

# otata 28

April 2018





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Translations of Franco Arminio by JM.

Other translations by the authors.

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otata's bookshelf

Joseph Salvatore Aversano, *When Izmir is the Sound of Silver*

## TOKONOMA

*Nous n'avons de rivage, en vérité,  
Ni toi ni moi.*

We have no shore, really,  
Neither you nor I.

— Guillevic  
(trans. John Montague)

## *Franco Arminio*

*Ho un amore sconfinato per la poesia.  
Cerco qualcosa in questo mondo  
che non è di questo mondo.  
Ho molta paura di morire.  
Ho poco rispetto per gli altri.  
La tristezza e la gioia  
arrivano e vanno via molto presto.  
Non ho una mente sociale.  
Non conosco il sentimento dell'amicizia,  
a meno che non sia arrampicata  
sugli ultimi scalini dell'universo.  
Dell'amore non so niente,  
amo molto ma non so come si ama.  
I paesi li spio, non so vivere in un paese,  
non sono mai stato dentro un bar  
col cuore in pace.  
Gli alberi comincio a capirli solo adesso.  
Gli animali li guardo da lontano,  
l'unica bestia di cui mi preoccupo sono io.*

I have an unbounded love of poetry.  
I'm looking for something in this world  
that isn't in this world.  
I'm very afraid of death.  
I have little respect for others.  
Sorrow and joy  
come and go so quickly.  
I don't have a social mind  
I don't know the feeling of friendship,  
unless it's climbing the final  
steps of the universe.  
I don't know a thing about love,  
I love a lot but don't know how to love.  
I spy out countries, I don't know how to live in a country  
I've never been in a bar  
with my heart at peace.  
Only now do I begin to understand trees.  
I watch animals from the distance,  
I'm the only beast that worries me.

*Fra poco saranno 58 anni di paura.  
Vivo nella casa in cui sono nato,  
sto qui con poco sonno  
e poco paese intorno:  
non esco per parlare  
esco per telefonare.  
Dell'Italia amo solo qualche residuo antico,  
amo le case abbandonate,  
le persone quando svelano un dolore  
acutissimo, un desiderio assurdo,  
un segreto.  
Sto spesso nella Rete  
che è insieme imbuto e squarcio,  
finestra e prigione.  
Ho due figli che cantano e suonano  
e non so se mi somigliano.  
Viaggio molto ma esco poco.  
Mia madre mi tiene ancora nel suo cuore.*

In a little while it will be 58 years of fear.  
I live in the house I was born in  
I'm here with little sleep  
and little land around me:  
I don't go out to talk,  
I go out to telephone.  
As for Italy, I only love some ancient remains,  
I love the abandoned houses,  
people when they reveal an acute  
sorrow, an absurd desire,  
a secret.  
I'm often on the web  
which is both funnel and gash  
window and prison.  
I have two children who sing and play music  
but I don't know if they resemble me.  
I travel much but go out little.  
My mother still loves me.

# *Frances Angela*

gritted  
the hill  
to her grave

yellow snow a homeless woman sweeping again

orange peel by an empty sleeping bag city underpass

winter sun  
all that's left  
of a dead swan

primroses on mother's cup drinking my tea

home town moonlight through the broken pane

winter moon  
every tree  
fills with crows

# *Mark Young*

## **COMPLINE**

R.E.M. in the background, in front  
of which trains, flooded rivers,  
the taste of a night filled to the brim  
with misplaced articles of faith.

## **SCENES FROM A POLICE PROCEDURAL #1**

The Mercedes hatch in  
front starts singing  
lieder. We all join hands,  
some more than others.

Then the lights go out,  
time gets away from  
us. Normal programming  
resumes immediately.

**ELISION**

the article the

a lifetime of words dependent on it

specificity

otherwise

one in a crowd

(p)article  
amongst many

**SWITCHING OVER / SWITCHING OFF**

come in from  
the garden

tea flavored  
with fresh-picked lemon

sink into the chair

Miles

[UNTITLED]

use:

used by

how

, which

or: maybe

Use

#### **THE CANDLES SHIMMER**

We all need some reinforcement.

