

## Reviews

Cerquiglini-Toulet, Jacqueline. *The Color of Melancholy: The Uses of Books in the Fourteenth Century*. Trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane of *La couleur de la mélancolie : la fréquentation des livres au XIVe siècle 1300-1415* (1993). Parallax. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. xxi-186 p.

For the sweeping characterization of the “long,” “tiresome” (152) century (of Machaut, Froissart, Deschamps, Christine de Pizan) proposed here, this book is too short. The central argument, its development and the conclusions to be drawn from it, seem not so much too rapidly written down as overly compressed, or scattered, or obscured by invasive, space-consuming quotations (with translations). Too many steps in the demonstration have perhaps been skipped or assumed not to need full explication; little has prepared the reader, for example, for the very late pronouncement that “[t]he model that has served [...] throughout this study is that of the family” (156), discussions of engendering, fathers, filiation and genealogies notwithstanding. Nor do the book’s (uneven and sometimes imperfectly interconnected) divisions and their (often offhand) titles and subtitles help reveal the author’s critical *démarche*; the summary Roger Chartier offers in his “Foreword” (xiii-xvi) is one admirable attempt at retrieving cogency; there may need to be others.

The fourteenth century understood itself as “the [melancholy] winter of literature” (4) coming after the “springtime of literature” in the “triumphant twelfth century” (3-4). — French replaced Latin in many domains and acquired political clout; it was the medium for knowledge which replaced wisdom as a cardinal royal virtue, prompting Charles V to commission numerous translations and to found the royal library of the Louvre. Interest in and reflection upon a language other than Latin led to interest in learning and comparing other languages. — Knowledge was understood to come from God, *créateur, roi, seigneur* and, significantly, *père*. Paternity, the relationship to God the Father, and to a multitude of other fathers (patriarchs, church fathers, spiritual fathers [popes, prelates, priests], “fathers in studies,” “fathers in the flesh,” symbolic fathers [patrons, ladies, friends, literary predecessors]) was a characteristic medieval model of thought, reflecting itself in the century’s preoccupation with lineage, filiation, “genealogy hunt[s]” (title of the third chapter), even autobiography (27), both historiographically and literarily speaking. For what was the “son’s” (or “daughter’s”) place in this model? Writing had become a craft that, like a trade, was passed on from father to son: from Baudoin to Jean de Condé, from Thomas to Christine de Pizan; Eustache Deschamps petitioned the pope in verse on behalf of his son Gillet, the Chevalier de La Tour Landry addressed not his lady but his daughters. And how, in relation to their symbolic fathers, did the writers refer to themselves? No longer mere scribes and as yet only aspiring to the total sovereignty of *poètes* sanctioned by posterity, they were *ménéstrels, dicteurs, acteurs, facteurs, faitistres, collecteurs, versifieurs, réciteurs*, clerk-writers (*clercs-écrivains*) both dependent on, and striving to be rid of, patronage. The “invention” of the book resolved their dilemma: no longer a *codex* of copied texts of varying genres, dates and authorship, the book became the *locus* of their unfettered artistry, and of theirs alone, and at the same time a storehouse of commissionable pieces. — In the “winter of literature,” according to Jean Le Fèvre [1376], “[s]oubz le soleil n’est rien nouvel” (92). Writers felt keenly that, as Machaut put it, “la matere fault” (93), that they were living a “crisis in subject matter” (53). In the wake of more illustrious predecessors, fourteenth-century writers could at first not think of themselves as anything more than gleaners who “go behind [the harvesters] to gather up what

