

# Interglacial Narrows



PIERRE JORIS

2/21

The Art of the Fugue; l'art de la fugue:  
how to run away from yourself  
to come to yourself  
through one outside.

- Snow this morning -  
that lives up to  
& beyond your unfamiliar  
idea of any other  
beyond -

\*

- a behind, rather, as from  
the other side of this page  
the ink bleeds through,  
my counter-fugue,  
my counter-image, mirror image  
brings nothing home, except  
right now what stops  
my stammer, that metaphor  
that ink can bleed or  
can it?

\*

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*Interglacial Narrows*

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for Nicou, always  
all ways  
lead to you

Wake up.  
Write down.

— Robert Kelly

Every time I cross language, the border loses some of its power.

— Nathalie Handal

When the body moves & works, observe the soul, and when mind & soul move & work, observe the body.

— Novalis

Feather the wind, leave the sky plucked  
The paper's blood is mixed with ink  
Its life doesn't want to stop

— Ahmed Lemsyeh

To be alive and explore nature now is to read by the light of a library  
as it burns.

— Tom MuStill

Why write eviscerating density and evacuating by-ways?  
Why flatten the polysemous bubbles into cardboard?

— Rachel Blau DuPlessis



# I. Lœss & Found



## ELEGY FOR ANSELM HOLLO

1.

eyes  
eyes  
eyes

invisible the eyes

a thousand  
crows  
on the snow

☞ yet, 2 crows  
already make a crowd

2.

☞ yet,  
we have to travel, Anselm  
because there are wines  
that don't.

3.

*Ich trinke aus zwei Gläsern*  
as we both  
*zackern*  
at the royal cæsura  
the wandering eyes  
in the crow's nest

between poem & translation  
translation & poem

bringing it all  
back home.

## ON THE ROCKS

that man-shaped tree trunk  
on the rocks at low tide  
borders the narrows,  
    at high tide the day  
before, it beat its wooden  
semblance against those  
same rocks — the twin  
branches imitating legs  
submerged, the pin-  
head angled up, banging  
on the rocks at algae  
level.

    the twist has stayed  
with me these three  
days, the anthropos slowly  
washed up,  
    washed out.

THAT FEELING

“you can(’t) go it alone,”  
vagrant, vagabond, give me a  
v-sign, double it to go  
wandering,  
    leave the medulla,  
slip between pyramid &  
peduncle,  
    (the letters go  
backwards) from jugular  
to carotid, down down, afferent all  
the way.  
    to count the schlup the schlep of  
viscera. Lets you know  
how your gut  
gets its  
gut feeling.

## II. The Book of U





## Cormorants

*in phylogenetic order & latin*

(to be chanted in alternation in the deep guttural grunts\*  
of the Double-crested Cormorant & the softer grunts of the  
Neotropic Cormorant)

Phalacrocorax  
from: φαλακρος (phalakros),  
“bald” & κοραξ (korax), “crow”  
or “raven,” which they are not.

auritus  
brasilianus (or  
Phalacrocorax olivaceus)  
sulcirostris  
carbo  
lucidus  
fuscicollis  
capensis  
nigrogularis  
neglectus  
capillatus  
penicillatus  
perspicillatus – extinct  
(c. 1850)  
aristotelis  
pelagicus  
urile  
magellanicus  
varius  
fuscescens  
gaimardi  
punctatus  
featherstoni  
harrisi

\* The Double-crested Cormorant makes deep, guttural grunts that sound a bit like an oinking pig. They grunt when taking off or landing, or during mating or aggressive displays, but otherwise are generally silent.

Leucocarbo

from: λευκος (leukos), Greek for “white,”  
& carbo, Latin for “black.”

bougainvillii  
carunculatus  
chalconotus  
stewarti  
onslowi  
colensoi  
campbelli  
ranfurlyi  
atriceps  
bransfieldensis  
georgianus  
nivalis  
melanogenis  
verrucosus  
purpurascens

Microcarbo

from: μικροσ (mikros), Greek for “small,”  
& carbo, Latin for “black.”

melanoleucos  
africanus  
coronatus  
niger  
pygmaeus

I. Prelude: West Coast

THE TRITON, LATE AFTERNOON

♫ even the ocean  
scums up earth  
shoving the sand back up

droppings of caught air

\*

along the Pacific rim  
— *Le prurit du soleil* —  
young women jog ♫ wag  
hurdling the scum-line  
in preparation for what lethal  
love marathon  
I cannot fathom —

\*

oh, cormorants  
take my mind  
off the blonde gulls  
♫ their lite car-  
nivorous lust.

\*

You hover & dive  
your drive  
a poet's gullet —

no albatross  
around this neck.

