

Abstracts

Inspiration and the Oulipo

Chris Andrews

In the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus* Plato establishes an opposition between technique and inspiration in literary composition. He has Socrates argue that true poets are inspired and thereby completely deprived of reason. It is often said that the writers of the French collective known as the Oulipo have inverted the Platonic opposition, substituting a scientific conception of technique—formalization—for inspiration. Some of the group's members aim to do this, but not the best-known writers. Jacques Roubaud and Georges Perec practice traditional imitation alongside formalization. Imitation is a bodily activity with an important non-technical aspect. Raymond Queneau consistently points to an indispensable factor in literary composition that exceeds both formalization and imitation but is inimical to neither. Sometimes he calls this factor "inspiration"; sometimes he speaks of "the unknown" and the "the unpredictable," which must confirm the writer's efforts and intentions. The lack of consensus within the Oulipo on the question of inspiration is not a fault or a weakness, since the group has never claimed to adhere to a unified doctrine. However, to present Queneau as a radical formalist is to distort his poetics. (CA)

Jean-Marie Gleize, Emmanuel Hocquard, and the Challenge of Lyricism

Glenn W. Fetzer

Within the past decade, one of the most pressing questions of poetry in France has been the continuing viability of lyricism. Recent models of perceiving the nature of lyricism

shift the focus from formal and thematic considerations to pragmatic ones. As Hocquard's *Un test de solitude: sonnets* (1998) and Gleize's *Non* (1999) illustrate, the challenge of the lyric today serves to sharpen the sense of alterity and gives evidence of lyricism's capacity for renewal. More specifically, in presenting a reading of sonnets from both writers, this paper shows that the debates on the nature and "recurrence" of lyricism foreground the relational mode, above all, and give witness to the capacity of the lyric to withstand, to test, and ultimately, to reinvent itself. (GWF)

A Clear-Sighted Witness: Trauma and Memory in Maryse Condé's Desirada

Dawn Fulton

Maryse Condé's 1997 novel recounts a young Guadeloupean woman's frustrating search for the identity of her father. Because the information she seeks is initially guarded by her mother and later contradicted by friends and family, this heroine confronts an epistemological impasse, a potentially traumatic event to which she will never have direct access. Informed by Toni Morrison's reflections on memory and invention and by recent studies in trauma theory, this essay examines the ways in which Condé negotiates this impasse in her novel, creating a narrative field of knowledge that allows for its own lacunae and maintains multiple registers of experience. I propose that while the protagonist's creative endeavor is ultimately an optimistic one in that she is able to forge a less restricted notion of her own identity, the isolation brought by her personal crisis nonetheless cautions the reader against interpreting this individual search for identity on a collective scale. With this particular modulation of the traditional Caribbean identity quest novel, Condé suggests that collective memory may be fragmented not only because of traumatic events, but also, and perhaps more irreparably, along the faultlines of temporal, spatial, and interpretive divides. (DF)

Where am I? Who am I? The Problem of Location and Recognition in Helena Parente Cunha's *Woman Between Mirrors*

Joanne Gass

Helena Parente Cunha's novel, *Woman Between Mirrors* explores the many ways in which a dominant and domineering patriarchy can and does impose itself upon its subjects through what Louis Althusser calls interpellation. Parente Cunha's woman, a true twentieth-century heroine, faces her divided self—a self determined by ideology—and begins a quest which will end when she becomes an “I” before her shattered mirrors. But before that can happen, she must author herself, and, in the process of writing herself, she must overcome the demons of location and recognition. In the material sense, the woman must locate herself geographically, historically, socially, and physically. Existentially, she must locate herself as an acting, functioning, speaking, unified “I”—unified, in the sense that she is recognizable “in her entirety”; in order to do that, she must recognize herself in the multiple images of the mirror at the same time as she breaks the mirror images which her society reflects back to her—to be able to say “I” and to know that identity is not coherent and unified but that it has many facets, many voices, many responsibilities, becomes the object of her quest. (JG)

Women, Subalternity, and the Historical Novel of María Rosa Lojo

Kathryn Lehman

María Rosa Lojo (1954) has received critical recognition as a poet, short-story writer, and novelist. Her poetic work *Visiones* (1984) and *Forma oculta del mundo* (1991), first book of short-stories *Marginales* (1986), and two novels *Canción perdida en Buenos Aires al Oeste* (1987) and *La pasión de los nómades* (1994), have received prestigious awards. Lojo's most recent work, informed and inspired by archival sources, has been acclaimed by both critics and the general public for having radically altered the established representation of canonical historical figures. The novels *La princesa federal* (1998), and *Una mujer de fin de siglo* (1999), and the short stories in *Historias ocultas en la Recoleta* (2000) and *Amores insólitos de nuestra historia*

