

Truinas

April 21, 2001

Philippe Jaccottet

translated by John Taylor

It was the 20th of April, on the eve of André du Bouchet's burial, when his daughter Marie called to ask if I would say a few words for the occasion. I told her I wasn't sure I would have the courage to do so. Then that same evening, after imagining the burial would be even more sorrowful if no one spoke up at all—even as I already suspected no genuine ceremony would be held—I quickly wrote this down:

“In the last letter received from André du Bouchet, dated the 31st of March, these words: ‘Arrived at Truinas in a marvelous snow storm. . .’

And these lines from Hölderlin's ‘Mnemosyne’ came to mind:

*And snow, like lilies of the valley,
Signifying nobility of soul
Wherever it's found, half-shines with the green
Of the Alpine meadows where
Heading up a steep road
And speaking of the wayside cross
In memory of the dead,
A traveler with
Another, but what is this?*

‘Nobility of soul’: words that have become almost unpronounceable. Yet this is what we all loved and admired in André du Bouchet; like his fiery spirit preserved until his last days despite what he had to endure; and that valor, which he also kept up until the very end, and which I always envied.

This is why Anne-Marie and I would feel strengthened, reinvigorated, every time we came back from Truinas. And if there was still daylight, the narrow stream would be glimmering further on, to the right of the road, after Dieulefit, like light going on ahead of us, leading us, having broken through the equally glimmering rock cliff in places. These are the things we kept close to us for more than fifty years; these are the things he reached in words as few other poets have been able to do, shooting his arrows from a bow strung to its keenest tautness.

Incandescent words.

To hear them no longer, I mean pronounced by him, will be greatly missed by everyone.

‘Taken away at Truinas this April 20th as if in a marvelous snow storm’; ‘snow, like lilies of the valley’—they won’t be long in sprouting up—‘signifying nobility of soul, wherever it’s found’ . . .”

Having left Grignan at about nine in the morning and as we were driving to Dieulefit through the Valley of the Lez, which narrows as one continues, I pointed out to Anne-Marie that the clouds ahead likely announced snow. Indeed, wet and heavy snowflakes started falling just after Dieulefit even as the fog was thickening enough to worry us somewhat about the end of the drive. Upon our arrival in Truinas, the whole landscape was sprinkled white, the air was cold, the paths were muddy; so that the sentence with which I had intended to begin and end my speech—the “snow storm” that was still a mere metaphor in my mind—would have to be modified since the snow which had been qualified by André himself as “marvelous” and which had accompanied his forced departure from Truinas at the end of March, was now falling again—but for his last return. . .

At the end of the small valley, when we arrived at the little cemetery alongside a chapel which, moreover, we had never entered, a mechanical shovel was still digging the grave in the miry earth. A few people were standing there, strangers as well as friends, but no family members as yet, so we decided to shelter ourselves from the cold and the sparsely falling snow by going into the chapel which, because it was deconsecrated, seemed even sadder and colder. At last we spotted Anne, then Marie, then Paule and Gilles. It clearly seemed as if nothing, absolutely nothing, had been planned or organized; not to mention a ceremony or ritual, which probably none of us expected anyway; nor even any attempt at some kind of order: there was a sort of strange bewilderedness as well as something wild which, perhaps, ultimately fit the occasion. Anne-Marie gave her arm to Jacques Dupin who had nearly slipped on the sloping ground. In a small sloping enclosure where, I think, there were still only one or two graves, the coffin had been placed on a construction site trestle table with metallic legs. I was struck by an impression of strangeness that continued to grow as time went by: because of the unexpected cold, the small snow-sprinkled valley that I was beginning to discover beyond the low cemetery wall, and even more so the kind of disorder and bewilderedness, the long silence—to the extent that I realized, later, that I had not thought for a second about a dead body lying in the coffin, let alone the body of such an old friend, not for a second—and I do not believe this merely stemmed from an unconscious defense mechanism against excessive emotion . . .

