Otata 23 (November, 2017)
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otata’s bookshelf

Giselle Maya, Fox Wind
I stared at her in astonishment. It was as if she were descending, before my very eyes, into the depths of an underworld I had never imagined; like someone fallen in a well, from which the only sounds to be heard were curses and a desperate gasping for breath. By the time she’d finished she was barely whispering, “Yes, there are such moments, moments when a technician wouldn’t have had to lift a finger, when no helicopter was needed. The world of living, growing things could dance all by itself.” Lord God, I thought. What had that one Faustian moment in her life been like, when she cried out for time to stop because the trees were swirling all around her? I shall never know, but it is there, somewhere in her past.

Once, after she’d been introduced to the tape recorder in our apartment and told that you could play back a text or a piece of music, she talked about what it would be like if someone’s life were recorded and put on tape to be rewound, stopped and replayed at will. She said she’d accept her own life the way it was, or rather, as it would be up to her death, but with the proviso that she might rewind it to any point she chose. I didn’t dare ask where she would stop the machine, and still less, why there. I didn’t think she’d tell me anyway.

— Magda Szabó, The Door
Translated by Lex Rix
Write about the unknown as if you never knew.

silence  
the brown thrasher mimics  
the Mystery

God  
is  
patient  
the  
egret  
moves

"Somewhere someone’s  
writing about what i’m  
writing about & knows it."

the penny which  
no one picks-up  
put penny beside it

Haiku is neither the movement toward an end nor is it a movement toward beginning. It is, however, a movement capable of carrying us along just as we are & with everything that is.
Maria Laura Valente

alba d’inverno –
nel primo sorso di té
tutta la luce

winter dawn –
in the first sip of tea
the first sip of light

alba che irrompe –
la capinera smorza
l’ultima stella

breaking dawn –
a blackcap blows out
the last star
ultimo bagno –
nel sapore del mare
tracce d’autunno

last swim -
a taste of autumn
in each wave

alba di nebbia -
invisibili i peschi
stanno fiorendo

misty dawn —
invisible peach trees
blossom
record arm needle-
diamond beak of a hawk
in twilight circles

sun bathing
pygmy rattler drops
from a palm tree
a chipmunk wobbles
between trash cans -
fermented apples

flute notes drop
a rotted tree trunk
carols
last leaves helping grandma lift her mother off the green commode

underpinning she finds the jade bead i lost

all the colors of mother’s hair growing up

late night train another woman’s child in my lap
mother's cashmere gloves
i wear now
second winter

wind chimes
my red sarong
blowing dry

a year since i saw the old man and his lurcher darkening heath

it's warmth still
the dead vole
i bury
withered field
sharing my apple
with both crows

old grave
seed falling
from the bird-feeder
ripen pumpkins —
the colors of sunset
in the garden
sea view
shutters
thunder

match to zip sheet lightning

supernovas
come and go
morning star
brink of night where the big beasts hurl brickbats

sunday roast blood on my tongue

moving in gift bruised peaches

pill low
teeth marks
physic garden
leaving with
a list of ills

guy fawkes night an earsplitting rainbow

fireworks pretty bombs all in a row

Catherine wheel it’s what she would have wanted

Black Friday
curtains
a kid’s
   game
   the red
   orange
   yellow
   leaf
   wins

seedling I say
   to the someday sunflower
   it’s a long way up
the flower seller
in the changing light
returns to her island

pinging off the tin
pecans sound bigger
than they are

horse-drawn their love early on
a bout with gravity
the surf’s
fancy footwork

native islander
the sing-song
in his voice

day lily stalks
our first fire
fed by summer
autumnal
I’ve been called
worse

back to our little game
renaming
the stars

skywriter . . .
  his words turning
  into clouds
where were you
when the lights went out,
firefly?

