
Abstracts

Alison Cornish, A Lady Asks: The Gender of Vulgarization in Late Medieval Italy 166

Classical texts were extensively translated into the vernacular in Italy during the period when Italian poetry began, and the “mentality” of translation is traceable in this early verse. Vernacularization is gendered female, especially in the conventions of lyric poetry. As exemplified in some thirteenth- and fourteenth-century poems and their prose commentaries, “vulgarization” is often presented as a discourse to women, who are conceived as a superior rather than an inferior audience. Instead of demeaning the Latin original, this kind of vulgarization paradoxically ennobles both the learned or scientific content and the young language in which it is written. This peculiar moment of Italian literary history contrasts with concurrent translation in France, with the subsequent abandonment of vulgarization under the influence of Petrarch, and with modern notions of the politics of translation. (AC)

Matthew Wickman, The Allure of the Improbable: *Fingal*, Evidence, and the Testimony of the “Echoing Heath” 181

While James Macpherson’s epic translation *Fingal* has usually been marshaled as evidence or impugned for its lack thereof, it actually bears a reflexive and critical relation to the issue of evidence in eighteenth-century British culture. On the one hand, the text elicits the ubiquitous logic of probability that was coming to shape the epistemology of legal evidence as well as parallel formations in commercial society and even in theories of the novel; on the other hand, however, the text counteracts this logic by highlighting its own affiliation with the improbability of witness testimony. Such testimony—improbable because widely differentiated from the deliberations of jurors, for example—increasingly came to reflect the relation of literature to the legal, scientific, and philosophical discourses of knowledge. *Fingal* shows how the improbability of the Scottish Highlands began symbolically to enable configurations of literary form as a vehicle of social critique. (MW)

Brett Bowles, Poetic Practice and Historical Paradigm: Charles Baudelaire’s Anti-Semitism 195

Historians identify two principal strains of anti-Semitism in France: a traditional, religious variety rooted in medieval Catholic theology and a modern, racial variety that holds Jews responsible for the myriad of socioeconomic problems associated with the rise of mass-market capitalism, urbanization, and industrialization in the mid-nineteenth century. This essay argues that Baudelaire exemplifies the historical transition between the two strains. The first, expressed in the poet’s work in the late 1850s through the motifs of prostitution and hyper-Catholic self-martyrdom, resulted from his lifelong financial misery, his relationship with a Jewish prostitute, and his identification with Edgar Allan Poe and Joseph de Maistre. Over the course of the 1860s, largely in response to his dealings with the Jewish publisher Michel Lévy and to increasingly heavy financial and psychological pressure, Baudelaire’s theological anti-Semitism turned into an aggressive, pernicious racism that culminated in his calling for “the extermination of the Jewish race.” (BB)