

CONTENTS :

« <i>après cela, moi j'ai regardé</i> » (ébauche) by ANNE-MARIE ALBIACH	6
“ <i>after that, I myself looked</i> ” (draft) by Anne-Marie Albiach	11
Translated by Donald Wellman and Julian Kabza	
ALEATORY DISPLACEMENT On Keith Waldrop's <i>Figured Image</i> by Donald Wellman	15
Urgence et négation en réponse Anne-Marie Albiach et Paul Celan by JEAN DAIVE	23
URGENCY AND NEGATION AS RESPONSE: ANNE-MARIE ALBIACH AND PAUL CELAN by JEAN DAIVE Translated by Julian Kabza and Donald Wellman	
EARTH ERGON, READING CELAN WITH DERRIDA AT HAND	
SURFACE [ truncated ] On Gamoneda	

*ANNE-MARIE ALBIACH*

*« après cela, moi j'ai regardé »*

(ébauche)

Une mémoire  
atemporelle s'annule  
et croît. Dans ces  
fragments allusifs  
qu'une logique ignorée

unit.

le désir appréhende ces  
fragments juxtaposés –  
ou la peur – l'a-préhension  
entrelacs du réel et de  
ces images subites –  
rapidité de l'instant –  
pulsion qui se joue de la  
destruction et de sa destruction  
points de mémoire précis –  
leur déportement dans un  
contexte évolutif – de la fiction  
masque – double – en perspective  
asymptote

le corps – se projette  
se divise se mémorise  
une ferveur – (corporelle)  
grammaticale  
un onanisme de la lettre  
s'auto-engendre  
projection  
(« l'air s'irradie : bouche fermée »)  
le hasard comme fiction: l'enjeu  
*le hasard comme logique:*  
l'énigme

une association  
d'images ou de termes.  
Leur figuration –  
La menace allitére – des

points permanents de  
danger corporel se réitèrent –  
(écrit dans le revers d'une  
culpabilité occulte)

perversité de la syntaxe –  
« analogies meurtrières »  
une innocence qui se défend –  
« cruauté » dans la ferveur – inversée  
vers soi

engendrement (et de la lettre)  
dans une perspective  
en déplacement dans le  
temps et son espace

termes musicaux élaborés  
dans le réel d'un « quotidien »  
hors sens – Une portée  
architecturale en retrait –  
l'image en défaut – son  
retrait (perpendiculaire)  
pervers perversité  
le délit

« meurtre » le corps  
se retourne sur soi – comme si  
le meurtre était extérieur et  
interne en soi –  
une respiration brisée qui perce  
la toile d'une mutité  
l'image surgit de ses  
cendres – par spasmes -- allusifs

le discours mis en  
accusation – sa trame défie  
la logique discursive  
une sécheresse mentale,  
la langue et le sable –  
percent la teneur prosodique

[ dans un corps à corps  
il induisait les  
débris de la logique –  
agressifs –  
la clausturation fait défaut  
à l'angle – « parfums précis »  
parfaire le cercle qui  
annihile les objets –  
cri – aveuglement latéral  
méticuleux  
fenêtre ouverte et l'absurdité  
du lieu

Voix maternelle: la haine ajustée des  
origines – parfums, voyelles  
incohérence des descendances  
monnayables

Sexe à nu  
omniscient pouvoir de  
destruction –  
spasmes évasifs sous des  
mains étrangères  
la haine perclus de terme,

dans les détours de la  
paralysie vocale –  
mise à nu dans l'attente,  
elle élabore une  
défense : l'atteinte déjà ancienne

fragilité prolifique :  
l'annulation de la perspective  
temps aléatoire  
un interdit transgressé  
par la mémoire  
Blasphème – ancestral  
sa dénégation

*“after that, I myself looked”*

(draft)

An atemporal  
memory annuls itself  
and grows. In these  
allusive bits  
that an ignored logic  
unifies.

