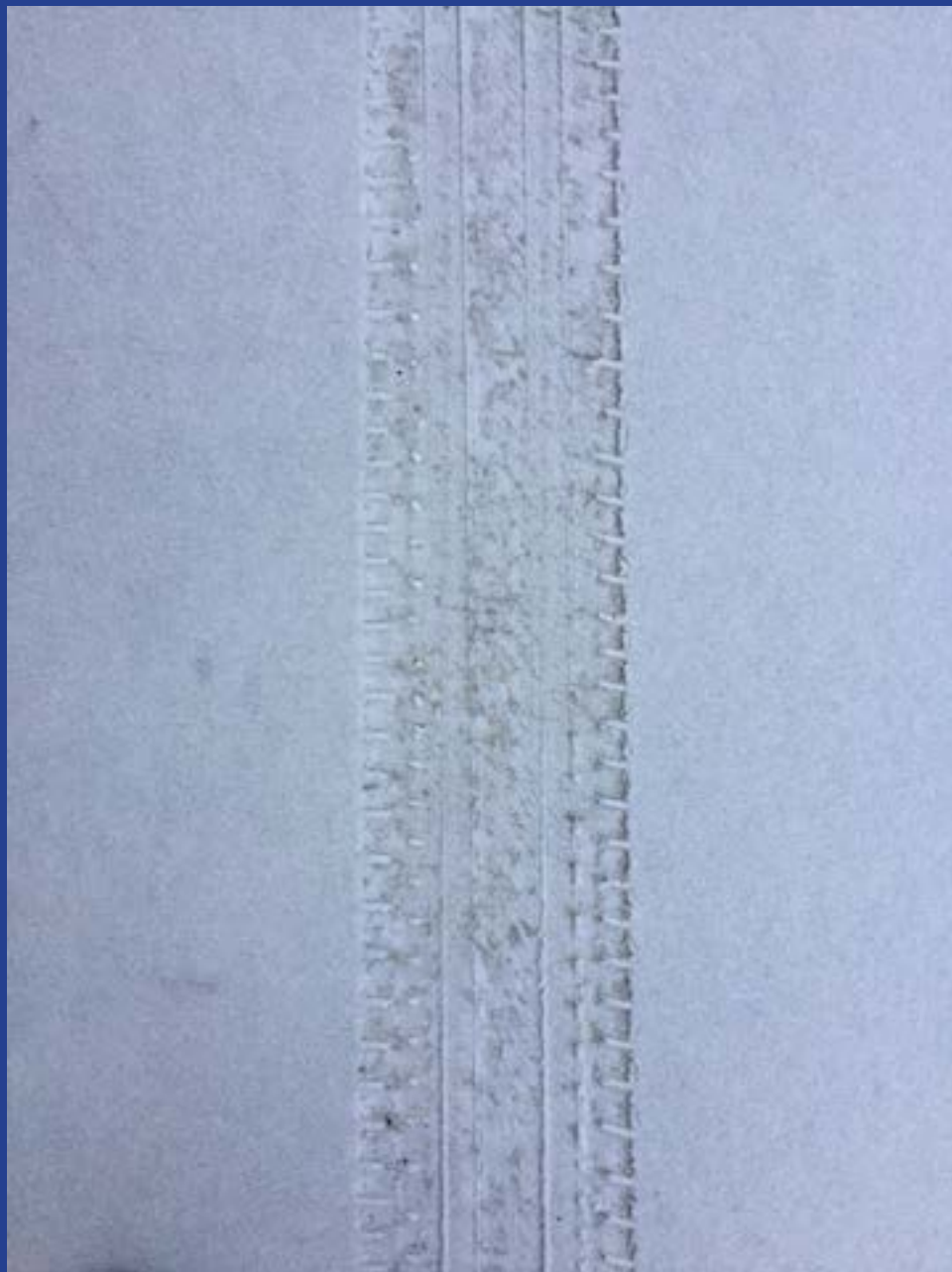


# otata 25

(January, 2018)





# otata 25

(January, 2018)

otata 25

(January, 2018)

Copyright ©2018 by the contributors.