remains to be picked" (Jean de Condé [55]). Such "paillettes" or "miettes" (Christine de Pizan [58]) they collected like treasures, to be kept in literal coffers (Froissart [59]) and stored in literary compilations for later use in a new springtime. Then reflection set in on the ways literary subject matter was produced and on the origins of a literary work. The metaphorical paradigm for the *materia prima* was the forest in which it was the poet's task "to distinguish the tree, the staff, the stick [...] to turn raw wood into literature, *liber* [bark] into *livre*" (68). Maternal matter (*mater/materia*) preceded paternal form given according to the masculine model of stamp, chisel or forge (76). Machaut, however, inverted this order: form given by Nature preceded matter given by Love (the lady replacing the mother); inasmuch as princely patrons commissioned works, they ruled like a sort of female figure in the realm of matter, while the virile clerk-writer gave form to the matter of female seed in the generative act of the incarnation model of literary creation (69). — The springtime, "youthful" subjects of "armes" and "amours," of chivalry and love, were either made irrelevant by the Hundred Years' War (1337-1415) or replaced by Marian poetry. And they were indeed subjects for the young, which the "worn-out, aged children of a century that was the last age of the world" (151) did not consider themselves to be. To them, to old age belonged not war and love, but books: "I [...] have begun compilations [...] because I have not strength enough to expose my body to warfare" (Jean de Courcy [89]). The orchard of love was replaced by the barren plain, springtime by autumn, the love bed by the conjugal bed or the bed of the dying man dictating his testament (89-90). Literary renewal also saw the forest paradigm give way to urban poetry (Deschamps wrote adieu to Paris, Reims, Troyes, Brussels) and to an "urban model of the text" (99), no longer linear but fragmented and labyrinthian. Finally, to obviate the subject matter crisis, writers turned from engendering and renewal to invention. Inventors did not create, they found; they sought and found the origins and originators of phenomena and what had resulted from them. A writer who compiled a catalogue of inventors, an intellectual genealogy, inscribed his own name in a prestigious lineage and created an archaeology for his work (105). Aware of the transition from oral to written vernacular literature, fourteenth-century "inventor"-writers (Jacques Legrand, Jean Le Fèvre, Christine de Pizan) wrote abundantly about the invention of writing (Orpheus, Thoth, Cadmus, Carmentis [Nicostrata]) (110-22). Invention in this sense was closely connected with memory. Memory was a coffer, a jewelbox, a book that one filled with treasures or from which one pilfered (123). Books were found in armoires, in libraries, in tombs, in the treasury of their authors' own memory. Books, like cemeteries, like memory, fulfilled the same function of remembrance (137), hence the age's love of lists (134), enumerations, genealogies. — Fourteenth-century literature may be interpreted not only through a vertical network of *pères*, but also through a horizontal network of *pairs* (this book is not immune to the *démon de l'homophonie*), i.e. fellow members of bacchic (on writing and wine see 143-46) and goliardic confraternities, or participants in literary exchanges (Deschamps-Chaucer, Christine de Pizan-Deschamps, Deschamps-Christine de Pizan, Philippe de Mézières-Petrarch-Deschamps, Christine de Pizan-Jean de Montreuil, etc.), or, quite simply, brothers (Petrarch and Gherardo, Jean and Jean [?] Gerson, Charles d'Orléans and Jean d'Angoulême, etc.).

Less a mosaic than a puzzle, this is an intriguing, often tantalizing book; it is not for the uninitiated.

Hans R. Runte

Dalhousie University

\*\*\*

Gordon, Daniel. *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1780*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. viii-270 p.

Gordon argues that the conception of sociability in Old Regime France, which rested upon observing forms of politeness and epitomized itself in a polite conversation, was an area of an inherently egalitarian social intercourse and of a free and unhampered discourse. Polite conversation was restricted only by the rules of civil behavior and there were no restrictions as to its topics. Following Jürgen Habermas's conception of the public sphere (rather than Norbert Elias's conception of the civilizing process), Gordon claims that this sociability developed independently from the court and became "a mode of exchange [...] free of the ritualistic constraints of corporate hierarchy" (29).

As a result of making politeness synonymous with a fundamentally egalitarian form of sociability, Gordon dissociates politeness from social hierarchy and reduces it to a simple formula of "not offending." However, in social practice of the Old Regime as we know it, "politeness" was a highly subjective quality that could not be easily codified, and therefore acquired simply by reading conduct books, but exclusively through the exposure to polite society. This very subjectivity made politeness a powerful tool of both integration and exclusion.

The assumption of the free and unrestricted character of discourse in Old Regime sociability is also exaggerated. In reality, more often than not, treatises on *honnêteté* explicitly excluded topics critical to the *status quo*, particularly political and religious, not as a matter of politeness (for example, because such topics might not be of general interest), but because they were considered irreconcilable with the set of values and loyalties characterizing an *honnête* person. Circumspection treating topics of conversation resulted from deference, not from indifference.

