

WORDS, NAMES, NATURE, EARTH: ON THE POETRY OF  
PIERRE-ALBERT JOURDAN\*

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I

"Tremor provoked by the forsythia in bloom," Pierre-Albert Jourdan writes in *L'Entrée dans le jardin*. "It has overcome greyness, the greyness of the spirit."<sup>1</sup>

And in his final book, *Les Sandales de paille*, he points, "in blossoms of a cherry tree touched by a slanting light"—"blossoms seized by light, and left hanging"—to "what words, always late in coming—words behind glass—fail to capture."<sup>2</sup> Thus, our language is portrayed as keeping us behind a closed window, in the grey room of ideology or dream, while what counts is outside, in the closest possible proximity to the realness (*l'en-soi*) of things. With observations of this kind, which are frequent in his work, Jourdan appears to be among those who consider that the word—this incomplete representation, this occasion for fantasy—is nothing but unreality. Out of the radiance of an initial certainty it filters false appearances, forced desires, questions that anguish stirs up. Lucid in the same way is the laugh of the zen monk, whose illumination is a flash of lightning, which in one burst explodes language, reducing to insignificance the relations between ideas, judgments, and values. Words continue to exist, untouched in their semblance of meaning; we can use them for ordinary ends, but no longer do they resonate with any belief, any hope. They are each detached from the claims to truth, virtue, and knowledge that animated the original word. And instead of such thoughts, we might hear the world breathe, we might perceive the great, indistinguishable oneness that our words had tried to penetrate.

It is true that words, the words of Jourdan's poetry, are, most of them, turned to what is beyond the ordinary power of language, beyond the idea that he would call "grey," beyond the image that flashes falsely at the threshold of wakefulness. And as much as he can, he strives to dissociate his word, kept in the closest possible relationship to a purely tangible perception, from this network of qualifications and connotations that binds ordinary consciousness to knowledge, dream, and the pride of intention. "The almond tree this morning is amurmur with bees. There is a calm, the most intense expression of calmness."<sup>3</sup> His senses seek out the thing that his mind has not yet qualified, the color or smell that no adjective has compromised, the clarity that dissuades him from continuing to speak. Thus, there is a radiance in his pages that one could call, simply, the renewal or the return of natural reality in its very own being, which a silent use of words might free from obscurity, uncovering correspondences that at the dawn of mankind our languages perhaps knew, but which the concept has lost. Again, I quote: "Suddenly, cherry blossoms and stars communicate. The same explosion, the same deflagration tearing all these weary words apart."<sup>4</sup>

But how does it happen that this poet who indicts language can at times also give the impression that he is beholden to it for what seem to be sudden moments of hope? "We cannot give light a name," he writes, but then adds: "The vine will have been its escort, clothed in aramon and muscat."<sup>5</sup> Thus does he sympathetically draw attention to the shimmering resonance of two lovely words, observing, moreover, that "there are names that go beyond names to enter into the blood."<sup>6</sup> Which reveals that in his encounter with words he can feel an excitement, a yearning, the imminence, perhaps, of a secret that may slip away, but not without shining fleetingly in the enigma that is their presence. In fact, while Jourdan was moved to write that "the countryside remains untouched as long as it is not contaminated by language,"<sup>7</sup> he comes to the realization in *Les Sandales de paille* that "mumbled words, perhaps, can assert that beauty exists,"<sup>8</sup> thus according the word a responsibility for certification that implicitly recognizes its capacity for discrimination, enunciation, and truth. Why, then, this renewed confidence—even if furtive and precarious—in language?

A text of great beauty, which I intend to quote, will answer this question; but let us first note that Jourdan, as attentive as he might be to the intensity of a light flashing in the sky or of a smell pervading the

grass, never speaks of them, except to link them discreetly and continuously to a whole set of events and things that, while closely connected to them, nevertheless remain separate. "As naturally as can be, grass and plant invade place and countryside," he tells us about Basho and his travels.<sup>9</sup> But no more in his work than in that of the great Buddhist poet will there be found what so many Oriental wash drawings evoke: namely, the space of mountain peaks and clouds where human presence is no more than a mere dot on a riverboat or at the dark entrance to a cave. In coming together, in being pruned, in offering their flowers by turns and their fruits by seasons, the trees and plants Jourdan cherishes have already given him a place that remains a center: his garden at Caromb, which, surrounded by other gardens, exists in harmony with the old walls and the faint sounds of a farming community. And how often has he evoked (and with such great fondness as to make any detachment impossible) the paths, the roofs, the small bells at the thresholds of houses! In one sense, the garden is inaccessible, since it partakes of the absolute of wild "herbs" growing between two stones; in another, and here is what most affects Jourdan, it is a fact of nature that, without abandoning anything of its reality, seems to open itself to something human.