    desire apprehends these  
fragments juxtaposed —  
where fear — the a-prehension  
an interlacing of the real and with  
these rapid images —  
sudden, fleeting —  
    the drive that plays with  
destruction and from its destruction

points of precise memory –  
their behavior in an  
evolving context – of fiction  
mask – double – in perspective  
asymptote  
the body – projects itself  
divides memorizes  
a fervor – (bodily)  
grammatical  
an onanism of the letter  
engenders itself  
projection  
("the air irradiated: mouth closed")  
chance like fiction: the stake  
*chance as logic :*  
*the enigma*  
an association  
of images or terms.  
Their figuration –  
The alliterative menace – of  
the fixed points of  
physical jeopardy reiterate –  
(written in the reverse of a  
hidden culpability)

perversity of the syntax  
" murderous analogies "  
an innocence that protects itself –  
" cruelty " in the fervor – inverted  
towards itself

engendering (and of the letter)  
in a perspective  
of displacement in  
time and its space

musical terms elaborated  
in a "quotidian" reality  
beyond sense – An architectural  
support in retreat –  
the image in default – its  
(perpendicular) retreat  
    perverse perversity  
the offense  
    "murder" the body  
turns on itself – as if  
the murder were outside yet  
internal both –  
a broken respiration that pierced  
the sheet of muteness  
the image surges from its  
ashes – in spasms – allusive  
discourse placed in  
accusation – its thread defies  
discursive logic  
    mental aridity,  
the language and the sand –  
pierce prosodic content

[ in a physical struggle  
    he introduced the

debris of logic –  
aggressive --  
the clausturation becomes vice  
at the angle – “precise perfume”  
to perfect the circle that  
annihilates objects –  
cry – blindly lateral  
meticulous  
window open and the absurdity  
of place

Maternal voice: hatred adjusts  
origins – perfumes, vowels  
incoherence of posterity  
convertible cash

Naked sex  
omniscient power of  
destruction  
evasive spasms under  
alien hands  
the hatred of a crippled term,  
in the lapses of the  
vocal paralysis –  
made naked in readiness,  
she elaborates a

defense : the violation already ancient

prolific fragility:  
annihilation of perspective  
aleatory time  
    a transgressive prohibition  
by the memory  
    Blasphemy – ancestral  
        her denial

Anne-Marie Albiach

*Translated by Donald Wellman, Julian Kabza, Claude  
Royet-Journoud*

# ALEATORY DISPLACEMENT

BY DONALD WELLMAN

In *Figured Image* (Post-Apollo Press, 2006), Keith Waldrop has made available to readers of English the most significant compilation of Anne-Marie Albiach's work since her *Mezza Voce* (also Post-Apollo Press, 1988). Waldrop's limpid immediacy negotiates with deliberate grace the complexities of Albiach's lexicon. She makes frequent use of words like "absence," "figure," and "trace"—a grammatological terminology, nuanced in her usage, but one that has since the 1980s become associated with an academic jargon. Without sacrificing this metaphysical dimension of the poetry, Waldrop achieves a physically pointed diction, a requirement if the reader is to grasp Albiach's distinctive processes of articulation, her "ghastly / literalness of absence" that abrupts as if by inscrutable chance on the page ("EXCESS: this measure," *Figured Image* 60).

It is difficult, in quoting from this text, to register the space between the terms of a title, like "Line Loss" or the spaces between lines and clusters of lines. That space honors Mallarmé, the forerunner to so many modern poetic practices. Moments of scored space, scored speech proliferate on her pages. I have chosen not to attempt to reproduce these spaces here. Thankfully the Post Apollo edition of *Figured Image* is a typographical facsimile of *Figurations de l'image*. Equally Mallarméan are the signifiers that admit an aleatory process as in "Un coup de Dés." None of this is precious. Image clusters dissolve and assert themselves by their own inscrutable process of seeking and shrinking from coherence. The work is not mimetic, as Mallarmé's in some senses remains.