Similarly, Gordon does not mention numerous critical opinions concerning the arbitrary ways in which eighteenth-century *salonnières* "governed" their meeting and quotes only eulogies. Taking eulogies as a proof that *salonnières* were admired by their contemporaries is a methodological tautology, as no one is supposed to be blamed in a eulogy. If, indeed, Enlightenment sociability epitomized by Parisian salons run by women developed the ideal conversational space, how do we account for criticism of salons and for the emergence of exclusively men's social circles, from the late 1770s, explicitly excluding women?

Taking into consideration restrictions regarding topics of conversation that can be found in treatises on politeness and the reaction to them in social practice would not only make the author's assumption of an allegedly free and "uncensored" character of a polite discourse untenable, but would also offer a perspective to conceptualize pre-Revolutionary French sociability not only as socially beneficial but also as a source of tensions and criticism launched from various angles: both by "unsociable" types, such as Rousseau, and by *salonnards*, such as d'Alembert, Morellet and Marmontel. In other words, it would link "politeness" with its discontents (to use Peter France's phrase), for which there is no conceptual room in Gordon's model.

Further, an assumption of an alleged independence of Old Regime sociability from the court seems a bit stretched. For an *honnête* person outside the court politeness could also be a technique, as indicated by the explicitly pragmatic orientation of numerous manuals meant for *la ville*. The conception of an *homme habile*, implementing court techniques to achieve an end, Machiavellian in provenance, became in practice a model for the *homme habile* in the circles of *la ville*. The difference between an *homme habile* (typified by a courtier) and an *honnête*

*homme* (not dependent on the king's favors), in theory representing two distinctive approaches to sociability (one pragmatic, allowing for deceit, manipulation and pursuit of individual career, exemplified by Faret's manual; another idealistic, detached from pragmatic preoccupations and focused on achieving ideal balance, exemplified by Méré's philosophy), in social practice was more often than not only a difference in degree.

The distortion of the picture offered by Gordon partly results from his lack of differentiation between eighteenth-century salons run by women and men's circles, such as d'Holbach's coterie. The author extends d'Holbach's observations (in the *Morale universelle*) to conceptualize all places of sociability, including feminine salons. In practice, d'Holbach's group has been a classic example used to contrast male and feminine modes of sociability in eighteenth-century Paris (usually on the grounds that d'Holbach's salon did not impose restrictive manners, while feminine salons did, and that in d'Holbach's salon no topic of conversation was excluded, while in feminine there were such topics). This suggests a substantial difference in the way men and women socialized in Old Regime France; a difference which cannot be conceptualized within the framework proposed by Gordon. It is, indeed, paradoxical in this framework that Diderot, one of the most substantial contributors to the project of Enlightenment and the great conversationalist in d'Holbach's salon, was not admitted to the feminine salons, including the salon of Mme Geoffrin whom Gordon made a crowning example of eighteenth-century salon sociability.

Although Gordon offers interesting insights, he does not present a convincing argument invalidating Elias's conception of the development of the civilizing process. It is one thing to claim that sociability under the Old Regime did not imitate court formalities and jargon, and quite another to infer from it that it developed in opposition to the court in order to promote egalitarian values and intellectually unhampered discourse.

Jolanta T. Pekacz

University of Alberta

\*\*\*

Paliyenko, Adrianna M. *Mis-Reading the Creative Impulse: The Poetic Subject in Rimbaud and Claudel, Restaged*. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997. xvi-206 p.

In this tightly constructed and incisive study, Paliyenko adopts a revisionist approach founded upon the theoretical reflection of Harold Bloom. Such an approach recasts the analysis of poetic influence in terms of "mis-reading" and "creative correction," focusing on how poets struggle (un)consciously to deviate from previous models of writing which at once inspire and enslave their own creative efforts. This view of an essentially dialectical relationship between poet and predecessor dissolves the reductive notion that influence pertains primarily to instances of imitation or similarity, and seeks out instead "the textual play of convergence and divergence between creative artists" (xi) whereby the emergence of a new stance, stemming from the reworking or revision of previous practice(s), can be traced and elucidated.

