them even again and again.

—

i also drew some representational pictures, the first i've done in years, and i've never done them often. one of a rock, and one of a small branch, with twigs, that have fallen to the ground. some satisfaction in this work, too; but it, so far, feels less <creative> & interesting to me than the others.

looking at the squiggles and their surroundings i'm simply pleased and ready to do more

looking at the branches (none too well done, anyway) i'm at least just a little embarrassed

—

i look at the branch again (am not displeased)

—

we are: people, branches, and the earth, all involved in making something, making it freely, making it creatively. no one is obliged to make it in the same way as others do, or as others have done. no one is obliged not to make in these (traditional) ways either. freedom is somewhere between these two (artificial) obligations. we are free to make, and to rearrange with grace and skill what is being made in us. the life that lives in us. we are not automatons, not even automatons of the spirit. we collaborate (with grace & skill) with whatever good spirit lives in us.

John Levy

as a child
the screen doors
summer and green leaves and lake
through the wire grid
framing them in a way I loved

winter meadow
brittle blades
erect around footprints

UR SPEED

the sign on the freeway said, probably
not alluding to the ancient Sumerian city

somebody random
who isn't
somebody random

the hummingbird points a lengthy
orange
beak at little more than a city

when my late father
and my late mother
enter my present poems
I pause
(though you can't hear it)
as if I were standing up
in front of my assembled
selves
not asking rhetorically Why
I think we're gathered here
but instead
requesting a moment of
silence
for us to
sense their presence

Water Pistols

On the walk (promenade?) in La
Jolla two small boys carry green
and orange plastic guns, toting

them comfortably and pointing them
at each other as irrelevant passers-by
dodge them. The boys' parents don't

speak to the boys for the five
minutes I follow them down to the
cove, where they descend

to swim. The smaller
of the two is more eager to shoot
a brother. It is a

pleasure to point
even an empty threat
and watch the brother who

plays along once
down on the sand as he clutches
his chest, falls backwards. These

boys with bright plastic
weapons
seem accustomed to parental

silences, the father
in a muscle shirt and the
mother walking ahead of all of them.

Written with La Jolla in Mind

She pronounces
recess as
resauce, although
everything

else she says sounds

like itself. The sea
sounds
like many selves
at recess, a

perpetual

recess

Red All Over

I remember being asked
"What's black and white
and red all over?"
I had no answer. "A
newspaper," the grown-up
told me. I was about five. I knew, then,

that the real newspapers
were hidden. I pictured
those front pages, with their black-and-white
photos of bloody people (the blood
the only red) who'd just
been killed. I knew it. I thought stacks

of these papers were kept in closed cupboards
in every home, maybe in bathrooms
because the bathroom was the one place
grown-ups were always alone. I didn't wonder
why a grown-up asked the question. That
didn't matter. The secret had been revealed.

Hercules, by Pablo Picasso

In this 1890 penciled drawing, Hercules holds, in his left hand, a club no larger than a small cucumber. Picasso

was nine years old when he drew this, based on a sculpture, encouraged by his father

to make "real" drawings. This is the earliest to survive. The arm holding the club is

rendered twice (one in front and partly inside the other). Neither the child nor the father felt it necessary

to erase

or maybe one did and one didn't or there was silence and no discussion, only the sound of pencil on paper, two bodies

breathing.

Chris Poundwhite

on quiet days a mood can approach like a tentative deer,
scattered by the slightest disturbance

