

Otata 2

February 2016



Fred Jeremy Seligson, Tom Montag, John Levy, Bob Arnold, Jim Kacian, Michelle Tennison, Jean Morris, Cherie Hunter Day, Philip Rowland, Helen Buckingham, Stanford M. Forrester, Hansha Teki, Johnny Baranski, Mara Rosolen, Johannes S.H. Berg, Gerry Loose.

In homage to Cid Corman and his *Origin*, this number and those to come begin with a —

tokonoma

Poetry calls for anonymity. It appeals, in short, to the each in all and the all in each. Its particularity must become yours. Autobiography is implicit in any one's work and may be taken for granted, but what has been realized and so set out as to be shared loses itself in the self that is found extended without end in song.

As the author has elsewhere put it:

If I have nothing to offer you in the face of death—in its stead—the ache

behind every ache, the instant man knows, I have no claim as poet. My song must sing into you a little moment, stay in you what presence can muster—of sense more than meaning, of love more than sense, of giving the life given one with the same fulness that brought each forth, each to each from each, nothing left but the life that is going on.

— Cid Corman

Statement

for Stead

Elizabeth Press, 1966

≡

Fred Jeremy Seligson—

When a good friend asks
what else
but sing out, "Yes."

≡

Tom Montag —

from Notebook: New Mexico

Along I-25

Afternoon, Levy, New Mexico.
Not the same as anywhere.

Approaching Santa Fe

Lovely sun
on the peaks. I can't hold my breath
long enough.

Approaching Los Alamos

Here we fly.

Who goes in

goes out.

Who touches

mountain

touches sky.

Leaving Los Alamos

The white sky,
these mountains —

even God goes blind.

Abiquiu

Rock,
and we seem small.

Cloud,
and we get wet.

Wind,
and now we fly.

≡

John Levy —

the kid chasing the peacock
at the zoo his mother in none
of the eyes

the mountain views the amoeba entertains

my late father, a little while after he re-
tired, pointed, laughing in his
closet, at cobwebs between his neckties

≡

Bob Arnold —

from
The Woodcutter Talks

Up In the Air

Well I'll be —
Finishing the ridge cap roofing job
An ant walks toward me

Breeze

who's that waving
to me when coming
out the door—

ferns

In The Garden

for a moment—
my steps
with a toad

Surgery

I just moved a curled up
woolly caterpillar from this
year's woodpile to next year's

Garbage

The ugliest house
on the road
has all the butterflies

Still

Snow in the
Yard into the
Woods even in
The trees but
Under simple
Plank swing
A square
Of grass

There There

Days of rain —
chasing the puking
cat around the house

Old Tale

When a child asks,
“When will it snow?”
It should begin

Jim Kacian —

forgetting the slow-motion crush of gravity

beyond journey and destination sweet potato pie

on a blue and white day a pale green future

finding she's home without words

living through just one of all kinds of time

Michelle Tennison —

before it vanishes from mind ghost orchid

like a moth to the
ghost orchid

unstuck sound
falling snow

if only cirrocumulus

if you search for me where butterflies go in the dark

the
quiet
alchemy
of deer

≡

Jean Morris —

Contre-Jour

against the light
a glass of rosé
and a paperback
whose cover flaunts
a rosy Bonnard nude



Cherie Hunter Day —

the garden in your mind for reference

cherry trees on the verge of confetti

YOU ARE HERE
the mineral layer
of wildfire ash

≡

Philip Rowland —

day moon
the plot of earth
between skyscrapers

measured for a burial:
the distance from
self to word

moonlit
something other
than other

after Reznikoff

the steel worker still himself upon the girder

knot in the sunlit floorboard undone by prayer

in the time it takes the temple bell

autumn leaves a scattering of moles on the monk's bald pate

Helen Buckingham —

new town
pain
remains

circus parade
characters from the ark
roll up in pairs

temple
down
trigeminal hell

Stanford M. Forrester —

stack of books
the Russian novel
cold to the touch

≡

Hansha Teki —

post mortem
a sanctuary lamp
on the time before

at first
there seemed to be
a never more

stooped low
to retrace the words
only I see

≡

Johnny Baranski —

strip search
in the prison yard
the sun has broken out

tossed in with the rest of us white collar convict

jailhouse window
the full moon
crucified

≡

Mara Rosolen —

Ehi, amico caro mio
dove sei più?
tu che ora sì
sapresti dirmi
dove incomincia il cielo.

O dear friend
where are you now
you who'd really know
how to tell me
where the sky begins

È successo.
Siamo innamorati ora
dello stesso mistero.

It's happened.
We've fallen in love now
with the same mystery.

Pianto dopo pianto.
Silenzi urla risate
che importa se intanto
i capelli diventano bianchi?

Cry after cry
silence shouting laughter
who cares if in the meantime
the hair turns white?

Rughe:
vedo la vita
passata su di me.
E non del tutto invano.

Wrinkles —
I see life's
passed over me.
And not wholly in vain.

Che fare più?
Stare al centro
e galleggiare nel mistero.

What more to do?
To be at the center
afloat in the mystery.

E adesso
fare amicizia
con l'inevitabile.

And now
to make friends
with the inevitable.

Il cammino verso il fallimento
oh, come è pieno di rivelazione.

The road to failure
o how full of revelations.

from Rivelazioni provvisorie
(Trans. jm with guidance from the author)

≡

Johannes S.H. Berg —

put your hand out in the rain alive

and when morning breaks a body made of paper

≡

Gerry Loose —

from Sweeney Albannach

I heard the cuckoo with no food in my stomach.

