

PERMANENT DIASPORA

PIERRE JORIS

DP

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for Nicole

Permanent diaspora — the
ideal state
— Anselm Hollo

Please wait. The language you have requested is being processed.
— Delta Airlines / flight 116 New York-Paris

Words raise thoughts, like dogs raise hares.
— Pierre Guyotat, *Explications*

THIS AFTERNOON DANTE
will be ex-
pelled from Florence —
a good thing as how could he
have written so well
on the far-away imaginary ex-
ile of the comically divine
realms had he not known
what it meant to walk
over a cold January day's
ground frost, clod-
breaking, heart beating,
from one city to another
— to come to
this: that exile
is but the next step you take
the unknown there
where your foot comes
down
 next, in
heaven or on earth
exile is when you can still
lift a foot
exile is when you are not
yet dead.

THE WORD, THE MAWQIF

The word is/as the *mawqif*, the station, the oasis, the momentary resting place.

The caravan of syntax discovers it, the new word, as it, the sentence, pushes into the not-yet-written, the word comes, or is given — however that happens, gift or present, possible poison in the present or present poisoned? And I stop, and if the word is new or re-newed, I will be surprised & delighted & rest in it, for a moment, then the push of ta'wil will get the sentence or line or caravan on track, no, on the trek again, into the desert ahead, in search of another oasis-word, resting place, station.

THE DESIRE OF A LINE

that strange genitive
anthropomorphizing
(what a mouthful
what a line filled)
(so full I'm out
(of ink change in-
(strument of in-
(scription of what
was the original
query, quod-something
quandary of
genitives, is it
the writer's desire
for a line or the
line's desire for
what? a writer?
Doubt here permitted,
even needed, as I
ask for the pleasure
of its presence, know-
ing no line hankers
after a maker,
 though(t)
may desire the silence
that follows, the winged
breath runs silent
from it's end to
the edge of page,

to stop, breathless
now & edgy at
end of its possible
word,
to survey
the margins.

WAVE TO AND FRO

-m the three women
at far away lunch
table (another galaxy)
to & from
the single male
— my rare pleasure —
reading a treatise
on angelology

that my retreats
— *mawaqif*, stations —
have been these
treats, these solo-lunches, thought-
launches in
crowded restaurants
(a baudelairian pleasure
revisited by benjaminian
nostalgia made more
difficult in this America
sin Arcadia)
angels, ibn Arabian
or novus —
as if there
could be a new
angel,
(One less terrible? – no
just wing-
less, unwinged,

all feathers used up, kalams
of necessity (the necessity
of writing, or
rewriting even
this menu, princely
print, fair
fare — we need
foods for single angels,
unattached wings,
what she called
quills & quirks.

A CALM VADEMECUM DOSE

toward a poem for Douglas
finally, though it starts

last Calvados tear
cried embracing you
knowing, knowing
this was the
long good-bye

tiers of Calvary
no more dawn on Pont Neuf
the new bridge now the oldest
over a river that is a scene insane
as I run

as I hold

the last
glass
of Calva, poured out
now on Paris ground,
sop for some imaginary big dog
& yet, Lady Lethe didn't get it all

as "dark switches on the light" title
of the last poem, Feb 10, 2000

"snow lying like a private drift of death"

"my interest is in the form that death gives to our lives"
"a public heart" he was, in John Donne's phrase quoted by Denise Riley

and the master of a most demanding poetics: “How shall I write this?
By living it; that rule has not changed. You have children. Lose yourself in them.”

even now, when
“death, our richest humour, fills with lights.”

 a stress born in time
 stands outside
a minor, eternal present, a
 trembling instant
partly resisting the flow
 the line creates it
its very great fascination.

arrived at this. at that
 bouche d'ombre
the descent beckons
 into memory's hollows &
gulphs — metropolitan or -tain
 through it rebirth of sorts, e-
merge elsewhere, come up
for breath, even if
myth your identity not safe
 above or under-ground
the grind, the grind
 I groan in dejection
 poor Calvados
pour calm vademecum dose
 poor Calvary
go with me
calamitous vagrant time
 we sat & smoked Cuba
 sighed Africa
 sited America
vaude-willed Haiti
 wept the Maghreb

set the world neither aright nor afire nor akimbo
recrossed Pont Neuf
had coffee & croissants at Le Petit Bar
embraced at metro gate
shot up the veins of another new morning
will meet again just there
I mean here

FOR BARRY MACSWEENEY DEAD THIS WEEK AT 51

First
Jim Morrison
rock idol,
now you.
Help him
break through
to this, that
or any side
(you are
the better
poet if not
the better
man) I
played you
once what I
wish you now:
happy trails —
you too a
quicksilver
messenger:
ride on &
you'll find
your chicano fretboard,
you'll open the sand
you'll deck the asteroid.
Drift on
through the tripe,
the liquid overdrive
you could not escape
is sour grapes now.

