

thus sought to flee via differing tactics of transcendence; and Mallarmé, too, must be read not only in the light of a dream of pure poetry but, too, in that light flooding his very early *Sa fosse est creusée*, his Easter eggs and *loisirs de la poste*, his extraordinary *Tombeau pour Anatole* and, of course, the realised “failure” of *Un coup de dés*. Maulpoix is explicit: “*Always somewhere in the universe*” (53). He is – like us all – “ce point instable et vibratoire sur lequel toute altérité vient jouer sa musique” (36), and if he – like us all – can experience doubt, self-derision, inadequacy and a persistent inadequation of language to the lived, equally can he – perhaps unlike us all, but, unpretentiously (: we are beyond poetic prophetism), *for* us all, should we care to *want* (cf. Bonnefoy) – respect his deeper feelings of urgency, pertinence, ontological splendour (and what he has recently called *responsibility* to that strange splendour of being and possible doing). This is a geopoetics – inevitably centered in self as the sole source of all feasibility of being and doing – less developed than lived. Language is thus used to realise and confirm a visceral, sensual and affective relation to what is, in principle all that is, which it can so easily intellectually deny. “Je n’ai jamais eu d’autres projets que d’habiter cette terre”, he writes, “Les mots ne m’en sépareront plus” (96).

A writer that must be read.

Pascal Commère. *Bouchères*. Paris: Obsidiane, 2003. 111 pages. 14 euros. ISBN 2-911914-60-0.



author of a wide range of writings over the past twenty years – from *Les Commis* (1982), *Chevaux* (1987), *Dijou* (1989) to *Lointaine approche des troupeaux à vélo le soir* (1995), *Vessies, lanternes, autres bêtes cornues* (2000) and *La Grand’ soif d’André Frénaud* (2001) – Pascal Commère is a poet, a very fine one, moreover, close to the Burgundian earth he lives and breathes, close too to an intimate, vigorous and intricate language capable, without sentimentality, preferring irony or compassion or discreet yet in-the-face questioning, of speaking this ordinary yet intense livedness.

Agricultural, rural life, its softnesses, its hard-edged realities, its fascinating “banalities” and its unrealised – unrealisable? – dreams: these are Commère’s major preoccupations here, lived in the heart of contemporary “peasant” France with its deontology of production and economic survival guaranteed to terrify even the most hardened beef-eater. *Bouchères* bears

witness to the deluge of blood, the shrill cries of fear, the crushing and slicing through of bone, that are but daily, monotonous rituals in a world hidden from the gaze of the city-dweller. It is a book, too, that captures the atmosphere of field and stable, the mists and suns that alternate their transmutations of them, the complexities and the routine of farm life, its focusses and its *inconsciences*. *Bouchères* is an elegy – and, however paradoxically, also a eulogy – such as the Romantics never dreamed of, fierce and compassionate, brutal and tender. Its texts can become rhythmically dense, fill with teeming perception and implicit emotion, or they can strip down to a bare, stark, or even exhilarated one-line visionariness. The language never lets itself loose upon the inventiveness of a Gerard Manley Hopkins' *Harry Ploughman*; it prefers a curious mixture of sobriety, penetrating detail and quirky, insightful imagery. Nothing is predictable, finally, in these articulations which never sink into morality before a world Commère knows too well to think to really judge it.

A powerful volume by an unusual poet...

Alfred Kern. *Le Carnet Blanc*. Orbey / Paris: Arfuyen, 2002. 149 pages. 14,5 Euros. ISBN 2-84590-015-5.

Most of Alfred Kern's publications date back to the fifties and sixties, though two poetic collections appeared much later, after a long period of silence: *Gel et feu* (1989) and *Le Point vif* (1991), both with the admirable Editions Arfuyen, directed by Gérard Pfister. *Le Carnet blanc*, prefaced by Philippe Jaccottet and introduced by Pfister to whose care we owe these pages gathered in the midst of the author's dying.

Le Carnet blanc, then, is a testamentary work of sorts. It offers poems and *proses*, annotations and meditations, at once situated and spiritually beyond the detail of concreteness. The tone of Kern's writing can be melancholy or enthused, discreet or intense, nostalgic and half-memorialising or oriented towards a future the present cannot envision, tenderly caressive of the livable or elegiacal, yet, though troubled, tinged with a serenity that proffers bare and touching consolations. Not that these pages are not clear-eyed, bold in their own way, unseeking of all compensation. Here is a poetic fragment:

l'instant
la juste mesure d'un rien