All ritual forgotten or deliberately rejected, and even the opposite of a ceremony, be it simple and quiet: the silence, the wet cold, the snow that had now stopped falling or was becoming rain, and this kind of waiting among those who were standing there somewhat dazed, almost as if lost.

At the end, instead of some liturgy which I, the old-fashioned one, would perhaps have preferred (yet which, I realize, would have been out of place when what was “true” was precisely this disorder, this confusion I have mentioned), words were pronounced almost

randomly and—deep down—not at all randomly; like those flowers that could be made out here and there beneath the snow. Dominique Grandmont neared the grave and read “The April,” André’s poem from 1983, and it was beautiful because it was about a “blue windowpane” and flowers, ultimately in opposition to the muddy grave, as words were flowering there, wildly: as was in turn Jacques Dupin’s exclamation: “André, my brother!” (and as I continued not to think of him as a corpse, continued to look only at the landscape as I had never seen it—and later I would also tell myself I would never have been able to pronounce words like those, nor like that, and that this was not to my honor). After which I read my few lines: “snow, like lilies of the valley, signifying nobility of soul,” aware that I was touching upon something, all the same, that was irrefutable and that had linked us to each other from the onset. Finally, someone whom I did not know stepped forward with a book in his hand and started reading in turn—it had completely stopped snowing; and his choice of text further deepened my astonishment and emotion because I immediately recognized the final pages of *Obermann*, notably the lines beginning “if the flowers were only beautiful” which, in the 1960s, had given me genuine enlightenment, to the extent that I used them as the starting point for a chapter of *Landscapes with Absent Figures*.

I listened, and the words read aloud penetrated in me as deeply as the landscape of that wintry April around us:

... Century after century, so many hapless wretches will have stated that flowers have been granted to us in order to cover our chains, to deceive us about them at the beginning and even to contribute to our remaining bound till the end! Flowers do still more, but rather vainly perhaps: they seem to indicate what no human mind will ever delve into more deeply.

If flowers were only beautiful to our eyes, they would still seduce us; but sometimes their fragrance leads astray, like a fortunate situation in existence, like a sudden calling, a return to a more intimate life. Whether I have myself sought out these invisible scents or, especially, whether they offer themselves

up, provoking astonishment, I receive them as strong yet precarious expressions of thinking whose secret the material world veils and encloses.

I was listening, even more moved:

. . . but daffodils or jasmines would suffice to make me say that, as we are, we could sojourn in a better world.

What do I wish? Hoping, then no longer hoping, means being or no longer being: this is what man is probably like. Yet how is it that after the songs of a moving voice, after the fragrance of flowers, and the sighs of the imagination, and the élans of thought, one has to die?

Then I listened as “a woman full of loving grace” approached “with no other veil” than a curtain, before withdrawing, coming back “while smiling with her voluptuous resolve”—like another, infinitely more precious, species of flower; after which, brusquely: “But then you will have to grow old.”

As if the most mysterious and the most necessary quality of every life had been touched in passing, almost idly . . . until the final pages of the book, which were also the final pages read that morning in front of the empty grave:

If I make it to old age, if, one day while I am still thinking constantly yet have given up speaking to human beings, I have a friend next to me to hear my farewell to the earth, may my chair be placed on the short grass and may quiet daisies be there in front of me, in the sunlight, beneath the vast sky, so that as I leave this life that keeps passing by I will once again sense something of the infinite illusion.

These sentences had been written, as if in a hush, two centuries beforehand; on that April morning they had just been read, also in a hush and with what fitting intuitiveness, by a voice that was even trembling a little; and it was no less than as if they

were filling all of space before blending into the fog hiding the horizon.