Titles confer power of position.

The thunder sinks into a growl.

The results don't correlate.

#### **THE BLOOD-BRAIN BARRIER**

There is one person in  
the US/Canada named  
Will Foldi. I hope I can

make it with Willy the  
way things are. Feed-  
back is optional; many

transactions receive no  
feedback at all. Happy  
Thanksgiving to you also.

# *Tigz De Palma*

blossom  
as you would  
almond blossom

lamb and blood oranges at the market spring

a scarab spins  
the last sip  
dusk slips past

i defend you defend me blossoms

equinox the word falls and springs

## *Fabrizio Corselli*

birch leaves  
in the embrace of frost —  
winter heart

peach flowers  
in the reflection of dawn —  
pink paths

light sun —  
they dream of spring  
orchids

a pale iris  
under the starry sky —  
just picked

*Elmedin Kadric*

a bourbon  
on the rocks

on the house  
autumn rain

high  
chin

spoon  
bow

hard  
ship

may  
be

mid  
may

may  
fly

all day a ballpark  
away from a bed  
of tulips *Our Lady*  
*of the Flowers*

# *Jeannie Martin*

no  
on/off switch  
the Northern Lights

the lake  
too wide to swim  
Jupiter Rising

may I share  
in your reflection,  
narcissus flower?

# *Angela Giordano*

*l'ultima stella —  
del sole il primo raggio  
sopra la soglia*

the last star —  
the sun's first ray  
above the threshold

*lo smog nell'aria —  
uno sprazzo d'azzurro  
sulla panchina*

smog in the air —  
a flash of blue  
on the bench

*le note di un jazz  
dal vecchio grammofono —  
corvi sui fili*

jazz notes  
from the old gramophone —  
crows on the wires

*nebbia sottile —  
la luce dei lampioni  
sui pendolari*

thin fog —  
the light of the street lamps  
on commuters

*pale eoliche —  
il vento è catturato  
da grandi braccia*

wind turbines —  
the wind caught  
in big arms

*John Levy*

*Passage*

the waves have no page  
numbers

it would be a long book to swim through

to dive into

deep and full of life

equally full of death  
or fuller of death?

it all depends upon how you count

you don't count for much, one  
in a boat

or swimming

in time

on one planet

the moon coming up and going

the sun coming up and sinking

A spoon is a fork's dream of embrace.

snowfound  
floating my head

## *The Poet's Bed*

It is covered with books.  
Each night  
it is still

covered with books.  
She lifts each one  
off

when she's ready  
to sleep. She  
makes different

piles of the books  
on the floor  
near her bed.

It is hard to  
finish removing  
all of them

without opening  
at least one  
again. She didn't

write what she wanted  
to write  
again today. The books

stand on the floor  
like shoes  
she could almost wear

to get  
where she wants to go, which  
is always unknown

from the first word  
that starts a poem  
to another word and sound.

# *Eufemia Griffo*

bird song  
she hums  
her favourite tune

*lungo viaggio  
un colibrì ha vegliato  
sui miei sogni*

long trip  
a hummingbird has watched  
over my dreams

spring wind  
stars fall  
on the pillow

*Adrian Bouter*

crocuses  
the egg yolk  
spreads in the pan

moss on boulders  
time  
has a soft spot

# *Patrick Sweeney*

Such a small gallows  
for the divine  
the dogwood in the rain

Morning prayers  
the segmented loop  
in the inch worm's advance

Klieg-eyed  
after snow viewing  
I make a blue novena

Using 'Sunshiney' font  
the little girl confesses  
she's a cutter

Major Bowes  
has abandoned his gong  
butterflies snooze on Philcos

## *Mark Terrill*

### THE VERGE

That woman with the white hair  
in the red coat  
on the green bike  
pedaling along the canal  
against October's blaze of colors—

Did she just emerge  
from some Van Gogh painting  
or is she on the verge  
of heading back into one  
and taking me with her?