Here there's snow
or a slow
decline
in the bathtub
where a fine
finesse
is as crinkly
as your heart's
crisp.
I still don't know
what a gamboge
stair is.
The yellow brick road
all the way
to heaven?
Death taught
us nothing.
Barry, meet Jim.
The quicksilver
cut we liked
so much was
Who do you love?
a live suite or
hand we still follow
or hold.
Whose hand?
Or the shed noose
of our dreams.
Shared. Go on,
there'll be trailers
for sale. Don't
settle there
or for anything
less.

TUESDAY, MAY 23RD 2000

full date written out
to draw a line

between now & then,
i.e. yesterday or last

night or this bare-
ly past night here now

it's dawn death,
today's early child,

time, time what we are
inside of, banging

our heads against yet
don't want to leave.

CARE OF HOUSE, DEAD
light bulbs, clogged drains
as the case may be —
as wearing as the care of
body, teeth
talking back, a rare ear
clogged, to be drained —
the care of mind, take
care of mind, it
happens in the act of
taking care of
home & body,
in the house of the body
in the body of the house
mind stretches
waking up, touches
walls on either side,
makes room for body
to be at ease, mind
is all around it, awake
body minds it.

EVENING WRITING

not the needed aubade
gift of morning
the rising
in my east
yeast of day
am moth
of morning
no redness at night
even on Friday

BUT THE MIND
has no care
absorbed in
June's warmth
body takes
over it laughs
mind shakes
its head
if it has one
if it has none
it shakes, just shakes
with laughter
two principles play
at hide & seek
trellis work of
shadow & light
lies on body in mind
candle awaits evening
trellis plays loose &
fastens mind
the order of order
takes care of mind
the share of light and
darkness fails
to account for the sound
of these colors these
flowers turn
in the visible wind —
there is knowing

outside perception
no knowing inside either
inside dawn a
flutter of expectation
lean on time
to come to bring
what never happens
how come the ladder did not
 reach the sky
but went right through it
 came out the other
side of / morning is the
 ladder lathered
with our comings & goings
 the useless climbing

“... IT WAS THE GESTURING...” : INSTEAD OF READING



WRITING #13

“... it was the gesturing as a whole, external, internal, of the ‘bourgeois’ soul that needed to be abolished and replaced by something closer to poetic inspiration; it was the whole social, even vital, system that was in place that needed to be overthrown, even if that meant perhaps to overthrow the most beautiful productions of that era of alienation; it was nearly all that made up a society that had to disappear for the benefit of a universal community where everyone would have learned the gestures of the other, where no act would have become fixed as custom, no gesture fixed as habit, no thought an ideology, where no wisdom, no proverb, no resignation to a merely human state would ever again have the time to congeal, etcetera, etcetera. Always, in fact, this matter of nomadism and the sedentary.”

Pierre Guyotat, *Explications*, p. 164 (my translation)

NIMROD IN HELL

My father was a healer & a hunter. Is it any surprise that I became a poet & a translator? We don't escape our filiations: we only stand more revealed, as the territories shift, as the hunt closes in. In an early work I spoke of St. Hubertus, patron saint & protector of hunters, bishop of Liège, who is also invoked against rabies. While hunting on Good Friday, he had been converted when he saw a stag with a light cross between its antlers — this was supposed to have happened in the dark woods of the Ardennes, i.e. just north of where Rimbaud was born, & in a space Rimbaud measured out in long walks. But in Hubertus, or behind that too easily christianized hunter, lay already an earlier hunter: not a saint, though an even more biblical figure: Nimrod, “the first mighty man on earth” — a hunter, a mighty hunter before or against God (depending on the translation). This giant & mighty hunter is also, immediately, in the Bible associated with the project of Babel, i.e. with the question of language & translation. And not surprisingly, as Giorgio Agamben reminds us, Dante has Nimrod in his hell (Inferno XXXI, 46-81) with the loss of meaningful language as his punishment. So that what the giant speaks in the Commedia is neither the lingua franca of Latin nor the new Vulgar Tongue. Dante gives us one verse of Nimrod's ranting: “*Raphèl mai amècche zabì almi.*” Commentators from Benvenuto to Buti, or more recently, Singleton, are certain that these words are meaningless. A few, such as Landino, suggest that the words could be Chaldean, others that they may be Arabic, Hebrew, Greek... But the problem may not be there at all: The words Dante puts into Nimrod's mouth are fitting, are accurate in their intention on language. Their meaning, in that sense, is absolutely clear: they mean to be ununderstandable, to be the babble of Babel, the language that is untranslatable into any language — & that therefore, we know, must be translated. (And yet – the lingo of Babel was the single language that all humanity understood, that a jealous commander-in-chief then got rid of as punishment for the early humans' communality; “divide et regna” already the essence of YHWH's political science. So that Nimrod either remembers the first, unified language of the human race which we no longer know, or he speaks in one of the post-Babelian lingos, which are what makes translation possible).