(2001), have proven to be a commercial success, indicative of the wider international phenomenon in which women are at the centre of both revisionist historiography and the new historical novel, as writers and as subjects, an important challenge to the traditional gendering of history. The marketing of this revisionist work has sparked a backlash against these forms of new historical writing. Kathryn Lehman asked Lojo to comment on the current position of women's writing and the historical novel in Argentina in an interview in Buenos Aires in October 2000 and again in September of 2002. (KL)

Modernity, Postmodernity, and Transgression in Sábato's Esthetics:
Poetic Dissemination, Defeat of Utopias, Returning Bodies

María Rosa Lojo, translated by Sebastián R. Bekes

After defining the problematic term "Postmodernity" and its possible application to Latin America, the position of Ernesto Sábato as an essayist and narrator is discussed in light of Modernity (questioned by him as the rationalist and enlightened canon, but applauded as romantic and surrealist rebellion), and Postmodernity with which it connects from diverse axis: the poetic of desire and that of transgression (vanguard movements related to Foucault, Bataille and Derrida), the theory of reality as "fragment" and "simulacrum" and the suppression of oppositions in the paroxysm of "symbolic exchange." Sábato would transcend from the central proposition of his writing, the vertigo of reproduction, the chain of copies, to plunge his hero in the sacrificial experience of the dissemination that reestablishes the broken ties between the realities of life and death. In his narrative the esthetic and metaphysical, avant-garde project triumphs in the "symbolic exchange" although a space remains for the utopian construction of a new society. In his last novel the political project of other vanguard movements sink in an exacerbated violence that reproduces over the victims of torture (the "disappeared"), the planetary catastrophe of the Cloaca. In this novel the failure of Modernity is produced as a philosophical and political project, another "disappearance," that of the writer himself. He will be estranged, alienated from the shapeless,

unclassifiable body of the novel next to the unburied body of the other disappeared who wait for their reintegration in the material and symbolic space of mother earth, and in the virtual space of common memory. (MRL)

The Politics of Race and Patriarchy in *Claire-Solange, âme africaine*
by Suzanne Lacascade

Valérie Orlando

Racial discrimination, colonialism, marginalization, and imperial politics are the components of Martinican author Suzanne Lacascade's 1924 novel, *Claire-Solange, âme africaine*. This little-known work is shrouded in mystery. Less information is available about the author or under what circumstances she conceptualized and completed her novel. Lacascade probably contributed to various reviews and journals of the first days of the Négritude movement. The novel offers one of the first discourses on race, racial mixing, hierarchy, and colonialism as construed by blacks and whites. The author defies the power of men over women in French society of the early twentieth century. Racialized parameters are synthesized, most significantly, through the protagonist Claire-Solange's views and opinions on two environments: the first is France, whose language she speaks fluently but in which she feels foreign; and the second African, a mythical place to which she is drawn due to her African ancestry filtered through her island home of Martinique. The author offers her readers a window on the life of a mulatta woman who is caught in the middle of white and black, forced, in the end, to live in a French, beige in-between, forever considered an *étrangère* because of her color. (VO)

The Public Becomes Personal: From Ernaux's *Passion simple* to *Journal du dehors*

Michelle Scatton-Tessier

Drawing on an interview in April 1997 with contemporary French writer Annie Ernaux, this article analyzes the interplay between female narrators and quotidian spaces in *Passion simple* (1991) and *Journal du dehors* (1993). Ernaux's writing career, spanning nearly thirty years, develops con-

tinually from depictions of physical spaces and the gestures or attitudes these spaces prescribe. Ernaux's spaces are not neutral; each bears the strong markings of a specific social class and gender. As this study illustrates, a radical shift exists between the author's 1991 and 1993 texts. Here, she distances herself from the traditional domestic space, as depicted in *Passion simple*, and concentrates on movement with the French capital and its environs in *Journal*. This shift leads to an inquiry into her narrators' compatibility with possible versions of the literary figures of the flâneur, as recorder of the modern city, and of the urban female wanderer, the flâneuse, as bourgeois shopper or prostitute. It also demonstrates the extent to which the author draws consistently on her personal preoccupations while expanding her scope to include a more journalistic approach to (auto)biographical texts. (MS-T)

Personalized and Depersonalized Discourses: Irony and Self-Consciousness in Bécquer's *Rimas*

Cecile West-Settle

Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer's *Rimas* have long been read as a prelude to the later twentieth-century texts of Juan Ramón Jiménez and Jorge Guillén. This established reading of the *Rimas* emphasizes the romantic idealism of Bécquer's poetry and identifies Bécquer as a proto-symbolist poet whose work anticipates "pure" poetry in Spain. An alternate view of the *Rimas*, one that recognizes the ironic impulses of this poetry, reminds us that Bécquer's poetry and poetics are, rather than single-minded, grounded in paradox and concerned with one of art's central problems, that is to say, with representing what the limitless imagination produces within the limits of language. (CW-S)