trying not
to startle

the deer
in my thought

once here
you cannot touch it
only sit with it

if it wants
to be touched
then it
will touch
you

& you may disappear

Lucia Cardillo

it's morning —
rain knocks to the window
with one hundred fingers

*è già mattino —
a pioggia bussa ai vetri con
cento dita*

hot summer —
finally the rain
on the bindweed

*torrida estate — finalmente
la pioggia sul convolvolo*

deep night —
without appearing one owl
hoots to the moon

*notte profonda — senza
mostrarsi un gufo urla alla
luna*

the summer's end —
cool grains of sand
in my book

*fine estate —
freddi grani di sabbia nel
mio libro*

the green fades —
I don't know if I'm ready
for this autumn

*scolora il verde —non so se
sono pronta per
quest'autunno*

Lisa Espenmiller

in my ear
her voice
the tea cold

stop sign
beneath her shoe
the red leaf

Antonio Mangiameli

fever -
the bitter taste
of the tangerine

shadow line
among shadows -
a dry branch

Peter Newton

whispering
its tattered green
the Luna's lifespan

the steady thrum of dusk tuning into insects

creation myth
up through the dried iris stalk
the colors of fall

sifting through
the sag of the screen
summer's end

Mark Young

A hubric note on the music of J.S.Bach

Unless
we are all
Gods

then
this is not

Loaded. Dais
Tocsin. Shock.
Moss. Destruction.
Empty. Fret.

It is raining
when we land.

My inbox fills up
with dolphins.

erasmused

In the kingdom of
the blond(e), the un-

dyed (wo)man is
considered kinky.

Rodgering Hammerstein

The hills are
alive with the
sound of muskrats.

song

I start
with the
the of
thee. The
e later.

questions, always questions

Who will I be-
queath my
dental floss to?

Jule Styne tune,

Sammy Cahn lyrics, sung by Sinatra. Saturday night (is the loneliest night of the week). Such social change since 1944, no-one now dances, cheek to cheek, have not done, many years since, early teens, last dance, even then, way out, on the.

Full moon, frogs, flying foxes.

Elmedin Kadric

you dandelion you

at sea
his ashes

the waves
a kind
of phoenix

my
calling

it
driftwood

but outdawning stars

all the. rows
with watery eyes

it's
one
thing

be
ing

as
an

ex
am
ple

in
aut
umn

Sonam Chhoki

When the rain goddess visits (Monsoon notes)

1.

A closeness in the early morning air, the threat of a long, stifling day. Dust-bleached roofs shimmer in the heat haze. In the heart of the valley a deep hush, a holding of breath. Parley in the sky: the Thunder Dragon* roars hurling bolts of fire. Swiftly gathering pace the wind tosses cypress heads on the slope. Sheets of rain blur the hills. The river bubbles and sparkles again.

petrichor
as if in a rush of recall
pale-footed warblers duet

*Thunder Dragon: (Dzongkha: Druk) is mythical being, who appeared to the founder of the Bhutanese state, Zhabd-rung Nga-wang Nam-gyel, prophesying that his tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, Druk-pa Kar-gyu would be established in the country. During storms, it is believed the Thunder Dragon lobs its bolts to subdue forces hostile to the teachings of the Buddha. This is celebrated in exorcism rituals. Bhutan gets its name Druk-Yul from Thunder Dragon, which features on the national flag.

2.

A crow fledging clatters out of the blue pine heights. Shaken by the power of its own wings it lets out raspy caws and flails about. Caught in the warm updraft of a summer dawn its cries rise and fall over lime-green paddy terrace.

straining through
udders of cloud
monsoon sun

3.

All week clouds hang over the peaks. Is this a shroud of shame as another bridge is washed away and roads crumble and disappear in landslips? A new monitoring system reveals strains of e.coli in the local river.

mid-summer rite
incense of mist smoking
in the blue pine grove

Beyond the threshold

I want to remap the summer night sky.
Emblazon your name on the red heart of Antares,
Ball fists at ascending Orion
Challenge him to redraw my destiny with his sword.
I want the Big Dipper to scoop
a hole in the firmament
Fill it with the grief of our unplanned parting.

Diabolic possibility of dreams

Raw silk curtains swirl from the pane-less window. Past the unhinged door, mica
whiteness of night-blooming jasmine. The dark yields outline of your face. I reach
out to touch you. A garbled voice calls your name. You retreat in waves of light.

anniversary
fog drifts in and out
of moulting trees

Painting memories

Of all the things that late summer this comes back to me. Shaft of sunlight on the threshing floor, a broom resting by the door. The only sound is the rhythmic thud of the water wheel.