<https://otatablog.wordpress.com>

[otatahaiku@gmail.com](mailto:otatahaiku@gmail.com)

## CONTENTS

<i>Tokonoma</i> : Italo Calvino	6
Paul Miller	7
Mark Young	11
Margherita Petriccione	16
Agnes Eva Savich	17
Antonio Mangiameli	19
Sonam Chhoki	20
John Levy	26
Tigz De Palma	37
Stefano d'Andrea	38
Tom Montag	40
Aditya Bahl	43
Lucia Cardillo	47
David J Kelly	48
Elmedin Kadrin	49
David Read	51
Eufemia Griffo	54
Debbie Strange	55
Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy	57
Angela Giordano	59
Patrick Sweeney	60
Christina Sng	62
Alessandra Delle Fratte	63
Adrian Bouter	65
Donna Fleischer	66
Clayton Beach	69

## Tokonoma

In Ponge the world takes the form of the most humble, secondary, and asymmetrical things and that word is what serves to make us aware of the infinite variety of these irregular, minutely complicated forms.

There are those who hold that the word is the way of attaining the substance of the world, the final, unique, and absolute substance. Rather than representing this substance, the word identifies itself with it (so that it is wrong to call the word merely a means to an end): there is the word that knows only itself, and no other knowledge of the world is possible. There are others who regard the use of the word as an unceasing pursuit of things, an approach not to their substance but to their infinite variety, touching on their inexhaustibly multiform surface. As Hoffmansthal said: "Depth is hidden. Where? On the surface." And Wittgenstein went even further than this: "For what is hidden... is of no interest to us."

I would not be so drastic. I think we are always searching for something hidden or merely potential or hypothetical, following its traces whenever they appear on the surface. I think our basic mental processes have come down to us through every period of history, ever since the times of our Paleolithic forefathers, who were hunters and gatherers. The word connects the visible trace with the invisible thing, the absent thing, the thing that is desired or feared, like a frail emergency bridge flung over an abyss.

— Italo Calvino, from *Exactitude*,  
in *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*,  
trans. Patrick Creagh

*Paul Miller*

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

*Mark Young*

**THE FROG *FICCIONE***

The flowers arrive  
laughing at my oilskin cape –  
vernal equinox.

*Mizu no Oto (1694-1744)*

## **DIY**

So that not only  
the eye but the

ear is engaged,  
a soundtrack

will be added to  
this piece, maybe

something you  
wrote yourself.

## **A NIGHT AT THE OPERA**

In the evening  
he would play

hillbilly songs  
on a banjo. What

was worse, we  
sang along.

## PRELUDE

Begin with "melody inside." The implications of it. The song within. Within the poem, within silence, even within a song. It's what we listen out for, what we strive to hear.

Otherwise. Notes. Mundanities. Pick up the dry cleaning. Put out the cat.

### *persuaded zygotes*

In a deterministic world

people think it's a no-  
brainer that the world's  
best nonfiction books are

morally responsible for  
the addiction of street  
kids to aerosol solvents.

*Idolatry exists—*

in absentia—  
    as a chip in  
    the corner  
of a cat's eye.

*diphthong*

Arabesques, & foliate patterns.

The dancer bends forward.

The secret is all in the shoes.

They are often painted yellow or orange.

Jimmy Choo is supposed to be a man of peace.

*trip*

He passed the journey looking for marsupials, saw only the one, a diesel locomotive pulling a load of cement wagons.

*Margherita Petriccione*

withered rose —  
the first hot sun  
on my knees



*Agnes Eva Savich*

all the sun in a late white butterfly

short hike with grandma creaky trees

grandmother's grave my marble face

geese heading south marriage

s n o w h e r e

seven year itch hummingbird feeder

keeping the world turning ants

*Antonio Mangiameli*

pathway —

me and my shadow

## *Sonam Chhoki*

### ***The darkness within***

Can you dream for someone who is too terrified to sleep? The night oppresses her with its layer by layer of thickening silence. Her secret demon comes alive in a dance of guilt and shame. Even the full moon glints with insinuation.

*deep blue iris ...  
the swollen smoothness  
of her broken face*

### ***The name of things***

Eyes dim with hopelessness he competes with the strays to pick the bins and gutters.