Malcolm MacLellan, Crofter, Grimnis, Benbenecula, as reported in Carmina
Gadelica

fragments 1-105

that fat spider hung
on translucence
then there was
only a great white
raggy winged moth
I caught it
in my hand but felt
pity
then

the dog it was
found my place
in heather

you count these
no worth
buttercup daisy thistle
the quadrated plants
rare words I found
but did not pluck
you count these
ravings of invisibility
they know better

his head sits his body
only queerly

guilt tears
worse than blackthorn

goosegrass
but no geese

whisky oh
whisky oh
whisky in the bushes oh
thorns don't matter

and then we examine
the politics of our time
and find still
Church

the moral law
of birdsong

my poetry
is entirely made up
of the sounds of rain
on leaves

it's that form of silence
I call wandering
that form of wandering
you call delusion

you think me deranged
to return as oak
looking over the kyles
stand for a thousand years

the eider is in awe
the cuckoo agrees
the yaffle agrees
the gulls mock me

that night I wove the clouds

wild honey
bee stings
the flaying syrup
of self pity

Sweeney attempts to list all things
on the strand

seals and singing

Sweeney is not suffering
his head
the world is indifferent

once he found a case of oranges

have you known hunger
withered windfall
in May

Sweeney seen
deer slots on the strand

farewell to Lochaber
or maybe petrol city

only the cuckoo
calls hello
two gowks together
until night
drops

the cant
and antiphon
of shearwaters
a mouthful
of cress
to my ache

I sit here
counting puffins
inventing words

there are no mirrors

below the yellow hill there
are caves
that keep out the rain
but not the reaches of cold
nor the midges' perorations

rusty hinge
of a lapwing's
voice
and unhinged
me

I am beside myself
where the best conversations
are to be had

the fattest snails
are found
in the graveyard

I steal eggs from the gulls
and from Mary's hens
crack and swallow

when I pass
they knit their brows
along with
their children's socks only Sweeney
dusty
is unspun

twelve by twelve inches
a square foot
what I'm here for
the first cast of the quadrat
one buttercup
one nettle
one stem of cleavers
I remain empty

show me the passage
between the poised mind
and the frenzied mind

there's a high wind
in my lungs
to give life
to the fire

it's rude to sit
with your back
to the sun
every cormorant knows that

there's the black cat
who visits
each morning
to roll and have
her stomach scratched
she doesn't know I'm broken
and there's a toad
who
lives around the corner

I drink red wine
from the kettle
for this moment I
am Li Po
that same wind rattles
our watery retreats

the cuckoo sings
two notes she flies
indefatigable
how can I be less

the deserted church

browned flowers
broken gas mantles
heh. heh. priests
gone from this place
but still seclusion

stealing apples
while eras
and stars
collapse around me

although I am conceived and die
I conceive of yet more

the priests even
atheists
maunder words
of soul and spirit
blasphemies of belief
such things are in
slaters and wrens

fear me
cry me gealt
because you fear
change
you fear revolution

there is no rest
at night stars
Saturn distant Mars
cold Jupiter
in the church ruin
a Sheela na gig
I flee even her
mound of Venus

the tempest takes
hurls the dove
I run into the heart
there is no abiding there

when the rain lifts
tracing snail trails
on the rock
with a cold finger

at night I
waken to myself
not there
either

pouring water
another vertigo
to fall

plover fears me
flees on a path of air
clatter dove wing
rising from oak
startles me to run
into the path of bramble
dread keeps us living

before the storm
the cuckoo's complaint
after the storm
cuckoo's lament
I'm still here too
after all

beside the rear
tractor wheel
its tyre flat
a stainless
steel socket set
and rusty headed hammer
crow on the cab roof
things are not
urgent

roof mostly sky
walls to east and south
sgurrs
north and west
seas
the robin hops inside
crows row through

lucid and ludic
is madness that whirl
of hair flying round
Sweeney's head
that tilt into wind
as he lifts his arms
and rolls earth words

fuck the polis
such lyricism is easy
fuck the priests
but they screw themselves
with faith and certitude
and there's only the last lit pale
constellations of ramsons here
on out into blue black
bruise scarred night

the seventh throw of the quadrat
early purple orchid wild garlic
raspberry leaves bluebells
bracken red campion but outwith
the confines of the quadrat
they grow where they please

the eighth quadrat on rock
white lichen red lichen
these are not symbols
not the thing
not the opposing
conjoined forces
of church and state
but substantive

my love gave me a meadow
that walked to the sea
my love gave me every seventh wave
that licked gently
my love gave me the seven days
and I am Sweeney
called mad

the young birch in wind
a child approaching

in search of fossils
found in that future
three specked eggs
in the oystercatcher's nest

that which resolves itself in sleep
is lost to Sweeney

yes I'm scared jittery
twitching jumping
alert mistrustful
but I haven't fear
living in me

where do my eyes lead me
what I see I am
clinging bramble vine
raking thorn peat hag
and cuckoo voice

invisible

overseer of wind
narrator of air
conductor of skies
mokonhandler
star-juggler
sun-lifter
breath of your lungs
without memory
continuous

move steeply
into that rising
scree-slope night
collapsing on itself
that hides

Sweeney
startled
startles
a snipe

Sweeney's clarity is inside
may be illuminated
briefly by a quality of
light pushing cloud shadows
lighting gullies and cliffs in a chequered
way
on a three mile distant mountain

their taste in whisky was poor

Armeria maritime
thrift
we call it
Sweeney has nothing
no need for thrift
stays nights
here and there in old small
rail cabins
Rannoch Corpach Arisaig
some have full roofs

I no longer need to know
who I am
indeed and I don't
my voice
embodied

aspen
Sweeney
by Ardtoe slip
tremble
in each
breeze

green
beyond green

FINIS