

Bernard Noël. *Les États du corps*. Fata Morgana, 1999. Np. ISBN 2-85194-483-5.

It is well known just to what extent Bernard Noël's today extensive work — from *Extraits du corps* (1958), *La Peau et les mots* (1972) and *Bruits de langue* (1980) to *L'Été langue morte* (1982), *La Chute des temps* (1993) and *Onze romans d'œil* (1988) — has in some significant measure devoted itself to matters of physicality, physiology, its marvels and its abuses, its strange and wondrous dovetailing, too, with our processes of fabulous and fabulating mentation, our moments equally of relative or even persistent dementia. *Les États du corps* is a most compact text, composed of eleven very short prose pieces, which fuse a discreetly lyrical ellipticalness with a yet manifest ethical cogency of ironic and pseudo-objective nature, and which are accompanied by four engravings by Cécile Reims attuned to — and no doubt inducing in some significant way — Noël's eleven texts. The latter progress with a somewhat esoteric clarity from a “beginning [in which] the body is open like a yes. What sweetness! But [wherein] it forgets itself”, to an “eleventh moment [where] there is no more time, but an activity called Opening or universal Cutting Up [... and where] the greatest slicer is clearly the greatest Nominator as well as the greatest Artist”. It is here, of course, that we reconnect with that older distinction of Noël's between the use of language — or, of course, image — as abusively practised upon the world and others, and its/their use as creativity, revealingly, epiphanically, non-abusively practised upon and via the self, for the (at least possible, but always unconstraining) value any other may find within such a gesture. What “happens” to, upon and within the body, between original, primordial “sweetness” and the clinical yet caressing gestures of writer and artist, is in part exposed in the interposed texts. And, of course, the ethical tussle still goes on, providing the extraordinary contrasts out of which surges the desire of a Bernard Noël — or a Cécile Reims.

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Guillevic. *Carnac*. Trans. John Montague, with an Introduction by Stephen Romer. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1999. Bloodaxe Contemporary French Poets 10, bilingual edition. 160 pages. ISBN 1-85224-393-7.

Guillevic's extensive oeuvre is avowedly marked by the author's keen awareness of a lived confrontation between what he can term *conscience* and *choses*. It is a confrontation that is not resolved by a Pongian poetics of *objeu* and *objoie* — although Guillevic's lightness of touch, his gnomic, discreetly dancing humour, is certainly