Torquato Tasso. *King Torrismondo*. Trans. Maria Pastore Passaro. New York: Fordham University Press, 1997. Pp. 332.

Much like Joseph Tusiani's 1982 translation of *Il mondo creato*, Maria Pastore Passaro's translation of *Il re Torrismondo*, the first in English, should rekindle interest not only in Tasso's last dramatic work but also in his post-*Liberata* production as a whole.

The translator's several excellent introductory essays provide ample background on Tasso the man, his work, and his influence on European letters. In "*King Torrismondo*, A Renaissance Tragedy," Pastore Passaro provides information on the play itself. Known originally as *Galealto re di Norvegia* and published by Aldus Manutius, Jr. in 1582 with the title *Tragedia non finita* in the *Seconda parte* of Tasso's *Rime e Prose*, the 1197-verse play remained unfinished until after Tasso's release from Sant'Anna's hospital in 1586. By 1587 the five-act play had not only a new title – *Il re Torrismondo* – but also a new publisher. The edition put out in Bergamo by Bartoli and dedicated to the son of the Duke of Mantua, Vincenzo Gonzaga, who had interceded to have Tasso released from Sant'Anna, saw fourteen reprints before the end of the Cinquecento. Performances of the play in Venice (Teatro San Luca) and at Vicenza's Teatro Olimpico in 1618 further attest to the play's extreme popularity in its own time and immediately afterward.

In this same essay, the translator also paints an accurate picture of the dramatic milieu in which *King Torrismondo* was born: Tasso's contemporaries Giraldo Cinzio (*Orbecche*, 1541) and Speroni (*Canace*, 1542) influenced his tragic art no less than the need to adhere to neo-Aristotelian principles of composition or the classical examples of Sophocles (*Oedipus Rex*) and Seneca (*Oedipus*, *Phaedra*).

In "Tasso, A Prototype of the Romantic Poet," Pastore Passaro traces a history of Tasso's influence on European letters. She recalls an English play of 1594 entitled *Tasso's Melancholy* (his hopeless love for Leonora d'Este was already well-known in England by the 1590s) as well as Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* of 1790, Byron's "Lament of Tasso," and Francesco De Sanctis' *Torquato Tasso* (1849). The translator also reminds us of Tasso's influence on Milton and makes reference to a dialogue published in England in 1762 entitled *Il Tasso (A Dialogue: John Milton and Torquato Tasso)*. This brief work, believed to have been written by Richard Hurd, has been recently translated into Italian by Pastore Passaro herself ("Un momento della 'fortuna' del Tasso in Inghilterra. Il dialogo 'Il Tasso'." *Studi tassiani* 29 [1991]: 97-117).

In "*King Torrismondo* Beyond the Alps" Pastore Passaro briefly discusses the success of the tragedy in France through Dalibray's translation and its reprints and the likely influence it had on Racine and Corneille. The author also points out the influence the play had on the epic verse of Milton's *Paradise Lost* as demonstrated by Mario Praz in *The Flaming Heart*.

The translation also contains a lengthy introduction by Anthony Oldcorn that discusses Tasso's life and times while tracing the development of his thought and the evolution of his literary practice. Oldcorn contextualizes the poet's art as he brings to life the literary milieu of late-Cinquecento Italy, that "Age of criticism" in which the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* led to "the enthronement" of epic and tragedy (9). Tasso, of course, not only wrote epic and tragedy but he theorized them as well, and Oldcorn presents this tension as a central aspect of Tasso's development as a poet.

Professor Oldcorn calls *King Torrismondo* Tasso's "generic 'experimentation'" (27). He praises above all the concluding lyrical chorus and argues that if we read backwards from it we realize that the play "lead[s] us by the hand" to the "negative epiphany" of the final chorus, itself a "vision of a universe in which not only is the god hidden, but any attempt to identify a system of values, indeed to name a single value, is doomed to ruin" (26). For Oldcorn, this "negative epiphany" is echoed some three hundred years later in Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," yet without Tasso's more "pessimistic" diagnosis (27-28).

The translation itself is quite simply excellent. The English easily meets Pastore Passaro's criteria of "accuracy, clarity and readability" (64). In order to avoid the difficulties involved in translating Tasso's blank-verse hendecasyllables and *settenari* into iambic pentameters, Pastore Passaro translates the play into English prose. She translates "literally whenever possible" (64), and when necessary – although in fact quite rarely – she sacrifices "faithfulness to fluency" (64). The result is a relatively fast yet smooth and evenly paced rhythm that holds the reader's attention to the very end. Although it is wholly modern and contemporary, Pastore Passaro's English rendering never allows you to forget that you are reading a late Renaissance tragedy.

This translation fills a much needed gap not only in Tasso studies (many more such translations of Tasso's minor works are needed) but also in our understanding of late-Cinquecento drama. As Pastore Passaro wishes, it will certainly find its way onto reading lists in comparative studies courses on late Renaissance tragedy (66).

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Roberto Salsano. *Novellistica in nuce: Abbozzi, esempi, schizzi, "smorfie" fra Ottocento e Novecento*. Napoli: Liguori, 1996 (Strumenti). Pp. vi, 75.

La storia della letteratura è fatta di figure statuarie, di menti grandiose, originali, estrose e irrompenti, che hanno segnato i costumi, le tradizioni, la cultura di interi popoli. Questi stessi popoli dei loro 'eroi' sagomano nell'immortale pietra le fattezze e li pongono alle porte della città per vantarsene, per affermare il proprio orgoglio, per proclamare la propria grandezza. L'ombra di questi simulacri segna fondamentali punti di arrivo lungo l'antichissima strada della nascita, della formazione e dello sviluppo della società degli uomini. Eppure, lungo la via, vi sono altri riferimenti, delle tappe, per così dire, intermedie, delle figure minori, meno appariscenti, ma non per questo meno importanti. Anche questi sono 'ritagliati nella pietra', pietre più piccole ma pietre miliari, che segnano l'avanzamento dell'uomo lungo la strada della ricerca spirituale e intellettuale, e a volte sono un preannuncio, un anticipo di una sosta più lunga, di un caposaldo.

È critico su abbozzi, esempi, schizzi, "smorfie" fra Ottocento e Novecento. In questo volumetto egli analizza appunto una serie di racconti e raccontini che rappresentano i germi – da cui l'espressione "raccontini in nuce" (2) – di forme, principi e stili poi divenuti capisaldi della letteratura novecentesca, quanto meno di buona parte di essa. Salsano ha scritto diverse opere critiche sulla letteratura classica – sull'arte e