

can debate and doubt them?; 2) to the extent that *l'arrière-pays* is the hinterland of dream, structure of an otherness denying "this-ness", art itself therefore, and of course language, is there not in *L'Arrière-pays*, as indeed in Bonnefoy's entire oeuvre, the ever-developing temptation of art's (self-)persuasion, its finely *image*-ing and conceptualising, structuring hubris, which, inevitably, are in conflict with Bonnefoy's initial premise?

*L'Arrière-pays*, of course, opens at a crossroads, a place and act of choice allowing self-assumption along the axis of imagined absolute and lived relativity, the experience of finiteness. To embrace and articulate, as does *L'Arrière-pays*, the dilemmas, the allurements and the deceptiveness of the pursuit of perfectibility and intelligibility, is, in effect, Bonnefoy's way of releasing himself from the "dangers" besetting self and text. To write one's way through conceptualisation is one way of "vanquishing image in image", as he says elsewhere. Writing and its structuring conceptualisations thus give way to a kind of becoming; they relativise themselves, question, contest, undercut; come closer, in short, to language as sheer, and mere, presence, words, like the brambles of *Ce qui fut sans lumière* — "that scratch our face but are just nothingness scratching nothingness in the light". The "equations" of meaning developed in *L'Arrière-pays* thus remain loose, free, beyond final truth, though on one of the infinite paths of "truth". They evade the reductions language seeks to impose upon being and thought. Poussin's realisation of the opaque and unsayable meaning of his brilliant sensual presence, a realisation that roots his art in the mystery of blinding visceralness, does not solve the equations his intellect had set out to wrestle with. Yet his gaze upon the world before him and the creation resulting from it, whilst never letting go of the ideas and dreams of otherness and some *amont du réel*, finally relax into the *hic et nunc* traversing him and traversed by him. And this is sufficient, as is Bonnefoy's unresolved, unresolving traversal of himself he calls *L'Arrière-pays*.

Michael Bishop  
Dalhousie University

**Henri Pichette.** *Les Épiphanies*. Paris: Gallimard, coll. Poésie, 1998. 205 pages. ISBN 2-07-040456-0.

**H**alf-forgotten, almost seemingly half self-forgetting and finally determined to rewrite even his essential texts, Henri Pichette occupies a very particular if, despite Gallimard's recent attention with the publication in the same collection of *Apoèmes*, somewhat obscure place in modern French letters. *Les Épiphanies*, originally published in 1948, is, Louis Roinet tells us in the (1969 Gallimard edition) preface accompanying this

edition, “a remarkable psychic exercise” which he likens to a kind of yoga or, better, “a waking dream séance of Jungian inspiration”. Pichette himself terms his own work a *mystère profane*, a kind of deeply (self-) searching mystery play put on for the first time on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1947. (The production was by Georgette Vitaly, the cast included Gérard Philippe, Maria Casarès, Roger Blin and Michel Michalon, the music was Maurice Roche’s, the backdrops Matta’s.) At the centre of this five-part creation (1. La Genèse; 2. L’Amour; 3. La Guerre; 4. Le Délire; 5. L’Accomplissement) lies the question — and, of course, the practice, the performance — of creative articulation and the art of writing ultimately connected to self-transformation *Les Épiphanies* undertakes. Despite the evident surrealist qualities and fascinations of Pichette’s perhaps most compelling work — the marvelous, “dream” and vision proliferate — there is much that remains coherent here, both in its expression and the “purposing” that is always felt in the midst of swirling emblem and metaphor. The poem-play closes in characteristic mode (my translation) by the Poet declaring (at the end of “L’Accomplissement”, we should recall):

It is probationary blood and immortal blood suspended and in space and on and on shall I go hot on the track of us all from earths to moons, a solemn fantasy, and through waves and through fluids still further yet, disdainful of all ordeals, in freedom in the light, until the supreme pulsation of the world.

A worthy work by which not to forget Henri Pichette...

**Michael Bishop**  
*Dalhousie University*

**Louise Herlin.** *Synchronies*. Creil: Dumerchez, 1998. 53 pages. ISBN 2-912927-02-1

**T**he first text of the first of three sections of Louise Herlin’s *Synchronies* — “Réflexions d’angle”, “Progrès” and “Rivières et rêveries” — sets a tone, a psychological mode, that will essentially persist throughout the collection. A consciousness of contrast reigns, and the paradox of attenuated possibility where yet “la joie neuve aurorale, sa clarté / lavée de frais / court sur l’ardoise des toits, / ricoche sur les façades brique et blanc, / gagne les esprits chagrin”. Grace, power, this opening text tells us, are to be felt and perceived all about, and desire, a sense of being given something pure, “treasures” no less. Yet slippage in time, impermanence, “drifting”, are held to be problematic. The natural ontology of becoming — which rests on a logic of constant offering of newness, difference — is lived also simultaneously as loss, “deprivation”, and