dusk wood
scattering the leaves
a monal hen disappears

alone
watching the Perseids
prayer beads forgotten

Elisa Allo

pumpkin flowers
Summer walks away
with the empty basket

*fiori di zucca
l'estate se ne va
col cesto vuoto*

amazed children ...
the leaves whisper
Autumn tales

*bimbi stupiti...
le foglie sussurrano
storie d'autunno*

leaves sway
in light breeze -
the shadow bows

*foglie ondeggiano
nella brezza leggera -
s'inchina l'ombra*

looking at the sky
on the sunglasses
moonsickle

*guardando il cielo
sugli occhiali da sole
falce di luna*

undertow...
little stones rolling
again and again

*risacca...
pietruzze rotolano
ancora e ancora*

under the stars
reading one page
then another

*sotto le stelle
leggendo una pagina
poi un'altra*

a street vendor
luck's bracelets
bathed by the sea

*un ambulante
braccialetti della fortuna
bagnati dal mare*

the sky clears
my baby's hand
on my cheek

*il cielo schiarisce
la mano del mio bimbo
sulla mia guancia*

Joseph Salvatore Aversano

the shade of distant Samos the sea's

the sea!
with all of the other
seas seen

the stars blown into magnolias

Dedication to Ground

ground no longer
steady the clouds
still pass

ground no longer
steady a bee
flies to a flower

ground no longer
steady I
lay a hand upon it

ground no longer
steady I
step

The Aegean and the Aegean World in the Age of Today's Morning Glories

for where no one knows
the ferry times

an old man breaks
into song

in a scale descending
as a leaf falls:

Days, nights
Days, nights
Days

Artemision

both worlds
exhaling
with mud algae skin
a pool for amphibians
where the altar was is

Angela Giordano

Deep quiet
I collected the stars
in my eyes

*Profonda quiete
Ho raccolto le stelle
nel mio sguardo*

Dusk
The shadow of the crows in flight
on sunflowers

*All'imbrunire
L'ombra dei corvi in volo
sui girasoli*

Deserted beach
The song of the sea remains
in the shell

*Spiaggia deserta
Resta il canto del mare
nella conchiglia*

On the other side
They mingle with the sky
new irises

*Sull'altra sponda
Si confondono col cielo
giovani iris*

A storm
The rainbow closed
in a puddle

Un temporale
L'arcobaleno chiuso
in una pozza

Tom Montag

DEVIL'S TOWER

1

How the world
loves the world.

2

All things
above us,
all things
below.

Shoved, lifted,
the mercies
of God.

3

This thrust
where earth

reaches
for sky.

We are all
born again.

4

No God here
but rock

telling us
all is shadow.

5

Holy moment.
A small bird

I cannot see.
The great rock

which holds me.

6

Those who climb
the rock
claim nothing.

The rock
claims everything.

7

Wind catcher.
Dreams. Trees

and rock
and rock's

great silence.

8

Magpie
wins for us.

The rock
wins for wind

and water.
Sky must

find its
own way.

9

Cicadas
as big as
the sky.

The big
rock even
bigger than.

10

Touch this,
the rock says.
I touch the sun.

You cannot
let go. Everything
you are you are.

11

Some say
God lives here.

God says rock.

The silence
rings with it.

12

Grandfather watches
from the top of the ridge

and what he says
is good-bye, good-bye.

13

Holiness,
the circle.

The rock
above us,

compass
and sky.

14

Every rock
an altar.

Every direction
the way back home.

15

Holiness follows.

Alegria Imperial

brain waves

Is light an aberration? How does a cloud palette wash away petals into waves? Gulls cry over nothing we see.

The elderly next door hands me a wedge of marble cake. See how many holes you could bore into it, she says. Your head would be a good place. I take bites instead, and start to bloat.

The violets begin to regress into little girls--petulant and furious over a grub that showed off its plastic body contortions. I want my doll to crawl, says one of them.