*his t-shirt logo:  
My Daddy is My Superman  
the homeless youth*

## *Talisman of grief*

The path to the cave shrine meanders up the red clay hill. Through low-lying clouds, a shaft of light fans out. Guru's blessings! I thought as a child each time I saw such light. On the anniversary of my mother's death I come to propitiate our ancestral deities.

The old monk said, 'No red offerings, only flowers and fruits.'

In the main sanctum a four-armed Mahakala is chiselled on a protruding granite face. Encircled in a vermillion wreath of flames, he stands astride a lotus, his indigo feet pinning down an elephant. On his head is a crown of skulls and his third eye is ablaze with primordial wisdom. I remember a passage from the Bar-do Teachings:

***'Between the first and second day you will see the light of Vairocana, the white light of the Mirror-like Wisdom. Due to past negative karma you will be frightened and want to escape this wisdom light and follow the light from lower realms....'***

I place my offerings on the rocky ledge and pray that the torment of cancer has annulled my mother's bad karma and she has found her way through the bar-do. For an exquisite, brief moment a presence brushes me.

Bronze bells ring out in the cold mountain air. A line of pilgrims winds its way up the slope.

*silence in the woods . . .  
the transparent tears  
of pine resin*

## *Lest I forget*

You would have tut-tutted that I leave the veranda lights on to scan the December night sky for the blue fire of Orion's sword and the red glow of Antares. In this hour of stillness the pain of your absence hurls itself at me like a beast of the underworld.

*horned moon  
somewhere in the night  
a fruit falls*

## *Crossing the line*

I no longer accuse Shin-je, the guardian of death, of stealing our life story, berate the geometric serenity of the Big Dipper or refuse to make offerings at the ancestral shrine. There's nothing left to desecrate. Something in me has freed itself and fallen away.

*what I couldn't say . . .  
first anemone  
in the spring rain*

### *Gift of the ancestors*

There where the goats drowse  
on the light-filled slope  
and where the wind  
kindles the piney air of the firs  
She roams alone  
her voice limning chants  
of the Dark Mother.

Clothed in skeins of lichen  
she adorns her hair  
with deep blue gentians  
that grow in her head.

Crescent moon  
for her bowl  
She stirs  
the elixir of hope.

## ***Fragments of an unfinished conversation***

There was harmony in our solitude. We were not afraid of where silence might take us. Even now I can hear you turn the pages as if you were opening a door to another landscape. And you did . . . you made landfall in a world beyond this.

*how to cross  
the bridge of the bar-do . . .  
a blue thrush whistles in the rain*

## ***six years on***

the things I still want to say . . .  
now leaving it  
to the poplars you used to visit  
writhing in the winter wind



dusk deepening cotoneaster hedge

waking from a dream  
tired wings of a moth  
at the rain-blurred window

*John Levy*

*The Noise Family*

for Philip Rowland

(1)

I ask my new dental hygienist if  
anyone in her family writes poetry.  
No. She says she had to write haiku

in grade school in Guam. I reply they  
kill poetry in schools and she says  
they kill everything in schools.

(2)

Rebecca Elson's mother and father  
never threw away the bird nests  
Rebecca collected as a child, nor  
the pebbles, tree bark, shells  
and small animal bones  
that Rebecca labeled  
before she began writing poems

(3)

the page is being

prepared for the poem

sweep

each of its

four corners then

unscrew the dead light bulb

(4)

silence, the heir of the noise family

(5)

the poem's half-yes

lasts

firefly-like

(6)

Googled “self help books” on August 10, 2014, and got 315,000,000 results in 0.32 seconds.

In “30 Self-Help Books That Permanently Changed My Life,” Jane lists those 30 and at the top of her blog she (assuming this is her) points at Big Ben and the caption says

My confidence is now the size of Big Ben. BOO-YA.

It’s night and Big Ben is all

lit up.

(7)

My new iPhone rings. I don’t even glance at the number, assuming my wife is calling. “Hello.” “Hello,” a man says, “who is this?” “John.” “John?” “Yes.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, I got the wrong abortion clinic. I’m sorry. Sorry, bro.”  
“That’s okay.”

a butterfly's  
flight  
to a flower's  
much slower  
flight  
in  
our  
time

*Three First Lines by Donald Finkel and  
Three First Lines by Ted Berrigan*

You will remember nothing.  
The sweetgum stands ankle deep in a pool of leaves,  
Arcadio says that tree's called Tree.

