



A Pierre Joris

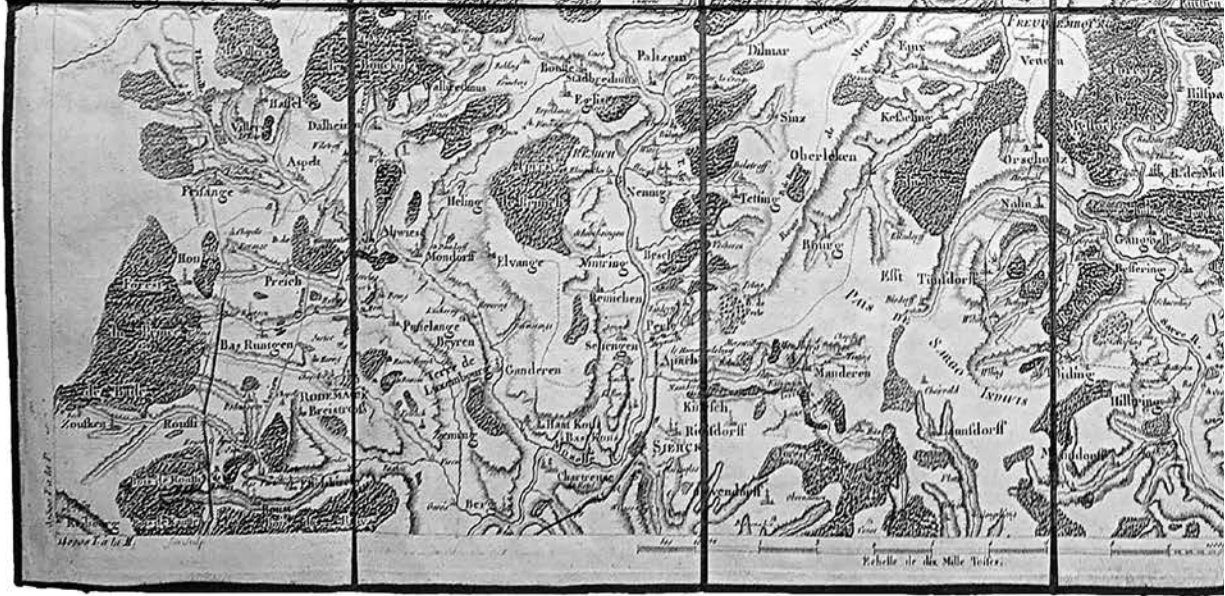
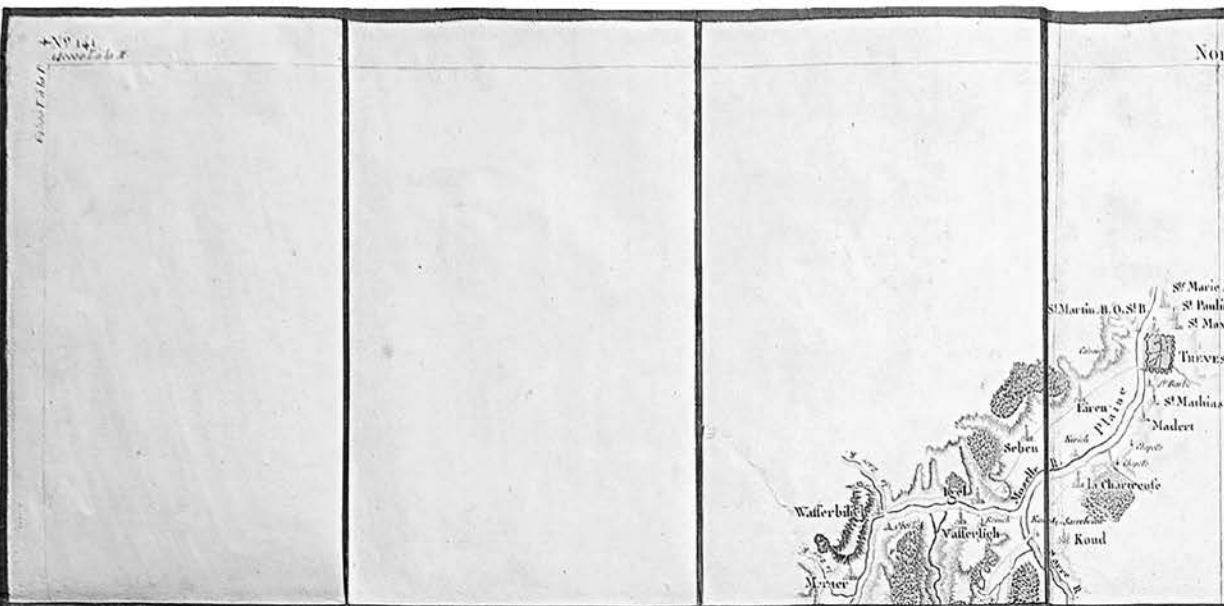
Reader

IN BETWEEN

KEEP MOVING

EDITED BY ARIEL RESNIKOFF & PIERRE JORIS

Wasserfall
1870
1871



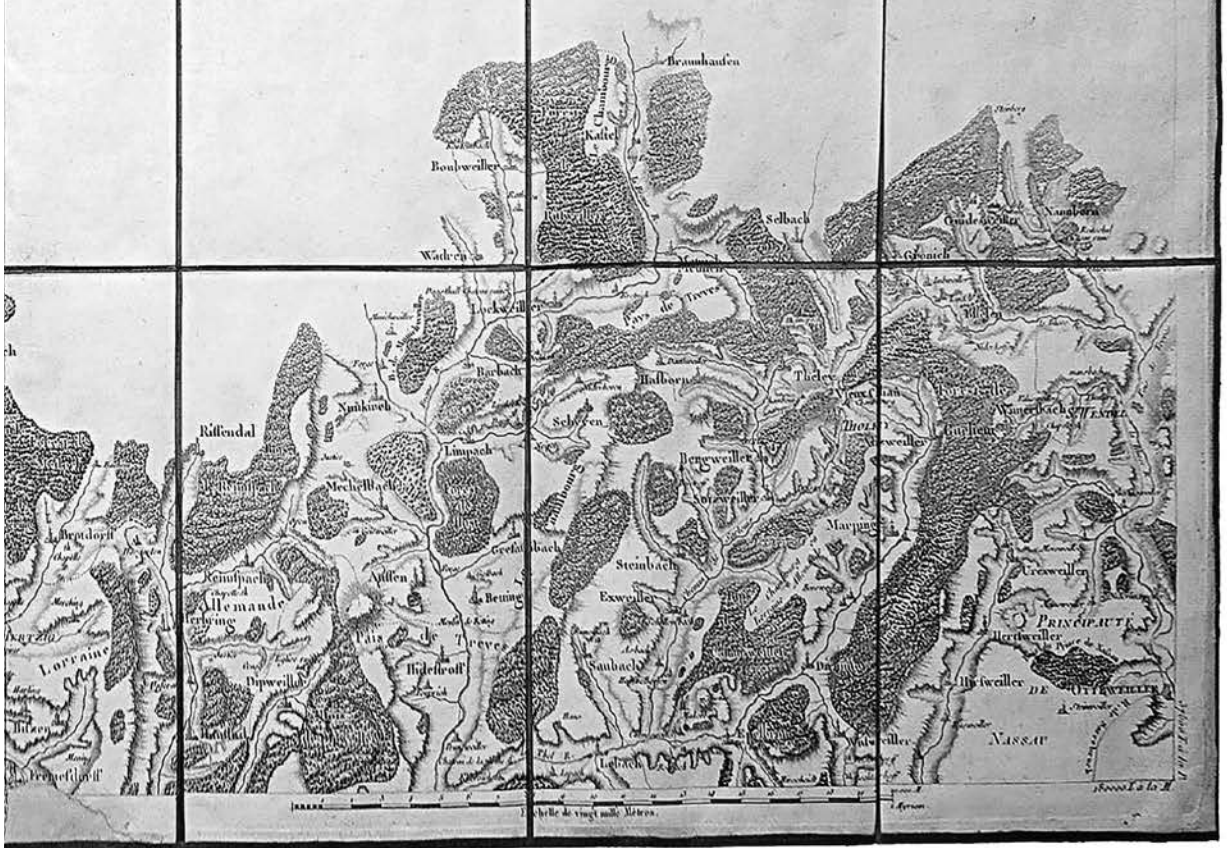
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1800. R.O.S.B.