Applying this framework to the poetic enterprises of Rimbaud and Claudel, Paliyenko demonstrates how, through mis-reading, the latter appropriates the former to his own religious cause and, in so doing, "antithetically completes his precursor in accordance with his own poetics of *connaissance*" (9). Her consideration of the divergent strategies of metaphor which underpin radically different conceptions of the poetic subject in their respective works illuminates an ironic transition from a

postmodernist to a modernist perspective, as the reader is brought "from the production of meaning in Rimbaud at the level of the signifier (poiesis) to the representation of meaning at the level of the signified (mimesis) in Claudel" (20), from the construction of a dialogic or split subjectivity in and through discourse in Rimbaud's case to the cohesive and completely known Claudelian self. Thus, while Claudel asserts the affinities which bind him to Rimbaud, Paliyenko conclusively restages the basis of their history of influence to highlight discontinuity. Indeed, astute analysis of Rimbaud's and Claudel's divergent poetics of subject and language not only uncovers the revisionist relation of these poets but, moving effortlessly between theoretical development and poetic practice, invites the reader to reflect on key shifts in modern critical thinking through the specifics of two differing creative options. In this way, Paliyenko's charting of a map of mis-reading embraces the broader sweep of poetic history and alerts us to new ways of evaluating its stages and momentum.

Impeccably orchestrated, this study initially outlines how Claudel discovers his own stance of mystical lyricism by revising the poetic subject in his precursor, in effect replacing the unconscious Other as an immanent source of creativity with the transcendent supremacy of a God-given voice. A discussion of the two poets' respective metaphoric practices follows, drawing notably upon Aristotelian, Freudian and Lacanian perspectives to differentiate between metaphor as poiesis at the level of the signifier (functioning semiotically with metonymy to produce signs that express the unknown) and metaphor as analogy at the level of the signified (working mimetically to disclose presupposed meaning). Having identified such key differences which bespeak a deviating stance and help plot the course of mis-reading, Paliyenko devotes two chapters to each poet, tracing the development of Rimbaud's fragmented subject from the seer letters through *Une saison en enfer* to the *Illuminations* and, thereafter, Claudel's converse construction, from *Connaissance de l'Est* through to *Cinq grandes odes*, of a unified and centred subject of knowledge whose creative impulse springs not from authority within but is received submissively from without. Lending clear, bold lines to the twists and turns of this revisionist canvas, *Mis-Reading the Creative Impulse* not only encourages understanding of how individual poetic voice originates, it argues forcefully against viewing the imprint of literary heritage as a progressive patterning of models and ideas, and bids us reconsider the complex web of alliances and antagonisms informing the creative urge, shifting and recombining to release anew the trembling possibilities of po(i)etic endeavour.

Michael Brophy

University College, Dublin

\*\*\*

Rabaté, Dominique, dir. *Figures du sujet lyrique*. Perspectives littéraires. Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1996. 163 p.

Ce livre rassemble huit études qui visent tout droit le centre de la poésie : la voix lyrique. Afin de mettre en relief la complexité de cette voix, les collaborateurs recourent aux concepts de l'énonciation. Ceux-ci sont, de nos jours, utilisés avec profit pour étudier des pièces ou des textes en prose. Leur emploi dans le domaine de la poésie est pourtant moins fréquent. Un des mérites du présent ouvrage est de mettre en évidence la valeur de cette approche qui permet un nouvel éclairage des strates discursives parcourant tout texte, soit-il poétique, dramatique ou autre.

Les contributions se regroupent autour de trois axes : en guise d'introduction, deux chapitres privilégient l'aspect historique. Les chapitres suivants combinent des

réflexions suscitées par un corpus poétique particulier avec des questions d'ordre théorique. La dernière contribution, signée par Jean-Michel Maulpoix, ne clôt pas le débat. Au contraire, le professeur-poète le relance en introduisant de manière enjouée un concept énonciatif jusqu'alors inconnu : « La quatrième personne du singulier ». Cette notion, disons-le tout de suite, n'a pas de valeur opératoire, mais elle exprime de façon exemplaire la polyvalence du sujet lyrique moderne. Capable d'intégrer toutes les personnes grammaticales, la quatrième personne du singulier (voir aussi la contribution de Sermet, 90) est « à la fois totale et insaisissable » (154). D'abord « imaginée par Ferlinghetti » (153 ; la référence exacte n'étant pas donnée, je l'ai trouvée grâce à Hans R. Runte qui m'a mise sur la piste des « beatniks » américains : Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Her* [London : MacGibbon & Kee, 1960, 1966] : 153), cette figure représente pour Maulpoix le mieux les formes multiples dont le sujet énonciateur peut se revêtir en poésie. Fragmenté, ambigu, présent-absent, voire virtuel, ce sujet n'existe que dans et par son inscription langagière, fait que Maulpoix rappelle en évoquant de nombreux poètes, de Baudelaire jusqu'à Michaux.