But here is the passage (from *Fragments*) of which I spoke. It sheds light on a whole other side of Jourdan's thinking about language: "A female prisoner in a concentration camp, having received an orange in a package, kept it for several months and then at Christmas passed it through the fence to a male prisoner, who was overwhelmed." Jourdan recounts this with a dispassionateness that the story seems to require. Then, suddenly, his tone changes: "Shining there, stunted, shriveled, faded, wrinkled, was what surpasses the world; what establishes it in a silent community. There, the orange shone as a grove of orange trees could never shine. There, one need no longer dream (as I was about to do in a self-centered way) of a plentitude in the shape of an orange."<sup>10</sup>

What do these words mean? Above all, that there is a world, other than the material one, that carries the name of nature; and that this other world alone deserves to be called reality. In relations between human beings Pierre-Albert Jourdan discovers what we do not encounter, at least not to the same degree, in lives inaccessible to language: the possibility, and even sometimes the fact, of a gift motivated by sympathy, of compassion, of mutual aid and exchange, all acts of solidarity that one feels Jourdan, in contrast to Nietzsche

and other moderns, refuses to think of as mere disguises of personal interest. He observes, further, that this new kind of relation, by which what is human detaches itself from what is simply natural, does not enclose itself only in its own meaning—on the level where this is produced—but affects the object that it has implicated in its act. What in nature had only been a thing, had only responded to material needs, is transformed because of it, acquiring a quality that can be called spiritual. The orange offered under the conditions Jourdan describes is henceforth more than a fragment of nature. It becomes the signifier, the reminder of what surpasses nature. And were it changed in its physical presence, as in the case of the fruit that the prisoner was compelled to keep for so long, this heightening will by no means be undone; in fact, we might at times be able to experience it even more intensely.

It is not, moreover, that this reality born from social relations could be lacking in fullness or variety, because, through the goods that human beings seek, the entire universe is, by degrees, encountered, used, and integrated into a structure; it is opened as well to the valorization associated with the act of giving. In fact, what our words designate—namely, this world that in the West we call nature, as if, starting with the oldest of these words, it were question of an autonomous coherence—is first and foremost a reorganization of the raw facts of practical experience as dictated by our needs. At the beginning of our language as well as of our terrestrial existence, words were stones, collected and joined together; from them an arch was built. Neither the wind, nor the sky, nor even water or fire preceded the word. To it they owed their appearance; they were made stronger by the degree of meaning conferred on them by the common enterprise. However, considering that it is of the very nature of life to seek to grow and to extend its limits, we can also understand that wind, sky, water, and fire are not merely temporary representations, which, prior to being wiped away by scientific thought, reflected our chance encounters with the world, but that they have taken the physical fact at the most natural point of a potential for development to which the concept, coming as it does later, is blind. To put it differently, it is the entire universe, thus rewritten, that can shine with this other quality that I referred to earlier in the example of the orange. I call earth this future, whose halo, in what seems at first only a simple appearance of matter—and yet may be a field or a path—is sometimes perceived and given the name of beauty.

