

leads to a tug-of-war between welcome and “mourning”. Moreover, this sense of loss is related, in Herlin, to a feeling that the full, contrastive, paradoxical *saying* of being (as the poet lives it, believes it to be) is equally slipping away. “Synchrony of what lies around and the inner gaze”, Herlin writes, hinting that such sensitivity to the available dynamism of psyche, heart and soul may, for her, be more vulnerable at the close of the millenium than earlier. Needless to say, these are delicate and debatable equations in a world admittedly, full today of greater, more challenging contrasts than ever before. The advantage of this, as Herlin seems to sense whilst half-humorously pitting herself against it, is that further desire is born, choices can and must be made, life urges its dynamic living upon us, dissuading us from resignation to the humdrum, the drabness that, for Herlin, poetry can so miraculously shatter with its “feu fées rimes Muses prosodie”. This said, the dilemma remains of desire’s felt impotence in the face of the equally felt need to “inflect” life. Words may enchant and exalt, but, in Herlin’s experience, they equally can “cut”, “deceive” and “kill”. No easier transcendence seems finally available to Herlin than to, say, Mallarmé, implicitly evoked in the closing terse summary of the human condition:

Le sort minime de la terre, des terriens
 Ensemble lancés dans l’espace
 filant
 défilant
 défiant l’obstacle...

Michael Bishop
Dalhousie University

Salah Stétié. *Fenêtre d’aveugle*. Mortemart: Rougerie, 1998. 51 pages. 54FF. ISBN 2-85668-026-7./ *Le Vin mystique*. Fata Morgana, 1998. 95 pages. ISBN 2-85194-459-2

Two very arguably different books are given us here by the author of *L’Eau froide gardée* (1973), *L’Être poupée* (1983) and *Fièvre et guérison de l’icône* (1998). *Fenêtre d’aveugle* offers photographic images of a number of Kijno’s *papiers froissés* with a brilliantly insightful reading of them. Stétié argues, of course, the tensions of matter and mind in Kijno’s crumplings of paintings, papers, engravings, the question of origin that haunts his gesture, the fragility he exposes and the powerful cosmic magma his “objects” yet cause us to contemplate, the interplay of creation and death underpinning his “ontology”, the “blindness” of an act yet visionary, revelatory. But his last comments are reserved for the elaboration of an equation of violence and love, nervous seizure and caress.

Le Vin mystique offers, firstly, a beautiful translation of Omar Ibn al-Farîdh’s celebrated *Al-Khamriya*, accompanied by the extraordinary original scripted by Ghani Alani, and ,

secondly, a very fine, indeed remarkable, essay by Stétié from which the book receives its title. I cannot, of course, pretend here to sum up the myriad complexities and subtleties of Stétié's argument which not only attends to *Al-Khamriya* but also dips into a huge range of pertinent texts from the European and Oriental literary, mythical, spiritual traditions in order to offer comparative or contrastive nuance. Suffice it to say that the emphasis moves about amongst questions of sacrifice, desire, transgression, ecstasy, transcendence, but that, equally, the at once manifest and fine parallels between physical and mystical "wine" are crucial — to both Western and Eastern traditions, moreover. The close of Omar Ibn al-Farîdh's poem translates as follows:

Il n'est point de vie en ce monde pour qui souhaite raison garder,
 et qui ne meurt d'ivre vin aura perdu la décision
 Q'il pleure sur lui-même celui qui a prodigué ses années,
 n'ayant saisi sa part de vin, sa flèche d'augure!

Wine is the emblem of our psychic, spiritual, ontic access to what Stétié calls "the place, *terra incognita*, of all possibilities". It is the irrational — i.e. rationally irreducible — path to the prophet within with his or her "arrow of augury". Such "mystical wine" gathers, reconciles, telescopes what we thought separate; it points beyond space-time, to a state or mode of being not unknown upon the path of physical intoxication — and, of course, the mystical here must be seen as still anchored in a physical that, in fact, cannot be separated off from the equations of mystical desire and experience. Stétié quotes, in conclusion to his exceptional essay, as shall I, lines from the superb Djelâl-Eddîne Roûini which I also translate:

Du néant est partie notre caravane porteuse d'amour
 Le vin de l'union illumine éternellement notre nuit
 De ce vin que n'interdit pas la religion d'amour
 Nos lèvres seront humectées jusqu'à l'aube du néant.
 (From nothingness set out our caravan bearing love
 The wine of union casts eternal light upon our darkness
 From this wine unforbidden by love's religion
 Our lips will remain moist until the dawn of nothingness).

Michael Bishop
Dalhousie University