Possibly there are multiple Albiachs. For one of these, composition is a material process keying on the physical presence of a breathing person. "I live the text as a *body*," she has said. Her

work has also been described as a combat between “the trace and the blank page” (Jean Tortel). Her poetry, I am thinking of *Anawratha* as much as *Figured Image*, is the site of dismemberment, violent incision, both the space of the page and the marks on the page scoring the language in the double sense of “score” or “cut” and “score” or “arrange.” It troubles my ear that Waldrop translates, the French “incision” as “notch” in “Figures of Memory” (*Figured Image* 25). But then he gives us the exquisite “major cut” for “entaille majeure” in his translation of “EXCESS: this measure” (*Figured Image* 75), fusing laceration and a physical bliss with the musical and prosodic resonances that are sustained motifs in this poem.

Albiach’s approach to writing is almost formulaic, in a sense modular; it is definitive with respect to the practice of *écriture* with which her poetry is associated, along with that of Emmanuel Hocquard, Claude Royet-Journoud, Jean Daive. *Écriture* privileges the nominal flatness of language, the “différance” – as theorized by Jacques Derrida – that allows signs to defer to one another in relational chains that inscribe meaning. For Jacques Derrida, the “trace” is a presence but it is also the site of the erasure of the sign, “erasure belongs to its structure” (24). Similarly influential for *écriture* is Michel Foucault’s construction of “enunciation.” For the poets associated with this practice, the image is a presence, not a trope, “involution of discourse” writes Albiach in “Winter Voyage” (*Mezza Voce* 62). Social factors that constitute a regime of discourse often exist in an unresolved tension with the intentional use of language. “Such investigation strips bare an indeterminate time, / abasing the relapsed, gestures from this time forward,” Albiach writes in “Incantation,” one of the poems in *A Geometry*, a small book, that is included in *Figured Image* (18). The poems of *A Geometry* serve well as an introduction, a grammar even, for the practice of *écriture*. Keyed on the physical presence of a breathing person, images or expressions, in isolated, incomplete fragments, mark an absence that is also a trace of an absence. Her use of the word “trace / tracé” in the opening line of “EXCESS: this measure” aligns deconstruction and *écriture* as twins or parallels, complementary reading and writing practices.

Albiach’s title, *Figurations de l’image*, reminds me of the discussion of the different senses of “figurative” and “figural”

that occurs in the opening pages of Gilles Deleuze's book on Francis Bacon. The liberation of the figure from representation is a project of deep expressive importance for Deleuze. It can be said that the white space of Albiach's page, combines with the erasure of the trace, so as to isolate the figured image, allowing aleatory recombinatory possibilities that are not representative but performative. This is precisely the needful isolation that Deleuze finds in Bacon and calls "figural" as opposed to either formal abstraction or figurative representation (9-10) Abstraction, Deleuze argues, is not the only alternative to figuration, the figural isolates the body in its presence on the page. Albiach's physical presence is an antidote to abstraction.

With a certain doubleness of purpose, I want to underscore that translation, like *écriture*, is an act of writing as well as reading. Consider the words of the title, "Figured Image." They are more singular than the multiplicities suggested by "figurations" in Albiach's title. "Figured" in its turn evokes a vein of semantic slippage and resolution, something to do with geometry, with the bass line of a musical composition, a fruitful redundancy between figure and image, all associations that are germane to an appreciation of Albiach's practice. Such translation adds resonance to the text in the mind of a revisionary reader. With regard to the multiplication of felt resonance, Waldrop's text stands first among of the many useful readings that this suite of poems will continue to require. I assume he had opportunities to discuss the scope of allusion and reference underlying his choices with the author and with other translators, settling after deliberation upon a sense that allows sustained and attentive readings for the reader of English. Still the poet for her part will be more aware of the meanings to her of key terms than the translator. The translator too will be aware of multiple possibilities for phrasing foregone. Translation by its nature must isolate plateaus and layers that are deeply fused in the original.

I want to address some specifics in the handling of two poems, "Line Loss" and "EXCESS: this measure." Images like the following from "Line Loss" are almost Roman in severity, "Draped in scarlet / they presided over the theme of an absence" (31). The matter seems to be a lust murder. "They" refers it seems to a couple exchanging embraces, a couple abstractly present. "Presided" is very royal, legal, juridical – the language borders on both absence and a dark eroticism. Do I sniff the influence of Georges Bataille, on these pages otherwise so pristine and

precise? The language of the translation catches some of this, but is it in the poem or a product of my reading? Are “they” lovers or judges, “Dans les draperies écarlates / ils officiaient ...” (37). The language is in any case, Roman, juridical. The image is not a figure, it is a moment within shifting permutations. A certain calculus has been applied.