## II

But to think in this way leaves open a question that needs to be raised again. If, to summarize in a nutshell what I have been saying, we are in *nature* but live on *earth*, how does it come about that even the tree or the animal, even the horizon line with its reddening clouds, are determined by our words and involved in their evolution? Does language not signal to us through these terrestrial things, even in those moments when the intensity of perception, suddenly heightened, gives us the impression of coming into contact with the very plenitude of a thing, fundamentally beyond the limited representations that our words secure for us? "Tremor provoked by the forsythia in bloom" Jourdan wrote, observing that a greyness he associated with words "always late in coming" was disappearing, and then proposing to remain silent—lying flat like the cicada against the trunk of the cosmic tree—so as to hear the murmur of the world. But the forsythia, like the almond-tree or the stars, is also, from the point of view of our perception, a word, the name that defines and underlies the form. When at springtime the forsythia summons us by its blaze of color that has, let it be said in passing, no attraction for any animal consciousness, is its name consumed by this blaze, has it vanished along with the grey word that cannot know this splendor? Or, conversely, is it not restored to itself, suddenly: released in a single gesture from representations that had confined it to the domain of mediocre desires, useless tasks, listless existence? We can imagine—it is an almost instinctive hypothesis—that the emotion corresponding in us to the intensity in a thing is the return of the hope that existed at the beginning of time, be it that of human history or of our personal life. We can imagine that it is the prospect of nomination—of verbalisation—that thus stands out anew, exciting or elating us; and that, when the sky is at its reddest and the pollen at its most vibrant, it is then quite simply that the human word implicitly signifies itself in the substance of the world.

Reappearing at the summit of what is, at the passage toward what is more than ourselves, which the light expresses in a single burst, is the imperative we had seen preside at the intensification of language, there where this intensification, insofar as it comes into being, finds its place of true efficacy: namely, in the encounter of beings, between this I and this other who are responsible for the world. The blossoming

almond-tree or the forsythia, their dazzling fragrance and color, command us not simply to smell, or touch, or gaze, until we are but one with the splendor we perceive, but to share and give, and attempt to break this egocentrism about which we can now say that it comes from far off in the biological past, that it was the very essence of simple lives before language, and that it is still active in the word, erecting systems of representations and of ideas in which the self takes form and is sheltered. These systems and images in lieu of what exists allow us to attain the infinite, since verbal signs evoke only essences; but they also enclose us within ourselves and deny the presence of the other. The great potentiality of things is lost, and one has to struggle against this loss by putting the self in question. This is what intensity requires of us, even when it has only glowed for an instant in nothing but a flower or dry stones. And what it expects us to undertake is therefore a criticism of illusion—the illusion that nourishes the self. This certainly links it to Oriental thought, but only superficially, because the negation that it seeks does not entirely concern the same object. In Buddhism, the natural phenomenon is, in the final analysis, shown to be illusory, and the actions that build societies are viewed similarly. One must understand that nothing has being; one must become fully conscious of this nonbeing and dispossess oneself of any future plan or hope. In the other kind of approach to the workings of illusion, however, the great structures of the world and of life—“useless forms of matter” as they may be—are by no means denounced; they are even resolutely accepted as the only possible absolute we have for our presence on earth; it is their appropriation by our dreams that is seen as constituting nothingness. Rejected is the orientation toward the strictly personal, whether some fantasy or an overly complex work of art. But by no means refused is the claim of each of us to declare ourselves real in our simple needs; by no means denied is the search for a meaning, the desire for an architecture; and by no means mistrusted are the dignity and quality of the presence of things, great and humble, with which people make their abode: in particular, those very things, profound as they are, from which may come the trembling that redeems. In a word, terrestrial reality, to this way of thinking, survives the criticism of the illusory. Subject, other, and world come about in the same instant: a singular reality, lost but always starting anew, that Rimbaud described at the end of *Une Saison en enfer* as “Christmas on earth.”

Christmas was also what Pierre-Albert Jourdan had noted when

he pondered what he had read about the prisoner and the orange. And similarly, as we have seen, he was not satisfied—at the moment the blossoming of the forsythia enveloped him in its flash of light—in evoking a splash of yellow, but retained the name of the plant, as he had done so many other times, particularly when describing the vine (so rich in names to identify its varieties) as the “escort” of light. To name at the very moment of dazzlement, of decentering, of a vast swell of tranquillity, to “honor,” thus, “the almond-tree, the grasshopper, the caper bush” as real presences, assuring as much as surpassing his own, this Jourdan never ceased doing.<sup>11</sup> And when at night he discovered “the little althaea at the back of the garden, like a totally black shadow, the other, terrifying (potent?) face of an often, all but forgotten plant,” we can imagine that he perceived in the surrounding space, so familiar was it, a storehouse of names ready to humanize the outerness of the world as “terrifying” as it may be; that he perceived also the possibility of an affinity with an object completely different from the “artificial plenitude” he feared experiencing, and perhaps even preferring, when the orange tree evoked this sort of profuseness for the pleasure of the senses alone.<sup>12</sup> Jourdan did not like *words*, words that were “always late in coming,” but he knew, it seems, that *names* precede us. And I wonder, therefore, which explains my long digression, if he did not ask himself *also* and with intensity—living, writing, searching through a struggle of intuitions and through a tenseness of mind that alone can shed light into the very depths of his apparently simple work—the question that I have just raised in a more explicit, though abstract, way.

