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Articles

Rhythm and Meter in the Early Juan Ramón Jiménez: The Case of
“¡Silencio!” of *Estío*

Vialla Hartfield-Méndez

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Abstract. The literary trajectory of Juan Ramón Jiménez is commonly divided into two periods, though this division is also generally recognized as an oversimplification of a very complex process in which the poet moves from the use of more traditional poetic forms, and a more concrete reference to reality, to the practice of free verse and more metaphysical expressions of man's relationship to his surroundings. “¡Silencio!” the last poem of *Estío* (1915), was written just prior to *Diario de un poeta recién casado*, the book with which it is considered that Juan Ramón began the second stage of his literary trajectory. “¡Silencio!” is a pivotal poem which presents various elements of nature that had appeared in Juan Ramón's earlier poetry, but in a new context, clearly anticipating in form and content what was to be Juan Ramón's next poetic enterprise. The “eternal silence” of the poem's last line is a transcendental silence that is the ultimate goal of his poetry. A close structural analysis of the poem reveals the manner in which Juan Ramón identifies transcendental qualities that he finds within himself with the various elements of Nature, and thus anticipates the totality of being that he seemed to achieve in his later works. (VH-M)

Questioning the Postmodern: Deguy, Jabès and Pleynet

Joan Brandt

167

Abstract. Theorists of the postmodern tend to see the postmodernist literary text as that which disrupts modernism's inclusive and coherent structures. As opposed to the modernist text, which is characterized as centered, ordered, self-reflexive and autonomous, the postmodernist text is seen as decentered and indeterminate; it blurs the boundaries separating the text from other cultural spheres and questions radically the metaphysics of presence, of the subject, of identity and coherence. This study questions the tendency to see postmodernism in terms of its opposition to modernism. Through an analysis of three contemporary French poets, Michel Deguy, Edmond Jabès and Marcelin Pleynet, it

argues that “postmodernist” poetics, while clearly contesting the modernist aesthetic, at the same time upholds many of its precepts. An exploration of these contradictory tendencies reveals that the closural devices of modernism, which are still operative in the “postmodern” text, interact paradoxically with forces that dissolve modernist boundaries and that give the text a more referential or historical dimension. It is thus by underscoring the paradoxes and duplicities that structure the contemporary poetic text that this essay questions the tendency to posit a simple opposition between the textual and the historical, between the self-reflexive and the worldly, between the modern and postmodern, that structures many of the current debates on postmodernism. (JB)

The Personal and the Political in the Work of Mariama Bâ

Adele King

177

Abstract. In her two novels, *Une si longue lettre* and *Un Chant écarlate*, Mariama Bâ describes how political as well as domestic problems develop from the tensions between tradition and the modern world. Desire for power and money leads to a post-independence society, in which greed motivates politicians and in which a woman is treated as merchandise to be purchased by the richest man. Adherence to a supposed ideal pre-colonial community, however, can lead to both the subjugation of women and political isolation. Bâ wants a morality based on respect for others, and a willingness to discard those traditions that inhibit such respect. She is critical of any separatism, between man and woman, black and white, European and African. (AK)

Street-signs: The City as Context and as Code in the Novels of Claire Etcherelli

Sara Poole

189

Abstract. The piece aims to consider the novels of Claire Etcherelli as examples of *le roman parisien*, and to examine the different roles the city is made to play in them. It looks briefly at Etcherelli's debt to the literature of the nineteenth century; at the significance of using real place names in such realist fiction; at Paris as political fulcrum; at why most of Etcherelli's characters live on the fringes of the city. The second half concentrates on *Elise ou la vraie vie* and attempts to illustrate how in this novel Paris becomes an extended and elaborate metaphor for that 'real' or 'true' life. The eponymous heroine is unable to penetrate the capital without simultaneously exploring her own coming to consciousness and sensual awareness, and she can achieve neither of these goals without the character given the role of initiator, her Algerian lover Arezki. The loss of the one therefore automatically incurs the loss of the other, and Paris becomes literally *out of bounds* to her. (SP)

Abstract. L.-F. Céline's preoccupation with the question of style appears not only in his correspondence, interviews and "socio-political" (i.e. anti-Semitic) tracts, but also in his novels. An examination of Céline's thoughts on the writing of, and in, novels reveals an opposition between features which should inform style, and those which should be eliminated, in other words, between those values upon which his own style rests, and those associated with non-style, with his "others of style." Two passages in his final novel *Rigodon* may be read as figuring certain aspects of these thoughts as well as some of the paradoxes which accompany them. The first passage is the description of character Horace Restif's assassination method which, although its features correspond to Céline's opposition to otherness in the form of reason and ideas, exposes the complicity between his style and illusion and artifice, the "unauthentic" against which he rails in his pamphlets and elsewhere. The second passage figures Céline's conception of style as revelation, as a journey to the inside of spoken language in order to uncover its secret relationship to emotion. However, while the journey inward is rewarded with discovery, the correlative journey outward is one toward meaning, communication, and the textual, various components of the otherness that distances the individual from his lived experience. (ALM)

