



Abstracts

Hesitating Between Irony and the Desire to be Serious in *Moi, Tituba, sorcière . . . noire de Salem*: Maryse Condé and her Readers

Sarah E. Barbour

In writing her fifth novel, a fictive autobiography of the title character, Maryse Condé has said that she “felt a strong solidarity with Tituba,” and at the same time she admits hesitating “between irony and a desire to be serious” in the invention of this “mock-epic character.” This article explores the reader’s relationship to the novel as a variation on this hesitation. Once Condé sets up Tituba’s authority to narrate her story, the reader is left in the precarious position of hesitating between getting the author’s irony and desiring to be serious about Tituba’s narrative of a painful history. By using and effectively abusing the way in which irony has traditionally been seen to create a hierarchy of those who *get* it and those who do not, Condé moves her readers in and out of a stable position in relation to Tituba’s narrative, inviting us to think more critically about how we read Tituba back into history. (SEB)

A Literary Form for Love: Yves Navarre’s *My Friends Are Gone with the Wind*

Richard M. Berrong

In *My Friends Are Gone with the Wind* (*Ce sont amis que vent emporte*, 1991), one of his last and most innovative texts, Yves Navarre (1940-1994), one of the most important contemporary French novelists to deal significantly and regularly with gay themes, returns to his preoccupation with the dangers that the forms inherent in traditional literary narrative pose for the expression of authentic human experience. The narrator, Roch, wants to capture the reality of his love for David, in part to prove to what he sees as a largely hostile heterosexual world that gays are as capable of loving relationships as straights, in part to



show those often inhibited straights how to express their love. He realizes that love's excessive nature requires a literary form that throws off the shackles of traditional order and chronology, so he allows memory to erupt within his manuscript as it occurs, unordered by logic. In the process, Roch accepts that he has to let everything in, even David's infidelities, but that by capturing the truth of love, its impulsive nature, he will convey their love in such a powerful way that it will testify convincingly throughout time to their feelings for each other. (RMB)

Moving On? Memory and History in Griselda Gambaro's Recent Theater

Gail Bulman

For more than forty years, Argentine playwright Griselda Gambaro has dramatized the social and political climate of her homeland. This article examines three of her plays from the late eighties and early nineties, using both Freudian and performance theories, in order to show how these works document the range of emotions in post Dirty War Argentina and, at the same time, postulate ways of coping with the memories of those years. Beyond traditional memory-theater, these plays demonstrate the trauma of remembering by highlighting different phases in the memory process and by conceptualizing stages in the grief of a traumatized nation. In each play, Gambaro establishes a metaphor of thwarted or frustrated travel to question how much psychological progress Argentines and their nation have made since the Dirty War (1976-83). (GB)

Reconfiguring Boundaries in Maryse Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove*

Deborah Gaensbauer

Maryse Condé's 1989 novel, *Crossing the Mangrove*, presents a compelling performance of the complicated patterns of place and space inherent in the social masquerade of a small, isolated, Guadeloupean village. Because the novel corresponds to Condé's return to a Caribbean "stage" to continue a long process of questioning mapped configurations of identity, critical attention has focused on the character of Francis Sancher, the returning "stranger," whose wake serves as both frame and catalyst for the action. Insufficient attention has been paid to the role of Mira Lameaulnes, Sancher's rejected mistress and the mother of his child, whose story the novel to a significant extent becomes as she effectively invades and undermines Sancher's



role as the principal signifying figure. This reading foregrounds Mira's critical confrontation with notions of place and space as an illustration of Condé's revolutionary approach to invalidating static or formulaic treatments of Antillean sites of identity. (DG)

Patrick Chamoiseau et le Gwo-Ka du chanté-parlé

Francis ("Pim") Higginson

Numerous critics have explored the use of orality in Patrick Chamoiseau's work. *Solibo Magnificent* adds to the opposition between the oral and the written the third term of the musical. Western artistic expression maintains a neat border between the media (e.g. literature, music, the plastic arts) because it helps legitimate the essentialization of (racial, ethnic, sexual) alterity: white maleness writes; the musical is instead associated with otherness (and orality). This hinged or articulated connection between alterity and the musical (and sameness and the literary) assures and assumes that the musical does not signify. This essay contends that Chamoiseau's novel responds to (and undermines) the West's regimentation of the relationship between the musical and the literary by showing another possible relationship between the two media—one in which their radical opposition is abolished. In this alternate conception of expression, language becomes rhythmic and melodic—offers an aural-sensory experience that the West associates with the musical—just as music wanders into the forbidden territory of signification. The resulting novel is not simply another mode of expressive being but a critical examination of the categories of the literary and musical themselves as strategically situated participants in a historical process of Western authorial and authoritarian domination. (FH)

