

Guillevic, *Accorder: poèmes 1933-1996*

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This insightful posthumous work reminds us of the warmth and generosity that inform all of Guillevic's poems and make them so eminently readable, yet so profound when one reflects on what and how they mean. Thoughtfully arranged by Lucie Albertini-Guillevic, in an order that respects thematic transitions more than strict chronologies, this is life writing from a wise man steeped in human weakness and delighted to make of it a strength. Preliminary citations remind us of his debt to Hölderlin, as a fellow poet in contact with the "[le] calme royaume des ombres" (7); of his fervent desire, embedded in luminous stanzas, to wed with lasting intensity each "nouvel instant" (8); and of the ongoing need to situate ourselves through verse within the world's fragile but expansive temporality. A postface and editorial notes likewise tell a story that bears underscoring, concerning the initial publication of these thirty-five collections "en collaboration avec des artistes" (299), as well as the "combat vital" (293) and "singulière ténacité en conscience" (294) that each text represents. Quoted material and clear editorial commentary indicate the breadth of his reach, as a poet choosing words carefully and an inspiration to others devoting themselves to the creative process.

Especially noteworthy in this followup to *Relier: poèmes 1938-1996* are the author's faithfulness to people, frequently conversational tone, and seemingly effortless minimalist mix of the abstract and the particular. The telescoping of explorations from many periods into one volume brings out the finely honed balance Guillevic favored each time he wrote, and does

not necessarily detract from his characteristic thematic focus and intensity. The poem “Jean Tortel,” for example, shares the “Merveille de la bonté / Dans les choses” and the pleasure of finding innocence “dans la façon / De baptiser” (98). “L’étoile à Max Jacob” both disturbs and reassures with its mention of one person watching out for another and of implicit inner struggles that cause trembling. Despite much left unsaid, we understand the scope of the grief described, including its reach from fraternal emotion into religious and sociopolitical spheres: “Tu écrivais alors — et c’était quelques jours / Avant que l’on t’arrête — // Que tu ne craignais rien, / Que je veillais sur toi. // J’ai mal veillé, / Je tremblais trop” (233). The addressing of pieces to others adds semantic layers, expanding the intersubjective reach as if author, reader, and addressee were jointly contemplating the real. In “Quanta pour Édith Clavet,” fruits and flowers take on human qualities, as with an “abricot musclé / Sur le point de mûrir” (252), while in “Quanta pour Arnaud Desarzens,” time’s resonance is intensified via observation of “Une bougie allumée [qui] / Raconte pour nous / La persistance des siècles” (254). Thanks to *tutoiement* and effortless stylistic flow, many texts read as conversations we might be having with ourselves in difficult moments, as with the simply titled “Qui frappe” and its incisive phrases such as “*Il arrive qu’on t’aime, / Étonne-toi*” (188) or “*Tous les jours / Tu recueilles, / Tu ramasses, / Tu te rassembles*” (194). “Lexiquer,” a kind of alphabet primer, combines word play with deep images that can read as maxims: “Vive l’absolu — // Clame l’horloge / Qui ne marche pas” (108); “Escargot, / Ma non troppo!” (119); “Des lambeaux de phrases / Comme des lambeaux de monde” (131); “Les mots, / Ça se maçonne: // Ta truelle. / Ton ciment” (134); “La terre // Est l’adjectif / De l’univers” (150); “Des mots / Trop forts en volts / Grillent la ligne” (152). A handful of longer books-within-the-book, “Lexiquer” among them, express a love of the outer world that ebbs and flows but never diminishes. “Ce sauvage,” for instance, points to the tenacity and attentiveness necessary in all realms of everyday life, however helpless and alone one might feel in the face of tangible mysteries and grandeur. Within the context of tightly condensed verse, to depict crying out to the sun before bedtime – “Il crie au soleil combien / Il a besoin de lui” (175) – is to reiterate the yearning and restraint that underlie the Guillevician vision. Specific motifs gracefully evolve across

line groups as well as from one collection to the next, as evidenced in the titles “La terre” (51-57), “Devant l’étang” (59-67), “Être un arbre” (69-75), and “Vivre en profondeur” (199-207). This *justesse* allows us to better notice an active coming-into-presence always taking place, to “S’emparer de présence / Jusqu’alors ignorée” (207), be it an “effraction continue / Par les naissances” (48) or cries heard “Dans le réseau / De tout ce qui se tait” (23). The slightest patch of earth, moreover, reveals how “Des univers s’attaquent” (47). In addition to highlighting the common destiny of beings and things, *Accorder* emphasizes a writer’s trajectory, from the turbulence of acknowledging his “glauques statues défaites” (17), to the relative calm of lines from older age depicting lack of fear in terms of an approaching storm that must be accepted: “Ici je suis le seul / Qui n’aie pas peur / Et encore — // Va savoir: / Tout va peut-être brûler. / Moi aussi” (289). Hypnotizing nourishment for seekers of truth glad to wake to inviting doubts each day and curious to know more about an exemplary poetic quest.

Works Cited

Guillevic. *Accorder: poèmes 1933-1996*. Éd. Lucie Albertini-Guillevic. Paris: Gallimard, 2013. ISBN: 978-2-07-014137-1.

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