

Paul F. Grendler. *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*. Madison, Milwaukee and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969.

The information concerning three original writers of mid-XVIth Century Italy is scattered and relatively difficult to reach; and it is a real merit of this book to have collected a considerable amount of it and to have organized it in good order. Professor Grendler's scholarship is evident in the three excellent biographical reconstructions and especially in the reciprocal proportioning of the characters of Doni, Lando, Franco.

However, the thesis into which such a wealth of information is moulded can appear more fashionable than substantial. The book accounts for the development of these writers by the growth of the vernacular press - which is no more than a factor, and certainly not exclusive. Furthermore, the author assumes the scornful attitude of these forerunners of controversial journalism to be founded on genuine systems of criticism, or at least on meditated dissent; and thus he implicitly links the subject with the noisy moods which have claimed importance, if not achievements, in recent times.

Critics of their epoch, as far as the XVIth Century is concerned, were Ariosto, Machiavelli, Montaigne; polemicists like Doni, Lando, Franco, were no more than disconnected denouncers, and their value as writers cannot be sought in their quarrelsome exertions. Inevitably, the picture emerging from their generalizations is confused and manneristic. And when Mr. Grendler attempts a closer connection with authentic 'critics,' e.g. with Montaigne, his thesis appears to be forced upon the subject from outside rather than discovered within it. 'Montaigne's position represented the culmination of the criticism of Franco, Doni, Lando, as well as of other sixteenth-century critics of learning ... In the Apology of Raymond Sebond he attacked liberal studies as being of no use to men ...' (161). It is a rather flattened view of the delightful montaignesque distinction concerning the belles lettres: 'Je les ayme bien, mais je ne les adore pas.'

The right way of interpreting the literary and historical value of a writer such as Doni seems to be rather the identification of a 'linguistic hedonism,' studied for instance by Segre (not quoted in the bibliography), and of a particular sadness of his world, studied by Momigliano (not quoted either). In fact, the bibliographical apparatus, although abundant and interesting, could be more complete even when referring to the original works. Concerning, for example, the writings of Doni (the most important of the three), we could suggest a number of additions. Mr. Grendler's list (taken from Ricottini) does not include, for 1550, *La Mula* printed in appendix to the Giolito *Libreria* and the *Orazione in lode dell'ignoranza*, Marcolini; for 1552, *I Frutti della Zucca*, Marcolini, the four parts of *I Marmi*, the first and second books of *I Mondi*, Marcolini, *Sendebar indiano*, Accademia peregrina, *I Fiori della Zucca*, Marcolini, *Le Foglie della Zucca*, *Dicerie Favole Sogni*, Marcolini; for 1554, *Il Terremoto* (s.l); for 1590, *La filosofia morale*, Benedetto Mammarello, Florence (attributed instead to Mammarello of Ferrara, who republished it in 1610); for 1614, *Le epistole di Seneca*, Milano. And also in the list of the modern editions of Doni's works I have noticed that at least six publications are missing.

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