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TREVES.

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In Between,
Keep Moving:
A Pierre Joris Reader

In Between, Keep Moving: A Pierre Joris Reader

Edited by Ariel Resnikoff & Pierre Joris

Afterword by Charles Bernstein



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Foreword

Intersecting Streams Without Origin: Foreword to *A Pierre Joris Reader*

*all the streams run to the sea / and the sea's not full / for all the streams
run / to the streams*

—Avot Yeshurun, “all the streams”

*The fallacy would be to think of language as at-home-ness while “all else” drifts,
because for language to be accurate to the condition of nomadcity, it has to
be drifting, to be “unterwegs,” “underway,” “on the way”...*

—Pierre Joris, from *A Nomad Poetics*

1. Working at the tenuous thresholds of writing & translation — writing as translation, translation as writing — Pierre Joris navigates the seismic ebb and tide of languages’ winding relations in wide constellations of intersecting streams. A translingual poet, writer, practitioner & technician, in Jerome Rothenberg’s sense, Joris cares for and nurtures, nourishes, and tends to those precarious word-worlds surrounding us on all sides, which are conditioned by a constant & ongoing translingual flux: the crisscrossing languages that flicker before our ears if only we are listening for them.

2. For me personally, Joris’ work has always arrived *just as I needed it* — a holistically healing and radically generative balm and salve for the burn of monolingual tyrannical violence, both conceptual and corporeal. A homeopathic refuge-scape from that doomed heir of monotheism, “national language” monolingualism — the new-old dogma of the floundering nation state. His work also presents a crucial contemporary precedent for me within the translingual “expanding” field of translation-oriented writing I seek to excavate — as poet and translator myself — from under the ongoing wreckage of our twentieth-, now twenty-first century epoch of catastrophe.

3. When we decided together then, Pierre and I, to edit a reader of his work, for which I would write the introductory remarks, I immediately felt we were doing something new and necessary within this expanding translingual field I mention, a field in which Joris was one of our greatest elders, and a powerful channel. Until now, there has been no single published volume where a student or scholar, writer, translator, or everyday reader of Joris' practice might encounter his work in all its variegated forms and styles, inflections and idiolects, discourses and dissensions, transmissions and transgressions. Here for the first time we have pulled and culled and gathered in conversation and cacophony a formally diverse and interdisciplinary selection of his work spanning more than a half-century — across poetry & prose, poetics, translation and collaboration — as source and resource for future readers & researchers.

4. My hope as co-editor and collaborator on this project has been to assist in stitching together a flexible yet durable tapestry of Joris' countless contrasting formal approaches and juxtaposing translingual dimensions, folding and unfolding together all at once between two covers. Following the errant and explicitly diasporic logic of his poetics and aesthetics, *In Between, Keep Moving* charts a writing composed in asynchronous deep traverse: from Luxembourg and Paris, London and Constantine, California, and of course always greater New York — Joris' hub, node, & place of consistent return since he arrived in the late nineteen-sixties to study at Bard College.

5. In making editorial and curatorial choices for the intensive stitchwork of *In Between, Keep Moving*, I was struck repeatedly by the strange spiraling character of Joris' diasporism, with each locale & language held within it in writing, a veritable snail shell — homegrown, but never really *at home* — or else, *home, but always on the go*. This sort of writing makes no privilege or excuse for final return over ongoing movement, and bears no nostalgia for any homeland or so-called national tongue. It understands that all returns are themselves a form of further diaspora, just as all writing is a form of translation and furthering of the spiral — the snail shell grows as the snail grows with/in it.

6. “Every nomad needs an oasis,” writes Robert Kelly of Joris’ diasporic approach:

Perhaps the act of poetry itself is a stadial or oasis condition in the nomad life. It lingers in language, nourished by the specific musics of the place — Luxembourg, France, America of the ’60s, Togo, Algeria, California, New York, the sacred straits of the Verrazano that guard Brooklyn. He takes up language & moves on. Not just the native Luxembourgish, German, French, English, Arabic, but the endless uprooting from what is given — there is the nomadic quality — the poem as a provisional pause, an overnighing. From which the writer, like the reader, finally must rise up and be gone.

Kelly, Joris’ first mentor in American poetry and close interlocutor, recognizes here a most inner spark at play within the translingual poet’s praxis: *he takes up language and moves on*. In long wandering sidelong glances, Joris engages a multitude of lineages, languages, & landscapes throughout his work: stretching from the pre-Islamic Qasida of the Arabian peninsula to the Occitan Troubadours of the Pyrenees; from the French-Arabic experimentalists of the Maghreb to Paul Celan and the anti-Fascist writers of a post-apocalyptic Europe; and across the great expanses of American avant-garde writing, from the Objectivists to Deep Image and Ethnopoetics, Black Mountain, The Beats, The New York School, L = A = N = G = U = A = G = E and far beyond.

7. Yet, Joris is no “pancultural” writer in Pound’s sense, not in the least, since he refuses to fetishize the ‘foreign’ in his work, and instead understands all language to be in some sense foreign and therefore translated. The poet-translator’s role is not specialized for Joris then, but just the opposite — as mundane and every-day as any other fact or factor of contemporary translingual life: a necessity of living in multiple languages and never a luxury of monolingual curiosity, fetish, or phobic anxiety (thinking of Eliot). This is what separates Joris’ nomadic translingualism from the polyglot modernist ancestors Pound and Eliot, among others, who took their multilingualism as classical erudite prize and trophy.

Joris' translational practice moves in non-hierarchical intersecting streams, with no concession to one language over another — never — and no monolingual origin to speak of.

8. I have begun to think of the “diwans” in this book as departments or compartments within the vast nomadic lifework of Joris' *poasis*: multiplex chambers throughout the “stop in the moving along the nomad line-of-flight” (“A Nomad Poetics”). These variable branches of poetic praxis are registers of rest in writing, hospitable records and recorders of respite manifested in words — however restless — and open-air offices for the annals of an endless and endlessly complex *mawqif*: “a whirling motion, making for the connection (rhizomatic) between today's and tomorrow's nomadic moves, whirling dervish, or that dance/stance, as Charles Olson once put it: “How to dance / sitting down” (“A Nomad Poetics”). We might think here also of Albert Memmi's *nomad immobile*, and the notion of movement in writing (and in the writer's mind's eye) as a prosthetic or phantom, or else even ghost reflex of a physical nomadism that may no longer be the condition of any given writer's diaspora or exile.