Les deux premiers chapitres insistent, eux aussi, sur le caractère composite du sujet lyrique. Yves Vadé (« L'émergence du sujet lyrique à l'époque romantique ») souligne que le « je » de la poésie romantique n'est jamais purement (auto)biographique, c'est plutôt un « sujet triangulé », déterminé par ses rapports avec l'univers (« je suis tout »), son allocutaire (« je suis toi »), et avec l'autre (« je est un autre »)(17-18). Dominique Combe (« La référence dédoublée ») prolonge cette réflexion en resituant historiquement le débat théorique autour du sujet lyrique, notion capitale de la critique allemande (*lyrisches Ich*) qu'il faut comprendre sur la toile de fond d'une discussion remontant jusqu'à Goethe, notamment son ouvrage *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (la poésie [ou la fiction, ou la littérature] et la vérité — le terme allemand de « Dichtung » étant polysémique, comme D. Combe ne manque pas de le faire remarquer [55]). Retraçant la polémique entre ceux pour lesquels le « je » lyrique renvoie au sujet réel (K. Hamburger étant la représentante la plus connue de ce groupe) et ceux qui refusent catégoriquement cette référence unidimensionnelle (F. Nietzsche, W. Benjamin, M. Susman, R. Ingarden, entre autres), Combe montre l'aporie commune des deux groupes : l'écriture poétique contient toujours des éléments autobiographiques tout en dépassant ce premier niveau. Aussi l'auteur conclut-il que le « je » lyrique ne se laisse jamais réduire au sujet empirique, mais qu'il n'est pas pour autant inventé de toutes parts : sa référence est double, ou « dédoublée ». Le « caractère tensionnel » du sujet lyrique qui, « n'exist[ant] pas », « est en perpétuel devenir » (63), résulte de l'écart définitif entre le « je » autobiographique et ses figurations.

La conviction réductrice stipulant l'identité entre les sujets lyrique et réel est réfutée dans chacune des contributions suivantes, avec toutefois des nuances dans l'argumentation. Dominique Rabaté (« Énonciation poétique, énonciation lyrique »), par exemple, rappelle que le sujet de l'énonciation, bien que « source de l'énoncé », est lui-même « produit par l'énoncé qui en porte trace » (66). Dès lors, l'« unité-unicité du sujet (lyrique ou autre !) » (67) est intenable, comme l'a déjà affirmé Oswald Ducrot, il y a longtemps (1982). Rabaté montre de plus que la temporalité du sujet autobiographique, tourné vers le passé, va à l'encontre de celle de « l'expérience lyrique » qui se fait au présent, est formulée au présent et « déborde » (72) le présent.

Analysant la poésie d'Apollinaire, Joëlle de Sermet met l'accent sur « [I] adresse lyrique », ou le destinataire du poème. L'auteure démontre que les permutations entre le « je » lyrique et son allocutaire « tu » sont illimitées dès qu'on prend en considération la position du lecteur virtuel. Destinataire ultime de toute énonciation

poétique, le lecteur virtuel peut choisir de mettre le masque du locuteur et / ou celui de l'allocutaire, si bien qu'il n'y a pas de terme aux jeux énonciatifs où l'un se construit par l'autre.

Selon Laurent Jenny (« Fictions du moi et figurations du moi »), qui étudie Baudelaire et surtout Michaux, l'espace où le sujet lyrique prend la parole est indéterminé. Voilà pourquoi on ne peut trancher définitivement entre un moi purement fictif et les avatars d'un moi réel : les « fictions » ainsi que les « figurations » du moi restent à jamais en suspens.

Michel Collot, en inversant la prémisse de Hegel selon qui le poète exprime son for intérieur, soutient que la poésie moderne présuppose un « [s]ujet lyrique hors de soi », état que le philosophe allemand avait admis comme exception (113). Cette sortie de soi-même, « ek-stase autant qu'exil » (114), est au cœur de la poésie de Rimbaud et de Francis Ponge. Refusant un lyrisme purement subjectif, ces poètes s'intéressent davantage à « la matérialité des mots et des choses » (117), travail qui leur permet de trouver un nouveau rapport au monde.