After that, once we had gotten back into the car and then driven off in the wrong direction down the road to Félines for a moment instead of heading directly for the house where friends were expected—some of whom we waved at while driving past—those big sloping meadows, those ravines with boulders like whole mountain chunks that had been halted there for centuries in their fall, two horses as well, motionless in a recess of the narrow road, those trees in bloom on terraced slopes, all this beneath a light layer of snow that only barely concealed them, all this—how to put it?—more beautiful, that is more real in its strangeness, in its wildness, more intense than I had ever seen; all this at once wild and “in well-ordered array” like the oak trees in another of Hölderlin’s poems that I recalled, a “presence” that I had perhaps never in my life felt as strongly, that was indubitable and perfectly incomprehensible, truly “marvelous,” yes, like the snow storm in André’s last letter.

One or two days later, back home and thinking about that morning, about Senancour’s exclamation: “Daffodil! Violet! Tuberoses! You have only instants! . . .,” I ventured this: never will the daffodil say “daffodil,” and this is probably why it seems at once so beautiful and so elusive to us. Flowers have no sight, no tears, no voice. Like the snowflakes that morning, like the boulders, like the mud.

Petit-crû, the dog, was seemingly watching, understanding a little, beginning to understand: he was partly crossing over to our side. The story of Paradise was perhaps not a vain fable: looking and speaking must have been born when human beings stopped being wholly inside the world and in harmony with it as plants and stones appear to be. “Their eyes were opened”: and after the invention of sources came that of tears, infinitely different from each other.

With these thoughts in mind, I saw us once again in the “well-ordered array” of that extraordinarily real and silently radiant place, with those human figures who had come together not without difficulty, the young foreign woman walking down the road to Truinas, Gilles and his daughter walking on another road—the one

on which we had spotted the two horses—along with those human beings who were slipping in the mud of the sloping little cemetery, who were cold, and whose voices, if they ventured to be heard, sometimes trembled a little; sad human beings of course, but not of the kind who show it overtly; especially as I saw them once again, saw us again, human beings who were strangely awkward and lost as if the “well-ordered array” that had long characterized, not only trees and ravines, but also the lives and the deaths of all of us, had come apart, leaving us distraught before the grave, at the end of this small valley, almost like poor people burying one of their own, the victim of some disgusting war, quickly, on the edge of the fighting . . . So unarmed.

Black figures ready to come apart as well, like snowflakes, but so much more miserable than snowflakes.

More miserable except that, lacking the ancient words of some liturgy, we had gone in quest of words that were hardly less unanchored than we were, along with the simplest heartfelt cries (“André, my brother!”), trying them out in the air against death, those very words that are born of the first exile, that would never have been formed and that would have remained unnecessary without it, thereby attempting to tie ourselves back to the world, at least for as long as it takes to pronounce or hear them, to the “marvelous” world of sightless, voiceless things, to the world of flowers and snowflakes on flowers that are blooming or beginning to bloom.

And now comes back to mind another moment of that morning of the 21st of April, when nearly all of us gathered once again in the house in Truinas. A very calm Anne de Staël, her great inner force undamaged by sorrow, came over to speak to me for a short while. She told me that a few days before André’s death, when she offered to read some pages—which had seemed particularly complex to her—written about his poetry, he rejected the idea; yet gratefully accepted her suggestion to read some of Emily Dickinson’s poems, which, as Anne confided, she had always admired; and she added these words more or less, with that frankness we can only appreciate in her: “As if, facing death, only what is self-evident withstood . . .”

I later thought it was as if, during that strangely full morning,

other threads had been added to all the interwoven correspondences which, for so long and despite our differences, I had perceived between André and myself. One of those correspondences was the thought of the “simple” (which, however, is not the word: Dickinson is not “simple,” nor Hölderlin, nor Hopkins, nor André himself) as what alone could be opposable to death, an idea that had preoccupied me for years. The other thread was Emily Dickinson’s being mentioned in that moment of mourning, because of what I had written twenty years before, after Gustave Roud’s death, and which I could not fail to remember now:

