

Renée Linkhorn and Judy Cochran, eds. *Belgian Women Poets*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000. ISBN 0-8204-4456-1.

The bilingual anthology Renee Linkhorn and Judy Cochran give us here has been long in the coming but has proved eminently worth the wait. The diversity of voice represented is truly impressive and, although this will come as no surprise to those readers of Liliane Wouter's earlier anthological work, it is encouraging to see such creative energy developing and blossoming further over more recent years. A solid essay by Jean-Luc Wauthier on the French-language poetry of Belgium opens the volume and each of the twenty-eight women poets represented enjoys a fairly generous selection, graced in turn by translations that are sensitive and well balanced. One would love to quote so much - from Marie Nizet's *L'Été*, Renee Brock's *Tout s'en íá de nous* or Lucienne Desnoues' *Les Epoux* to Cécile Miguel's *proses* or "graphic compositions", Claire Lejeune's *Je quite le deuil* or Lucie Spèd's *Circé* - but, then, such focussing would be so relative, would undermine the joy one can have from reading the entirety of this Belgian patchwork, its shifting and resilient forms, its ever modified mental and emotional outlook, the sheer vitality it globally exudes. *Belgian Women Poets* should urge us, as should so much recent writing on and anthologising of the modern poetic canon, to rethink the latter, to give it nuance and balance, greater breadth, greater beauty and human pertinence. To read French literature today, is increasingly to expand one's geographic horizons, just as it is to appreciate the transgression of the genres that traditionally defined it. One can only warmly thank all those contributing to this fine book for the rich opportunities thus afforded us.

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William Cliff. *L'État belge*. Paris: La Table Ronde, 2000. 136 pages. 79 FF. ISBN 27103-0966-1.

With Baudelaire's "Connaissez-vous íá paresseuse Belgique?" floating before it epigraphically, William Cliff's *L'État belge* sets forth in characteristically tonal and modal fashion a two-part collection that radically and with ludic flair seeks to update any conception we may have had from reading Baudelaire's rather sour assessments. Not that Cliff offers us any glossy, self-agrandísing visions. His manner can be firmly ironic, parodic even; a fundamental melancholia developed from solitude, from observation of a world of intense and perhaps growing contrast, can be offset by discreet if sure compassion, or by moments of simpler play. Often there is unflinching straightforwardness in his self-representation, though lucidness and self-worth just beat out any temptation to indulge in flickering guilt. An ethical strain is manifest at times, though Cliff does not seek to offer solution - at best a dream he barely can believe in. His metric control, his self-imposed constraints, vie with the now ironic now touching freedom of expression that otherwise reigns. It is, in effect, not possible not to think of Baudelaíre, or Verlaine, or Rimbaud, when reading Cliff. No imitation, let us be clear; rather, something in a half-spoken yearning that yet cannot maintain its absolute buoyancy.

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