9. The noet (or nomad-poet, another Jorisean portmanteau) does not *choose* to live and write in errant diaspora, surveying the various dialects at-hand as a traveler on a language-safari (the Poundian model) — but instead accepts the conditions of this diasporism against the mythic doom-and-gloom teleology of exile, what the great historian Salo Baron called the “lachrymose” narrative of history. In Joris' work we find displacement itself a place among places, where a plethora of languages dwell & thrive. So diaspora in his writing becomes a term of speculative cultural hybridity and analysis, rather than simply a symptom of exile. Diaspora for Joris signals continuous dynamic presence, rather than irreparable static absence.

10. In the pages that follow, you will find streams of translingual thinking in perpetual motion. This is because Joris' particular genius is to never stop or stand still in language (at restless rest), and never to arrive in one language to stay for good, but always to work in response and in constant *relation* to many languages at once. The present volume invites the reader

into this translation-oriented relationship — this serious seated-dance & immobile nomadism — in all its nuance and complexity, all its possibility and impossibility. Or as Joris puts it: “even that station, that mawqif is never a given, but always a wrestling so as to expulse the slag, to burn the dead wood and rearrange the stones in the ruins of the old camp. For all poetry rewrites language against itself” (“Glottal Choice”).

Ariel Resnikoff
 El Cerrito, California
 June 17, 2025

NOTE

There are certain footnotes in this work that Joris meant to attend to but which he was unable to complete before his death. I have chosen to retain these phantom notes rather than editing them out of the book as yet another instance and insistence on the notion of the in-between and the perpetual pivoting of Joris’ nomad poetics, which continue to gesture to us from the great beyond. Their presence will be indicated with the following symbol: ●

We are initially translators then; and in coming into our native speech learn that language as we translate our selves into language. We did then come from another world, for sure. And the problems of translation are not secondary to our being native.

— Robert Duncan

« Seule demeure l'affirmation nomade »

— Maurice Blanchot, *Le Pas au-delà*

“all that remains” or “the only dwelling?”
language itself affirms the nomadic, affirms itself as the nomadic dwelling, as what remains, the only thing that remains and can carry us forward. MB’s phrase shows the nomadicity of language not only in its outward meaning but also in the polysemy of its words that make translation nomadize between different meanings, creating the arc of tension that is living nomadically, or better, dwelling nomadically in the house of language. But not Heidegger’s — as Celan shows early on in “Waldig.”

“Sedentary dread.”

— Maurice Blanchot, *Le Pas au-delà*

In NYC March 1969 notebook:

“It may be that every man is set upon the earth to find one method of divination. That is, to write one sentence whose syntax is total. Because (this idea is familiar) syntax is the heart of divination, to locate the function of a thing in the structure of process. We must remember that. Who are we?”

— Robert Kelly, *Alchemical Journal* (underline is Joris’)

First Diwan:

The Necessity of the Other

(or: “your voyage... my translation” (Nabile Farès)

(*Nomadics 1: Luxembourg — Paris — New York: 1966–1971*)

4 Haikus

autumn leaves
on clear rocks
in a double scotch

—

raindrops disturb
branches
in puddles

—

we shall see toys
in the wrinkles
of our coffee cups

—

falling night:
a seashell drowns
under waves of ashes

Allen's Ode

I found Ginsberg / in Madame Tussaud's
 wax-museum / beard stained with last
 morning's egg yolk / St. Quentin eggs / so
 they got him finally / the raving poet /
 but unexpected riots / 589 priests marched
 clear over from Rome / Kaufman was there too /
 sold his tea supply / to buy lions for Allen /
 Shooting blues bullets with steel
 saxophone / & Kerouac & Corso & Ferlinghetti
 pleading / a dozen & ½ holy hindu-men
 marching / couldn't help either / was
 too late / he had pleaded guilty / guilty
 of eating eggs / for breakfast / supreme crime
 sentenced to death / by 1 & ½ New York
 Klan's men / the last ½ didn't count/
 was a negroid Indian / at 13 P.M. it
 was all over / I won't go to Madame Tussaud's
 anymore //

White-veined
night rest
less fragments of me --

nailed to the
sky's curbed
back by
stars grown cold
under the hammer
of her
eyes.

Bard, oct. 29, 1968

SOTTO VOCE

Dozing on a shallow riverbank

A reptile's scale-incrusted cutis:

Notre-Dame,

That old stone-castle overloaded

With stone-made statues: saints

Bearded or bald, in mossy

Overcoats,

Mute(d)

Typd night

moon / less night
ballet
keyboard ballet
mind mechanics
hammer
syllables
out of my pain
ballet / bullet
break
my silence
my moon / less moan

Summer 1969, Luxembourg

From: *The Clown #1 & 3* (Bard College 67-68)

CHALLENGE of the wind

to the vertical tree

Bending toward horizons

Never to be reached but

Thru a loosening of roots.

Transplants of trees:

To choose the right season.

Trying to escape the

Stare of leaves.

Ambivalent hold of

Earth around my feet.

Après-lude

Sometimes,
when the storm
is over
I light two cigarettes
and see a face
in a corner of the room.
But between us
so many tides of
smoke
make her hair
so ashen,
her face
go grey.
I inhale her deeply
till the other
beside me
burns my skin
on a thousand different
bodies.

SEPARATION

Stone to stone
Bone to bone
And blood to
Water.
O Lord, let it not be —
My need for stones
Is great Lord,
And my blood
Is at war with
The waters.

—

Emit
Once
Every hour
The overlapping
Of timefingers:
Illusions
Of timeless
Duration.
But then:

Omnia vulnerant
Ultima necat.

—

SONG OF THE ABSENT SNOW

— but the bareness
Of their arms does not upset me.
I have seen the leaves dying
In another country.
These moments of wood
Cannot be spoken
By the wind — another
incarnation of the same old
Song.
Still rips twigs from trunks
In his mouthless fury indiscernible
From the silence of
The stones underneath.
Winter is a rider
His beast is death,
His sword the stillness
Of silenced stones,
Ploughing a seedless belly.
Birdcloud over-treetop —
The writing in the sky
Vanishes
As I draw closer.

AFTER REREADING CELAN'S *ATEMWEENDE*

Icebergspeech . snowscript
wanting
to break thru the un
singable remnant.

foundlingpoem.
sevenedged
dice freed from the
harnesshurdle
between out- & in-side.

treat me to snow —
(let me know
you, penetrated one.)

thorned eyepaths,
your poems
travel thru
sleepmountains
etching
the acidsong into the furrows
of what is.
your incandescent arrowword
(trancefigure
sunk finally the last
dreamproof skiff
where the symbol
clings to the broken mast
— sad pennant
of yesteryear.

*

Second Diwan:

The Witnessing Begins

(Nomadics 2: London – Constantine: 1972–1979)

“... to locate the function of a thing
in the structure of process...”

