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SPECIAL ISSUE ON  
CONTEMPORARY FRENCH POETRY

GUEST EDITOR  
Richard Stamelman

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André Frénaud's Plural Voice  
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*Abstract.* Dramatic self-projection and the use of recurrent or occasional personae are features manifest in André Frénaud's poetry. One also notes a tendency to multiply unique phenomena. Furthermore, the medium of his poetry displays huge variety in form and tone. This study reviews a selection of these interacting characteristics and investigates their relationship to the poet, who represents the unity beneath the diversity, but whose self proves versatile in its exploration of world, word and identity through the revealing ventriloquy of plural voices. (RL)

Living Transcription: The Poetry of Jean Tortel  
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*Abstract.* With the publication of six new books of poetry since 1979, Jean Tortel has joined his contemporaries, Francis Ponge and Guillevic, as one of France's leading materialist poets. His writing, recounting the process of its own unfolding with voluptuous precision, is meant to bear witness through its figurations to the forces of chance and mutability governing the natural order. As such it constitutes a place of passage or verbal garden, both sumptuous and ordinary, where reading and formulation merge. (SN)

The Notion of *Presence* in the Poetics of Yves Bonnefoy  
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*Abstract.* The notion of *presence* is the cornerstone of Bonnefoy's entire poetics, the common element linking his earliest pronouncements about poetry to his latest. The insistence on presence emerges as the animating principle of a self-consciously anti-Mallarmean concept of poetry that seeks to align itself with hopefulness and with an affirmation of this life. The term is never defined once and for all, however, and the great range of evocations and applications of the idea in Bonnefoy's work has triggered a significant critical debate about its significance and validity. (JN)

The Unseizable Landscape of the Real: The Poetry and Poetics of Philippe Jaccottet  
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*Abstract.* For Philippe Jaccottet the real is the force of life itself. It is also a rapid, fleeting perception made all the more ephemeral by the mimetic imprecision of language. The essence of the real, since it is always other than what is said about it, can never be fully represented. This alterity of the real and the fundamental lack it announces provoke poetic language. By means of a poetics of passage, of passing through, of *à travers*, Jaccottet confronts the otherness of the unseizable landscape and of the elusive language in which he dwells. In the meditative, prose poem *A Travers un verger* (1975) he traverses the mysterious space of an orchard and a text, of trembling blossoms and quivering words, in an effort to understand the opposition between the limits of language and the limitlessness of the real. Out of the experience of landscape and the language that describes it—out of the epiphany of the real that a flowering orchard sustains but that images only fail to seize—"something" is perceived: an ineffable, indescribable "something" that dwells in the *beyond* of representation. (RS)

Words, Names, Nature, Earth: On the Poetry of Pierre-Albert Jourdan  
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*Abstract.* An ambivalence toward language is present throughout the work of Pierre-Albert Jourdan. Words are associated with the closure of a grey world; they are always arriving late, after the fact; they are veils, masks, dreams detached from truth, knowledge, and immediacy. Yet, words and names hold out the possibility of hope; they can designate the presence of beauty in the world;

they can mediate the encounter of self and other. The human word signifies itself through the substance of the world and the communion of beings. At the intersection of natural reality—the center of the real for Jourdan—and of language are found the garden, the earth, places of an ephemeral, haiku-like presence where the natural opens itself to the human. (RS)

**Thought and Perception: Bernard Noël and the Mind's Eye**  
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*Abstract.* Bernard Noël has investigated the relationship between the conceptual and the visual in many of his prose and poetic texts. From the earlier “body” poetry of *Extraits du corps*, where the image of the inward-looking eye makes its appearance, to his book on Magritte’s “visible thought” and the prose text *Le 19 octobre 1977*, where he thematizes the functioning of perception, Noël explores the complex interplay between seeing and thought, language and thought, and seeing and writing. This study analyzes these and other major issues driving Noël’s poetics. (LE)

**Shall We Escape Analogy**  
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*Abstract.* Claude Royet-Journoud’s and Anne-Marie Albiach’s work can be read as manifestos against metaphor (relation by similarity, the vertical selection axis of the speech act) with which poetry has long been identified. Whereas Royet-Journoud takes as his theme metaphor in the largest sense (including, finally, all representation that is based on analogy), Albiach’s “Enigme” dramatizes the loss of the vertical dimension through, ironically, a metaphor: the fall of a body. Formally, both stress as alternative the horizontal axis of combination (especially the spatial articulation on the page) and the implied view that the world is constructed by language, that it does not exist prior to it (waiting to be represented or expressed). (RW)

**Contemporary Women Poets**  
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*Abstract.* The essay evokes the essence of the respective *démarches* of eight major contemporary women poets: Janine Mitaud, Andrée Chedid, Marie-Claire Bancquart, Jeanne Hyvrard, Anne Teysiéras, Martine Broda, Denise Le Dantec, Heather Dohollau. No attempt is made to generalise the findings of the individual analyses of collections and sample poems, though the following

'tensions' emerge as characteristically significant: the telluric and the cosmic; entropy and reintegration; body, mind and soul; passingness and search; language as problem and resolution; minimality and maximality; violence and love. In each poet high intensity is matched with wisdom and serenity, problematic though they may be. The poetic project of these women may be "fragmented" or more "coherent"; always it is marked by a profundity of perception and sentiment. (MB)