L'avant-dernière contribution, « Sujet éthique, sujet lyrique » de Michel Jarrety, sort des préoccupations communes du recueil, si bien que les raisons de son inclusion ne sont pas tout à fait évidentes. Non que ce chapitre soit inintéressant — l'auteur y étudie Bonnefoy et Char —, mais le raisonnement philosophico-religieux, avec son cadre conceptuel si différent des autres études (« engagement », « poésie et salut », « devoir », « morale », pour nommer quelques expressions que Jarrety emprunte à Bonnefoy [129]), a pour effet que cette voix critique « déchante » parmi les autres.

D'aucuns hésiteront peut-être à reconnaître la valeur de concepts provenant de la linguistique en matière de poésie. À cet égard, il n'est pas inutile de rappeler qu'une terminologie apparemment plus simple crée ses propres impasses, telles que les dichotomies érigées en système entre sujets autobiographique et fictif, l'extérieur et l'intérieur, l'objectif et le subjectif. Dépasser ces oppositions afin de pouvoir saisir le sujet lyrique dans toute sa complexité, tel fut le défi lancé aux collaborateurs. Ils l'ont élégamment relevé et réussi à mettre en relief, par l'étude des enjeux et écarts énonciatifs aux niveaux pronominal et spatio-temporel, la pluralité et l'hétérogénéité des composantes dont se constitue le sujet en poésie. Enfin, ils ont démontré que « la » voix lyrique n'est pas mono-tone, elle est, au contraire, polyphonique.

(Compte rendu rédigé dans le cadre de recherches sur l'énonciation et l'autobiographie au féminin effectuées grâce à une bourse postdoctorale « Killam » pour laquelle je tiens à remercier l'Université Dalhousie.)

Monika Boehringer

Dalhousie University

\*\*\*

Bishop, Michael. *Women's Poetry in France 1965-1995*. Winston-Salem: Wake Forest University Press, 1997. 392 p.

We are indebted to Bishop for a superb bilingual anthology of twenty-eight "feminine voices at play" over a thirty-year span. The word *beau*, as defined by Baudelaire, best conveys the depth, sensitivity, and rigor that Bishop has invested in his translations. Broad-spectrum in approach, his main thought was "to make accessible to a larger Francophile and even Francophone audience" writings that are scattered and difficult to come by. "Women simply have been, and still are, very significantly excluded from the modern poetic canon" (iv). Bishop has now remedied this dearth.

In his introduction Bishop notes that choice, always incumbent upon editors of anthologies, requires deletion. Confronted with this dilemma, while giving precedence to published works, he omitted “perceived or actual literary, political or theoretical ‘schools’ or groups” (xv). Immensely helpful to the reader are his tracings of the tradition of French women poets back to the *lais* of Marie de France, the songs, poems, and allegories of Marguerite de Navarre, Christine de Pisan’s *Treasure of the City of Ladies*, Pernette du Guillet’s *Rhymes of Gentle and Virtuous Woman*, the flamingly resonant sonnets of Louise Labé, and the elegies of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore. To broaden the reader’s scope, Bishop suggests that she or he indulge in a creative act as well: reading the poems of Labé in concert with those of Jacqueline Risset; that of Christine de Pisan commutually with those of Marie Étienne or Jeanne Hyvrard. The transcendence of the time/space factor would allow readers to penetrate a spiritual, emotional, tonal as well as intellectual dimension which might otherwise be impossible to experience.

Each of the poets in Bishop’s anthology captures not only eternal feelings and sensations, like anguish, struggle, rage, serenity, love, hate, but also multivalent perceptions into the cosmic mysteries of woman’s world. As intuitions take on life, tone wanders, perspectives vanish, coalesce, or emerge as they merge into existence, convergings uprooting a well-worn past while molding new physically exciting contexts and forms.

Bishop offers sensitive, yet masterful translations of poems by Chedid, Dohollau, Hân, Mansour, Laffay, Duras, Mitaud, Cadou, Helft, Supervielle, Bancquart, Ghoury-Ghata, Teyssiéras, Le Dantec, Burine, Herlin, Risset, Albiach, Borias, Hyvrard, Broda, Baude, Étienne Redonnet, Malroux, Tellermann, Grangaud, and Zins. Let us listen to Andrée Chedid’s “Nous allons”:

Il n’y a pas d’épilogue  
Ni de verger intact

Dans les tournois de l’âme  
Dans la chair du temps  
Nous allons nous irons  
Sans atteindre le seuil

Ni confins  
Ni sens inverse  
À l’incessant voyage.