“On the afternoon of the funeral, I was struck by the presence of a few objects, which seemingly summed up a life, on his desk cluttered with probably unread books and with mostly unanswered letters. First, the photo of one of Roud’s farmer-friends, a winter woodcutter who was wearing a fur hat, and, in front of this photo, a postcard showing, I think, the head of an archaic Apollo; then a small volume of Emily Dickinson of which Mademoiselle S. told me that he knew by heart a poem that he would constantly reread, in the original, during his last months:

*If I shouldn't be alive
When the Robins come,
Give the one in Red Cravat,
A Memorial crumb.*

*If I couldn't thank you,
Being fast asleep,
You will know I'm trying
With my Granite lip!*

I have often stated that my decisive encounter with Roud and his oeuvre, when I was an adolescent, fortified me with respect to a poetic philosophy in which the craft of writing and how one lives—how one stands up to life—should be inextricably linked. I doubt that André du Bouchet would have much liked Roud’s books, nor even his translations of Hölderlin. Yet the two men were similar in

discretion and dignity, “at the same height”; and even more so at the roots of their oeuvres by means of certain deep harmonies, of which the appearance of the pure figure of Emily Dickinson, as they were about to die, was a poignant sign.

Quite a few of us were in the house and close to one another as rarely happens: André himself was as little dead as possible, if one may speak in this way. And those unheard-of echoes, in the two senses of the word, were circulating in the air as if we had been caught in the network of a “silent music”—the *musica callada* of Saint John of the Cross—and held there together, living together in a house other than the stone one braided with plants that was sheltering us.

A network, yes, it was exactly that, as I assured myself more and more while recalling our long and, most often, tacit friendship.

“We have the same reasons.” Despite the widening gaps in my memory, I still hear André du Bouchet saying these words, just like that, during our first meeting, which took place at the Abbey of Royaumont during some cultural festivity of which I have forgotten everything; we were introduced to each other by André Berne-Joffroy, as he recently reminded me: in 1948, perhaps; in all events, a very long time ago. . .

Five brief peremptory words in which I wholly recognize him today; brief and brusque words since they could be based only upon an immediate intuition; five words that I myself would have been incapable of finding because of my doubting mind and this cautiousness that I have never rid myself of. Five words whose aptness I now perceive with astonishment.

(Whereas the consequences of those “reasons” in our books have been so different that they have sometimes seemed almost incompatible to me; and I have wondered more than once how André could put up with my books, and how I could feel for his so much admiration. As if, in the final reckoning, from the same soil, plants of very different species could sprout. From the same soil, that is: the “same reasons.”)

Similarly, our common admiration for Hölderlin.

In *Landscapes with Absent Figures*, which dates back to 1970, this note added to a few pages of reflections about the same poet:

“One of the most admirable [images written down by Hölderlin], among many others, is found in a sketch of a hymn to Christopher Columbus:

*since
for so little
the bell used
for ringing out
dinnertime
was out of tune, as if by the snow.*

It is difficult to grasp the relationship between these lines and the hymn itself; but suspended as it is here, the image suggests a haiku; and some readers will understand if I say that I find in these few words *the infinite opening* that makes me live.”

It's no coincidence that I had idly contented myself with pointing to the enigma of this fragment, while underscoring the gleam that drew my thoughts to it, and that years later it was taken up by André du Bouchet as the impetus for and the title of a meditation in which he progresses into regions I could never have neared. However, since each of us had granted the same special place to Hölderlin's oeuvre in our own poetic adventures and had both translated some of his pages, it was clearly by choice that we had spent time in the same vicinity of the mind. No surprise, either, that a fragment of “Mnemosyne” almost immediately occurred to me for bidding farewell to him. Not only because of the snow, the lilies of the valley, and the “nobility of soul,” but also because of the evocation of the two travelers who go over a pass marked with a cross “in memory of the dead”; and for this theme of crossing over, which will have accompanied me all my life, and for the multifarious echoes it was raising in me, beginning with the opening of Büchner's *Lenz*:

On the 20th of January, Lenz was walking in the mountains. The summits and high slopes were covered with snow, gray stones were tumbling down to the valleys, green meadows, boulders, and spruce trees.