long after the guacamole
avocado plant
in bloom

for the
coyote too
Wolf Moon
Eufemia Griffo

my mother’s last trip
so cold
this autumn dusk
Jack Galmitz

So little time left
I watch the sparrows flying
dipping and rising

Whatever I love
is mine
that mansion covered in vines

Back of the trailer
boys in a puddle
playing soldier

Three men on a roof
stop what they are doing
to pledge allegiance
thistle
tapping lightly
butterfly

lizard sky scent of pine and sea

humming
birds in bloom
all my broken heart
waiting
inside a pomegranate

rise the ancient fort cobble moon

quick the blue
eye of cicada
razor song
its night voice
response in stones

one in the sea two in the sky equals yellow
greening meadow...
a wood warbler sings
his grandfather’s song

knothole
the explosion
that is the sun

brisk
spring
morn
ing
after
my
making
the
bones
left
over
spring clouds…
a mannequin shaped
nothing like me

less than 500 sq. in. of orange…
late monarch

replacing
it
more
gently

than
I
picked
it
up

sea
star
melancholy...
a distracted bee
forgets the flower

malinconia...
un’ape distratta
dimentica il fiore

in the clearing
the sweet thuds of chestnuts
— childhood echoes

nella radura
i dolci tonfi dei ricci
— echì d’infanzia
peony...
the wet caress
of thunderstorm

della peonia
la carezza bagnata
di temporale

silent fountain —
only the crickets’ chirp
in the sultry air

fontana muta —
solo il cri-cri dei grilli
nell’aria afosa

reading Lorca
...a tangerine’s droplet
on the page

leggendo Lorca
— goccia di mandarino
sulla pagina
the pied wings
of a dead butterfly
— moved by the wind

le ali screziate
d’una farfalla morta
— mosse dal vento

the first grape...
a gecko peeks at me picking grapes

la prima uva...
un geco mi osserva scegliere gli acini
so much depends

upon the direction
you're coming
from
but

bicycles &
red wheel
barrows
always have the

right of way
even when
it's not /
raining

Mark Young
manifestly obvious

When asked what he & Engels were up to, Karl Marx replied: "We're writing the wrongs of the bourgeoisie."

The white cockatoo's song of love

Self-inflated & perched on the branch above the object of his desire, he comes across not as bird but as a puffer fish with the air escaping.
The Prize

A moment when two or more lines of thought that have taken long independent journeys arrive coherent & incandescent in the same singular space.

Formal de Hyde

When is a sonnet? Where are there sunspots on the moon? What will the river rise? Why, on a street of high-class jewellers, couldn’t she buy an autographed copy of *The Life of Caesar*? How are the antelope lonely?
Ma Caw

In the background, the empty vessel that is Céline Dion parrots the words of others with as much emotion as a cash register can generate.

The narrow road

as unlit piece
of s tone placed
on a h ill side
re counts t he t ravels
summer storm
the neighbors forget
their quarrel

*tempesta estiva –*
*i vicini scordano*
*la loro lite*

holding it between my teeth
then the sweetness
a grape

*lo tengo un po’*
*tra i denti, poi la dolcezza*
*un chicco d’uva*

in a little water
a snow-white lily
epilepsy

*in due dita d’acqua*
*un giglio bianchissimo –*
*epilessia*
[jottings]

china
blue on
white

boats
figures in a landscape

*

train platform
bald grackle
struts
across pavement

*

patch of lawn
beside
a bus stop
many small
white
mushrooms
Earthly

The word recurs.

Brief the pale end of day.

Susie stands at the window.

Cloud-covered sun.
Stephen Toft

aurumn wind
my father’s saw
sings to the trees

snow at night
you whistle
the strangest tune

spring breeze the song of the florist
feeling playful
on washing day
i become a ghost

autumn leaves
the colour of my
neighbour’s hens

deep winter...
snow fills the doctor’s
footprints

swimming
above the dam
the stars
(to my brother)

primo vagito —
la luna del raccolto
nei miei ricordi

the first crying —
in my memories
harvest moon

all’ombra
di una quercia
campane lontane

in the shadow
of an oak tree
distant bells
tsukimi*...
*moon-viewing or "contemplazione della luna piena d'autunno"

the tatami listens to
the moon song

orionidi...
desideri dispersi
nel firmamento

desires dispersed
in the firmament
autumn sky
once more I long
to speak crow
leaves fall —
on the branch an empty nest
in unstable balance

cadono foglie —
in bilico sul ramo
un nido vuoto

autumn light —
one big fly slams and slams
on glass window

luce d’autunno —
um moscone sui vetri
batte e ribatte
bone scan ...  
an aspen drops  
its leaves