There is no epilogue  
No immaculate orchard

In the tournaments of the soul  
In the flesh of time  
We are going we shall go on  
Without reaching the threshold

Neither confines  
Nor reversal  
In the ceaseless journey.

Poetry lovers—and libraries—should avail themselves of Bishop’s unique offering. For he, like the authors imprinted in *Women’s Poetry*, is also a remarkable poet!

Bettina L. Knapp

Hunter College and the Graduate Center,  
City University of New York

\*\*\*

Atlan, Liliane. *Glück, doch wie nur es sagen?* Trans. of *Bonheur, mais sur quel ton le dire?* by Rüdiger Fischer. Rimbach: Verlag im Wald, 1997. 115 p.

Liliane Atlan, known for the originality, breadth, and scope of her plays—*Monsieur Fugue* (1967), *Les Messies* (1969), *La petite voiture de flammes et de voix* (1971), *Un opéra pour Térézin* (1997)—is also a poet whose unique lyrical voice seizes our attention. We find the poignancy and beauty of her vocalizations in this bilingual edition as well, which is also memorable for its remarkable translation.

Dalhousie French Studies 44 (1998)



The intensity of the emotions animating the twenty-five poems—in verse and in prose—translated here, clutches the reader in its grip by the beauty and heightened feelings conveyed, by the richness, amplitude, and subtlety of the vocabulary. Whether focusing on love, death, pain or passion for life, or voicing a prayer of gratitude to God, Atlan's words, emerging within the framework of a vital energetic movement, are endowed with biblical power and breadth. A consummate artist, Atlan draws her inspiration from philosophical and metaphysical spheres which she manipulates in brilliant images, rhythms, thoughts, sensations, and feelings, which remain fixed as mnemonic devices within the reader's experience.

Blending transcendence with the most visceral of passions, Atlan has perfectly mastered the art of transmuting the abstract Ideation into the Word. She succeeds in this prodigious feat by liberally filling spatial expanses with free verse, despite Antonin Artaud's conviction of the impossibility of such an operation.

Atlan's poems reach cosmic dimensions in, for example, "Le maître des marionnettes" ("Der Meister der Marionetten") which asks God, who had once led his people to the promised land, to show them the way once again: "Comme une Armoire / Ouvrez le Ciel" ("Wie einen Schrank / Öffnet den Himmel"), thereby allowing humanity to contemplate anew the infinite and ineffable abyss, the "ombres des ombres" ("Schatten der Schatten").

"Notre sourire nous effraye" ("Unser Lächeln erschreckt uns") translates the disquieting lightning flashes traversing those secret inner spaces, that hidden world which the poet refuses to reveal. This intimate domain will remain sealed, walled in, inaccessible, protected with vigilance from all intrusions.

A profound sadness celebrates the anniversary in "Mariage" ("Heirat"). Traveling through time, Atlan evokes the icy coldness which seizes her soul as she penetrates the now glazed surfaces of once salubrious ponds, the very one a couple had long ago experienced in togetherness. As her vision soars to heights unparalleled, the poet still feels those throbbing internal pulsations, that once secret livingness, forever obliterated, lost in oblivion.

In "J'ai vu la mort pleurer" ("Ich sah den Tod in Tränen aufgelöst"), immobile whiteness takes on contour, transmitting meaning in so doing. The poet, immersed in the immensity of Mystery itself, hears Death whose fragile and worn fingers open up to "une maison d'étoile et de vêtements blancs" ("Ein Haus genäht aus Stern und weißem Kleid").

Night obliterates the visible world in "Manteaux de pluie" ("Regenmäntel"). The vaporous images which surge forth, like the formerly inhabited house, vanish one by one, yielding the once occupied space to beasts of prey, as the vacillating eye of the disquieted poet stares on.

Although it is difficult to make this choice, one might consider, perhaps, "Nous avons tous un grand chagrin" ("Wir haben alle großen Kummer") to be the most beautiful poem in this collection, for the manner in which it projects its light behind the medley of masked faces. As the past surges forth in small and successive touches, each beating out the rhythmic patternings of the Void, we listen to the poet: "quelqu'un nous manque, l'être le plus aimé nous manque, notre vie n'est plus rien, où trouver la force de survivre au désert" ("jemand fehlt uns, das liebste Wesen fehlt uns, unser Leben ist nichts mehr, woraus wir Kraft schöpfen könnten, um in der Wüste zu überleben").

