
Abstracts

Christopher Flint, *Speaking Objects: The Circulation of Stories in Eighteenth-Century Prose Fiction* 212

An enormously popular narrative device, speaking objects were used frequently in eighteenth-century British fiction to express authorial concerns about the circulation of books in the public sphere. Relating the speaking object to the author's status in a print culture, works featuring such narrators characteristically align authorship, commodification, and national acculturation. The objects celebrate their capacity to exploit both private and public systems of circulation, such as libraries, banks, booksellers' shops, highways, and taverns. Linking storytelling to commodities and capital, they convey an implicit theory of culture in which literary dissemination, economic exchange, and public use appear homologous. But as object narratives dramatize, such circulation estranges modern authors from their work. Far from mediating between private and public experience or synthesizing national and cosmopolitan values, these narratives record the indiscriminate consumption that characterizes the public sphere in a print culture. (CF)

Anna Brickhouse, *Hawthorne in the Americas: Frances Calderón de la Barca, Octavio Paz, and the Mexican Genealogy of "Rappaccini's Daughter"* 227

"Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844) is one of Nathaniel Hawthorne's most famous and most frequently taught short fictions. In it Hawthorne distances himself from what he earlier called "the tottering infancy of our literature"; he boldly attaches his tale instead to the venerable scene of European literary history. Yet despite the numerous references in "Rappaccini's Daughter" to a European literary genealogy, Hawthorne makes no such self-conscious allusion to a crucial source, Frances Calderón de la Barca's *Life in Mexico*, a work mired in specifically American controversies over colonialism, race, and slavery. This essay examines Hawthorne's literary relation to the Americas by investigating what I call the Mexican genealogy of "Rappaccini's Daughter": both the story's immediate predecessor, *Life in Mexico*, and its afterlife in Octavio Paz's *La hija de Rappaccini*, a dramatic revision that I read as an allegory of Mexican colonial history. (AB)

David R. Jarraway, "O Canada!": The Spectral Lesbian Poetics of Elizabeth Bishop 243

A general reluctance to engage the issue of lesbian identity in Elizabeth Bishop's work has understandably been conditioned by her own longstanding reticence. An approach that theorizes about the nonreferential, hence inarticulable, contours of Bishop's project, however, discloses a more eroticized aesthetic practice—one conceivably enabling the vital exploration of transgressive sexuality that perhaps goes without saying. What arguably forges the link between theory and practice is Bishop's experience of loss. The unspeakableness of mother loss due to insanity, mediated poignantly by the curtailment of Bishop's Canadian childhood, formerly provided the invitation to enclose Bishop's writing explicitly within a lifelong travail of itinerant displacement. Recent psychoanalytic theory, by contrast, foregrounds a more challenging loss that divides her writing between reality and the real and thus implicitly opens it up to a spectral lesbian poetics beyond what her canonical "American" identity readily permits readers to see and to say. (DRJ)

James M. Harding, *Cloud Cover: (Re)Dressing Desire and Comfortable Subversions in Caryl Churchill's Cloud Nine* 258

Scholars have maintained that Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* unites Brechtian and deconstructive strategies in a dramatic form that subverts traditional representations of gender and sexuality. Yet this reception has consistently overlooked the repressive undercurrents that surface in the movement from the text of Churchill's play to a performance of it. Indeed, a

fundamental disparity exists between the play's seemingly progressive textual pronouncements and the effects of its oft-celebrated dramaturgical strategies. The use of theatrical techniques like cross-casting harbors surprisingly reactionary attitudes that reinforce heterosexual imperatives by presenting homoerotic desires in conventional, stereotypical forms. Underlying these reactionary attitudes, I argue, is a liberal ideology that restricts the expression of gay male and lesbian desire to terms that reaffirm heterosexual norms. The play thus perpetuates a disturbingly naive and demonstrably repressive notion of acceptance of sexual diversity, a notion in which difference is easy to accept because it is not enacted. (JMH)

Maera Y. Shreiber, The End of Exile: Jewish Identity and Its Diasporic Poetics 273

What is the location of Jewish identity? Cultural studies has provoked reexaminations of many long-standing tropes of ethnic and religious identity, including that of exile. Such inquiries have potentially explosive consequences for the already vexed notion of Jewish identity, especially in the context of an American experience. This essay means to trouble the relation between Jewish identity and the problematic marker of exile, within the contexts of cultural and postcolonial theory, drawing on the work of Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers, including Alain Finkielkraut, Daniel Boyarin, and Edward Said. This analysis allows for a sustained consideration of a diasporic poetics—an alternative aesthetic model for imagining community and the attendant terms of belonging. The experimental Yiddish-English bilingual verse of the contemporary poet Irena Klepfisz serves as a paradigmatic example of such a vision that challenges the familiar opposition between home and exile. Yiddish, a notoriously inclusive language and a by-product of the Diaspora, is central to her inquiries into the relation between individual and collective identities and into the role gender plays in the construction of such entities. (MYS)