It is a very great thing  
Every day when the sun comes up  
Huge collapsed Mountain Enters from Stage Right,

**raIN SOaked**

Bible on concrete steps in an alley  
on the top step open to the middle

black dog in a red sweater  
at the end of a white leash  
led — by a tall figure in a wet  
yellow hat and raincoat — up the  
dark sidewalk towards a front door

### *Postcard to My Cousin*

Dear Betsy,

This postcard has a black-and-white photo of a tree that reminds me of the giant trees in front of your childhood home. Now we're in our mid-60s. If I would've imagined, back then, talking to you when we were this old I would've pictured ancient people like those in illustrated fairy tales, white-haired, feeble, stooped, wrinkled. I wouldn't have imagined the real old people I saw as being what we could become because our old age would've seemed too far away and make-believe. Here we are in 2017 and I'm thinking of those trees and you and my memories stretch above the child I recall in every direction.

Love,  
John

on break, diamond cutters under umbrellas  
watch drops lengthen from the green leaves



## ***Letter to Don Cole***

Dear Don,

I am about to read  
various translations of Homer's  
Odyssey and I wish  
you'd painted — or would — not  
*illustrations*, but visions

of some of the best  
scenes. I can almost see  
the Cyclops you'd paint,  
his one eye

still in his massive  
face (what color eye  
would you give? Blue?  
Green?) and  
Cyclops blinded, his horrible  
socket above a grimace or  
howl. Then your

Sirens. I imagine  
standing before them in your  
studio entranced, suddenly  
alone with them — as I imagine it  
you are not in the room —  
and I make myself  
look away, turn to

your Circe. Perhaps  
she'd be surrounded by the pigs  
who'd been men or maybe you'd  
do a portrait of her and Odysseus, choosing  
the moment when she comes at him  
swinging a sword. I know I'd

hold my breath  
looking at what you'd create —  
as with the paintings and  
collages you've already  
brought to life. This

Thursday morning you're  
most likely on Vashon Island.  
I'm in Tucson, as usual, and  
Trump is in China basking  
in Chinese flattery like  
the wise leader Trump  
will never be. In my  
study it's quiet, Leslie

is off at Safeway buying  
supplies for us while I'm  
supplying these words  
to both you and me at the same time.  
I'd like to think  
that as I write  
you're painting something  
I couldn't guess, something even  
you wouldn't have known until

you make it  
exist. Easy for me to  
think myself into your studio —  
I've been there so often. That first  
time with Ed Cain when I first  
met you and Ed helped you install  
the studio windows while I

helped myself  
to the paintings you'd  
transported  
to Vashon Island from New York.  
I should bring in Joan now — who was  
and is there with you — Joan

who creates  
marvel after marvel with her  
art. Perhaps the two of you at

this moment are in the two halves  
of your studio working

or you could be at the gym or  
in Seattle, but the good thing  
is knowing you're "out there," as  
they say, out there  
and in  
my head, vivid, active,  
moving. Ezra Pound begins his  
Cantos, in Canto I, with his  
translation of lines from the Odyssey:

And then went down to the ship,  
Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea, and  
We set up mast and sail on that swart ship,  
Bore sheep aboard her, and our bodies also  
Heavy with weeping, and winds from sternward  
Bore us out onward with bellying canvas. . .

I can imagine us, in your kitchen, reading  
this aloud, perhaps pausing  
at canvas while thinking (maybe  
thinking aloud?) of your own work  
on canvas, not beneath  
the "bellying" sails. The pieces of yours  
that hang in our house

take me out, onward — and  
back to you, too. The painting in our living  
room of the mountains, half-  
abstract and all  
crammed with presence and life — the collage  
in my study, wild and perfect. And

more, other spots  
in our home, vivid and  
right. And right now I have to  
go out into the world — an appointment  
to keep — and so will  
head out to the car, set tires  
to earthen driveway and go forth

into the godly world we share.  
I wave goodbye  
from this stanza  
and I wish you well.