### III

A tenseness of mind. Certainly, one will have to emphasize, and as strongly as possible, the fullness given in his thought to Oriental mysticism, that of Buddhism, of Taoism. He referred as clearly as possible to this spiritual allegiance in explaining, for example, how moved he had been by the beginning of *La Sente étroite du bout du monde*,<sup>13</sup> so extraordinary indeed and so enticing to our dreams: “‘And I, from I do not remember what year, tattered cloud yielding to the wind’s call. . . .’”<sup>14</sup> It is under the sign of Basho’s journey along

the paths of his asceticism that Pierre-Albert wrote with amused modesty: "Lift this bag, it is quite light! You may almost be ready to travel."<sup>15</sup> And it is also in the spirit of an irreversible detachment that he had noted, as early as *Le Matin*: "Don't search for anything, overlook this mass of confusion. Merely draw near to this clump of thyme. There is so much to forget. . . . Stay there, close to the swaying grass as high as your face. Plunge into it. Consent to this rhythm alone."<sup>16</sup> And again: "The shadows grow long. Crouched there, I feel as if I have drunk them. My identity becomes confused. The 'who am I?' fantasizes itself a pebble. Divine brew!"<sup>17</sup> How far we are in this last notation from that other poet who is also crouched: Rimbaud in *Larme*, equally avid to "drink," but whom "dark countries, lakes, poles," whirls and clouds of a tempestuous word shattered by flashes of lightning and dreams deprive "until evening" of clear, fast-flowing water! Assuredly, there are moments in Jourdan's work when words give up, when one no longer uses them except to highlight the immediacy they deny. And yet, this poet is the one in France who, from time to time in his writing, has come the closest to that condition, characteristic of the haiku, where words are freed from their reciprocal relations. I will give two examples, each having in common the perception, already in itself particularly "Japanese," of a faint noise of metal (or of wood) striking against metal or wood, reminiscent of what he calls "the tiny bells of lightness."<sup>18</sup> The first of these "haikus" is: "The wind makes the small bell on the door tinkle. What is the wind? Did it show itself? Is there not another small bell that tolls?" And the second, which is also from *L'Angle mort*: "At the moment I held this dead bird, a little canary, in my hand, I bumped against the door with its bell."<sup>19</sup>

It is true as well that Jourdan, one April day, wrote in *Les Sandales de paille*: "It seems as if there were in nature a will to fulfill beauty that it alone possesses. An unadorned, smooth, and simple face, the triumphant reflection of what one can only call Creation, the enigma of which possesses here . . . such strength that it seems to suggest other, unimagined ends to our destiny."<sup>20</sup> These are words quite foreign, this time, to Oriental sensibility. They seem even to waver at the still uncertain threshold of belief. And two years earlier, writing in *Fragments*, Jourdan observes: "It is a cathedral as well, the blossoming almond-tree buzzing with bees," suggesting in the image of the cathedral the idea of a communion and the dream of this communion multiplied by the example of the spring, which he who