*It was damp and cold; water was streaming from the
rocks and gushing over the path. . .*

Then, emerging from behind those lines—or those slopes, those cliffs—Celan’s admirable *Conversation in the Mountains*, translated into French as early as 1970 by André du Bouchet and John E. Jackson:

We Jews, having come here like Lenz, over the mountain. . .

And still further back, a memory less immediately convincing but all the same still alive for me: that “Winter Voyage into the Harz” which almost reconciled Rilke with Goethe’s poetry. . .

From there, only a few steps inside myself were needed to arrive at the *Winter Journey*, at Schubert whom, as I discovered one day with some surprise, André admired as much as I did; even as Schubert had been loved, in what I would call a still more intimate way, by Gustave Roud once again; he whom I had been able to compare, toward the end of his life, to another “winter traveler”—and I had never afterwards looked at the low windows of his country house bedroom without the frost flowers evoked in one of the most beautiful lieder of the cycle being re-engraved in my mind.

Echoes less numerous than obstinate and heard in the depths of the heart, all the way to those words which were written so generously for me by André and whose ending in fact makes both Schubert and Goethe surge forth: “What the spirits sing above the waters.” A waterfall poem, a “pure sunbeam” falling from the abrupt cliff and becoming a foamy iridescent veil and murmurs in the depths, all the way to the smooth mirror of the lake where constellations are reflected:

*Human souls
How like water you are!
Human fate
How like wind you are!*

Why then, when I arrived in Truin as that morning, did I immediately sense I was seeing the reality of the world as if it were “in relief,” as

if it were submerging you, almost taking your breath away? I could initially imagine that the painful circumstances had made my sensibility more acute; and that, moreover, the unexpected snow which had so quickly transformed the landscape had somewhat sharpened my eyes. (I must add I had always found Truinas to be a beautiful, “true” place—beautiful because “true”—, including the big low house that had become the heart of the place.)

The sprinkled snow over all things: the encounter, either the first or the last, at the beginning or at the end of the season—a surprise—snow and meadows, snow and foliage; the discovery of all things around us as if they were freshened by a sort of weightless plumage, the surprise—as if a very big bird had swooped down and grazed the ground for an instant, the light touch, fresh, almost immaterial—virginal, as I think that one can and must say (“The virgin, lively and beautiful today”). The boulders, the ravines, the meadows, the hedges, the bouquets of trees, the few stone farmhouses, indubitable as ever and at the same time, how to put it? lightened. . .

The presence, weight, and density of this bit of the world were impossible to call into doubt; and in addition, the very event of the burial that had also become strangely “truer,” true like those stones and that mud, through the total lack of ceremony and through what I said, even with its apparent disorderliness, bewilderedness, a sort of awkwardness before death.

Wild.

Wildness: what lies in the depths, is unaffected, the recovered foundation, ground on which one doesn’t sway—the very qualities ever so present in André du Bouchet’s books—at the very place where, one night, many years before, I had broken a heel bone after overstepping the path and falling from one dry-stone terrace wall onto another one: the opposite of a dream; and with that, the light snow, like feathers left behind by a late migration.

The encounter, which is almost impossible to express, of snow on apple buds beginning to bloom; touches of pink in all that whiteness.

The cold, the mud, the fallen down boulders, the orchard in bloom; but also those two motionless horses, beautifully wooden in color; and the people who were walking there, and the naïve feeling they were all friends, or should have been, because of the common magnetic pull towards the grave, and towards the house.

And the other, even stranger feeling, in me at least, that there was no emptiness, no absence, that only the coffin was empty, as it were. I will even venture this: there was no real sadness, in me at least; rather an emotion at once calm and intense, but no heartbreak, no revolt. (I have to say what I myself felt: nothing more—as I have always tried to do.)