# *Tigz De Palma*

this island  
box  
without lid

one hibiscus spilling sun over a concrete sky

maddening  
you persimmon  
you

## *Stefano d'Andrea*

*chiaro di luna  
sulle bianche betulle —  
notte di perla*

moonlight  
on white birches —  
pearly night

*i vecchi abeti  
nudi fino al ciuffo —  
tuoni lontani*

the old fir trees  
naked up to the spikes —  
distant thunder

*giovani geishe con piccoli ventagli*

— *farfalline blu*

geisha girls with small fans

— blue butterflies

*nella fiammata crepitante il rovo porge una mora*

in the crackling blaze the bramble proffers a blackberry

*Tom Montag*

from  
**NOTEBOOK: NEW MEXICO**  
January, 2016

*Along Highways 60/84*

Here they farm  
under a wide sky.

Here they wait  
for every rain.



*Highways 60/84, Mile Marker 374*

Where the wind  
    races grass, and  
        the grass is winning.

*Highways 60/84, Mile Marker 366*

Sky  
at the  
end of

the  
universe.

I have  
been there.

*Highways 60/84, Mile Marker 346*

Trickster plays  
his tricks again.

Hawk is  
not impressed.

*Highways 60/84, Mile Marker 340*

How much of this  
do you want?  
Trickster asks.

All of it, I say.