\*

like Lazarus  
you rise again  
from the ashes  
like that bird —  
a turkey with  
funky feathers  
& an attitude a  
mile long  
no cormorant would  
crane her  
neck toward

except that now  
your mind has  
turned into  
a shroud  
a mile  
long, white &  
flat &  
you have to  
start writing  
all over it  
all over  
again.

## 2. East Coast

before the walk: the hope to meet  
 cormorants. my cormorants.  
 & ask them to regurgitate  
 matter enough for a poem.

between the first (& only)  
 cormorant (though he would  
 be a revenant) Rancière cites  
 late so&so saying: le marxisme

est une théorie "finie." But  
*is it worth it if it doesn't*  
*cost you an arm or a leg?*  
 (Blau #88)

TWO FOR THE CORMORANTS

1.

the heart of  
the cormorant

is at the head  
of its name

it wants more  
but no rant

2.

we applaud  
the cormorant

even if the fish  
slipping down

its gullet  
won't.

IN THE ABSENCE OF CORMORANTS,

a cricket (cicada?), no, a female  
mantis (it is green)  
walks the narrow railing  
along the Narrows,  
a turtle pokes its head  
out of the quiet water  
before diving to the bottom —

here things are upside down,  
the earth carries a turtle  
on its back, & a mantis  
looks down on it all,  
worried or unworried  
that it may fall.

HALF WAY DOWN MY MORNING

walk &  
a lament for missing fauna  
forms in my head re-  
membering yesterday's  
mantis & turtle  
with only a ½ dozen  
sleepy gulls swinging non-  
chalantly on the flat waters  
½ way between here &  
Staten island

(so this all an  
in between, a half-  
way house New York

when of a sudden from  
under the water a cormorant  
emerges sits quietly for a  
moment & then with olympic  
precision as it starts to dive  
back under another cormorant  
breaks surface 25 feet away  
in perfect rhyme with its  
disappearing semblable, a  
phalacrocorax *da-fort, fort-da*  
made my morning &  
no doubt  
theirs too.

### III. Homage to Celan



## PREFACE

2020 was the 100<sup>th</sup> birth- & 50<sup>th</sup> death-year of Paul Celan, the poet whose work has accompanied me, & not only my translator-avatar, for 50-plus years now. An endeavor that came to an end with the publication in November 2020 of the two final volumes: *Paul Celan: Memory Rose Into Threshold Speech — The Collected Earlier Poetry* (FSG) and *Paul Celan: Microliths They Are, Little Stones (Posthumous Prose)* (CMP). Over those years I have of course written poems to, for or even against Paul Celan, the man who brought me to poetry when I heard his most famous work, “Todesfuge,” recited in a high school class in 1960 or 61 in Luxembourg. I thought it therefore worthwhile to gather at this point in time this small section as homage to Celan, great poet and translator, *il miglior fabbro*. Surrounded by a number of “occasional” Celan-related poems (some already published in previous books but gathered here for this celebration), the core of the section is *The Book of Iyap Nalec*, a sequence of four poems I composed in the mid-seventies to write myself through the relationship I had with Celan’s poetry & poethics. It was first published in 1982 as a chapbook & picked up in 1987 in my first selected, *Breccia*. It is the center between the first poem, dating from 1969, and written while I was translating *Atemwende/Breathturn*, and the last written in November 2020 as a reflection on Celan’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

AFTER REREADING CELAN'S *ATEMWENDE*

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

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

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.

( oh, to have  
that distance —  
distance in closeness  
distance is closeness —  
a different identity)  
yours is that distance's  
eye eroding  
last year's snow from your  
forehead.  
— Je est un autre. —

(1969)

THE BOOK OF LUAP NALEC

*para mis Europeos*  
*para mis muertos*

We will never look very good  
We are too far gone on thought, and its rejections  
The two actions of a Noos

Edward Dorn

Artistik ist der Versuch der Kunst, innerhalb des allgemeinen Verfalls der Inhalte sich selbst als Inhalt zu erleben und aus diesem Erlebnis einen neuen Stil zu bilden, es ist der Versuch, gegen den allgemeinen Nihilismus der Werte eine neue Transzendenz zu setzen: die Transzendenz der schöpferischen Lust...

... im Grunde also meine ich, es gibt keinen anderen Gegenstand für die Lyrik als den Lyriker selbst.\*

Gottfried Benn

\* Amidst a general decay of contents, artistry is art's attempt to experience itself as content and create a new style from that experience. Contra a generalized nihilism of values, it is an attempt to pitch a new transcendence: the transcendence of creative desire...

... So basically I mean that for lyric poetry there is no other object than the lyric poet himself.

