

Jean-Michel Maulpoix. *La Poésie malgré tout*. Paris: Mercure de France. 1996. 233 pages. 120FF. ISBN 2-7152-1932-6.

Jean-Michel Maulpoix may be best known for his poetry and creative prose — the finely written and quietly urgent *Un dimanche après-midi, dans la tête* has just been reprinted — and for his studies of Michaux and Reda. With its excellent introductory essay in nine parts, followed by thirteen short studies of poets from Baudelaire to Jabès, *La Poésie malgré tout* shows the wide range of Maulpoix's subtleties and analyses and also constitutes something of a manifesto in its sober brio, its witting recognition of the powers and limits of the *poietic*. Poetry, Maulpoix argues, involves a caring for the impossible and permits us to learn to live. Its celebrations, he maintains, are largely funereal, centred upon the lost gods of childhood, ever drafting "gospels for nothing." The consciousness thus acquired of our mortality permits each of us — poet and reader — better to "se traverser, se franchir, s'inscrire dans l'intervalle entre la poussière et les dieux." The poet's space is one, jointly, of a necessary irresponsibility and an equally necessary *justesse* — a kind of punctilious assump-

tion of one's acts, and words. *La Poésie malgré tout* offers many powerful, moving and yet shrewd articulations of the poetic and the onto logical. It can be read most profitable in conjunction with, say, Jean-Claude Pinson's fine *Habiter en poète*, Jacques Garelli's *L'Entrée en démesure*, Jean-Marie Gleize's *A noir*, even Christian Prigent's *A quoi bon encore des poètes?* Poetry, for Jean-Michel Maulpoix, is not an icon, it produces no icons, but it does reach out to the sacred in its very freedom, its soul-baring honesty, its very expression of groping, unknowing and oddly self-erasing desire for the divine. Above all, it opens us to the realms of the irrational, the unconscious, whilst simultaneously never surrendering our vast capacity for conceptualising our complexities and our contradictions. "Sur la finitude l'infini joue de la musique..."

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