witnesses the gathering, dispersal, and transmutation of the pollen is not inclined to judge as being without a second level of meaning or interest.<sup>21</sup> One remembers Jourdan's "Pause, ou la chaise qui se dérobe," pages he wrote to find his bearings after the appearance of a few issues of his literary review, *Port-des-Singes*. Here, for once in his life, he spoke of despair—hardly his style, given how unpreoccupied with himself he was. This was not the way he might have set himself apart from Chinese philosophers or zen monks. But he immediately discarded this notion, replacing it with the idea of an "awakening," which suited him more; then, he shifted ground again, jeopardizing at once the obviously difficult idea to which I have just referred. "I dream," he wrote, "of a responsible review . . . that could open a few windows onto this profound landscape of the heart, today on the verge of being swept away like hedgerows, trees, birds, and other creatures until. . . . Is this a dream? Certainly it is a dream, a dream of communion. . . ." <sup>22</sup> Hedgerows, trees, and at the same time the "landscape of the heart": a world and human communication dying and coming to life in the same breath. Is this not the kind of reflection I referred to earlier? And do these lines not point in Jourdan—who wrote that "No one looks at us and we look at no one. Monstrous indifference. It is night"—to what at least can be called a hesitation between two possible interpretations of the intensity, when we know how to recognize it, that shimmers in a tuft of grass or a star?<sup>23</sup> A hesitation, and perhaps also a slow movement forward. It is possible that Jourdan had a choice that by its excessive reality remained obscure or about which, out of modesty, he remained silent. But I scarcely feel I have the right to question him anymore.

Let me observe only that even if he tries most often to express his relation to things alone—his moments of solitude, to put it another way—not any the less does he evoke, at many points in his thought, a completely other mental space: that of the distant city, its large crowds, railroad stations, commuter trains—crossroads of alienations, of silences, but also of outpourings of sympathy, of dreams of revolt. In fact, what he feels and recounts as an experience of the absolute in the early-morning garden is also—and often we notice this—the surprise of someone who returns to the countryside he loves after long months of absence; it is the wonder to which the exhausting journey and the night without sleep give way. And consequently, the greyness he says these seconds dissipate is not, as he puts pen to paper, a vague evocation, a past that reveals itself to be non-meaning

and that one must only forget. It is an historical condition that continues to call for his full awareness because it remains the fate of beings who are for him, one feels, objects of compassion or love, and by no means the shadowy forms that philosophies of detachment reveal.

Again, in *Les Sandales de paille*, on a day of the same spring whose blossoming (which always seemed a miracle) would be the next-to-the last he would experience, Jourdan wrote: "Flowers held by the light, suspended. Humble oracle suggesting another face of time. . . . To know if in us also exists this possibility of turning again toward the light, of receiving it in a time outside of time, of drinking at the spring, letting the boat of shadows slip into the current. . . ."24 What meaning can we give to these words if not that of anticipation: hope not having been weakened in the fervor of its desire because it knows that it seeks the impossible? So, in the next line Jourdan expresses the analogy that perhaps best explains why this irrationality, rejected by the Orientals whose wisdom he loved, remains in some way an obsession in his work. This reversal of all being, this faith that light seemingly expects from us, this would be, he noted—as if to complete the story of the concentration camp, the prisoner, the orange—"like the laughter of a child at the end of one's arms, who, flung an instant into the void, is breathless from fear and joy commingled."<sup>25</sup>

Translated by Richard Stamelman

## NOTES

\*Entitled in French "Les Mots, les noms, la nature, la terre," this essay is the preface to Pierre-Albert Jourdan's *Les Sandales de paille*, edited by Yves Leclair and published in Paris by Mercure de France in 1987; it is reprinted by the kind permission of the author and the publisher. (An earlier version appeared in *Pierre-Albert Jourdan*, published by Thierry Bouchard in 1984. The essay can also be found in Yves Bonnefoy's *La Vérité de parole* [Paris: Mercure de France, 1988], pp. 291–303.) Hereafter, all references to *Les Sandales de paille* will be indicated by the abbreviation SP. [TRANS.]

Pierre-Albert Jourdan was born in Paris on February 3, 1924. In 1947, after having studied law, he became a manager in an insurance company, a position he held until his death. In 1957, he met the poet Rene Char who became a lifelong friend. His first poetic work, *La Langue des fumées*, was published in 1961 (Paris: Jose Corti).