— Robert Kelly

A BUNDLE OF RODS BOUND UP WITH AN AXE IN THE MIDDLE, ITS BLADE PROJECTING

(to & against NOB)

killed an owl with a crooked arrow
pierced an owl seven separate places
made the faceless sky a person
to do this he who tries must be king
or fail for leatherbag is not windbag
but chaos killed sevenfold for
possibilities of rebirth &
pure ritual creation in the making
of all as is condensed in the glyph
before the diluting fall into metaphor
a fall put the poet the maker into
the hands of the king a bundle of
letters the law of the assembled
like acorns assemble the sows or
not like but still the glyph distilled
in place of which is nowhere & only
in time & first letter is a matter
a pure matter & simple thing though not
simpler than simple that is complex
enough to create attraction from which
is created the city which is syntax
& as we fumbling through the actual
fall into a metaphor became the bungled
bundle the fasces bound with wet
leatherstraps torn from the poisonous
windbag's soft underbelly dried in
king's hot speech contract they shrink
breaking the arrows' crookedness
forcing the straight narrow
the fake simple the slack syntax

BRECCIA

1.
agglomerate deposit
sharp fragments
a fine-grained matrix

2.
the minute & the very large
but mainly the figure arose
between these two

3.
from under rock
where the old appetites walk
& I talk out of Homer

4.
shoulderblade cracked in heat
a map of fissures
the art of writing

5.
we'll make it
by the skin
of our teeth

6.
riparian dawn
things to be picked up
to be toyed with & tried

7.
(out of Homer the stem
is strong repose:
to lie still & keep still

8.

as O under the ram's belly
evading the fathers
"lie quiet Ez, this is Chas speaking"

9.

cubo : to lie asleep, also sexual
↳ death — fr. root to bend (so elbow
↳ concubine, ↳ in English hump hoop hip heap

10.

the fleece now
in the fullness of earth
you found old honey

11.

pushed a flower up by its root
we are at the beginning
another age, yucca-age

12.

appropriating in relation to nature
expropriating in relation to man
poverty a relation between people

13.

the blatant vulgarity
of a pseudo-scientific language
preoccupied with warfare

14.

from the large grass-eaters
pelvic bones
a sort of natural drinking cup

15.

at best a night's lodging
not bedrock
open-eyed, we rest like hares

16.

learning the language of being alive
organs & functions
activity of the hands

17.

"We are ready to admit
anything — except
to have begun at the feet"

18.

carapaces of turtles
tough strands of beach vine & kelp
driftwood seasoned in salt water

19.

needs of iodine & salt
benefits from unsaturated fats
inclination to high protein intake

FROM: *ANTLERS*

V.

First image of Saturn. A man with a stag's head, on a dragon with an owl which is eating a snake in his right hand.

— Giordano Bruno, *De Umbris Idearum*

The horned man
first dream of
darkness
below the stars
above the earth.

There is no way
we can avoid
dealing
with that aspect.

I mean Ficino
was a good man
but afraid

whereas
Bruno
knew better or
more or
was not afraid.

The antlers! Shadows
in the memory
a dark mossy
tree comes
out of /
from /
the night.

Moss crawling
with transparent
creatures
 (the white
creatures, cross
of the night.

 The hunter
counts
the points
to know the age
of the stag.

 The pearls
around the antlers'
base
 a measure of
strength
 &
power.

The moral
wealth said
to lie
in the branches
the quantity
number
thereof.

 When antlers
are branchless
the stag's a
freak
creature,

called killer-
stag
the white killer
of the woods
 (the branches
keep life in
the autumn play —
they can't
dig in deep
enough
 can't reach
the quick.
 The white, straight
dagger-
antlers tear
the guts).
 The stag
— afflicted thus —
knows & roams
alone
 comes out
late on the fall
meadow
 comes out
a cold knowledge
& a blazing white
something
between
the eyes : the frozen
pain
 the freak

creature knows
has known
all his life
 from the inside
out
has known
all his death
is in the shadow
the outside
 casts
(a heavy-handed
spell)
 on that other
knowledge
 old as bone
of his by chance
of growth
of bone.

 He comes out late
moves in silence
through the shadows
of the tree-line
wants to
stay
 there to
live his separated
path
 winding
along that
weaving across

that inter
face
that skin
— a cool & porous
place —
links the
private forest
to the public
land.

But the shadows
betray the secret
creature:

against
their dark
surface
the blazing
white something
stands
out clear,
reveals the stag's
presence
to the watchful
herd.

Proud
& many-pronged
the leader

turns
away from his
does
moves against
that light
has to

challenge
what he does not
know,
 has to
overcome his fears
to keep an
old ritual
alive.

 After
the kill
the stag
moves on moves
in
 deeper into
the woods
 away
from the does
circling the dead
16-pointer
 away
from the unleashed
hounds
 the hunter
sets on his trail
feeling cheated
of his prize
 — the kill
he has waited for
has counted on
 too
long — .

Third Diwan:

The Death of Europe

(Nomadics 3: Constantine – London – Paris: 1979–1987)

THE HORSES OF LALLA FATIMA

I. MEDITATION IN A KITCHEN

Out here where-
in the roads
fork
we do too
the roads we
go down
 necessity's
passe-montagne
pulled tight
over the
eyes.

 To see through & choose
weird boast
like poking one's eye out,
meaning in.
(Con-
fusion of
movement : you can have it
if you want it
both ways . I eat
with a fork) I

risked the road
yesterday, will risk it
tomorrow . tonight
we rest in the oasis
of this kitchen

(a needed rest:
 “nothing ever is
acquired”
 proud boast
forgot about
biology, ir-
reversible
processes,
shorter breath
as the lines are,
get,
the lives.)
Heartcoals in a kanoun
movement at
☞ of rest, love
prepares a feast, lamb
roast in the oven, a tale
to be told, to be-
hold on
the air.

 the time
it takes the meat
to take : let's make use of
the time we have
 carefully, accurately,
(the hours you spend
 oiling washing drying
 your hair:
your patience, your
accurate sense of)
 your body against my impatience
 my rotting teeth
 no longer all that long

the length now of my lines
the enormous ambition
whittled down
to the voice of
the lyric,
box-canyon song
where the horses
rear, narrow ears
pricked, nostrils
flared towards
where the puma
prowls.

Circling the meat
in the oven : the time
it takes —

(the way
those muscles we call
the mouse, la souris,
musculus & mus
— a cooked etymology
as in “to cook the
books” —
tighten under
heat, then crisp &
shrink back
down the
bone

/
white splinter-glimmer
grows a handle
on our lives
of bone & words & yes
we make what we make

as bony as our lives it
turns & stops & yes
control means loss.
It does choice does
& yet is the only choice
we have .

 Turn the roast
touch bare rocks
eternal snows &
in passing touch
& rest
at the crossroads
where we cross our
eyes to Hermes . touch to
go on from
the feel of the land
your thigh's
gentle slope.
There is strength left
in
the bones
& right there
in your
hands.

 It is all
I . we
 need it all.