Everything was livened that morning: the sensation of the reality of the world, of the marvelous reality of the world in a moment when contraries meet; and the feeling of human warmth, of, yes, I'll say it again, a "nobility of soul" beaming inside and outside, beneath the snowy sky as well as beneath the roof of the house.

But the greatest marvel, which was capable of arousing, paradoxically if not scandalously, a kind of muffled, timid, yet nonetheless powerful joy, definitely consisted of the words, which were another species of flowers and snowflakes that had sprouted, had flowered, had floated for a few moments midway between the earth and the sky, immaterial things and yet not entirely so, words impossible to produce if there had not first been the flowers, the boulders, and the clouds that they sometimes evoked, yet emerging from a place utterly different from the earth and the sky, born of ourselves, emerging from the heart, unable to be spoken except by us, and speaking to us alone—and those words, yes, obviously, had won out that morning over emptiness, for as long as that morning lasted; but with what lightness, what lack of pretentiousness, without the slightest accent of triumph—I would like to know and be able to say how—as simply, as miraculously, as a stream cutting its way between high grass and rocks (and it was in fact faithfully flowing down below).

A luminous smoke.

Or the fragrance risen from the depths of a heart no longer

closing itself off from the world.

A net knit of words, which gathered, which enveloped like a coat, yet which did not enclose, imprison—quite the opposite; since all the words chosen were expressing a crossing over, were themselves the crossing over, one step after the other—and the mountain, ceasing to seem a wall, had simply become what carries snow at its summit, night that blooms on its distant summit at sunrise.

(Here, another passage from “Mnemosyne,” which immediately precedes the one I quoted:

*But what we love? Sunshine
Sparkling on the floor and dried dust
And the shadowy woods of the homeland. . .*

And finally, just after the same passage:

*. . . but what is it? By the fig tree
My Achilles has died. . .)*

This is how the visible and the invisible, natural things, animals, human beings alive or dead, and their ancient or new words, as well as sadness and a kind of joy, can end up woven together. And once something that looks so much like the most intimate part of the mystery of being has been grazed with what is most intimate in you—however frail you might be, however moronic you might become—how can you forget it, how can you keep it to yourself?

Attached Pages

I have now given shape, though clumsily—so clumsily that, in the past, I would not have divulged them like this—to these pages begun immediately after the 21st of April, 2001, and dragged around like a burden for three years, the burden of an unsatisfactory draft, of an unfulfilled promise. Now published, despite everything, because of the impulse of friendship that they originally signified; and because of what they wanted to say and say again, before I will assuredly no longer be able to do so.

If I had at least spent days rewriting them, touching them up, giving variety to them, enriching them! No, those days were mostly spent keeping my distance in order to avoid the evidence of my failure; and I was not distracted in the least by other chores that would have given me an excuse.

It's barely if I could note down, from time to time, the extent to which I felt "undone"; not "torn apart," but "undone."

Also ill-at-ease, as never before, when facing what always seemed essential to figure out.

Ill-at-ease, undone, disgusted at times, yet with some final remaining persistence.

On another day, I remembered this line from a sonnet written by Góngora in old age:

¿ Caduco el paso ? Ilustrese el juicio
that I had translated as:
Caduc le pas? Que l'esprit s'éclaircisse. . .

[A faltering footstep? May the mind clear itself up. . .]

That this line kept haunting me was perfectly natural. But what if the mind itself "falters," I thought? Against that, nothing could be done. And this provided an additional reason for not postponing the completion of this text, if that morning in Truinas had truly been, as I happened to believe, one of the rare moments when I had recovered my "inner balance" during these years "in the ravine." After which, I had quickly let go once again.

I was experiencing a moment when "winged words," or what had always been dreamt of as such, fall to the ground in piteous disorder; a little like those woodpigeons, in the Pyrenees, flocking into the net that captures them—a spectacle which I had seen in the Pays Basque in 1938, when barely a teenager, and to which, I think, we were taken so we could admire the "great show." I fear I judged it to be so at the time.