Distilled lyricism inhabits Atlan's poetry, as it does Emily Dickinson's. Its vibrations are inner, its intensity inner, its secret pulsations liberated only in flashes of intense inner light, in dense musical interludes, limited colorations, and choice rhythmic beats, each ushering in vague sensations which dominate the moment.

Rüdiger Fischer must be felicitated for having captured both Atlan's inner and outer worlds. Praise must also be awarded him for rejoining Atlan's rhythmic flights, imagistic flairs, and concealed messages so deeply embedded in the fabric of each poesis.

Accolades are to go to the designer of this volume. The jacket, both front and back, features two extraordinary vases by Christa de Coppet, a student of graphic arts in Hamburg, of fine arts and decorative arts in Paris, of Oriental art during her stay in the South Pacific where she discovered and used primitive firing methods for her pottery and sculptures in order to underscore the livingness in each individual creation. Her arresting vases replicate the beauty, depth, and eternity not only of Atlan's art, but of her own as well.

Bettina L. Knapp

Hunter College and the Graduate Center,  
City University of New York

\*\*\*

Runte, Hans R. *Writing Acadia: The Emergence of Acadian Literature 1970-1990*. Chiasma 6. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997. 243 p.

*Writing Acadia*, a ground-breaking work, seeks "to introduce English readers to a Canadian literary phenomenon," to familiarize them with a new and quite remarkable literature emanating for the past twenty years from the French-speaking areas of Eastern Canada.

Although Acadian writing has been going on for at least a century, Runte writes in his historical resumé, not until the middle of the twentieth century can one refer to such endeavors as "Acadian literature." A dearth of time, wanting educational institutions, and a stigmatization of the French language caused the void. Nor was there a *need* for literature since *orality* took its place in the form of ballads, songs, and legends. Runte expertly familiarizes his readers with the works and authors responsible for taking that giant step from orality to writing, thereby paving the way for the literary renaissance of the last twenty or so years.

It was Antonine Maillet who in 1971, eight years before winning the Prix Goncourt, took it upon herself "to retell Acadia to Acadians [...] by word of mouth." What distinguishes her work from that of others of the time is her intent not to write "about but of Acadia." Runte meticulously explores her four basic books: *Pélagie-la-Charrette*, "a scattering of families" and their return from exile being its central theme; *Cent ans dans les bois*, which "recreates oral Acadia orally"; *Les Cordes-de-Bois*, depicting "epic and mythical tales"; and *Crache à Pic*, an attempt at perpetuating the epic genre.

Canada's official bilingualization in 1969 catalyzed Acadian writers to express their ideas. Raymond LeBlanc's *Cri de terre* (1972), a "poetic dismantling of an ossified Acadia," was the first book published by the Éditions d'Acadie. Seeds of discontent were then spread in the works of Herménégilde Chiasson, Louis Comeau, Calixte Duguay, and others.

Although a mood both of indifference and of "Acadiocentrism" took hold of Acadian poetry in the 1980s, it nevertheless became the springboard for a new and far more "sober awakening" from which a new consciousness would radiate: "on ne peut pas skipper la réalité," wrote LeBlanc. Something different was "hatching under the embers and ashes of the once consuming and now quite consumed discourse of the 1970s which would escape the enclosure of hope and fatality." With this in mind, Gérald Leblanc identified departure as, in the words of Rose Després, "[l]eaving in

order to see better from afar [...] not fleeing into wasted time,” but recasting it in terms of new images, tonalities, and rhythms.

Issues, imagination, and solutions have drawn together, Runte writes, into “a literary crucible in which all creative wills converge” to bring forth the new, but are also “in danger of imploding.” Acadian literature must now try to distend its creativity to reach “outer regions of the universe of Acadianness,” a task which Dyane Léger, France Daigle, and Monique Leblanc have so eminently taken up. They and others are, in Runte’s words, “[w]riting (im)possibilities.” Nevertheless, the first two threaten to unwrite literature and consequently to write Acadia out of existence, depicting it as “a non-country which cannot and need not be described.”

Runte’s book is fascinating as well as scholarly. Although I have mentioned only a few nuggets concerning Acadian literature, its birth and its renaissance, libraries, specialists as well as casual readers and students will benefit greatly from *Writing Acadia*.

*Bettina L. Knapp*

*Hunter College and the Graduate Center,  
City University of New York*