

Salah Stétié. *Cold Water Shielded*
 Michael Bishop, ed. & tr. Pierre Alechinsky,
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 Bloodaxe/UNESCO (Dufour, distr.)
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COLD WATER SHIELDED REPRESENTS a collection of poems by the French Lebanese poet Salah Stétié, edited and translated into English by one of North America's leading authorities on modern and contemporary French poetry, Michael Bishop. The appearance of Stétié's work in Bloodaxe's widely acclaimed Contemporary French Poets series recognizes his talent and international renown by placing him in the company of other well-known poets whose collections have been translated into English via that series, poets such as René Char, Yves Bonnefoy, and Paul Éluard, among others.

Bishop not only makes a selection of Stétié's poems accessible to the anglophone audience through his exceptional translation; he also offers the reader a thorough analysis of the poet's thought and style in his brilliantly composed, erudite preface to the volume. In his introduction, Bishop demonstrates how Stétié's "rooted, visceral, sensual poetry is caught in a net of meditation that quickly may veer to the metaphysical whilst never losing its grip upon an ethically and emotionally driven instinct that knows the indivisibility of the categories of being and its deeper discourse." There could be no better summary of Stétié's poetic project here.

The challenge for any translator, whether of poetry or prose, but especially the former, is both to generate a text that is faithful to the original work and to retain the author's poetic voice. While many translators fail in at least one of these goals, Bishop succeeds wonderfully in each commission: he renders a beautiful yet remarkably literal translation of Stétié's French poems and at the same time manages to capture the author's original poetic expression. Moreover, the translator and the editors have taken great care to reproduce the forms of Stétié's poems on the facing-page translation exactly as they appear in the original, thus preserving all punctuation and spatial effects. This measure is not without relevance, for it graphically echoes

the theme of deconstruction and reconciliation of opposites at play in Stétié's verses through a poetic vision where "direction / no-direction," "mirror / no mirror," "to die / to incarnate," "poetry / no poetry," "pure / impure," and "dying / no-dying" coexist and are resolved on the ontological plane (*Fragments: Poems*).

Rather than a translation of a single work by Stétié, the present volume represents a selection of poems from fifteen of his collections dating from 1973 (*L'eau froide gardée*) through 1995 ("Jardin de l'Un" / "Flambeaux de la rivière"). With the exception of *L'être poupée* (1983), which appears just after *L'eau froide gardée* and just before *Fragments: Poèmes* (1978), the selections are presented in chronological order by the year in which they were published. In addition to the verse poems, Bishop also introduces prose texts from *Lecture d'une femme* (1987).

It is the reviewer's opinion that the reader would be hard pressed to find a more rewarding collection of recently published poetry than Stétié's *Cold Water Shielded*. Under the same cover, one enjoys a solid bilingual edition of poems that manifest the union of the metaphysical and earthly dimensions at work in the poet's meditative and mystical universe, and one profits from the insightful analysis of a scholar who functions as both translator and guide to a critical reading that allows access to that universe.

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