But his words, no matter which language or non-language they are in, are fitting in a further sense: they are a rant, a babble, thus a babelian bavel, & thus connect to have, Fr. for drool, spittle. A false etymology – but are any etymologies really “false”? Aren't they the engine whose misfirings, rather than smooth transparent linguistic runs, drive poetry forward? A false etymology, then, possibly, but one that brings in that much despised excretion without which we would have no language. (And yet, looking up the etymology,

Fr. “bave” goes back to pop. Latin “*baba*”, an “onomatopoeia that expresses the babble [babill] of children.” Or of giants. Or of the single universal language all humans once spoke in their lingo-genetic childhood.) Now this bave, this spittle, this active saliva (doesn’t the word “alive” hide somewhere in “saliva”?), as the *Encyclopaedia Acephalica* teaches us, is “the deposit of the soul; spittle is soul in movement.” For spittle accompanies breath, “which can exit the mouth only when permeated with it.” Because “breath is soul, so much so that certain peoples have the notion of ‘the soul before the face.’” Without spittle no breath, no soul, no language – it is the lubricant that immanentizes the pneuma. But it is also that which, the EA goes on, “casts the mouth in one fell swoop down to the last rung of the organic ladder, lending it a function of ejection even more repugnant than its role as gate through which one stuffs food.” And it’s sexual connotations & erotic manifestations allow it to befuddle any hierarchical classification of organs. The EA again: “Like the sexual act carried out in broad daylight, it is scandal itself, for it lowers the mouth – which is the visible sign of intelligence – to the level of the most shameful organs...” The scandal of children & giants speaking in a language comprehensible (or incomprehensible) to all, like spitting in public. Neither YHWH nor Dante can let this happen. The one shatters the single language, the other gathers the now incomprehensible words of the giant hunter Nimrod but makes them, has to make them fit into his language, wiped clean of spittle.

For Nimrod’s language anguish cannot, and does not exceed the Dantean world, it fits exactly into the cosmotopography of his lyric epic. It is metrically exact & accurately rimes with “palmi” two lines above & “salmi” two lines below. Gentle giant, speaking nonsense in comely divine words. Not surprisingly the prissy Latin poet wants worse for Nimrod, telling him “Stupid soul, keep to your horn.” And Virgil finally dismisses him: “Let us leave him alone and not speak in vain, for every language is to him as his is to others, which is known to none.” Yet Nimrod in rage hunts still – for meaning, & he says his meaning.

Poet, translator: même combat! We keep hunting among stones, Dante hunts down language in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* where he tells us: “let us hunt after a more fitting language...so that our hunt may have a practicable path, let’s first cast the tangled bushes & brambles out of the wood.” (Ronald Duncan’s translation, modified). But the *selva* will always be *oscura*, mutters Rimbaud in the Ardennes, stumbling through Hubert’s hunting grounds, escaping mother and her tongue (is that why he gives up writing poetry?) and he stubs a toe, goes to Africa, travels the desert, the open space, no *selva oscura*, no guide needed, he has learned the languages, this nomad poet who knew that “living in the same place [he] would always find wretched,” to go on trafficking in the unknown, master of “la chasse spirituelle,” a hunt that will not let up.

Homophonically this morning I hear Dante/Nimrod's line as:

“Rough hell may enmesh ease, a be-all me.”

A CERTAIN SHABBINESS, OR: THE CIRCUS IS LEAVING TOWN FOR GOOD.

