

JAN MICHALSKI PRIZE FOR LITERATURE 2010 SELECTION

L'amour est vulnérable, or the philosophy of Viktor Malakhov

Philosophising based on a caress rather than the *cogito*. That is the novelty and the strangeness of Viktor Malakhov's method. In contrast with a philosophy that is sure of itself, and which has amassed whole cycles of ideological systems, the Ukrainian philosopher from Kiev, who writes as well in Russian as in Ukrainian, offers a caress, a real caress, the language of the hands, of the smile, a physical language which encompasses the soul more effectively than abstract statements about the ego and the you. Man in his smallness cannot develop without caresses.

It has nothing to do with hedonism. Or rather, the whole of philosophy can be accused of hedonism, showing complacency in the system and leaving man to the tragic aspects of the unfinished. For we live in a state of the perpetually unfinished.

To take up the thread of the unfinished, Malakhov the philosopher writes his philosophy as if it were a sort of intimate letter to the reader, and this epistolary approach clearly does not seek to portray totality, but rather to sketch out, brush over...

Art should be a caress, but is often an aggression. While a mother caresses her child, the telly shows horrific gore. And yet souls often remain younger than bodies, and need caressing. Yet our life nowadays no longer caresses.

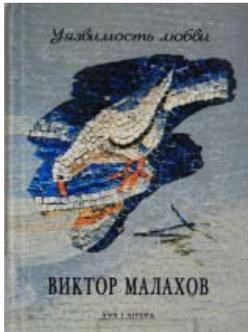
So goes the philosophy of this Ukrainian nomad, who recalls another Ukrainian philosopher, Skovoroda, who went about barefoot, a pipe in his mouth. Moreover, Malakhov speaks of the philosopher of gardens, who had chosen to make Christ childlike, so as to retain him better.

Kant and Gogol, or two cases of the impossibility of carrying a thought through to its conclusion: the thing-in-itself for Kant, paradise for Gogol, the holocaust as action against everyone, or in other words no longer having anything tragic about it. And in contrast the completion of certain landscapes, or rather atmospheres: a summer evening can be the most complete thing in a life.

This strange philosophy, through gentleness, fragments and thought journeys in the gentle light of a summer evening. Malakhov is a philosopher at the opposite extreme from the whole, the disagreeable, the complete. Old age or childhood, the two extremes of human life, mean more than adult life, which is portrayed too often. The most intense thoughts are often impossible to express.

By awarding the Jan Michalski Prize to this wanderer who goes against the flow, with only his gentleness and vulnerability as a shield, we were drawing attention to an original thinker, off the beaten path, noiseless, in the gentleness of a Europe half way between curiosity and nirvana, between West and East. This little music does us good.

Georges Nivat
Member of the Jury



Viktor Malakhov
L'amour est vulnérable
Philosophical essay
Doukh i Litera 2005