To the literary life he may have enjoyed in Paris, Jourdan preferred his home in the small village of Caromb and the surrounding landscape of the Vaucluse, as Yves Leclair observes in a biographical note (SP, p. 498). Here, among almond trees, forsythia, and thyme, as well as in the fields, paths, and foothills of Mont Ventoux, he wandered aimlessly, listening wondrously to the "lessons" of the countryside and recording detailed observations and poetic meditations in a language of "petites touches" (SP, p. 87). In these notes, it is question, Jourdan writes, of

something momentarily *physical*, which is immediately felt and transcribed—approximately, perhaps: a small earthquake that articulates itself. For me, at times, it really seems the earth is speaking, expressing itself, through me, or is trying to do so. ("Lettre," in Annie Bientoiu, et al., *Pierre-Albert Jourdan* [Losne: Thierry Bouchard, 1984], p. 53)

In the nineteen-seventies Jourdan began to publish these imagistic fragments—these aphoristic ruminations on the sacred geography and "essential topography" (SP, p. 436) of a simple place—first in *La Traverse*, and then in *Port-des-Singes*, the review he founded in 1974. He also published several private editions of his work: *Le Chemin nu* (1970), *L'Ordre de la lumière* (1971), *Le Matin* (1976)—reprinted in *Fragments (1961–1976)* (Paris: Editions de L'Ermitage, 1979)—and *L'Angle mort* (1980)—reprinted by Editions Unes in 1984. On September 13, 1981, at the age of fifty-seven, Jourdan died from lung cancer at his home in Caromb.

Since his death the following works have appeared: *L'Entrée dans le jardin* (Losne: Thierry Bouchard, 1981); *Les Sandales de paille (Notes 1980)* (Paris: Editions de L'Ermitage, 1982); *L'Approche (Journal 1981)* (Trans-en-Provence: Editions Unes, 1984); *L'Espace de la perte* (Trans-en-Provence: Editions Unes, 1984); *La Marche* (Trans-en-Provence: Editions Unes, 1986); and *Les Sandales de Paille* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1987), the first of three volumes of collected works. A complete bibliography of Jourdan's writings can be found in that volume and in *Pierre-Albert Jourdan* (Losne: Thierry Bouchard, 1984), a memorial work containing important critical essays on Jourdan's *oeuvre* as well as unpublished poems by him. Finally, it should be noted that, in addition to the present essay by Yves Bonnefoy, excellent studies of Jourdan's *oeuvre* have been written by Philippe Jaccottet—" 'Messager qui efface les murailles.' (Pour saluer Pierre-Albert Jourdan)," *Nouvelle Revue Française*, 347 (décembre 1981), 65–71, reprinted as the preface to *L'Angle mort* (1984)—by Yves Leclair—"Chutes d'un passant invisible," *Critique*, 411–12

(août-septembre 1981), 830–35—and by Roger Munier—“Un Dieu d’herbe. Sagesse et passion de Pierre-Albert Jourdan,” *Nouvelle Revue Française*, nos. 426–27 (juillet-août 1988), pp. 124–32. [—TRANS.]

1. “Ebranlement provoqué par le forsythia en fleur. Il a vaincu la grisaille. Celle de l’esprit.” [SP, p. 220—TRANS.]

2. “Quelques fleurs du cerisier sous une lumière frissante.” “Fleurs tenues par la lumière, suspendues.” “Ce que les mots n’arrivent pas à rendre, toujours en retard—les mots derrière la vitre.” [SP, p. 297—TRANS.]

3. “L’amandier ce matin est tout murmurant d’abeilles. C’est le calme, l’expression la plus profonde du calme.” [SP, p. 191—TRANS.]

4. “Soudain fleurs du cerisier et étoiles se répondent. Le même éclatement, la même déflagration qui déchiquette tous ces mots harassés.” [SP, p. 92—TRANS.]

5. “On ne peut donner un nom à la lumière.” “Vigne aura été l’accompagnante, dans sa robe d’aramon et de muscat.” [SP, p. 225—TRANS.]

6. “Il est des noms qui dépassent les noms pour entrer dans le sang.” [SP, p. 225—TRANS.]

7. “Le paysage est intact pour autant qu’il n’est pas contaminé par le dire.” [A slightly different version of this quotation is found in SP, p. 193—TRANS.]

8. “Dire peut-être en balbutiant que la beauté existe.” [SP, p. 308—TRANS.]

