possible translation strategies could be used with this kind of text. He leaves it to the practitioners to adapt his translation for performance, as he proposes “a version that *could be* transformed ... into a performance text” (33, emphasis added). Thus, he avoids making radical choices (for instance, rendering the passages in Bolognese dialect into Cockney), and his elegant version has the merit of being very close to the Italian original, often cleverly paraphrasing the text if a joke or allusion risked being lost in translation. Overall, I imagine that English-speaking readers will find this edition of *Love in the Mirror* at the same time very useful and exciting, and will be left wishing for more editions of plays by Andreini and his contemporaries.

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David L. Marshall. *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric in Early Modern Europe*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. viii, 302. ISBN 978-0-521-19062-6 (hardback) US.\$ 85.

The thesis of this book is that Vico, who was steeped in rhetoric and who indeed was a teacher and a theorist of rhetoric, experienced after 1720 something of a crisis. Marshall opines that on that year Vico came to understand that the classical conception of a rhetoric tied to the Greek *polis* was inadequate for modern times. Thus, he “sublimated” the “rhetorical politics”, which he had inherited from Aristotle and Quintilian, into a new technique. Drawing inspiration from Homer’s epics, which were originally poems sung in the marketplaces and fairs of Greece, Vico grasped the need for a new rhetoric that would link together words and deeds. This new insight into language responded to the realities of Naples and hopefully would provide the “conditions of possibility” for future political action. Marshall finds in Vico a variant of what Gramsci called a “philosophy of praxis.”

This central thesis allows Marshall to reject the old, superannuated scholarly debates on Vico as either an anti-modern or as an Enlightenment thinker. On the contrary, so does Marshall write, Vico belongs fully to the economy of early eighteenth-century Naples, a city in which he felt isolated and marginal, an intellectual without any purchase in the political discourse and critical decisions. This existential (but not political) sense of rootedness in the concrete, historical terrain of Neapolitan life, devoid, as it was at that time, of democratic institutions, so does Marshall argue, forced Vico to think anew and reflect on ways in which the space of political action could be retrieved. The claim of lack of political institutions in Naples overstates the case. In reality, Vico’s writings consistently evoke public spaces — the university, the academies, bookstores, marketplaces, the judicial fora, theatres — thus investing literature with a public value. These spaces constitute places of debates, exchanges, and decisions by self-styled elites. But the detail is meant to suggest that the overall argument of this book, although it is not without a certain appeal, does not really deal with Vico. Rather, it comes forth as a

rhetorical argument, one which gleefully turns upside down the philosopher's explicit statements and beliefs. If anything, one suspects that Marshall uses Vico to legitimize his real aim: identifying (and justifying) an updated form of rhetoric for modern times, vindicating current modes of communication and making them politically valuable.

Marshall seeks to prove his point by following Vico's major experiences, such as his work as a historian writing about the conspiracy of the Macchia (Chapter 2); he gives a fairly straightforward account of his lectures on rhetoric at the University of Naples (chapter 3), and of his writings on law (chapter 5). But the centerpiece of this study grapples Vico's discovery of "sapienza poetica" and of Homer as "Rhetorical Institution" (chapter 6). The new poetic rhetoric he articulates for the benefit of the city makes Vico, so does Marshall argue in the "Conclusion" to his book, the forerunner of such insights as Genevosi's thoughts of public opinion as a political force, Mario Pagano's understanding of "popolo" as a "piazza", and Cuoco's theory of public education.