For-Giving Death: Cixous's *Osnabrück* and *Le Jour où je n'étais pas là* Eilene Hoft-March

In her early writings, Hélène Cixous earned recognition as the feminist proponent of a theory of gift economy that challenges the patriarchal practice of giving. Patriarchal giving, she contended, enacts the master-slave dialectic, maintaining power differentials by indemnifying and reducing the other to the one who gives. Cixous imagined an alternate practice whereby the gift incurs no debts and no death for the other, a giving without expectation of return, a generosity that enriches all who participate. More than two decades after those theoretical essays, Cixous



continues to explore in her fiction the relationship to the other as mediated by gifts; however, her earlier concept of giving has been considerably modified, as a reading of two very recent novels will show. In *Osnabrück*, an otherwise admirable model of generosity is put in question for ignoring the debts and death that dog even the most generous relationships with the other. Extending this understanding, *Le Jour où je n'étais pas là* presents death and debt as non-negotiable givens and obliges us to conceive of a kind of generosity predicated simultaneously on death and on the forgetting of death. (EH-M)

Nabokov, Dostoevski, Proust: *Despair*
Timothy L. Parrish

Although Nabokov criticism has long identified *Despair* with Dostoevski, critics have for the most part addressed *Despair* in terms of how it either attacks or validates Dostoevski and thus have understood Nabokov to be speaking primarily about Dostoevski's achievement as a novelist. As I argue, *Despair* revises Dostoevski as a sly assertion of Nabokov's paradoxical aesthetic independence, and does so through the medium of Marcel Proust. It predicts the more obvious Proustian influence that critics have noticed in Nabokov's later works. In *Despair* Proust gives Nabokov the fundamental modernist narrative that makes an artist's coming to consciousness coincident with the narrative the reader reads. Nabokov borrows Proust's narrative pattern and lends it to Hermann to mishandle, but neither author of *Despair* keeps it as his own. *Despair* is a failed Proustian novel, one that Nabokov arranges so that the failure is not technically his. Paying ironic and even humble tribute to the author to whom he was closest, Nabokov imprisons Hermann and his Dostoevskian fantasies within his own aesthetic universe and thereby separates Hermann's derivative Dostoevskian one from Nabokov's peculiarly original novel. Although Nabokov implies Proust is his ideal artist, the truth is that Nabokov, as always, points to himself. After Hermann disappears from the novel, one world remains, named *Despair*, and it belongs to Vladimir Nabokov and, perhaps, the reader. (TLP)



Recollecting Wondrous Moments: Father Pushkin, Mother Russia,
and Intertextual Memory in Tatyana Tolstaya's "Night" and
"Limpopo"

Karen R. Smith

With their references to Alexander Pushkin, Tolstaya's "Night" and "Limpopo" respond to the cultural crisis of 1980s Russia, where literary language, bent for so long into the service of totalitarianism, suffers the scars of amnesia. Recycling Pushkin's tropes, particularly his images of feminine inspiration derived from the cultural archetype of Mother Russia, Tolstaya's stories appear nostalgically to rescue Russia's literary memory, but they also accentuate the crisis of the present, the gap between the apparel of literary language and that which it purports to clothe. "Night," an ironic reworking of Pushkin's "Queen of Spades," dismantles the nostalgic imagery of his "Winter Evening." In "Limpopo" the resurrection of Pushkin's feminine muse from his 1825 "To . . ." challenges the linear temporality that shapes claims for eternal influence made in "I will build a memorial to myself. . ." In both stories, Tolstaya exploits paradoxes within Pushkin's *œuvre* to explore oppositions—present vs. past, cultural expression vs. experience—that limit literary representation in her own time. Tolstaya's allusions to Pushkin ultimately express cynicism about the capacity of literary language to provide authenticity in the wake of totalitarianism, but they also celebrate its persistence as an alternative life force that tears through the deadening banality of Soviet routine. (KRS)