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Fra Ariosto e Tasso: vicende del poema narrativo. by Guido Sacchi

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Con un'appendice di studi cinque-secenteschi. Studi 7. Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2006. 428 pp. index. append. bibl. €30. ISBN: 88-7642-183-1.

This volume provides a tantalizing vista of the chivalric landscape between the publication of the *Orlando furioso* (1532) and the *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581). Whereas many previous scholars have asserted the popularity of romance epics during this period, Sacchi is the first to offer a systematic and comprehensive account of the new editions printed over the course of the six decades in question. He has identified twenty-seven authors who composed a total of forty-three original works. For the most part, these poems did not enjoy commercial success during their day and many are currently available only as rare books in Italian libraries.

The initial chapter offers a description and evaluation of the various works as well as an investigation into the background, profession, and social status of the authors. Sacchi finds that poets on the highest end of the social scale wrote canonical works with greater attention to classical models (namely, Trissino's *Italia liberata*, Alamanni's *Girone il cortese* and *Avarchide*, Giraldo Cinzio's *Ercole*, Bernardo Tasso's *Amadigi*, Bolognetti's *Costante*, and Torquato Tasso's *Rinaldo*). A second category of poets, comprised of professional writers and intellectuals such as Aretino and Dolce, composed poems for the growing publishing industry that were more attuned to readerly demand. A final group of little-remembered *dilettanti* were for the most part less conversant with innovative techniques, less steeped in classical culture, and less certain of correct grammatical usage. They were not necessarily, however, devoid of talent, and they sometimes devised the most surprising plot lines in continuing the vicissitudes of familiar characters. In Marco Bandarini's *Rodamonte innamorato*, for example, Angelica falls in love with Brunello and commits suicide in desperation, while his *Amorosa vendetta di Angelica* features Alda as a "malmaritata" abandoned by her errant husband Orlando. In Secondo Tarantino's *Bradamante gelosa*, madness becomes an all-pervasive force that affects characters indiscriminately, even causing Angelica's former suitors to torture her in a series of horrendous ordeals.

The remainder of the study delves into various topics in greater depth. Chapter 2 examines such paratextual elements as letters to a poem's dedicatee or its

readers, prefaces, vignettes, extended titles, and prose allegories. These explanatory moments often directly expound authorial intention, revealing the theory behind the praxis. Sacchi notes, for example, that poets increasingly declare their principal aim to be that of illustrating the perfection of their heroes. The third chapter looks more closely at the proems and final stanzas of selected poems. Sacchi separates the latter into concluded (*finito*) and open-ended (*non finito*), pointing to the model provided by Boiardo's unfinished *Orlando innamorato*. The final chapter focuses on the narrative form, using the categories of *epos* and *romanzo* (epic and romance) to broadly distinguish the poems. In this chapter Sacchi also considers the forms and themes of "continuations," the figure of the poet within the poem, the use of irony (or lack thereof), and the technique of interlacing.

The work lacks an introduction and conclusion, and the final chapter ends abruptly because the author died in early 2004 before the study was completed. As Lina Bolzoni and Matteo Residori explain in their preface, this study is, in fact, the dissertation that Sacchi was scheduled to defend at the Scuola Normale of Pisa in May of that year. In this posthumous publication, the editors have also included a lengthy appendix that gathers together a number of Sacchi's essays dealing with several authors, including Marino, Aretino, Michelangelo, Campanella, and Chiabrera ("Studi cinque-secenteschi").

Even in its unfinished format, this work constitutes an important contribution to the history of the chivalric poem between Ariosto and Tasso. An acute reader sensitive to nuance, Sacchi does an excellent job of assessing imitation as well as innovation and of sparking the reader's interest in taking a closer look at texts that have been largely ignored. While not claiming to have discovered any overlooked masterpieces, Sacchi shows that these works are worthy of greater attention both for their own sake and for the insights they provide into the development of the genre and of Renaissance culture in general.

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