

Abstracts

Cocteau *au cirque*: The Poetics of *Parade* and “Le Numéro Barbette” Jennifer Forrest

Parade (1917) was a joint effort production with libretto by Jean Cocteau music by Erik Satie, decor, costumes, and curtain by Pablo Picasso, and choreography by Léonide Massine. It was not only Cocteau's first truly original work, but, as Pierre Gobin contends, *Parade* is central to an understanding of the structures that would inform all of his subsequent work. Equally central, proposes Lydia Crowson, is Cocteau's July 1926 *Nouvelle Revue Française* article on “Le Numéro Barbette.” The essay on the transvestite striptease trapezist Barbette offers a poetics of the theater that will have changed little by the time of his last play, *L'Impromptu du Palais Royal*. The underlying system structuring the Coctelian poetics perceived by Gobin and Crowson is perhaps neither in *Parade* nor in “Le Numéro Barbette” alone, but in both as they propose a poetics of Coctelian art as illusion, and reference and actualize the semantic register of a particular signifying system: not the fairground *parade*, as contends Gobin and other critics, but the circus and circus culture. But while *Parade* and “Le Numéro Barbette” share a circus-related theme, the circus does not function merely as a metaphor. Each work in a different way appropriates and promotes rather the circus's revolutionary orientation toward space, its creation of “real” time, and its undermining of social signifying systems, in particular those pertaining to race and gender. The circus space is like that of dreams in that it permits the irresolution and co-existence of the sort of contradictions cited by Guillaume Apollinaire in the celebrated program notes for *Parade*, and produced by Barbette in his aerial number. This he learned from the circus. *Parade* and “Le Numéro Barbette” are indeed pivotal texts in the formulation of Cocteau's very twentieth-century *poétique*. (JF)

The Poetics of Visual Cubism: Guillaume Apollinaire on Pablo Picasso

Pamela A. Genova

Guillaume Apollinaire, one of the most original poets of the early twentieth-century French *avant garde*, played a crucial role in the enunciation of modernist aesthetics. Through innovative poetic forms, Apollinaire set forth a new aesthetics which underscored the inherent ambiguity of an increasingly turbulent modern context. Apollinaire's interest in the pure dynamism of the contemporary material landscape, and his attraction to the image that explodes with immediate presence, also led him to a natural curiosity in the visual arts. Identifying with the Cubist mosaic style of inclusion, the juxtaposition of reality and imagination, and the simultaneity of spatial and temporal movement, Apollinaire saw modern artists as "singers of a constantly new truth," inventors of a uniquely authentic modern experience. Apollinaire composed verse to honor his favorite painters, but he also wrote critical studies on the visual arts, and he declares that it is in Cubist art that we can discover a truly successful endeavor to come to terms with the upheavals of modernity. In several texts Apollinaire devotes specifically to Picasso, he argues that his canvases contain the most essential aspects of modern art: a new interpretation of light, a genuine understanding of the elusive notion of the "fourth dimension," and an incarnation of the most modern of principles, surprise. Apollinaire's texts on Picasso, examples of his *poésie critique*, do not remain simply words printed on a page, but are transformed into an extension of the painting he wishes to convey, experimental and unpredictable in discursive tone and poetic style. Through these texts, Apollinaire moves beyond the parameters of a journalistic style of criticism, as his pieces on Picasso take on a chameleon-like power of movement, engendering unique forms of an *avant-garde* improvisation, the painting of prose poetry. (PAG)

Aesthetic Deviation: Victor Segalen in China

Kimberley Healey

Victor Segalen's early twentieth-century writings on China provide an alternative to nineteenth-century French literary exoticism. In his examination of the self and the other, much admired by postcolonial critics, he attempts to embrace a new

aesthetics of diversity. Segalen's writing on the other opens the door to a jarring and heterogeneous aesthetic of exotic encounter by reevaluating the position of the European abroad as well as the literary forms used to depict the foreign. However, Segalen's encounters with difference as illustrated in his two main narratives on China, *Equipée* and *René Leys*, deviate from the desire for absolute difference outlined in his theoretical work, *Essay on Exoticism*. Although seeking experiences of the real that will plunge the traveler into an awareness of difference, his narratives of diversity ultimately reveal greater gaps between the self and other that must be bridged by the text.