When does the brain turn autocrat?

more fragile than chimes
Nan's breathing

Dave Read

Sea Dogs

cracked lips,
salted tongues; land
becomes a myth

skin is tight,
pinched. not one drop
of water to drink

into a trough,
I empty a bucket
of yesterday's shit

on the mast,
the English seagull
traveling with us

with a bucket of
seawater, I mop seawater
off the deck

coughing up
the taste of raw fish;
another wave

what I imagine
fails me; ghosts collapse
into fog

the sun darkens
the sky and sea: descending
below deck

a rush of words
the river flows
through fish

twelve cups of water
everyday; she rests the pail
on her head

desert heat ...
an aardvark tongues
extinction

Marietta McGregor

Hortus botanicus

glasshouse
the see-through
of them

victoria regia a queen lies in state

over now
room beneath
the Bodhi tree

Kuan Yin sheltered by ficus

offering
fertility rites
of beanpoles

medicinal seeds they always claimed

epiphyte
the unknown weight
of trunks

Apical dominance

'Watch me', you say, and shin up 'through the guts' as you call it. Pressed hard against rough bark sticky-brown with exudate. Appearing, triumphant, at the apex, the big pine's tip.

clutching sky
a shower of needles
in my hair

Laughing and bouncing, sun-struck. Like the crazy man I think you are. Then swinging in great arcs, the old timber groaning under you. Swinging and slithering from branch-tip to branch-tip, lower and lower until you let go, drop and stumble towards me.

handmaiden
at the pyramid's
dusty base

Bluewater classic

The yachts are tiny scudding triangles so far away they may as well be in Melbourne. We're on the Hobart Domain, an English-style park with views of the River Derwent and the annual sailing regatta. My mother has spread a simple picnic on a seersucker cloth. My father is with us that day, at least that's what I want to remember. His figure shimmers in my mind like a mis-tuned cathode-ray tube. I look towards the yachts then back at him, but sun-dazzle on the water means I don't see anything at all.

sea-rounded quartz
the unknown end
of a dream

witch's broom
one white feather
in the pitch pine

garden escape
mignonettes run
to seed

ex-libris
years overdue
mortgagee sale

derelict church
the clasped hands
of an angel

fish trap
a creek mends
its banks

summer meadow
the skewbald
upside-down

the river
leaving its curve
billabong

tidal inlet
stingrays stroke
an eddy

Gary Eaton

the secret life
of a saucer of milk
new moon

Margherita Petriccione

winter garden
my mother's pink powder
without perfume

*Giardino d'inverno —
la cipria rosa di mia madre
senza profumo*

Vivaldi's Spring —
the crescendo of
a baby's cry

*Primavera di Vivaldi —
in crescendo
il pianto del bambino*

down to the sea —
a look from
the chained dog

*discesa a mare —
dal cane incatenato
uno sguardo*

diaphanous moon
in a summer dawn —
pink dove

*luna diafana
In un'alba di estate —
colomba rosa*

Mark Terrill

A Rising Up

A rising up, a stepping forward,
another doorway accommodating our pas-
sage.

We see the horizon edged with skeletal trees,
smell wood-smoke in the autumnal air.

No masters travelling the roads today,
no clouds carving their initials in the void.

We come to clarity as to a mirror;
someone always there looking back at us.

Bill Cooper

solar eclipse
a speck of water lettuce
on the frog's eye

Eufemia Griffo

veiled stars
losing the way
in August sky

Etruscan tombs
the shadows of olive trees protect
eternal sleep

*tombe etrusche
le ombre degli ulivi proteggono
il sonno eterno*

moon
draws shadows on the walls
of old cottages

*Luna
disegna ombre sui muri
di vecchi casolari*

Patrick Sweeney

ice flowers
when we used to say the same thing
at the same time

cold-hammered stars...
in her shabby coat Dorothy Day
spits tongues of fire

three teaspoon sparrow
the high theology
of fall

gone to fetch his grand son
he lets the boy be a butterfly
all the way home

autumn dusk
remembering to cut her sandwich
on the diagonal

johannes s. h. bjerg

ouch
ay
av!