In another line, “opacity / not found in fiction” (34). We have in miniature, miniaturized what is essential about the practice of *écriture*—for the writing, in its opacity, accretes associations, is envisaged, flatly produces something other, but cancels that fiction. Reading is an effect of the presence of the text, of a writing that will not loosen or recede from its presence on the page. The French for disappearing opacities will always be more nuanced than English, “l’opacité / absents dans la fiction” (40). The double relation of absence and the opacity of figuration is much more insistent in Albiach’s original than in Waldrop’s translation. His is a reading among a congeries of readings. To gage Waldrop’s accomplishment consider how Peter Riley handles these lines, “the opacity / absentees in the fiction” (20). That sense of missing persons is also at play in Albiach’s language. Engagement with a text this supple requires many iterations, by many hands.

“Line Loss” is an erotic poem about “spasms” and “perfect liquidity” (31). Waldrop captures the innuendo and interplay adroitly. In a doubling of planes, “an attentive duplicity” figures of passion emerge in “aleatory displacement” (32). The poem cites its Mallarméan heritage, its deconstructive linguistic practices, and its Freudian (or Lacanian) slippage between courtroom and courting, catching this range of tonalities with an admirable precision, almost it seems as if to quote from itself, by these means presencing the deliberations of writing. “Counted steps” (31) become “an erotism narrated / with unheard precision” (39). The cutting that is rendered as “precision” is a verb in the French “se précise inouïe” (45). Waldrop alteration of her grammar enables an unimpeded reading, although that might not be the most suitable choice..

Translation is a reading of the opaque; but it’s against its nature to remain opaque for then it could no longer claim status as a translation. Waldrop’s English is less grammatical in a sense than hers and in a sense more dramatic. His “the first traces / unnamings the name” (37) renders the rich linguistic ambience within which “écriture” as a poetic process is a partial response,

partial step into complexities of its own apprehending. Albiach's text reads, "Les traces premières / où se dédit le nom" (43). The reflexive nature of her deconstructive editing enacts the complexity of *écriture*.

In "EXCESS: this measure," like other examples of Albiach's method, she works between embodied constants, "breath" and a "gaze fixed" by discernible articulation, "following the sketch / an articulation or / discernibles" (47). The lines call for a reading that follows a score. "EXCESS: this measure" foregrounds compositional method; it is an important document in that regard. References to "dismemberment" and "rehearsal" seem to place the reader before a piano, an instrument of some description, possibly a flute, "the painful side of / inhaling" (50), practicing, "a score / abstracts the lure" (51). Generously spaced lines and clusters mirror hesitation and concentration "awkward at / the joints" (52). Think tired fingers. The tropes, from "score" (51) to "scar" (55), stage a personal resonance, allowing "nutritive lacerations" (58), as though the writing were on the body, the body like the page, the site of "dismemberment" (58). Then a larger gap between lines, an "abyss" figured and a "literalness of absence." (60). The art is breathtaking, "prosody reflects" (85). The page entrances.

JEAN DAIVE

Urgence et négation en réponse

Anne-Marie Albiach et Paul Celan

Le Palais des Papes domine le Rhône et au-delà Villeneuve-lès-Avignon où je prépare un programme de lecture l'après-midi à la Chartreuse alors en travaux. Des agents municipaux montent une scène dans le jardin entre un mur et un passage de fortune : elle se compose d'une structure métallique bâchée faite de planches, de pièces de toile et de tréteaux. C'est l'été pendant le Festival d'Avignon. La fin de journée est chaude. Anne-Marie Albiach que j'ai invitée est là. Belle, sombre, tendue, grave dans sa robe blanche plissée et son chemisier transparent. Presque dramatique et espagnole avec ses cheveux tirés en arrière. Elle fume et ses lèvres pincent un porte-cigarettes en argent avec force, parfois même avec cruauté ou