Epiphanies at the Supermarket: An Interview with Brigitte Kronauer Jutta Ittner

Brigitte Kronauer has been called "the greatest German [female] fiction writer of our time" (Marcel Reich-Ranicki). Her stories, novels, and criticism have established her as a uniquely sophisticated literary voice and won her many literary prizes. Kronauer's trademarks are her laser-sharp vision, her luminous prose, and the intricate structures of her uncannily realistic literary universes. Finding the mystical in the mundane and exposing human foibles with subtle irony, Kronauer creates, in the words of one critic, epiphanies at the supermarket. Beneath its everyday surface her fiction deals with the eternal human questions of life, death, and love. At a still deeper level it circles around philosophical issues such as our futile attempts to find truth in our own constructs of reality. In her interview with Jutta Ittner the author reflects on her individual path to writing. She describes the role of literature in creating a semblance of order in a multifaceted reality, and she discusses the structure of her literary universes, her characters and their aspirations, and the importance of animals for man's quest for a meaningful life. Finally, Kronauer explains how she sees herself in terms of women's literature and indicates where her writing is headed. (II)

The Double Writing of Agota Kristof and the New Europe Martha Kuhlman

Agota Kristof, a native of Hungary who lives in Switzerland and writes in French, has written a trilogy of novels that explore the borderlines and fractured history of the "New Europe": *The*

Notebook (1986), *The Proof* (1988), and *The Third Lie* (1991). Set in an unnamed Central European country, the novels traverse the three successive shocks of Nazism, Socialism, and Capitalism. Through the device of identical twin narrators, brothers Lucas and Claus, Kristof inscribes the story/history (*histoire*) with a “double writing” that opposes personal and official histories. But this opposition is not a simple one, for the two versions are combined into a narrative Moebius strip that continually exposes the act of its own composition. Although her writing is deceptively naive, the narrative structure of the trilogy forms the architecture of a fictional labyrinth that can be read as a parable for Europe. Which narrative is the authoritative one? Each successive novel rewrites the story of the previous one in a self-consuming fictional trap, a reminder that history is always narrated by the victor. This article demonstrates how Kristof’s works enact, both in the narrative and at the linguistic level, the “double writing” of history, and relates her works to contemporary debates that trouble the conscience of the New Europe. (MK)

“Drunken Boat”: Samuel Beckett’s Translation of Arthur Rimbaud’s “Le Bateau ivre”

Gerald M. Macklin

This paper scrutinizes Samuel Beckett’s translation of Arthur Rimbaud’s famous poem “Le Bateau ivre.” After a short introductory section which outlines how Beckett’s translation fortuitously reached the public domain through the endeavors of James Knowlson and Felix Leakey and then raises some of the main issues arising from this encounter between two such celebrated authors, the article proceeds to offer a close analysis of the Beckett text in terms of Rimbaud’s original. This involves a stanza-by- stanza consideration of the original and the translation as reproduced by Knowlson and Leakey and a suggested division of the two texts into four sections for the purposes of close examination. The paper attempts to bring out both the accuracy and the fidelity of Beckett’s work but equally the majesty and ingenuity of the “translation” that he has produced. While his work reveals many fascinating insights into both the Rimbaudian aesthetic and the Beckettian, ultimately one is struck by the fact that Beckett has produced something that goes far beyond what we originally designate as a “translation.” “Drunken Boat” emerges as a poem in its own right as well as a staggeringly successful rendering of a poem that has so often resisted satisfactory translation. (GMM)

Theorizing the Role of the Intermediary in Postcolonial (Con)text:
Driss Chraïbi's *Une enquête au pays*

Anjali Prabhu

The paper is a study of the role of the “intermediary” as exemplified by Inspector Ali in Driss Chraïbi’s novel *Une enquête au pays*. This reading traces his role as the intermediary through a close reading of the construction of this space — between higher levels of administration, implying the more elite strata in Moroccan society, and the Berber peasants who live isolated in the mountains, struggling to subsist. Ali has claims to both of these locations: to the former through education and his position in the police force and to the latter through ancestry and the culture of his childhood. Choice and the variable implications for power that it affords through shifting locations, become key issues in the theoretical significance of this character. While engaging in a careful consideration of the complexity of the intermediary in Chraïbi’s text, this study illustrates how an intermediary space can very effectively serve as a point of departure to theorize current issues of interest to postcolonial studies, such as the national space, the position of intellectuals, the question of class and of indigenous modes of existence, and the idea of structure in and beyond the new nation. (AP)