2. THE TALE

crosses the road,
 last rays long days the
 talk not of hope
 more practical or
 as they say
 (who's they?
 down to earth
 (who'd dare
 talk down
 to earth?
 (under the surface
 not the earth's,
 ours, or under our
 talk's fastidiousness)
 we are just that
 & more
 anchored here in smell
 of roast in
 your hand's accurate
 mobility.

Now
 this story happens
 when the prophet's
 only daughter,
 the mother of
 Hassan & Hussein,
 she who is called
 Lalla Fatima
 sent a caravan
 of horses from
 Mecca to Medina

(or maybe it was
 from Medina to Mecca
 we don't know
 when it happened,
 was it before or after
 Muhammad's death, before
 or after her sons
 were born?) it does
 not matter. This
 matters : the horses
 lost their way
 (or the drivers
 did, this again
 the story does not tell
 it was a human not
 a horse committed it
 to memory)
 ☞ when the sun had set
 ☞ their allotted time was up
 ☞ they had not returned
 (how the parenthesis
 flourish, how
 the processual
 stalks
 from every direction
 at once while
 this art demands
 again ☞ again
 choice at the cross
 roads) which is
 how I got this
 story / I talked
 of crossroads you
 thought of the story
 of the horses

of Lalla Fatima
 as answer to my exegesis
 on the fork (not
 the one turned the roast,
 the one in the road
 where those eyes
 were offered
 to Hermes)
 close parent
 thesis, open to
 where Fatima
 in long flowing gandoura
 anxious on rooftop
 looks out over the battlements
 of Mecca or Medina
 (a tall house, her father
 a rich merchant-prophet)
 towards Medina or Mecca
 where the straight road
 has been forked
 by the will of the horses
 & Fatima now fetches
 a fat-bellied pot with a
 narrow opening she holds
 over the kanoun where-
 in burn the seven
 consecrated perfumes:
 black & white frankincense
 elemi resin
 wood of aloes
 coriander
 amber & myrrh.
 Into the cleansed
 vessel a handmaiden
 pours spring water &

now both women
 with the gathered tips
 of their fingers raise
 the pot & Lalla
 recites a poem a
 prayer & lo
 the pot turns it does
 a sure way you
 say a sign points
 out the direction
 where-
 in something
 has been lost (let's
 use you say
 one of ours
 that way, I wondered
 what we had
 lost, was coy, said
 it is the earth
 turns & our pot
 may be from
 the right place but
 is not in
 the right place
 & who am I to
 attempt practical
 magick when I have
 such a hard time
 with the simple
 telling of the story
 which is my job
 & then you
 remembered more,
 re-
 membered the

mouthed words (which
 you say are the story
 you told me)
 † I went with the fork
 of the Greek road
 where myth is
 the mouthed words make
 (or do they make)
 the pot turn.
 I wanted more, felt
 something here I didn't
 grasp, pushed you †
 you called your
 mother
 who said there were
 no horses
 they were camels
 but they did
 get lost
 † so the question
 returns as:
 where are the camels
 of Lalla Fatima?
 Or should I change
 the title, re-
 write the story?
 No. This is
 the story of
 the horses of Lalla Fatima,
 the horses that didn't
 come back at day's end.
 Or did as the pot
 turned, or came
 back as
 camels.

The pot could not foresee
that fork in the
narrative road,
Down one prong
the horses rushed,
up the other came
the camels. Fatima
is surprised, she has
waited all these years,
the pot in hand
shatters, the prophecy
come true, the
horses are back as
camels. we are
none the
wiser.

Fourth Diwan:

The East of my West, the West of my East

(Nomadics 4: New York — California: 1987–1992)

TURBULENCE

*

critical transformations
talk about weather
hominids out of
a drier Pliocene
forest withdrawal sudden
wide vistas a savanna'd niche
the past shrinks to first
symbol meagre clump of trees
that's it for a million & a half
stasis under clear skies a silent sun

then ice and an urge
called culture
climactic change opens new vistas
the clump of trees shrinks
into the brain moldered
trunks bridge hemisphere gap
hands hot up twirling
stick sparks a younger night

the bright fire behind the eyes
back to elephant graveyard of time
convexed out a smile remembered
to remember brain trace
notched on universe
the universe down now
on incised bone

reversal is the movement of Tao
after stasis change bring color
to cheeks the weather does
change shove bone scepter in girdle
clouds over the moon
slain deer shoulderblade
cracks in fire
memory remembers to look forward
cracks in the sky
know it in your bones

*

one moment earlier
something had deviated
moving

obliquely.

This is local fortuity
the clinamen exactly
↳ more exactly
deviation from equilibrium

the incline the streak of lightning
bars the clouds
immediately a shape happens
roughly (↳) circular no need for more

a little hole around which people gather like bees
a dead body at center
a world where accident is rule

*

begin here
in the middle

by the smallest angle
deviation
begins

be gone
get off the road
(what road
when

at the beginning all directions are equivalent

begin again
in the heart of the city
I is born)
the sign reads TOUTES DIRECTIONS
points one way only
(I is born
at the smallest angle
gives a slide
the fastest slide down
direction born side by side

☞ the laminary flow
at the edge of the city
that is all heart
meets you
turbulence

*

the cyclone elsewhere savages

the neat
ly circular
geography.
The Caribbean & Yucatan
Brownsville, Texas

the eye will come ashore in 4 hours

polyphemus? we are read by
the eye we cannot read
the stars obscured we hide
in the false pride
of old calculations.

but the world is run by
meteorology
the world as cloud not chambered depression
& anticyclone
from West to East is movement
a shift northward ruffles our well-combed hair
air pressure relative humidity
absolute rigidity the sun only rises and sets
rises and sets
rises and sets
father father yes
I will marry
your daughter turbulence

*

the true condition is not
 law of stars astronomy
 clear summer skies
 the subject fixed in the middle
 the spectacle of stars for practical reasons
 with mor(t)al law in its heart
 but despair of a cloudy night over Königsberg
 the depressions over the Atlantic
 moving West to East towards Russia
 low ceiling nimbus end of the world
 how will you reason that one out Immanuel?
 loved by god yes the law
 but what we can't know
 that moral way
 is what we live by
 not galaxies stars planets as objects in space
 but atmospheric disturbances
 meteorological conditions
 low ceiling nimbus end of the world
 cyclone & anticyclone
 air pressure & relative humidity
 precede the rising & setting
 of sun & moon
 thus precede celestial mechanics
 first Aphrodite out of foam
 a turbulence
 cyclone & anticyclone
 my woman the human

*

where Wiener was at the time I don't know
 published 1947 Paris a work written in English
 prefaced by himself in Mexico
 begins with the weather conditions in Boston announced
 for January 17, 1950
 it is since the times of the nomads
 when it was necessary to remember
 the location of the pasturing grounds
 that the importance of the place where one is
 has been exaggerated
 a little German song
 weißt du wieviel Sternlein stehen
 introduces cybernetics
 a nurse from Berlin teaches the song
 a town translates as
 Attila's Bridge early fifties
 where Wiener was at the time I don't know
 do you know how many stars
 in Vienna pedestrians form nebulous cordons
 his only weather in the mail today
 back in Vienna temperature relations a cold front August 1913
 pedestrians form nebulous curtains Vienna as cloud
 particles that move no fixed center a man without qualities
 walking to school a big black dog a whispered name
 a city with Buddha and plague particles that move
 a little German song clouds parade by you insert
 yourself or are inserted walking to school clouds parade by
 nur Gott der Herr could count them

