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François Mauriac and Jean Paulhan: Correspondance:  
1925-1967 (review)

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is rivalled by the poetry's darker atmosphere, analogous to the disturbing ellipses to be found in the metaphysical painting of De Chirico. Sweet considers Breton's idiosyncratic reading of Apollinaire's *calligrammes* in its critique of their aesthetic quality and its approval of their mimetic aspect. He goes on to chart Breton's developmental with the visual arts — from resistance to the rationality of constructivist modes to immersion in the interior impulses shaping Surrealist painting, particularly that of Ernst. Frank O'Hara, with his playful assimilation of Symbolist, Cubist and Surrealist strains, emerges as a postmodernist practitioner. O'Hara is shown to move on from French influences, notably that of Reverdy, both to Abstract Expressionism and to Larry Rivers's 'smorgasbord of the recognizable'. Sweet reads John Ashbery's writings on French *avant-garde* art as the 'proto-poetics' of a writer usually more intent on obscuring his debt to French poets and painters. At a time when domestic and disciplinary specificities are being rethought in productive fusions, Sweet's probing of variable verbal–visual interactivity contributes substantially to the critical negotiation of transnational currents in modernist/postmodernist cross-over.

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FRANÇOIS MAURIAC and JEAN PAULHAN: *Correspondance: 1925–1967*. Édition établie, présentée et annotée par JOHN E. FLOWER. (Correspondances de Jean Paulhan). Paris, Éditions Claire Paulhan, 2001. 371 pp. Pb €28.00.

This collection of 293 letters, only fifty of which have previously been published, charts in admirable detail the relationship between the leading Catholic writer of his generation and the editor-in-chief of the prestigious *NRF*. Flower's introduction usefully surveys the most important aspects of the men's exchanges, and his excellent notes provide a wealth of contextual detail that enables the reader to grasp fully the ins and outs of their discussions (although I would suggest that Paulhan's reference in letter 109 is, in fact, to Mauriac's articles 'Critique de la critique' and 'Nouvelles notes sur la critique', published in *Journal II*). Because most of the letters are not clearly dated, Flower makes careful use of unpublished diaries to reconstitute a plausible chronology, correcting a number of unlikely dates given for letters previously published elsewhere. It seems probable that Mauriac and Paulhan first met in the early 1920s when the latter was employed as Jacques Rivière's secretary at the *NRF*. Flower draws on his earlier edition of Mauriac and Rivière's correspondence (see *FS*, XLIV (1990), 82–83) to illuminate the background to Mauriac's strong desire to contribute to the *NRF* (his 'évangile'). This objective was achieved in December 1922, but Flower demonstrates how Mauriac's association with the journal was to remain uneasy thanks to events such as Gide's open letter of June 1928, an article by Jean Prévoist published in March 1930, Gide's praise of atheistic Communism in the early 1930s, Sartre's devastating attack of February 1939, and the evolution of the journal once it fell under the control of Drieu La Rochelle during the Occupation. The *années noires* saw a friendship develop between Mauriac and Paulhan as they contributed to the *résistance des écrivains*, with Paulhan working behind the scenes to bring about the publication of Mauriac's *Cahier noir* by the Éditions de Minuit in 1943. They were also both opposed to the excesses of the *épuration* and to the blacklists drawn up by the

Comité National des Écrivains (to which they both belonged). Paulhan, however, showed himself to be more charitable (or less politically pragmatic) when it came to the rehabilitation of figures such as Rebatet and Céline in the early 1950s. From this point onwards, despite Mauriac's support for Paulhan's election to the Académie Française, relations between the two men cooled somewhat with the reappearance of the NRF (at a time when Mauriac was committed to *La Table Ronde*), the publication of *Histoire d'O* (which Mauriac attributed to Paulhan himself), and their very different positions with respect to France's policy in North Africa (with Paulhan opposing independence for the countries of the Maghreb). Throughout, as Flower astutely observes, it is Paulhan who seems to want to steer the exchanges and who proves the most conciliatory when disagreements arise. This handsomely produced edition, containing several facsimile reproductions and photographs, provides a very valuable contribution to the literary history of twentieth-century France.

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*Redefining Resistance: The Poetic Wartime Discourses of Francis Ponge, Benjamin Péret, Henri Michaux and Antonin Artaud.* By ESTHER ROWLANDS. Amsterdam — New York, Rodopi, 2004. 200 pp. Pb \$50.00; €40.00.

This book seeks to examine 'the way in which language may be defined as a locus of resistance' and 'reposition' the war-time discourses of four writers not normally associated with the French Resistance canon. Rowlands has in her sights the *Anthology of Second World War French Poetry* edited by Ian Higgins, who, she claims, treated Péret as a 'culprit' and gave 'minimal' attention to Ponge. Her study argues for the rehabilitation of writers whose work is characterized by 'reversal', 'inversion', 'abolition' and 'reconfiguration', poems where 'the subversive effect of style and resistance arise from polymorphism, movement and germinativity'. We are presented with Ponge and 'language turned against itself', Peret's annihilation of 'the logical limits of language', Michaux 'strangled by a language broken by centuries of compromise' (since exactly when?, we ask) and Artaud probing the 'extremes' of language in his wartime *Cahiers de Rodez*. We find ourselves in the suspiciously familiar and canonical company of Barthes, Lyotard, Foucault and Deleuze, along with the slightly more exotic Michel de Certeau and Ross Chambers. As far as polemic goes, this is fine. But alarm bells begin to ring when the reader stumbles upon the very rare allusions to the historical period supposedly in question: 'in 1939, Peret was imprisoned, in Rennes, by the Nazis'; 'illegitimate power' is a category into which 'any totalitarian regime, such as Nazism, Capitalism and Colonialism may, naturally, fall'; the other C-word eventually arrives when we learn that 'when the Communist revolution occurred in Russia, the Stalinist state accepted avant-garde, [sic] art only for a brief period, before enforcing its suppression of all modernist movements'. As for her attack on Higgins, when, in her reading of Ponge's 'L'orange', she writes that 'the functioning of the object is reliant upon its specificity, its sense of uniqueness and mystery, its relations between its impact on the human senses and its linguistic representability', it is difficult to see how such an assessment differs radically from that made