THE BIRTH OF LUAP NALEC

(...)  
somewhere a door closes.  
I am not awake  
alone . I am

thinking of  
you, lady  
la nuit américaine  
I'm thinking

the strong body of America arched  
night over an ephectic Europe

' e n t r o p o c e p h a l u s '

God's peace, Benn, would have that coin  
(age that knew the brain's skin  
Roman des Phänotyp:  
played Doktor  
wrote Morgue  
dies)

Celan dares  
go further, Faden  
sun through  
threadbare  
web,  
his breath  
turned  
to water.

How dare you  
dare?

Face  
myself  
past the bright  
wound mirror?

Stare  
where you  
single counter-  
swimmer  
count

↳  
break  
the floated  
spines,  
the lines.

Time  
broke us  
in,  
saddled us  
with a sadness  
(post-modern, no,

post-mortem) its  
vigor the rigor  
of water now  
frozen, the white  
silenced sheet,  
Pleistocene  
place I search  
to find  
the shifted  
stance.

## IV. Up to & Including the Virus

Diaretics 2020-2021



1/1/2020

The numbers add up  
& bring it to us  
minus or plus the world —

there's no more hiding  
night has fallen  
take my hand

time to get going  
the numbers have been crunched &  
they haven't run out as yet.

1/14

(in *Think Café*)

with nothing to think about  
except for wondering how  
do you think, what is  
the process? from outside  
in or from inside out, or  
is it what happens in  
between (like everything  
else) where outside  
& inside meet or if  
all goes (to the) well at  
least confuse themselves —

1/26

Misheard on radio (some ad seems to claim that  
“dying is a global culinary experience.”)

1/30

It is still night,  
the words as yet as few  
as there are lights  
on the opposite shore

All shores are opposite  
— but opposite what?

My eyes, no — they have to be in  
my eyes for me to see,  
they are opposite the night  
and touch, the lights  
are the night.

1/31

The great dying of the birds  
puts cheap gas into your cars  
✂ a feather on the hat  
of this and that  
“industry,” celebrating  
its adage, a dollar is  
worth more than a life,  
any life.

NOTE TO SELF ON 11 FEBRUARY

cell-sense (N)

cell-self (P)

the body politic of the  
community of one's cells —  
as place of reflection:

the cell & its relation to sugar —  
N's contention that it, the cell,  
will go for the easiest high, &  
loves sugar — & by mimesis (? —  
my word here) we, that organized bag  
of cells do the same.

I.E. life's like that, or that's life

goes for  
the quick fix —

& the birds love the fermented berries,  
getting loaded's a treat  
for them too!

FEBRUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>

no, I don't  
love you

more today  
than on any

of the other 364  
days of the year.

2/15

day after, even even-  
ing after,

the coldest

morning of the winter,  
sun out & clear skies,  
cleansing February skies —

the day after

love, love is still  
there, & here,

it is always coming

like the wave

& the shore knows

& stays put.

day after five cardinals

on the Rambles,

& one Cooper's hawk,

day after morning

after noon

after evening,

the three rafters of day

to swing on,

live under —

2/16

The word of the day  
the screen saver (or  
Savior?) claims  
is *soniferous*

(according to Webster's meaning  
producing or conducting sound as in  
*soniferous* marine animals)

you say I am confused  
is it today's word  
that is soniferous  
or is the word of the day  
that word,

I say I am confused as

I type the word it is auto-  
magically (I tried to type -matically but it too was  
retro-corrected) into  
coniferous but then

you break  
through my confusion  
saying "I am soniferous"  
loudly,

and the day  
answers with light  
laughter.



## OTHER BOOKS BY PIERRE JORIS

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(Station Hill Press, 1989)

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*INTERGLACIAL NARROWS* gathers a range of Pierre Joris' poems written between 2015 and 2021, including an extended version of the *Book of U / Le livre des cormorans* by Joris and Nicole Peyrafitte, initially published by Galerie Simoncini in Luxembourg in 2017.

Both central to the book and opening up its time-lines is the section "Homage to P.C." Put together in 2020 to celebrate Paul Celan's 100<sup>th</sup> birth-year, it gathers poems the earliest of which dates from 1969 & the most recent from 23 November 2020, the day Celan would have turned 100 years old.

The final section of the book is a diaristic sequence of poems & notes started during the spring of 2020, i.e. at the moment the covid-crisis hit NYC the hardest.



Pierre Joris is a word-wizard who shines light on the soul itself. His poems are precious jewels — compact, crystalline structures — each containing their own unique secrets, guiding you to undiscovered places, feelings, images, and ideas. It's impossible to read his work & come away unmoved. Magically inspiring!  
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