Most of the arguments Marshall sets forth (for instance, the role of Homer's poetic rhetoric, which he elevates to the central model of Vico's revolutionary rethinking of rhetoric) amount to little more than a re-writing and appropriation, in a rhetorical key, of critical views put forth by Vico scholars over the last forty years. But, without a doubt, the overarching notion of history as a series of rhetorical shifts comes straight out of the work by Marshall's mentor, Nancy S. Struever, whom he rightly acknowledges. I have in mind Struever's *Theory as Practice: Ethical Inquiry in the Renaissance* (Chicago, 1992) and the more recent *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity* (Chicago 2009), in which she has systematically rethought the findings of thinkers such as Grassi, Heidegger, and Camporeale. In the wake of these thinkers, Struever has argued historical consciousness is at one with a rhetoric of history, and has accordingly retrieved the Roman and Italian traditions of rhetoric. Her work ranges from Petrarch's invention of a rhetorical practice in his *Familiars* to Valla's grammar, to Machiavelli, Gramsci, and "Croce's Vico." Her recent monograph, on the other hand, presents Vico as the original theorist of "an alternate scenario" of history as rhetoric. In her view, Vico's originality lies not in viewing history in Ciceronian terms, as a "treasury of philosophical exempla of the civic humanist paradigm," but as "the record of the operative constraints on future ... contingents". To make sense of this sentence one ought to keep in mind Struever's correct insistence on rhetoric as the soul of politics and as a genuine form of political action.

Marshall's book both follows in a number of ways Struever's well-known defence of rhetoric and enlarges her enthusiasm by linking her concerns to those of Hanna Arendt. Like Struever, Marshall in reality seeks to rehabilitate the Sophists, the philosophers Socrates despised for reducing knowledge to opinions for sale in the marketplace. The retrieval of the Sophists, to be sure, has been on the table for a number of years. In the 1950's, Italian and French intellectual historians, such as M. Buccellato and J. De Romilly, had done the spadework. But, with forcefulness and originality, Struever has managed to present a positive interpretation of the Sophists' reduction of truth to rhetoric. Marshall, with a certain

insouciance, on the other hand “sublimates” his teacher’s eloquent argument. For him, Vico has elaborated a theory that joins together the personal and the social, and in the process has delivered not so much a theory of *poiesis*, (which means making and work) but one of *techne*, a “medium” in which human beings “appear” (in the terminology of Arendt). The *piazza*, then, or the digital virtual space, as in Homer’s marketplace, is the paradigmatic arena of action and exchanges.

The radical importance of the *piazza*, as an open and accessible space for political action, is obviously suggestive (I write this review while the turmoil in the *piazze* of some cities of Tunisia and Egypt has been cracking open despotic regimes and challenged established authority). But Marshall’s theory, which endorses a post-modern political philosophy, lacks the tragic consciousness of the dangers barely hidden in this paradigm of seemingly open spaces, which in reality conceal the dark plots known as *arcana potestatis*. There is in Marshall a form of excessive optimism which is of a piece with his argument about the myth of impersonality that sustains the economy of the marketplace. To be sure, Vico himself has elaborated a trenchant theory of subjectivity which posits the marketplace under the sovereignty of Hermes/Mercury (the god of laws and speech who travels silently by night). What detracts from the persuasiveness of the rhetorical paradigm, however, is the author’s unwillingness to relate it to the question of esthetics and *poiesis*, two activities that Vico considers to constitute the founding mode in the imaginative construction of the world.

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Giuseppe Manitta. *Giacomo Leopardi. Percorsi critici e bibliografici* (1998-2003). Castiglione di Sicilia: Il Convivio, 2009. Pp. 322. ISBN 978-88-95503-00-6. €25.

La bibliografia di Manitta offre un ausilio prezioso per addentrarsi nel vasto labirinto della critica leopardiana più recente. Il periodo cronologico preso in esame dallo studioso, infatti, si segnala come uno dei più fecondi per l’esegesi leopardiana, certamente sulla scia del bicentenario del ’98 che ha fornito un nuovo impulso all’interrogazione dei testi del poeta. È proprio questo imprescindibile legame genetico con l’occasione del bicentenario a giustificare la scelta dello studioso di sovrapporsi parzialmente alla precedente bibliografia leopardiana curata da Ghidetti (Bil), uno strumento di ricerca digitale che, pur con qualche inevitabile lacuna, resta tuttora fondamentale, andando a coprire l’intero arco temporale che va dal 1815 al 1999.

Il volume di Manitta, tuttavia, non si segnala unicamente per la ricchissima rassegna bibliografica del periodo preso in esame (3-269), ma anche per la lunga sezione introduttiva (IX-CCXIII) che si propone di disegnare il panorama delle diverse direzioni in cui si sono mossi questi studi più recenti.

Manitta inizia il proprio percorso introduttivo con un paragrafo dedicato alle