This Yucca-Age: Statement for *Tyuonyi*

This yucca-age an era of intense invagination; real readership more than ever before folded back upon itself, uroboros here we come, are, tail in mouth (or between legs?), the reader of poetry as/is poet, the fault, I believe, not so much the invagination of poetry itself, but rather the socio-political fact that only the person trained (self-trained) to read beyond Reader's Digestive Biscuits is poet herself [↻ Hackademia bears the brunt on the right most of the so-called creative depts ↻ on the left the froggified theorists a.k.a Newer Critics leeches as ever on centuries gone ↻ total blindness re the present]. None of this essentially new, even if the specific configuration is: except for rare historical quirks it has been that way all along — remember Hölderlin asking: *Wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?*

Back in these States after fifteen years in Europe ↻ Africa this seems right now a shape I detect: despite a number (a dozen, for me, maybe 20 poets right now — ↻ that, in truth an astoundingly large number ↻ fact one has to be thankful for, as it is the exigency ↻ support of that strong contemporaneity that keeps one sane against the imperial insanity of the times ↻ place, while poor Hölderlin, say, had to, insanely, go to, the past, live with the Greeks, for lack of that community of the present).

Despite a number, I said, of red-hot poets writing right now, this sense however of an increased ghettoization of the various poetry communities, the seed more promising than the tree it developed into, tree, that old hierarchical root-trunk-branch symbol, a kind of flag-waving, even if the flag is upside-down. A tiredness of sixties defeat translates as repli, a folding back on purely local concerns, pristine communities eschewing the needed wider, global stance. Amazingly enough, ↻ despite recent euro-focus, there's still much anti-intellectual resentment among the "poets" ↻ certainly no push to engage ↻ discourse in a wider public arena. A fear of dirty hands? (Cf. Eco's introduction to the American edition of his *Travels in Hyperreality*) ((For when a US translation of Régis Debray's *Le Scribe?*))

The eternal bitching re the economics of being a poet (both in relation to day-by-day survival & to publishing) sounds incongruous to anyone aware of same problems in, say, England or France, and absolutely obscene in regard to the non-white world. Nowhere are poets better off (materially, that is) than in the US of A. The obverse of which is of course the possibility that that cld free a major energy-surplus which cld make not only for excellent writing (which it does) but also for an active investment by the poets in the wider struggle, call it an activist counterpoetics, — though that (see above) happens only very spottily, shoddily. And yet, and yet, having moved back here, & willing as ever, as is our job & duty, to bite the hand that feeds me, it is that sense of available energy that boosts me, engages me, empowers me again & again.

From: *Lemur Mornings*

FIRST LEMUR MORNING

caught may in coattails
aztec drudge goddess
pianola payback hogs
these last testamentary folds
quadrants drive & divide
blindfold trees new
greenage acres the ford
uptime brought to you
carries over the noise
the disc monthly
microsoft conjunctions
smudge the stellar
meals the spillover
a major backup snuggles
close & wet & warm
child's play a haystack
shoves a needle home
carry-over from winter
tour yacking on the frozen
tundra radioactivated
mink coats coatliqueued
the last remnants of
a charred social class
filtertipped ideation
in translation makes
for yoyo practice
the built-in hydrant
glosses time & an aside
to the word "over" in
another language at

least wakes up
 the palmtree to be
 read as summer progresses
 in increments of overlord
 despair you buy into
 wartime journalism
 like the last soft animal
 rushing for a stereo
 visioned cliff
 hanger with roaring
 lion rampant & 902
 characters from a dismal
 font create advice columns
 prepackaged page
 cuts the eager beaver
 concatenation heals of all
 real health the bomber
 pilot with the natural
 yoghurt face
 vaselines his way
 out from above
 as strange dividers
 claim footnote
 privileges of knowhow
 while the structure of
 complex words
 harbors antimonies
 of real desire that remain
 unexpressed in the
 dentist's assistant's
 telephone voice
 but we know we will
 meet in another lemur
 morning

Fifth Diwan:

Anthologies of the World

(Nomadics 5: Encinitas CA — Albany NY: 1992–2008)

Revvng Charon's Outboard Engine

change dawn to night
mind's weight scales the same
though the violins be otherly
(Ravel's maggoty, thin
stridency, as breastless as a new moon.

On the counter of your breath
I pearl my minutes,
nimble brambles butterflying
the onset of dark.

You laugh at the many hats
of night, she changes
safety-belts like the devil
his horns, the classical
choice is a new pair

of loins & the engine purrs
leonine through the zodiac
of her dreamscape where
in some kind of a wonderment

we ride a stone-beast from here
to there, hear her trumpet
thump while her finger changes
pronouns like others underwear.

The change is upon us. Do not
resist. Insist. Ride the letters
into newer never and. Prepare
to land, touch ground.

No sponge can follow us here
with false equations from word to
thing. Walk, do not run,
the ninja metaphor is just another
hired killer, cold in winter
& hungry throughout the day.

Noon is only the most visible
insistence, its inexistence proven
by the freehold shadow. Sacrifice
only the parting of the ways,
indigestible fork shoveling
sand & mica into our eyes, an

excuse for a tear, a murder en
masse at the ligature of the
year where the stuttering slow
grammaring of the self sews
dayshade to nightshade &

here comes Pluto, here Persephone,
they stay less than time, scared as
they are of their own shadows.
Why mince your steps when you
can be fire-ground by the breathless
share of noon?

My mouth knows a language
 my hand & eye cannot imitate,
 the mother-tongue there only as phoné,
 as phoney — though this
 sound-rhyme be phoney
 etymology — the fake,
 the counterfeit arising
 from Old Irish / Irish Gaelic
 fawney (in which a small
 counterfeit deer hides), “a
 gilt brassring used by swindlers,”
 the book does not
 tell me how
 to use a fawney —
 nor if it was a nose ring
 as for cattle
 or a marriage ring
 a token of exchange,
 a useless ring except for
 the purported value of its metal
 & counterfeit in that?
 So the real root of phoné,
 sound, voice,
 is I-E: bhâ-,¹ which gives
 a list:

fable
 fate
 infant
 preface
 prophet
 abandon
 banish
 bandit

fame
phono-
symphony
confess
and (not & but)
blame
(end of list)

& while on
American Classics
gravely Jo Cotton
tells the girl with the glycerine tears
“I was a lot of things
a gambler
a thief
a phoney,”
another list
while here
the search goes on, the phoné-origins
downloaded days later
searching a CIA database
gathered intelligence
for Luxembourg & got this re ethnic divisions:
 “Celtic base, with French &
German blend.”
Like rich coffee,
except whiter,
& the language,
other.