And as I was musing during this rout of my thoughts, I wondered if a few of those woodpigeons soaring over the wooden-framed net cast up toward them, had safely flown over the pass. The very thing I could have dreamt for those "extreme words."

(*Parole estreme*, said by dying Clorinda to Tancredi in Tasso's octaves

translated into such admirable music by Monteverdi.)

Even later—it was now the 3rd of November, 2003—I had nevertheless received, once again, a sort of sign: as viewed from a path between the place known as Gleizes and the Rocher des Aures, a few of those poplars that shine or, rather, light up like candles with yellow, almost golden flames, against a backdrop of dense dark-green pastures—especially in front of a rather steep slope where grazing cows seemed to be painted on a vertical panel, as in Books of Hours. Those kinds of lamps whose flames barely tremble in full daylight and which stand upright in the high hollows, at the ends of those small quiet valleys; and their truly golden light, their sunset light, having at last returned to my weary eyes so they can open again for at least as long as it takes to pass by, below.

Signs that are aids and that have become rarer.

And finally, in desperation, nearly three years to the day after that morning in Truinas, this resolution to content myself—but “content” is saying too much—with the work done.

Because what I have tried to retain here becomes something more and more remote.

Something that will end up resembling a foreign language that you had long thought you understood and even had dared to speak, and that becomes little by little unintelligible.

Or a long effective remedy which would no longer work and for which no substitute could be found.

Or it would be like a hand that withdraws, a face that turns away.

Life’s sunlight that moves one step back, then many steps back.

I wonder if a bird can still fly through that sky.

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Translator’s Notes

“And snow, like lilies of the valley. . .” This poem by Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) has several versions. See the discussion in Hölderlin’s *Sämtliche Gedichte* (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005, pp. 1031-1052). I have translated the German version that Jaccottet used:

Und Schnee, wie Maienblumen
Das Edelmütige, wo
Es seie, bedeutend, glänzet mit
Der grünen Wiese
Der Alpen, hälftig, da ging
Vom Kreuze redend, das
Gesetzt ist unterwegs einmal
Gestorbenen, auf der schroffen Straß
Ein Wandersmann mit
Dem andern, aber was ist dies?

Jacques Dupin (b. 1927-2012), French poet. Along with André du Bouchet, Yves Bonnefoy, Michel Leiris, Gaëtan Picon, Louis-René des Forêts, and Paul Celan, Dupin founded and edited the important review *L'Éphémère*, beginning in 1966.

Dominique Grandmont (b. 1941), French poet and translator.

“The April” was actually first published by Janine Hao in 1963, then reissued by the Éditions Thierry Bouchard in 1983. Jaccottet recalls the latter date, which corresponds to an edition that circulated much more widely among the poets in Jaccottet’s and du Bouchet’s circle. Jaccottet notes “croisée blue” (blue window or here, arguably, windowpane) as an image; the actual context is: “croisée renvoyant la couleur de sa lumière au ciel bleu qu’on ne voit pas, est pour jamais confondue avec lui” (windowpane sending back the color of its light to the blue sky that cannot be seen, is forever blended with it).

The French writer Étienne Pivert de Senancour (1770-1846) published his novel *Obermann* in 1804.

Jaccottet’s *Paysages avec figures absentes* was first published in 1970 by Gallimard.

“In well-ordered array.” From Hölderlin’s poem “Lebensalter.” The German phrase is “Wohleingerichteten (Eichen).”

“Their eyes were opened.” A common phrase and concept in the Bible. See Genesis 3: 7, 21: 19; Acts 9: 8, 18; Luke 24: 31, etc.

