
Abstracts

Alice Fiola Berry, “L’Isle Medamothi”: Rabelais’s Itineraries of Anxiety (*Quart livre 2–4*) 1040

In the Medamothi episode of Rabelais’s 1552 *Quart livre*, the medieval tradition of storytelling represented by Gargantua encounters the classical tradition. This meditation on origins is enacted as a family drama: the son, Pantagruel, attempts to choose between his two “fathers.” Initially, the classical influences have priority. Pantagruel buys tapestries of the life of Achilles, an act representing the son’s desire to break from his past with Gargantua by adopting the Greek hero’s life. Pantagruel also purchases strange animals that describe the creation of a new and living logos. In the next chapter, Gargantua’s envoy arrives to vindicate the native father’s rights. Gifts and letters are traded between Gargantua and Pantagruel, an exchange charged with antagonism. The rivalry is resolved, however, for Pantagruel sends back home the classical things he purchased on Medamothi. Two literary pasts nurture Rabelais’s books, but, in the end, the author privileges the native tradition. (AFB)

Richard H. Rodino, “Splendide Mendax”: Authors, Characters, and Readers in *Gulliver’s Travels* 1054

Gulliver’s Travels is a battleground of interpretation, both within and outside the text. Acts of interpretation within *Gulliver’s Travels*—acts of writing and reading texts, of inventing characters for one’s fictions and in turn becoming characters in others’ fictions—signal a central controversy in eighteenth-century culture, in the relations of language to truth and to power, and in readers’ unceasing stratagems for mastering what a text means over and against the human subject it seeks to represent. The epistemological question is thus inescapably also the political question of the fate of human subjects in a public sphere in which they are made objects in others’ interpretations and fictions. As “splendide mendax,” Gulliver exemplifies how human attempts to totalize truth are forms of lying as well as expressions of power and, in the absence of these insights, too readily become expressions of injustice and violence. (RHR)

Ellen McCracken, Metaplagiarism and the Critic’s Role as Detective: Ricardo Piglia’s Reinvention of Roberto Arlt 1071

In 1975 the Argentine writer Ricardo Piglia published a transgressive appropriation of a short story from a prestigious European tradition to call into question the notion of literary private property. Using such postmodernist techniques as scholarly parody and metaplagiarism, Piglia succeeded in catching critics at their own game: few read carefully enough to decipher the elaborate literary crime he had constructed as a tribute to an important but undervalued Argentine writer, Roberto Arlt. The double codes of entrapment and disclosure in Piglia’s narrative pose a special challenge to contemporary readers: in a noteworthy reversal of current critical fashion, the vanguard reader on whom Piglia’s text depends must engage in a careful, formalist decoding in order to apprehend the text’s larger theoretical concerns. (EMcC)

Sarah Stanbury, The Virgin’s Gaze: Spectacle and Transgression in Middle English Lyrics of the Passion 1083

Depictions of the Virgin in Middle English lyrics of the Passion are one of the most common medieval sources for accounts of a woman’s gaze. Her gaze in these laments, however, runs counter to cultural proscriptions of female gazing, as illustrated in Dante,

Chaucer, Alan of Lille, and Bernard of Clairvaux and as theorized in recent feminist film theory. The Marian poems complicate the gaze by repeatedly enjoining the reader to view Christ's suffering and mutilated body through an intricately mediated visual enterprise: the reader looks not only at the figure on the cross but also at the Virgin gazing, a sight that is further mediated by the poet, often in the persona of someone watching at the scene. Spectatorship in the laments sets up a complex tension between the Virgin as spectacle and the Virgin as a transgressive subject of maternal and erotic power. (SS)

Rita Felski, The Counterdiscourse of the Feminine in Three Texts by Wilde, Huysmans, and Sacher-Masoch 1094

The texts of the late-nineteenth-century European male avant-garde reflect an imaginary identification with the feminine. Examined here with specific reference to Huysmans's *Against the Grain*, Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, this topos is evident both in the representation of "feminized" male subjects (the aesthete and the dandy) and in a self-conscious writing practice that foregrounds style, parody, and quotation. While ostensibly challenging sexual and textual norms through a subversion of bourgeois masculinity and realist aesthetics, these works in fact reinforce gender dichotomies by persistently associating woman with vulgarity, materiality, and the tyranny of the natural. The preference for art over nature in early modernism thus reveals a misogynistic dimension that is intimately linked to, rather than dissolved by, its parodistic and antirealist aesthetic. (RF)