It is not because the initials of the Lydia Zavatta circus — large golden letters, less baroquely adorned than one would have supposed, against a less-than-scarlet red cloth above the band-stand — immediately brought to mind a major American poet who has yet to receive his dues and is unlikely to do so in the present climate, it is not because of that that this thought came to me immediately upon entering the circus and after some fumbling around finding our seats — hard and narrow benches covered with faded, threadbare cloth of the same red. Or that the thought stayed with me throughout the show, growing more obvious or even banal with every dusty act, and then after we traipsed out into the lukewarm summer night, and drove back in a quiet if not overtly pensive mood and gazed at the ocean, itself oddly subdued under a lackadaisical moon, for a few minutes before going back to our rented summer cottage and its so-so mattresses, where said thought, still unsaid, remained with me throughout a night of slapstick dreams that must have been distant cousins, if more chaplinesque montages of the circus. And has now lasted into this gray day, this thought — if this bitter-sweet mingling of nostalgia and foreboding deserves to be called a thought rather than just the ring of shabby sadness that clings to all such occasions like the ring of gray soap flakes marks the water level of the drained bathtub. So that even now, having left the occasion behind me, the taste lingers and wants to be put down here, now, instead of the aubade that habitually opens day. The banality of it all so apparent — a simple analogy with all its inaccuracy, vagueness, with maybe only that bitter sweetness to make it stick, to make the link hold. It is this: that this provincial French circus, small, shabby, on the brink of bankruptcy, with only one clown, with only a few doves, half a dozen dusty dogs and four moth-eaten brown bears, struck me as a clear analogy for the situation of poetry today.

EP: HEARD, NOT SEEN

One.

The Pound re-
sounds
in these hills
volleys of him
mill in these ears
all the way a
cross two quick
valleys
to Exideuil.

There is a lark here too –
don't know how to bring
him in, except by saying
so – but he sings when
he wants to.

Two.

Altaforte,
Altaforte,
E.P. sings
he no lark
busy bee he
was & brings

you to the mark
a restaurant table
now en deuil
of him in
Exideuil.

READING/WRITING #18

via JD on J-LN

the mouth is first place,
is first,
place of
spacing,
retracts from breast
opens a cavity, cave, a-
byss, or-
ifice, hole,
an o, an opening, an open
ring.

It is touch before speech, it
opens the first space, the
first con-
fusion: oral
& buccal –

the mouth simultaneously
place & non-place, place of a
dis-location, gaping space
of the *quasi permixtio* (Descartes)
of soul & body

((—> etc. page 42, *Le Toucher*

try to think this mouth /
opening together with the
Olson/Celan
commissure / tesseræ
matters
or : an opening, a gaping
also creates a commissure, an
angle in common, a fold.

i.e. beyond the reflexive *s'ouvre*
se détend, it creates a
doubling, a commonality
(com-missure) trembling
towards an outside, an ex-
teriority.

(opening opens – in the middle voice

The I already two
formed by the opening of the mouth
makes it so
says it so

that makes it so by saying it.
Not round
no circle, an
angle.

((Angel

Or in the circus, a trapeze
an articulation breaks
the round.

Break the ring-of-roses
to be, to say be-
coming.

The circle is always angular.
Circling the fire, you become
nomad by flying
off at a tangent,
at the commissure
:that possibility a
given

((If song is there first, or singing, as Nicole suggests, then its loss via speech, its necessary loss is a breaking of that round, deeper down, in the sound-box, a making angular, a creation of lines / of flight/. Speech would then be the nomadicity of human sound, with song an original at-homeness, a sedentariness we escape.))

*

but what of Olson's
 tesserae,
 articulations
 (laws? of the same name?
or shards, multi-
edged reterritorialize onto
the roundness of escaping lines,
of what escapes the
commissures,

 or the way (*der Weg*,
 the Weg stirbt)

these lines of flight articulate
themselves?

“the desire to communicate is inversely proportionate to our real knowledge of the interlocutor, and directly proportional to our wish to interest him in us. No need to worry about acoustics: it will always appear by itself. What matters is distance. Whispering in the neighbor's ear quickly tires.”

Osip Mandelstham, *De l'Interlocuteur*, p. 67.

what touches in not-touching?
the border, the untouchable,
the always elsewhere I stalk
I push against yet never
touch.

If
you cannot touch the
 untouchable,
 you can look
where looking was forbidden.

 a shadowy suspicion
 an aroused content

disturbing to psyche
 but “Psyche was
a searcher in the story,
 as a consequence of her looking
 when looking is forbidden.”