### THE KEY

You know that each step will take you closer  
to the end. You also know that each step  
could bring you closer to the beginning.  
You know this like the brittle truth that it is,  
which you carry with you like a pocketed key  
to some grim gray zoo in an abandoned city  
behind enemy lines in which exotic fur,  
panzer-like skin, and colorful feathers languish  
behind cold steel bars, all ears tuned in  
anticipation of the clicking of the rusty lock.

*Robert Christian*

*THE ENGLISH MASTER*

The cover is  
a lovely blue  
the crest is golden  
Stanley Cawthorne  
recommended you  
my Nonesuch Milton  
(1952)  
Thanks Stan for  
everything you gave me  
unacknowledged mostly

# *Maria Laura Valente*

*insomnia...*  
the sound of my steps  
fades away

still ocean —  
will I lose myself  
again?

snow on the highway...  
a childhood itch  
on my fingertips

winter soup —  
in each ladleful  
nostalgia

old book smell —  
outside the rain  
falls silent

the way  
he avoids my eyes...  
spring snow

*komorebi* —  
play of light and shadow  
within me

*Guliz Mutlu*

*Lake Times*

For Marylou and Kirk Mulhousen

*A path to Lake Eymir:*

a balbal  
in the wild  
shaman sunset

picking the purslane  
not mud  
but a rabbit hole

a sudden mist  
baby talking  
with the dogs

*At Lake Tuz:*

the bitter breaths  
a shared bread  
with a salt lake bird

sunrise over the lake  
a villager staring at  
the salt harvester

after the harvest  
the unknown sheep  
with pounds of fleece

salt burned smiles  
flamingos at the lake  
then the wildfire

*Mogan Lakeside:*

an afternoon lull  
nearby the reeds  
nap of a swan

a spring light  
a waggle dance  
with wildflower seeds

# *Marta Chociłowska*

ice boats  
gliding ahead  
wild geese

frost forecast  
magnolia buds  
flush pink

sunset  
a sunflower turns  
to the painter

*Jessica Malone Latham*

humility  
swaying  
redwoods

calla lily  
my secret on the tip  
of his tongue

Brazilian waxing pink hyacinths

# *Corrado Aiello*

*stato di pace –  
della pèsca che rotola  
sono il nòcciolo*

state of peace –  
of the rolling peach  
I'm the pit

# *Beverly Acuff Momoi*

cold snap everywhere verbal nouns and expletives

the four-note hook again winter moon

asthma attack stress cracks in the shifting ice

river ice shove the shore song of winter

sake the color of stars shedding inhibitions

in search of the strongest heart note barbed wire grass

typhoon suddenly the skirl of the wind machine

*Kala Ramesh*

five yards sari allover violets going wild

marshy land  
an orchestrated blackout  
of fireflies

I sink in layers of autumn deepening thought

the blossom's shadow a shadow of its morning glory

# *Jack Galmitz*

More snow  
& suddenly  
it's droll

The Netherlands  
why not  
here, too

My Valentine  
is 75

Easter Sunday —  
an old Chinese space station  
crashes in the city

# *Alegria Imperial*

## insomnia

*crawling on my neck  
incomplete nights  
half beads time devours*

*I blame the gist of all beginnings  
mere hedgerow of probabilities*

if water in the brain quenches one's thirst for gutter flame kindling sparks  
but salt-drips caught in a semicolon or evening moths the shape  
of injured clouds on a glass pane who can figure the rain's last phrase  
the staccato scratching of a rake thumbprints melting on a hollow voice  
a foghorn coughing out night's filaments no eyelid tight enough  
to contain in dolorous eyes when two suns on a frying pan collide or  
the labyrinth in my hand spirals into a word vortex mirror equations that  
skid on truths if reconfiguring molecular moons or in a squall how  
tightened wombs gag on dream boat schemes suppositions in puddles who  
the species that sits on a crown re-tracing cracked shells of hippocampus  
bullets a burst of imprisoned cells