Linda Abbandonato, "A View from 'Elsewhere'": Subversive Sexuality and the Rewriting of the Heroine's Story in *The Color Purple* 1106

By telling the story of the "invisible woman"—a character traditionally silenced and effaced in fiction—*The Color Purple* challenges patriarchal constructions of femininity and female desire and makes representation itself a compelling issue. Initially, the great twentieth-century cultural narratives of sexuality and socialization, Freud's oedipal theory and Lévi-Strauss's theory of kinship systems and the exchange of women, are played out in the drama of Celie's life. But this differently crafted, quilted novel is also differently sexual; it replots the heroine's text within an alternative framework of desire and disrupts the symbolic order with its carnivalesque celebration of polymorphously perverse pleasure. (LA)

Edward Hirsch, The Imaginary Irish Peasant 1116

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Irish peasant was a figure encoded with literary, social, and political meaning, and to speak or write about that central image of Irish identity in the context of the time was to participate in a special kind of cultural discourse, far removed from the changing realities of rural life. The portraits of the peasant generated by different Irish poets, dramatists, fiction writers, and antiquarians were often radically opposed to one another; in fact, each writer undertook to rewrite or to reconceptualize the peasant characters imagined by predecessors and contemporaries. Thus W. B. Yeats and Douglas Hyde created portraits that not only rivaled each other but aimed primarily at overturning the prevailing English colonial stereotype reflected in the stage Irishman. These portraits were in turn rewritten by John Synge, even as Yeats's, Hyde's, and Synge's were reworked in divergent ways by James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, and Patrick Kavanagh. (EH)

Gerald Doherty, One Vast Hermeneutic Sentence: The Total Lawrencean Text 1134

While Lawrence's total novelistic production is generally conceived of as a loose aggregation of highly individual texts, each departing significantly from the norms that shape the traditional novel, the complete oeuvre conforms to the rules the single works violate: it approximates the discursive form Roland Barthes proposes for the classic realist plot. In the light of three powerful models—based on the sentence, the classic realist narrative, and a tropological paradigm that synthesizes the two—Lawrence's changing structures from the early to the late fiction emerge as one well-organized traditional text that displays the characteristic articulations of narrative beginnings, middles, and endings, especially in the unfolding of the erotic visions and wisdoms that the individual novels explore. (GD)

Jonathan Mayhew, Jorge Guillén and the Insufficiency of Poetic Language 1146

Jorge Guillén's literary criticism makes a case for the "sufficiency" of poetic language, its capacity to measure up to the richness of its creator's inner experience. To define the attitudes toward language that underlie his poetics, this essay reconstructs his argument in *Language and Poetry*, a series of authoritative lectures on major Spanish poets in which Guillén attempts to refute linguistic skepticism. His advocacy of sufficient language meets its test in his own poetry in *Cántico*. Although critics have traditionally viewed his theory as mimetic, his poems also reveal an awareness of linguistic mediation that undercuts his seemingly naive faith in the power of the poetic word. (JM)

Donald L. Guss, Enlightenment as Process: Milton and Habermas 1156

Reason as the medium of truth and freedom—though suppressed, the idea returns; it is presumed by our very participation in discourse. Its opponents say that only practices are real. But, as Milton and Habermas know, reason is itself a practice. Milton's "free and lawful debate at all times . . . of what opinion soever" recognizes interestedness, perspectivity, and struggle; Habermas's unconstrained communication is a never-achieved goal (an "ideal") regulating discursive practices here and now. Both writers recognize that meanings are cultural, social, and existential, that knowledge cannot be separated from interests; but they do not therefore stand outside praxis rhapsodizing about struggle and contingency. Instead, they seek to move toward social freedom and individual autonomy through reason-able communication—that ongoing search for unforced agreement which is our usual and best alternative to violence, our usual and best way to find meaning in the world, in our selves, and in one another. (DLG)