*Aditya Bahl*

poems from  
*since 1988*

some of the steel pillar shows thru parts of a skinny actress

BOULDERS

once her slow-lipped groan  
grown twice hard of hearing

ITALIC

do lilac lean a lil

tinnitus  
minus  
bison

incest in cents

OREO

or for  
halo is  
dude  
doleful

BOSOM

a boo  
thither  
concealed

POLIS  
enjoy your evening

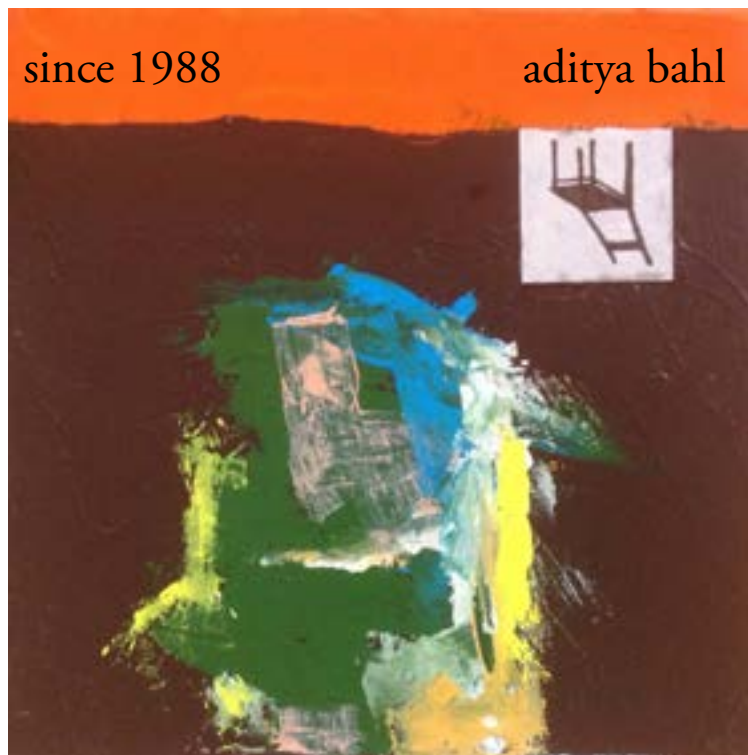
JEER

jesus to  
the ear, sorry  
to the eye

MARMALADE

for the simple tangible visible book

wanting to separate from the apron one mends one says I once twice



*[Link here to the ebook from delete press](#)*

## *Lucia Cardillo*

*inaspettato —  
nell'alba immobile  
un frullo d'ali*

unexpected —  
in the motionless dawn  
a flutter of wings

*rami ormai nudi —  
sperdute nella nebbia  
ombre d'inverno*

naked branches —  
the shadows of winter  
missing in the fog

*David J Kelly*

aspidistra before you could say it



*Elmedin Kadric*

more  
over

lark  
spur

o  
pen

a  
cro

on grounds  
of humility  
common snowdrops

trail  
a beige  
monarch

looks after the rain

there there winter wind

*David Read*

olive moon ...  
a bitter end  
to the opera

winter night ...  
my queen and I  
in check

tree house ...  
a rope ladder  
to the stars

autumn leaves ...  
wiping the blade  
on his jeans

litter through holes the size of magpie beaks

receding into the low tide turtles

a car folds  
into a pillar ...  
winter rain

oxygen bag ...  
the nurse maintains  
his breath

the head falls  
off the snowman  
new moon

## *Eufemia Griffo*

cold afternoon  
grabbing a cup of tea  
with both hands

winter sky  
a snowflake shines  
in a snowflake

*Debbie Strange*

brambles morph into resting stags morph into brambles

after the wildfires invisible sunspots visible

strung between a whale's bleached bones aurora

blue sky etched with gulls suspended animation

watersongs the differing frequencies of stones



# *Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy*

## ***Good for the Goose***

I am Tom  
the evil fellow  
that always loses  
to smart Jerry  
much to  
the  
amusement  
and approval  
of all ye lot.  
all those howls  
of glee and mirth  
as I get beaten to pulp.  
not one of you sees me  
for the poor moggy that is  
starved of its rightful prey  
like all those pets of yours  
allowed to merely watch  
the goldfish and lories  
and call them "brothers"  
while you set traps  
for those mice  
in your fields  
and barns.  
go kiss a cow and let it live instead

trip photos  
the slum dwellings  
picture-perfect

butter moon  
another child  
sleeps hungry

gift wrap  
tearing apart  
the silence

*Angela Giordano*

a new year  
in the refugee camp  
ancient spices

near the fire  
Grandma weaves the threads —  
melting snow

## *Patrick Sweeney*

where I touched the wing  
of the white butterfly  
hailstones bounce

two Hail Marys, one Our Father...  
in the center of my chest  
Earth's rotation

freezing rain  
the crow  
asks not

countenance of Gary Cooper  
the broken-footed  
parking lot crow

a feather  
the color of Montane grassland  
I wherefore the sky

*Christina Sng*

dragonflies  
at the playground  
parents hovering

stubborn macadamias  
my daughter's hands  
tightly clenched

finally the kick  
of her unborn child  
tenth pregnancy

# *Alessandra Delle Fratte*

*la notte e il nulla —  
si ferma anche il respiro  
dentro al silenzio*

night and nothingness —  
breath stops too  
in the silence

*invisibile —  
questa notte mi sento come il vento*

invisible —  
this night I'm like the wind

*ombre autunnali —  
di arabeschi dorati  
parlano i muri*

autumn shadows —  
the walls speak  
of golden arabesques

*di un melograno  
chicchi rossi assaporo —  
uno ad uno*

of a pomegranate  
I taste red grains —  
one by one



*Adrian Bouter*

blurry birthday...  
the cake she used  
to bake herself

singular the mute nightingale of your absence

entwined roots  
your God as mine  
as good —

*for Hanane*

*Donna Fleischer*

the nothing  
r e m a i n s   wind  
on the grass

finch topples  
the seeded dandelion's  
springy head

this day mama may  
get a bit of sun  
on her headstone

below ground floor —  
a clerk's office plant breaches  
the window sill

through tears  
a blue and white  
pinwheel

bubble kisses  
at the tidal break,  
little fishes

## *Mourning*

Leaving its post  
Becoming silence  
a once heard,

Clear hard  
Pristine  
Bell-  
ring

## *Passing Through*

University students make their way through the late morning. Ice the night before mutes this day world. Their crystalline green air of what remains between – these skipped steps among stopped tufts, a pair of stiff pines, and a grey stone bench.

*the whoosh  
of Li Po's snow-stained robe —  
a new year*

## *Clayton Beach*

arrivals and departures blue field entoptics

sheer lace veils her soft form evening star

dark sky murmurs the surf replies in foxfire

climbing vines toward some idea of knowledge

worn stone a lone ant traces the lemniscate

cool breeze all day without incident roadside yarrow

alone once more the sound of rain in f minor

pond ripples from the carp's tail pitch bend

lotus blossom the horsefly's daily ablutions