*before
and after
the killing*

I break
my silence

grass

in several
tongues

*remains
grass*

ouch
ay
av

*efter
drabene -*

jeg bryder
min tavshed

græs

på flere
tungemål

*forbliver
græs*

speak
or don't

behind
the painting

you'll
be swallowed

with the black
shiny cross

by the silence
of the land

dead
spiders

•

tal
eller ti

bag maleriet

du
sluges

*med det sorte
skinnende kors*

af landets
stilhed

*døde
edderkopper*

one stone
on top
of another

build a hut

that's
prayer

*or a head
from it*

too

*summer
grass*

•

én sten
ovenpå
en anden

byg en hytte

det er
også

*eller et hoved
af det*

bøn

sommergræs

so
you might not
like it

*uneven floors
uneven nights*

but you
breathe it
anyway

*you wrap a string
round a stone*

birch pollen

*and discover
your centre*

•

så
du kan måske ikke
lide dem

*ujævne gulve
ujævne nætter*

men du
indånder dem
alligevel

*du vikler en snor
om en sten*

birkepollen

*og opdager
dit centrum*

while waiting

falling

for history
to repeat
itself

another prerogative

allergy
meds

for an Earthling

•

i venten på

at falde

at historien
skal gentage
sig

endnu et prærogativ

allergimedisin

for en Jordbo

the ocean
in your eyes

*one hand
shelters the other*

why is
it empty

*and the minute
flame*

of sails?

that's mine

•

havet
i dine øjne

*én hand
beskytter den anden*

hvorfor
er det tomt

og den lille flamme

for sejl?

der er min

silence

bending a finger

my standing
and sitting down
again

and stretching it

gets ignored
by the rain

I age

•

stilhed

*mens jeg
bøjer en finger*

jeg rejser mig
og sætter mig
igen

og strækker den

ignoreret
af regnen

ældes jeg

what's there
to know?

*just as I gather
strength enough
to say:*

the old
chair

*this is like that
that is like this*

in a new
place

it changes

•

hvad er der
at vide?

*ligesom jeg
får samlet kræfter
til at sige:*

den gamle
stol

*denne er som det dér
det dér er som denne her*

på et nyt
sted

forandres den/det

there's a
red thread here

Adam's navel

from the snowdrop
to the Dog Star

did that emerge

going through
my Pineal gland

after the fall?

•

der er en
rød tråd her

Adams nævle

fra vintergækken
til Hundestjernen

kom den frem

og gennem
min Koglekirtel

efter faldet?

pushing

dying

without
a body

*words
outside*

Western
gale

silence

•

skubber

døende

uden
en krop

*ordene
uden for*

vestenvinden

stilheden

Adrian Bouter

o!ive

windfall
dipping my bread
in golden blood

lonely on a bus
down the road
poor boys waving

out in the open light bearing you

equilibrium -
closing the door
on a dark room

and the sun rises obedience

nearly fall
a pheasant
runs for cover

forest I turn to wood

Jennifer Hambrick

summer heat
the 2 a.m. taste
of this screen

Jack Galmitz

She was old

and the dog's leash
was long and leather.
The malamute in human years
looked even older.
She bore out
as they got closer.
When I reached them
she stopped and I patted
her head, rubbed under her chin
and along her mouth
that was dribbling.
I took a few steps
and when I turned around
I saw that she was bounding
a little.
That's all it takes:
to be loved for a minute.

All the streets are wet

because it rained.
Couldn't be stopped.
Don't worry. It will dry.
Every time.
Forget the plans you made.
Go out and do something different.
Hurry and you'll be fine.
I'll do the same
just in case you're lonely.
Killing time is like trophy hunting.
Little good will come of it.
Make something instead;
not something that's already been done.
Open yourself to the sky.
Pound your feet on the ground.
Quit believing in a real.
Resist that crime.
Stop being good or bad.
Take your time.
Ultimately you'll create something new.
Very proud you'll be.
Why not?
Xylophones will be played for you.
You'll be a new technician.
Zero excuses will be needed.

Ronald Scully

her dresser drawer
full of rocks

saved from the tracks

acorn

becoming
heart-
ache

oak tree
never
free from
overarching
shadows

butterfly

extrudes
rainbows
flight

our
reasons
why

seventeen raindrops on the red maple leaf tonight who's counting ku

wrap text

merge

center

align left

snowman's bones

briquette

skull

eyes'-

howled

soc ket

inside

out

ghost money

sand
dollar
swallowed
un-
spoken

Charon
obol
stolen

lily pad

displacement weight
of the word:

swan

between
a
rock

and

a
hard
place

Christina Sng

forty below
the cold hand
on my bones

night stars
beyond the clouds
the rest of everything

swing swaying
on a bare bone branch
chemotherapy

cold streets
a curled up man
unmoving

echoing halls
the layered darkness
of every day people