Robert Musil: Literature as Experience

Burton Pike

221

Abstract. Trained as a scientist and empirical psychologist, Robert Musil offers an illuminating instance of a post-Nietzschean modernist writer whose endeavor was to develop an experimental literary language that would more adequately represent experience as psychology and philosophy were coming to understand it. Musil's enterprise, based on regarding literature as experience rather than as a formal construct of language only, is not best examined by structurally-based language or discourse analysis and criticism. Like Mach and William James coming along at the end of the idealistic tradition in European thought, Musil wanted to fashion a language that would permit objective communication of the whole complex flow of experience from person to person and within society as a whole, and thus make true communication possible. Musil's fiction grew out of the phenomenological enterprise, but the focus here is on his interest in shaping this philosophical mode of thinking into a precise fictional vehicle—an approach often overlooked in comparing the practice of writers' and philosophers' ideas. (BP)

Return to “0”: A Lacanian Reading of Ingeborg Bachmann’s “Undine Goes”

Veronica P. Scrol

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Abstract: This essay approaches Ingeborg Bachmann’s “Undine Goes” from a Lacanian perspective. The object of the study is three-fold: first, to demonstrate Bachmann’s deconstruction of the ideal ego through the water-sprite Undine’s criticism of the human Hans. Second, to transcend the limitations of dualistic interpretations (as noted by some feminist critics), by introducing the triple Lacanian registers—the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real—into this particular reading. Finally, to establish Bachmann’s monologic text as a discourse of the real and Undine as the voice of the death instinct. (VPS)

The Past and the Present in the Early Novels of Hanns-Josef Ortheil

Ernestine Schlant

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Abstract. Hanns-Josef Ortheil’s early novels *Fermer*, 1979 and *Hecke*, 1983 have male protagonists who search for self-identity in the West Germany of the 1980s. In the process, they discover that they are profoundly influenced by the lives and experiences of their parents, particularly as these lives were shaped during and by the Hitler regime. In *Fermer*, the 19-year old protagonist rebels against this society by going AWOL. Yet in his geographical flight and intellectual analyses he realizes his deep emotional bonds with the expectations and behavior of the parent generation. Recognition of these bonds is only the first step on a long and painful road toward personally independent and politically responsible adulthood. An exploration of the key concepts of order and *Geborgenheit* (being protected) reveals the deep-seated ambiguities in the postwar mentality of the parent generation as it is trying to instill these sentiments in their successors. The 30-year old protagonist of *Hecke* pieces together his mother’s traumatized life during and after the Hitler regime in order to understand her emotionally stultifying hold on him. He comes to understand the manipulative power of her suffering and realizes that he must shed the burden of her displaced needs if he hopes to attain a conscious, mature self-identity. The use and the manipulation of language and its silences are the prime target of the narrator’s efforts to penetrate the “protective hedges” of untold stories. Both novels conclude with the protagonists’ intellectual insights into their psychological and socially conditioned make-up, but they do not—yet—carry these insights into action. (ES)

Phylacteries as Metaphor in Elie Wiesel's *Le Testament d'un poète juif assassiné*

Simon P. Sibelman

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Abstract. The novels of the Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, were initially read as eloquent expressions of remembrance and witnessing to the massacred millions who perished in Hitler's Inferno. His fiction is likewise a profound expression of Jewishness and of the author's fundamental belief that post-Auschwitz Jewry must draw nearer to its authentic roots. To that end, Wiesel's novel, *Le Testament d'un poète juif assassiné*, represents the author's most compelling expression concerning Jewish identity. The novel is replete with the language, symbols and meta-structural techniques which elicit an exhortation to remain faithful to one's Jewishness. Moreover, Wiesel provides the reader a single, subtle metaphoric *mise-en-abyme* which gathers together all the signs and symbols of Jewishness: the protagonist's phylacteries. This paper will explore the importance of the phylacteries as metaphor as well as analyzing the manner in which they serve as a *fil conducteur*, linking the novel's various narrative levels and providing the structural cement and symbolic matrix to unify the text. (SPS)

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