morning fog  
we stagger into  
each other

open grave ...  
examining the depth  
of my shadow
floating upstream sunlight

cricket song ...
a fish ascends through moonlight

wild thistle
a patch of blood on his knee

autumn leaves
rust colours
my memory
foreign tour
the monument speaks
through the guide

moving closer
to the old pipal tree--
I talk to myself
too late

“dead cells”, they say of hair, same thing about nails, 
skin, too, that sloughs off tempers, hurts, lusts, and regrets, 
which send the heart hurtling in Hades

caterwauling

flailing braided hair of nymphs, could they have been 
instruments of execution? and the mane of golden boys, pennants 
in the eyes of virgins… unbeknownst dripping of night

a prolonged moon

on hair that has found its own rights and freedom, denuded by 
tectonic eruptions spewing inner fire, deluded by the burst 
of spring that by the time it booms, a live head

thuds on a stone grate
firing off

1.

in the distance
a crow’s
sealed-in tweets

why even try
to sustain a vibrato
with a cicada

skinned birch
I once owned this house,
he says

2.

scouring dry ground
wind turns a soiled paper plate
belly up

molds
an unseen rot
in his heart

dead leaf racket
ricoeheting on steps
to resurrection day

3.

lisping stars a million
supplications for scraps
in flood tides

partitioned winds
read vortex where
a mollusk opens

used to be muddied blue
today the wishing well
silent dark
cackling

cackling
the measured widths
we shrink into
talking into the darkness
late crickets
heaving up a molehill

a cackle
of office meniscus

summer drizzle
a wet stone growing
an ear

in a sonogram
frog song

lollipops in the basket
some promises
we swap

war of the fishes
in a pitted clam shell stilled
FIRST THING

the window
& the mirror

morning light

DISSENTERS' BURIAL GROUND,
PONSHARDEN

The cracked language of stones
all askew and fractured,
moss-edged, ivy-clung,
on the edge of land & town.

We try not to disturb kaddish,
tread carefully around the dead.
Digte er pumpguns
rammer ofrenes sjæle
genplever dem

poems are pumpguns
hit their victims in the soul
reviving them

På gadehjørnet:
En lille dreng på 5 år
ser på dameben

on the street corner:
a little boy of 5
studies ladies' legs

Din morgenhilsen
Labestiften på spejlet
formet som et kys

your morning greeting
lipstick on the mirror
shaped as a kiss
På vej mod lyset
tilfaldige skeletter
med mennesker i

on their way to the light
random skeletons
with people in them

To svaner på træk
elskov på fire vinger
Grim æling på vej

two swans in the sky
live show on four wings
ugly duckling on the way

Giv mig din varme
lykken mellem to arme
byd mig op til dans

give me your heat
happiness between two arms
let’s dance
Dolce è la notte di Istanbul.
Dolce
Come pannocchia di granturco
Si sgrana
Al lume di lanterna
Che incede sul molo
Nella brezza del Marmara
A Kumkapi.
Dolci
Gli sguardi delle fanciulle di Fatih
Che scherzano del nulla
Sbirciando l'infinito.
E dolce è la luna sovrana
Che danza sul Bosforo
Per la trama azzurrina
Del ponte alto
Verso l'Asia
Dolce di profumi di sandalo
E cannella.

Sweet is the night of Istanbul.
sweet
like maize
graining
in candle light
reflecting on the pier
in the Marmara breeze
at Kumkapi.
Sweet
the glances of the young Fatih girls
(joking on nothing) who joke on nothing
glancing at infinity
and sweet is the sovereign moon
that dances on Bosphorus
through the light blue weft
of the high bridge
towards Asia
sweet sandalwood
and cinnamon scents.
I am the one
who is not one
in a room of seniors
I am the one
who is one
sui campi d’ottobre
la nube d’oro dei moscerini
- letame fresco

on the October fields
the golden cloud of the gnats
- fresh manure

spilla di turchesi –
quelle lugubri campane
di settembre

turquoise brooch –
those gloomy bells
in September
primi germogli
sul mandorlo
gatto in calore

first sprouts
on the almond tree
cat in heat

colombe —
su piastrelle in cotto
pane raffermo

doves —
on terracotta tiles
stale bread
profumo di Datura -
questa sera è leggero
il peso del silenzio

Datura scent -
tonight the silence weight
is light

sette e mezza -
tra un treno e un altro
parole di vapore

half past seven -
between a train and other
steam words