R.D., HD Book p. 292

Look there, every-
 where look at her.

 But we look to touch
and do so in the act
of looking —

 the desire of / in
the eye — fires
to hand to advance
 “he is looking to touch”

(touch assures being
ear /eye /nose assure well-being

J.D. *Le toucher*, p. 61

MONSOONISH .

 on back porch
awaiting dawn through a
curtain of rain. to write
whatever . all the unwritten
letters to you. And you.
And you. The noise of rain
on the brain. Do not
mention pens. Wet dogs'
bark. Do not mention rain.
A quarter is a small
space, except when it's
empty. Rub Al Khal.
Lat. 18° 45', Long. 52° 30'. American
spirit: organic poison.
I wish I were in
Sa'ana. No news is old
news. A break in the clouds.
No joke. She sleeps through
it. Not the Latin Quarter either.
The pont Mirabeau. He
was a strong swimmer. They
say. Which leaves a doubt. Do
you need a doubt? Careful
coffee. This morning. Every
morning. Still or again the
back porch the front porch &
back again a smoked cigarette
now that rain has stopped

the kids play ball scooter down
Madison Place. Here there is
no doubt. Yelling clear pleasure
& excitement. Every fact is a
miracle. There can be no doubt.
This is the back porch again.
5 a.m. nicotine
not a moth it is a bee.
the night bee circles the light.
Tighter, more wound up than
any moth. Bounces off the
oddly honey-combed shaped surface
of the porch light. Goes into
darkness. Now a small
mosquito. Thoughts of stag-
nant water. Here by the Hudson
West Nile disease. Birds & mosquitoes.
All places now contemporaneous in
the body. The birth of Mithrias
from homesteads. Mystery of
a postcard Allen sent from
Newcastle. Paying tribute
to the dead. Barry MacSweeney,
poet, friend. A birthing card
cycles between the
three of us, the
wheel of Samsara
wheel of common
wealth & decay.

A LATER LEMUR OFFERING

flip months & days
continental drift dates
a clear willingness
to know both
incise bone or
briefly strum hind legs
a desert music
like any other
data carriers of
dead meat
the central site
is not in between
to toggle the lemur
dawn into peristaltic
window dressing
moon shots heard
not seen in obscure
caves under no
skies we slither
erect & long-limbed
carrier diseases
evacuate stagnant
water bowls aimed

at pharaonic
drift from delta
to delta wing it
superbly bitchy
carefully licked
in the intimacy
of fever patches
drowning gill
flowers one moon
time shoots its
payload here
now when
the time is gone
to worry the beads
astrally disposed
in cunabula fat
flattened distance
is occipital trap
indoors wading pool
marshals the village
idiot to comic
corrals but doesn't
restart the drosera
filigree

DREAM ANGUISH GIVE

way to a-
wake anxieties
a different kettle
of fish where
the kettle calls the
fish black & the
fish stop their
night chant, tired
of mouthing moder-
nist scores, eager
for a warrior-like
epic of the great
Black Fish Quest
— that they are
the dark matter
that keeps us from
flying apart, that
keep the stars swirling
in galaxies of high
speed.

Black fish, the bone
structure of this
multiverse, slowly
congealing,
a scaffolding for
dreams & stars
inscribes the fate
of the universe:

systole & diastole
sucking up & in
until all is gone —
or breathing out,
spewing forth
dreams & matter
into the sails
of the dream until all
moves in final equilibrium
on the galactic
merry go round.

WHAT THE DREAM ENDS IN
is a confrontation of p.o.w.'s
and post office workers,
a confrontation of prisoners
of war and p.o.w.'s
at the edge of the continent
looking eerily empty
a few sailors pressing
against the railings
as the boat espouses the
land's curvature & you
& I breathe somehow relieved
& smile but not for long
because back in the building
someone has snatched my
son & I chase him upstairs
unsure as to whether he is
prisoner or worker, while
outside the verdigris statue
waves & giggles.

FOR GERRIT AT 75

The dream calls to order –
 What is due is a
 A way to-
Do today to dance the cha cha cha
 A two-step of set
steps up
 the Chakra-
tree. The Gerrit ladder
a letter to the red
 Shah of Shah's
 The dance of trance
formation, cha
cha cha –

 An entre be-
tween two, is an *antre*-chat
 the cave of becoming
 the step in the middle
twixt two sets