

Yves Bonnefoy.
Entretiens sur la poésie (1972-1990).

Paris: Mercure de France, 1990. 383 pages. 130 FF.

Début et fin de la neige.

Paris: Mercure de France, 1991. 77 pages, 120FF.

*E*ntretiens sur la poésie and *Début et fin de la neige* come to us in the midst of a great flurry of gathered creative activity by one of the most urgent and compelling literary voices of the century: *Les Raisins de Zeuxis* (1987), *Ce qui fut sans lumière* (1987), *La Vérité de parole* (1988), *Où retombe la flèche* (1988) — taken up again here at the close of *Début et fin de la neige* —, *Sur un sculpteur et des peintres* (1989), *Encore les raisins de Zeuxis* (1990) and, most recently, Bonnefoy's momentous *Alberto Giacometti* (1991). Both the extensive critical volume and the compact poetic collection obey their author's criteria of self-renewal, of persistent, intense, yet oddly serene self-inquiry and -meditation, in the context of a world at profound ecological risk, privileging as it does what Bonnefoy varyingly terms form, image, 'language,' 'writing', concept, dream and ideology, over the deep meaning of individual and collective presence, the unheard but ringing *why* of its half-forgotten creative processes.

Début et fin de la neige performs — but its theatre is real, 'in the round', urgent yet unpretentious — what the numerous *Entretiens sur la poésie* not so much advocate as reveal to be possible: the debate of being, the multiple, shifting dialogue upon our intrinsic, at times one could believe near-effaced dynamic meaning. Poetry, working against its self-institution as poem, as congealing artefact, becomes, rather, a place of 'conversation', a 'way' rather than an end. The time to simply deplore, only to quickly celebrate, the jangling emptiness of textual space, yields, none too soon, to the need to traverse poetry — all great art — as a means of continuous reflecting upon our experience of the earth, of reintegrating mind and matter, self and other, beyond aestheticism, narcissism, nihilism. The book's — any great book's — potential for closure, for tightly convoluted, terroristic, implosion of the imaginary, can thus be made to give way to a logic of openness, *parole*, dialogue and plurality — a logic, rather, of books, one renewing, contesting, replacing the other, deflating the power of *image*, exposing it to alterity, to what 'exceeds' its flashing strict interiority, restoring passage, movement, exquisite and difficult mortality to a domain that had, perhaps, forgotten to be merely a way of presence and absence.

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