9. “Tout naturellement l’herbe, le végétal envahit lieux et paysages.” [SP—TRANS.]

10. “Une détenue dans un camp de concentration a gardé une orange reçue dans un colis pendant plusieurs mois pour l’offrir à Noël, à travers le grillage, à un détenu que ce geste bouleverse. Là brillait ce qui, rabougri, dessèche, perdant couleur, ridé, dépasse le monde; ce qui le fonde dans une communauté silencieuse. Là l’orange brillait comme une forêt d’orangers ne le pourra jamais. Là, plus besoin de s’assoupir comme j’allais le faire, si petitement, dans une plénitude en forme d’orange.” [This quotation is found in a slightly different form in SP, p. 166—TRANS.]

11. “Honoré l’amandier, la sauterelle, le câprier.” [SP, p. 189—TRANS.]

12. “Le petit althéa dans le fond du jardin comme une ombre absolument noire, autre face terrible (puissante?) d’une plante quasiment ignorée d’habitude.” [A slightly different version of this quotation is found in SP, p. 120—TRANS.]

13. [A work by the Japanese poet of haiku, Basho (1644–1694)—TRANS.]

14. “‘Et moi, depuis je ne sais quelle année, lambeau de nuage cédant à l’invité du vent . . .’” [This is a quotation from Basho, reprinted in a slightly different form in SP, p. 122—TRANS.]

15. “Soulève ce bagage, il est bien léger! Tu pourrais presque prendre la route.” [A slightly different version of this quotation is found in SP, p. 109—TRANS.]

16. “Ne cherche pas, oublie tout ce fatras. Approche-toi simplement de cette touffe de

thym. Il y a tant à oublier. . . . Reste là, proche de ce balancement des herbes à hauteur de ton visage. Enfonce-toi. Accède à ce seul rythme." [SP, p. 113—TRANS.]

17. "Les ombres s'allongent. J'ai l'impression, accroupi là, de les boire. Mon identité devient trouble. Le 'qui suis-je?' s'hallucine caillou. Divin breuvage!" [SP, p. 135—TRANS.]

18. "Les petites cloches du léger." [A slightly different version of this quotation is found in SP, p. 104—TRANS.]

19. "Le vent fait tinter la clochette du portail. Qu'est-ce que le vent? S'est-il annoncé? N'y a-t-il pas une autre clochette qui tinte?" [SP, p. 178—TRANS.] "Au moment où je tenais cet oiseau mort dans ma main, un petit serin, j'ai heurté la porte avec son grelot." [SP, p. 188—TRANS.]

20. "Il semble qu'il y ait dans la nature comme une volonté d'accomplissement de la beauté, à elle seule assignée. Un visage nu, lisse, sans artifices, reflet triomphant de ce qu'il faut bien nommer la création, dont l'énigme, ici, revêt . . . une telle force qu'elle semble suggérer d'autres issues, insoupçonnées, à notre destin." [SP, p. 301—TRANS.]

21. "C'est aussi une cathédrale l'amandier en fleur tout bourdonnant d'abeilles." [SP, p. 161—TRANS.]

22. "Je rêve d'une revue responsable . . . qui permettrait d'ouvrir quelques fenêtres sur ce paysage du coeur profond aujourd'hui sur le point d'être balayé comme les haies, les arbres, les oiseaux et autres créatures jusqu'à ce que . . . Est-ce un rêve? Bien sûr que c'est un rêve, un rêve de communion." [*Port-des-Singes*, 6 (hiver, 1978-79)—TRANS.]

23. "Personne ne nous regarde et nous ne regardons personne. Indifférence monstrueuse. C'est la nuit." [SP—TRANS.]

24. "Fleurs tenues par la lumière, suspendues. Humble oracle qui nous suggère un autre visage du temps. . . . Savoir si, en nous, existe aussi cette possibilité de se retourner vers la lumière, de l'accueillir dans un temps hors du temps, de se rafraîchir à la source, laissant glisser la barque d'ombre dans le courant. . . ." [SP, p. 297—TRANS.]

25. "Comme le rire d'un enfant à bout de bras, que l'on lance un instant dans le vide, et qui suffoque de peur et de joie mêlées." [SP, p. 297—TRANS.]