

Eugene Guillevic. *Quotidiennes*. Paris : Gallimard, 2002. 171 pages.
13,50 euros, ISBN 2-07-076510-5.


Just over three months after writing his last poem, Eugene Guillevic passed away 19th March, 1997. *Quotidiennes*, gathering some 130 texts covering the period from November 1994 to December 1996, constitutes then something of a testamentary statement, one that does not, however, dwell upon the past, but, as had his work for well over twenty years, orients itself both towards those horizons of feasibility articulated in *Possibles futurs* and, implacably, a present lived, precious, ordinary and exquisite, from moment to moment.

The closing texts of *Quotidiennes* are characteristic of both the passions and reservations, the affirmative impulses and self-questionings that people Guillevic's work as a whole. The poet can, oddly, offer us pity for what Ponge too suggested is the tautology, the self-imprisonment, of trees; yet he immediately expresses deep thanks for "their presence, / The songs they inspire, / The silence they teach" (143). He can ask himself what, precisely, he has gained from his long, persistent close observations of the phenomena of the world, yet his real or potential doubt can be immediately quelled by an upsurging sense of what he goes so far as to deem a *reciprocal* living of deep life (145): observer and observed equally drawing meaning from their juxtaposition, their "apposition" Deguy might say, and their exchange. Guillevic's questioning or simple apostrophising of the things of the world could, in less subtle and less authentic hands, appear limp, but its force is discreetly touching, its pertinence profound and demanding of our meditation.

Certainly, Guillevic can be drawn into the mild or severe anxiousness that plagues many: what is the self in the larger cosmic picture?: nothing? disconnected? exposed to contingency? Yet his sense of self, his larger "knowing" (153) at this point of his life, remain rooted in factors whose depth of significance he is, despite wavering, unwilling to deny: the sheer power of love, its catalyzing experience; the instinctive urge to embrace (all of) what is, and the felt meaning of this desire; the intuitive perception of a rightness of the Earth's mosaical imbrications; his understanding – again, in spite of hesitation – that his ultimate centre of preference, love, meaning, remains the self: it, finally, moulds, conjoins, chooses (harmony or rupture, for example), creates. The existence of light, its mystery and its marvel, Guillevic at last ponders, and both his instincts and his contemplation tell him that its logic is connected – as is all Guillevic's work – with a *recognition* accorded by the self, a smile, a consent (Bonnefoy would say),

a loving embrace of itself and of all it renders possible (cf. 155). In these ways Guillevic the materialist traverses physicality, attains to something of those symbolic dimensions of being we can only experience within, not replicate for a rational consumption Guillevic's work ultimately bypasses.

Philippe Jaccottet. *Et, néanmoins.* Paris: Gallimard, 2001. 96 pages. 10,52 euros, ISBN 2-07-076'91-4.

“nd, nevertheless”: a title speaking as have so many of Philippe Jaccottet's books, of an impulse to recuperate that which seems lost, ruined, degraded, of a both visceral and philosophical dialectics of moral impotence and spiritual feasibility yet not susceptible of synthesis. Faced implicitly – and, elsewhere, more explicitly – with the anguishing contradictions of collective, planetary events and, ultimately, with what is felt to be the definitiveness of death, that great mental and emotional blockage, there yet remain, for example, violets:

Rien qu'une touffe de violettes pâles,

une touffe de ces fleurs faibles et presque fades, et un enfant jouant dans le jardin... (19)

A clarity of vision suddenly can seem possible at such moments of experience, an unmasking of what is can occur, a sense of what, “perhaps”, lies beyond our terrified equations. Jaccottet's writing constantly returns to such moments, to the dream they incarnate, the residual desire to “bring back to the house of the world the soul, wounded, lost, or so it thought itself to be” (29). If such moments recur, however, Jaccottet so frequently insists they are the “opening up of an avenue; but nothing more” (23). Thus, Jaccottet argues, have we lost the *name* – the language – of the very light needed “in order to hail it” (13); thus will Jaccottet repeatedly insist upon the *separation* from self of those very things – flowers, birds, trees, etc. – that, yet, strangely speak to him; thus can Jaccottet, in spite of his instincts and his intuitions, characterize such “things” as “unneeded, valueless, powerless” (76).

Nevertheless..., even if the “reality” of death can appear unquestionable, the absurdity of its logic can be felt by Jaccottet: brief epiphanies orient him towards a sense of the profound otherness of self and all phe-