Note

I. ●

The Nomadism of Picasso

Superficially one could argue that Picasso's nomadism is most visible in his switching of languages, leaving the Spanish mother tongue to write in French (both languages, as already indicated, probably ghosted by Catalan at some level). And yet the question of a nomadic writing is not necessarily rooted in the writer giving up the mother tongue — as, indeed, Picasso never completely does. Rather, the matter of a nomadic writing is anchored elsewhere, specifically in the syntactic and grammatical manipulations the given language is subjected to, in order to free it from a range of traditional constraints. Picasso's writing is thus nomadic in terms of its free flows, unhampered by the sedentarizing effects of normative grammar, syntax, and discursive forms. To use the terms of Deleuze & Guattari, the lines of flight of a Picasso poem (and they are lines “of flight” also in the more traditional poetic definition) are never reterritorialized, are never re-inscribed onto the grid of just “literature.” One need only compare his writing to that of, say, Breton to see the absolute difference: despite Breton's call for a “pure psychic automatism” that would break social and literary norms & barriers by the very speed of the writing (*vitesse v.v.v.*, etc.), few writers — be it in the poetry or the prose — compose in a more traditionally rhetorical, not to say high classical, French style than Breton himself.

Picasso, the non-French artist and poet, has the considerable advantage of not being burdened by built-in or acquired stylistic grids that would contain or modulate his explorations. He raids this foreign language (raids that he has already practiced on the mother tongue, i.e. the language of the country he has by now long left behind) — and the core principles or rather the practical engines are a nonstop process of connectivity and heterogeneity along the entire semiotic chains of the writing, the characteristics of a rhizomatic and nomadic writing. The way this plays itself out in Picasso's poems can be traced not only in the heterogeneity of the objects, affects, phenomena, concepts, sensations, vocabularies et cetera that can and do enter the writing at any given point, but mainly at the level of the assembling of these heterogeneities:

eschewing syntax and its hierarchical clausal structures, the writing proceeds nomadically by paratactic relations between terms on a “plane of consistency” that produce concatenations held together (& simultaneously separated) either by pure spatial metonymical juxtapositions or by the play of the two conjunctions “and” or “of.” One could of course claim parataxis as a category of syntax, though it seems to me that in Picasso’s writing the very exorbitant use made of the paratactic process suggests that one may better see this process — in Giorgio Agamben’s word — as “atactic.” How traditional conjunctions and prepositions function in such nomadic atactic semantic chains is worth a closer look.

Because of their repetitive omnipresence — they seem to be evenly distributed or, rather, used with equal ferocity, joy, and energy throughout the writing from 1935 to 1959, with the possible exception of the plays — these conjunctions lose any causal or subordinating effects they have in traditional syntactical constructions. The conjunction “and,” maybe the most basic ligature in our languages, is in Picasso — just as it is in children’s telling and, at times, in epic narrative — a pure accelerator of action, a way of getting from one thing to the next; its multiplicity immediately overcomes the (mis)use (as brake) of this accelerator when present singly and made to function as a divider, separator, creator of dialectical or ontological differentiations between two terms, and thus as the originator of all dualisms (the good and the bad, the beautiful & the ugly). Thus never just one “and,” but always “and... and... and...” In that sense the multiple “ands” do not set up one-to-one relations between the terms they align, but function vectorially, pointing to nomadic spaces outside and beyond those terms. As Deleuze writes: “The AND is not even a specific relation or conjunction, it is that which subtends all relations, the path of all relations, which makes relations shoot outside their terms and outside the set of their terms, and outside everything which could be determined as Being.”¹ Or, to draw on Picasso’s other art: his “ands” are gestures: they resemble the arm movements of the painter, picking up his brush, putting paint to canvas, dropping his arm, picking the brush up again, and so forth. “And,” then, as a muscle contracting/extending, an action, a speed that makes visible a multiplicity of events.

“Of” is, at first look, a different kind of conjunctive particle, as grammatically it is considered a preposition, i.e. a word placed before a substantive and indicating the relationship of that substantive to a verb, an adjective or another substantive. The opening definition of “of” in the *American Heritage Dictionary* reads: “Derived or coming from, originating at or from.” And indeed, Picasso’s “de” or “of,” taken singly, can be read in that fashion. But, again, the concatenation of “of’s,” the rhizomatic agencement of this particle linking wildly heterogeneous series of terms, subverts any of its single or double genitive functions, forcing the reader to eventually relinquish causal/grammatical readings — something the translator, to his or her initial chagrin and frustration, experiences at first hand when approaching the poems. But this relinquishing of the desire to locate the specific semantic unit(s) from which a given term is supposed to be derived, leads the reader/translator to experience this endless chain of derivations as an ongoing forward drive or as what the Situationists called a “dérive” — lines of flight through language that empty any desire for origin, for an original, singular term a single “of” may point back to. Finally, I would propose that the nomadicity of Picasso’s language is further enhanced (syntactically as well as visually) by the radical lack of punctuation marks — those “traffic signals,” as Theodor Adorno called them. As already suggested, Picasso is the most radical of his era’s practitioners of such a complete obliteration of punctuation marks. This gives his poems the feel of a wide open field, a smooth, non-striated space, or blocks of space, through or along which one can travel unchecked, free to choose one’s own moment of rest, free to create one’s own rhythms of reading — an exhilarating and liberating, dizzying and breathtaking dérive.

Albany, March 2001

Note

1. Gilles Deleuze & Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 57.

From: Pablo Picasso — *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz & Other Poems*

21 april XXXVI

powder of paradychlorobenzine plumb-line of the dance tune from the bridge its moorings loosened camellia in the ropes entwined carries away in its hands the mutilated head of the marble statue stretched out on the sand near the edge of the water advancing its fingers pulling them back into its sleeves nails bitten by the inhuman form of the imperative body fixed in stone by the capricious desire of the dream a flute player marked with a red hot iron by the siren gnaws at him and drags him fishing sail at the tip of the arrow that follows the heads-or-tails of its flight circling the sound of the water drop falling on her chest and breaking its forehead against the echoes of that rotten silence's stink smelling of marsh-mallow benumbed by the stabbing perfume of grilled sardines caramel color of shadow through the Venetian blind shut tight target practice of inquisitive starlight listening in on the feast of torn off flags umbilical cord of the impassionate source of the drawings of small bells spiraling around the sunbeam planted right in the middle of the feast spread-eagled in naked foam arm tying gaze in blind flight mouth open carries sand swallower of the period hitting the forehead of the untamable beast's monster dressed in sunday best clogs in swallow horn legs covered in sugar-cane stockings under small pantaloons of spider lace taken from the flies' throats shirt made from strips of cheese held together by electric cables locked in crystal balls inscribed in the circuit of the veins of the Lorraine ham resting on the shelf holding up the brassiere garden bench painted green where the wet nurse and the soldier are sitting playing hopscotch hide and seek in the circuit imposed on the nooks by the she-monkey dressed as a canteen-attendant — oak robe made from great planks nailed with carpenter's nails and held up by welded wrought iron wedges — hat made from granite rock attempting to hold up and balance the bloody neck feathers of a chicken run-over by a car full of oranges turned over on the road — a necklace of onions and breath savers and Pan flutes — a cigarette

case excavated from a doughnut fastened to the dress by hooks hanging
 from small radio apparatuses good weather for the cherries locked into
 their pits and beautiful among the beautiful floats proud beauty standing
 up on the clouds' mother of pearl ladders that laughingly tour the domain
 of the seedy cottage of the infinite her loved body

23 april XXXVI

(I)

bugle-call of the harp stuck in the mud in the middle of the road no
 exit octopus fastened to the core of the warm ball source of the river of
 feathers earth [welded] head lowered

(II)

dissolved in the flakes heart shoved in no exit to the octopus fastened to
 the road in the river of feathers boils in the source the earth's lowered head

(III)

* to the helmet taken to heart * octopus shoved into the harp * the road
 * warm ball of the river of feathers * fasten earth is lowered head *

24 april XXXVI

legs in the air the rainbow in the middle of the starry night wringing
 its linens cradle with astonished eyes pure goldfinch from the blinking
 hammock of the games round of nails hammered into the fire at the
 prism's throat rope held by the ends at the burns of the mud-stuck wheel
 in the pond biting with rage the eye of the expiring bull

Poems for the Millennium: Preface to volume 2
(with Jerome Rothenberg)

Know this:
the only game I play is the millennium
the only game I play is the Great
Fear
Put up with me. I won't put up
with you!

— AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

INTRODUCTION

If the first book was an opening, the second is a continuation and a movement into future works. It is the celebration of a coming into fullness — the realization in some sense of beginnings from still earlier in the century. And yet the poetry like the time itself marks a sharp break from what went before, with World War II and the events of Auschwitz and Hiroshima creating a chasm, a true aporia between then and now. It is on the near side of that paradoxical break that our own lives first come in — not outside history this time but living in and through it. The years the book covers are those of the cold war and its aftermath and, viewed from where we are, the time too of the second great awakening of poetry in the century now coming to an end. The story told is one that we have lived in and have found never to have been truly told, neither in its triumphs nor its failures (with an affection for the failures sometimes as great as for the triumphs). If ideas like that guided our first book, they will more strongly dominate our second, where we can no longer act as distant and objective viewers, but as witnesses and even partisans for the works at hand.

Sixth Diwan:

Home in the Multiple

(Nomadics 6: New York Outward 2008–2024)

I am in exile from exile. — Merle Bachmann

From: *AN ALIF BAA*

preamble to an alphabet

letters arose
says Abu al-Abbas Ahmed al-Bhuni
letters arose
from the light of the pen
inscribed the Grand Destiny
on the Sacred Table

after wandering through the universe
the light transformed
into the letter alif,
source of all the others.

another arrangement of letters
into words and words
into stories has it
that Allah created the angels
according to the name & number
of the letters so that they should
glorify him with an infinite
recitation of themselves as arranged
in the words of the Qu'ran.

and the letters prostrated themselves
and the first to do so was the alif
for which Allah appointed the alif to be
the first letter of His name & of the
alphabet.

Adam is said to have written a number of books three centuries before his death. After the Flood each people discovered the Book that was destined for it. The legend describes a dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad & one of his followers, who asked: 'By what sign is a prophet distinguished?'

'By a revealed book,' replied the Prophet.

'O Prophet, what book was revealed to Adam?'

'A, b...'. And the Prophet recited the alphabet.

'How many letters?'

'Twenty-nine letters.'

'But, oh Prophet, you have counted only twenty-eight.'

Muhammad grew angry and his eyes became red.

'O Prophet does this number include the letter alif & the letter lam?'

'Lam-alif is a single letter... he who shall not believe in the number of twenty-nine letters shall be cast into hell for all eternity.'

1.

and Alif has many seats
 under which he is silent
 though you cannot call it suffering
 suffering rhymes with zero
 at least initially
 a sweet round perfection
 as we like to draw it
 doodling one into the other

(newspaper margins of the b&w middle fifties
 at Mme Cavaïotti's where I wrote
 or learned to daily at 5 P.M. whose husband
 told me that in the last war (which wasn't
 the last at all) he had been
 forced to drink his piss from his boot
 in the desert of Libya, his wife linking
 zeroes, rounds, in the margins of the daily
 "Wort," making, making writing

a chain of nothingness
 that is something
 and that is our fate und Fluch:

that we have to do something
 even to achieve the nothing
 even if only we doodle
 ourselves through life
 while talking on the phone
 to someone doodling elsewhere
 while all we mumble are
 sweet nothings chains
 of linked zeroes

yet
step back & focus shifts
a shape emerges from the space created
by the two circles'
intersections,
mandorla,
wherein stands
the shape of Celan's eye, of the fruit
of the almond tree,
there stood, maybe,
the names of the six kings
of Madyan, make up the letters
of the Arabic
alphabet.

The nothing, where does it stand?
It stands outside the almond,
it stands in the shells
of the suffer'un
the zero-crescents
above & below

("Human curl, you'll not turn grey,
Empty almond, royal-blue")

fall away
as the almond looms,
yet remain as links
of a chain,
isthmus-claws
sew mandorla to
mandorla

2.

What a place that must be,
a something at least, to be in
and if that nothingness
was the hamza
a sort of zag without a zig
a future breath half taken now
with always something more
solid, important coming right
behind it.
a kind of fishing hook.

which puts an odd occasion
on this table:
a fishing hook
equals
a future breath
here lie the roots of another
surrealism yet to come
when we find the zig goes with
the orphaned zag.

A poem in noon

noon already
 yet dew
 persists
 in a letter
 framer of Enlightenment
 a vocalization of Arabic
 & a discussion, no, an
 excerpt from a letter
 — the other kind
 or is it? —
 in which Ghita
 (a gain to open her name)
 meditates on that most redolently
 redundantly?
 of poetic objects:
 the dew drop —
 rosée
 dew
 nda

where our r, French,
 rolls & roils
 into the dark of a round
 wonder, a drop in
 a bucket, to re-emerge
 hissing wet, somewhat
 sheepish, but not ain
 so difficult to pronounce
 for northern claritas.
 Rosée, rosée you want to go on
 mad Brel sheep braying
 rosée, rosas, rosa, rosarum

an elsewhere will have
 gobbled the drop by noon
 whereas dew dances
 on that soft initial d
 even if one suspect a
 long gone missing hamza
 that moment of separation
 of drop & ether, air
 the caught breath of
 transformation
 air into water
 a condensation (a poem)
 in itself.

we live on such false
 etymologies, on the real
 joy of sound-
 ing, it brings
 on what unravels
 in a word
 lip formed, throat instructed,
 scraping or not the roof
 of its tent,
 & way back of it,
 too high up to get
 that close
 or simply get it
 the brain amazed
 that shaped air
 makes sense
 in difference.
 Shut your brain port
 (as if, as if)
 for a moment
 open your mouth

be wet sweet breath
 be dew
 be dew
 be the beduin
 letter
 be noon
 be noon dew
 between lips
 be silk between
 be between
 the letter and the brain
 the letter and the letter
 be the hamza both
 cuts & links,
 be barzagh
 be peninsula
 be isthmus
 be the moment between
 breathe, ride the breath
 ride the separation between
 letter & letter
 the air bridge
 be there
 & listen:
 rosée, dew — a due rose
 triangulation with
 soft sweet nda
 hop over the bent back
 of the initial, both hands
 gently on that back
 to gain air
 becomes the slight
 explosion of d
 into that most initial and red
 of vowels

arnica, all-healer
end of nda
but I err
the alphabet was wrong
the noon
in Arabic
shaped
mirror reversal
over the horizon,
in its language
the letter a little
trough a gentle
curved cup
ع the dew the drop
maybe is but the dot
hangs over it, thus:

ن

COLOPHON



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