“One of those correspondences was the thought of the ‘simple.’” Jaccottet is alluding to the epigraph that was used for the first issue of *L'Éphémère*, the review co-edited by André du Bouchet, Jacques Dupin, Yves Bonnefoy, Michel Leiris, Gaëtan Picon, Louis-René des Forêts, and Paul Celan. The notion is often

discussed in du Bouchet's essays; see Clément Layet's preface to du Bouchet's *Aveuglante ou banale: Essais sur la poésie 1949-1959*, Paris: Le Bruit du Temps, 2011. The idea of the simple is found in Plotinus.

Gustave Roud (1897-1976), a Swiss poet and short-prose writer who exerted an important influence on Jaccottet. Jaccottet's study *Gustave Roud* was first published by the Éditions Seghers in 1968, then expanded for a new edition published by the Éditions Universitaires de Fribourg in 1982. Roud's translations of Hölderlin are collected in *Poèmes de Hölderlin* (Lausanne: Mermod, 1942), a book that was reissued by La Bibliothèque des Arts in 2002.

"If I shouldn't be alive. . . ." Emily Dickinson's poem is No. 182 in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Boston / New York / London / Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1960).

The *musica callada* ("silent music") of Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591) is mentioned in strophe 15 of *The Spiritual Canticle* (second version).

André Berne-Joffroy (1915-2007) was a French critic and art exhibit curator.

"since / for so little". From Hölderlin's fragment "Entwurf zu Kolomb IV". See Martin Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1951):

Von wegen geringer Dinge
Verstimmt wie vom Schnee war
die Glocke, womit
Man läutet
Zum Abendessen.

". . . taken up years later by André du Bouchet as a title. . ." Jaccottet refers to the book: . . . *Désaccordée comme par de la neige* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1989).

Georg Büchner (1813-1837) published his novel *Lenz* in 1835.

Paul Celan (1920-1970) published his *Gespräch im Gebirg* in 1959. See the *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 3 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983, pp. 169-173). Jaccottet quotes a sentence toward the end: ". . . wir, die Juden, die da kamen, wie Lenz, durch Gebirg. . ."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) wrote his poem "Harzreize im Winter" in 1777.

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Franz Schubert (1797-1828) composed his song cycle *Winterreise* in 1827. The evocation of “frost flowers” is found in “Frühlingstraum” (“A Dream of Springtime”): “Doch an den Fensterscheiben, / Wer malte die Blätter da? / Ihr lacht wohl über den Träumer, / Der Blumen im Winter sah?“ (“But there on the windowpanes / who had been painting leaves? / You may well laugh at the dreamer / who saw flowers in the winter?”).

“What the spirits sing above the waters.” From Goethe’s poem “Gesang der Geister über den Wassern.” Jaccottet quotes and paraphrases lines from the second strophe. The quatrain is found at the end of the poem: “Seele des Menschen / Wie gleichst du dem Wasser! / Schicksal des Menschen, / Wie gleichst du dem Wind!” Schubert uses the quatrain in his Lied D714.

“The virgin, lively, and beautiful today.” The title of a well-known sonnet by Mallarmé (1842-1898): “Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd’hui / Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d’aile ivre / Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre / Le transparent glacier des vols qui n’ont pas fui . . .”

“But what we love?” The aforementioned poem by Hölderlin, in the version used by Jaccottet:

Wie aber liebes? Sonnenschein
Am Boden sehen wir und trockenen Staub
Und heimatlich die Schatten der Wälder . . .

. . . aber was ist dies? Am Feigenbaum ist mein
Achilles mir gestorben.

Luis de Góngora (1561-1627) was a Spanish poet. Jaccottet has published two translations of Góngora, *Les Solitudes* (Geneva: La Dogana, 1984) and *Treize sonnets et un fragment* (Geneva: La Dogana, 1985). The line “¿Caduco el paso? Ilustrese el juicio” is found in the sonnet beginning “En este occidental, en este, oh Licio. . .”

“Extreme words. . .” From *Il combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda* (1624), composed by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), who used a libretto based on *Jerusalem Delivered* by the poet Torquato Tasso (1544-1595).

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