
Whatever one may think of the implausibility of a reasoned discourse on and a systematic inquiry into a totalizing vision and a coherent hermeneutic experience of the Adone, Guardiani’s study provides in my view the first real attempt at just such a reading of the Marinian epic narrative. Of course, wading through such murky waters is not without its risks, but the critic’s partial immersion, to extend our wading metaphor, partial because his avowed stance stems from a methodological procedure based on a type of rhetoric “intesa come può intendersi oggi,” does on the whole provide illuminating leads and original hermeneutic apertures intended to illustrate the work’s legitimate placing within a modernist philosophical context.

The book opens with a theoretical *premessa* in which the sustaining critical parameters are discussed in a brief yet satisfactory manner. Guardiani delineates very clearly the theoretical underpinnings of his work, at the same time making manifest his privileged utilization of Perelman’s “nouvelle rhétorique” with timely incursions into such camps as Pozzi, Frye, Grassi, Barilli and Lausberg. Equally apparent in these opening pages is the critic’s intention to eschew for the most part questions dealing with a philological revisitation of the Marinian poem, questions no doubt pregnant of meaning in their own terms, yet not sufficiently conducive to a novel and invigorating understanding of the Neapolitan poet’s text.

The three chapters that represent the substantive corpus of the book deal with the three constitutive elements of rhetoric; respectively, *inventio, dispositio,* and *elocutio.* In the introductory chapter on *inventio,* Guardiani very skillfully illustrates the changed horizons of Marino’s life-world vis-à-vis the renewed representation of the epic genre. It is the critic’s polemical aim to demonstrate that Marino’s perception of history — indeed the perception which informs the European Baroque poet-intellectual — is one of staticity as opposed to the dynamic perspective which had characterized epic narrative up to and including Tasso’s production. Guardiani studies in depth the subversive potential of this changed perspective in what he deems is the Adone’s binary structure, a form widely and successfully used in Marino’s voluminous madrigal production and whose quasi oxymoronic principles are applied with skill and sophistication, albeit through a long process of elaboration, in the corpus of the “poema grande.” In a superbly engaging reading of the poem, the Canadian critic finds caesural crossing points of bipolar tensions in the course of canto XI. Guardiani thinly veils the concurrent containedness and capaciousness of the fabula: “In questa prima parte del poema dell’amore in cui abbiamo trovato un ostentato didatticismo, una ‘logica’ sistemazione del mondo e un protagonista non innamorato, Marino presenta ‘il razionale.’ Nell’altra metà della sua visione del mondo apparirà ‘il viscerale,’ mettendo in evidenza gli elementi della sfera del privato.
The second chapter deals with dispositio, the intricate and meticulous process of organization and development of the various compositional phases as well as the guiding principles in these processes of reconstruction of the Adone. In a painstaking yet free flowing fashion, the critic maps out the history of the text, drawing from well documented sources for the most part, at times moving persuasively on the heels of reasoned working hypotheses. The fundamental binary principle which, according to Guardiani, was present in the early phases of the “poemetto” would, with some vicissitudes, accompany the text to its definitive edition. The sacralization of the youthful Adonis is a Christ figure, a transformational component to which the critic had devoted some convincing and thought-provoking pages in the first chapter, is revisited in the second chapter in order to attempt to adorn the poem with a deeper sense. Guardiani is, however, desirous of promoting the text’s various hermeneutical apertures and is hence prudent in articulating his privileged reading in a way that does not suppress further valid interpretations.

The third chapter, on elocutio, reflects Frye’s discourse on the phases of language in history, and on their respective modes of signification. Emphasizing Frye’s third phase of language — the demotic one = “this is like that” — which coincides with a mode of metaphorical signification peculiar to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries grossomodo, and relying on the support duly provided by Tesauro’s ideas on the matter, Guardiani delves into a fruitful elaboration of what he calls the exercise of the senses, in the Adone, for a more thorough recognition of reality. Marino’s proximity/distancing from Petrarch in this respect is particularly illuminating, and our critic makes full use of this prime exemplum of associations/dissociations in order to drive home his point.

In his concluding remarks, the critic reaffirms his belief in Marino’s epic poem of love and peace as a literary and cultural reservoir of considerable relevance for today’s reader — a “sentita certezza che nel capolavoro del Marino si possa trovare una utile e, anzi, quanto mai opportuna e attuale lezione di vita. Quella del poeta è una lezione di nobile apertura nei riguardi del diverso, di disponibilità all’accettazione dei fatti umani più misteriosi e incongrui, in una parola, di tolleranza” (156). It is a belief that beckons to be shared, a felt certainty that one would do well to heed, particularly in the light of Guardiani’s refreshingly novel and post-modernly humanistic re-reading of the Adone.

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Subtitled “dalla tragedia classica al dramma romantico,” the present study traces the evolution of the tragic genre in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Italy, with an eye to classical antecedents. The author concentrates on the writings of Vittorio Alfieri, Vincenzo Monti, Ugo Foscolo, Silvio Pellico, Alessandro Manzoni, and the major works of opera lirica by Vincenzo Bellini, Gaetano Donizetti, and Giuseppe Verdi. The influence of the socio-historical climate of the times, spanning Revolutionary, Restora-