*testing how far into the deep  
I can count star-blinks*

*in between moons  
nibbling into my stare*

*the tip of my nose a dragonfly  
washing into my cortex*

*a ghost chorus...my lips  
an old rose in a wrinkled shade*

# *Maria Teresa Sisti*

*la nevicata -  
un rumore di pale  
tutta la notte*

snowfall -  
a scrape of shovels  
all night long

*ultimo treno -  
sui binari ghiacciati  
solo silenzio*

last train —  
on the frozen tracks  
silence

# *Antonio Mangiameli*

*panni al sole —  
un gattino in strada  
graffia le ombre*

clothes hung-out —  
a kitten in the street  
scratches the shadows

*Christina Sng*

by all accounts  
I should be dead  
water bear

silent spring  
another tumor  
another day

correcting  
my imperfect pitch  
arrhythmia

# *Margherita Petriccione*

*strada interrotta -  
l'orologio rotto di mio padre*

interrupted road –  
my father's broken watch

*collina bruciata due volte —  
anche l'asfodelo è grigio*

twice-burned hill —  
even the asphodel  
is gray

Carpe diem —  
*splende nel sole invernale*  
*il cavolfiore*

*Carpe diem* —  
the cauliflower  
shining in winter sun

*sullo stagno*  
*silenzio di antiche mura -*  
*un'armonica*

on the pond  
silence of ancient walls —  
a harmonica

## *Lucia Cardillo*

*adolescenza ...  
non trattiene il cancello  
le nuove rose*

adolescence...  
the gate doesn't hold back  
the new roses

*cesoie sui rami ...  
l'asinello mastica  
la primavera*

shears at the branches...  
the donkey slowly chews  
the spring

## *Sonam Chhoki*

*Fed up with the rains until seeing yellow-eyed babblers bathing in the gutter.*

road closure  
finding a new route  
by the cranesbill slope

*Now the fields are green I go to the clinic with a little hope.*

building a nest  
in the lightning-struck tree  
what do the bees know

*We meet frequently by the Standing Gandhara Buddha at the Musée Guimet*

in dreams  
with stars from Orion's belt  
I make you a wreath

## THEY CAME TO CONQUER ...

*I have come to the craggy outpost on the Tibet-Bhutan border to honour my forebears. The spring wind has an edge of chill. I am filled with imaginings of a battle of long ago fuelled by a cache of childhood stories of the drama of that day:*

It is a spring day with cobalt blue sky.  
The peaks are aglow with the last snow and the sun streaks the ridge with splashes of gold.  
News has arrived of an invading force headed for the Land of Medicinal Herbs.  
The valley of our ancestors is the first upon which the invaders will burst with their cries of conquest.  
With no moment to lose and being no poltroon to hide or surrender  
Our forefathers of farmers, traders, monks and householders  
scramble together whatever tools and men they can summon.

The mountains resound with the grotesque sound of the approaching enemy.  
Phalanx after phalanx of Tibetan and Mongol warriors on foot and horses  
pour over the high passes like waves of death-bringing locusts.  
In this hour of terror our ancestors turn to the guardian-deity of the valley.  
Stirred by their fealty and valour, he opens his Third Eye  
and casts the mountainous terrain in the mould of the vast Brahmaputra Plain.  
The ridge appears as a shimmering, rippling horizon-less vista of endless green  
to the marauding hordes.  
They run and they gallop as if their feet and steeds have taken wings.  
Off the precipice and into the shadows of the cavern below they leap to their deaths.

*So they lie deep in another realm beyond their Land Of the Snow Lion.*

ghostly light  
a griffon vulture casts  
its slow shadow

low howl of wind  
a row of bare larches  
keeps vigil

pressing the silence  
of an ancient grief  
frozen lip of waterfall

