syntax” (122) sarebbero il risultato di semplici parafrasi di brani dell’Aspramonte o prestiti dal Guerrin Meschino e dall’Ugone d’Alvernia che un suo imitatore avrebbe messo insieme senza possedere l’abilità dello scrittore, ed anzi fraintendendo spesso i testi originali. Non avendo la possibilità di consultare i manoscritti in questione, è impossibile per chi scrive formulare un giudizio personale sui testi sotto discussione; è il caso tuttavia di osservare che le analisi dell’Allaire si rivelano senza dubbio puntuali e convincenti, al punto da giustificare pienamente le sue conclusioni. Ma al di là del risultato immediato che si ricava da queste pagine, quello di ampliare e di ridurre il numero dei titoli delle opere di Andrea, che a prima vista potrebbe apparire prematuro e forse anche ozioso, ove si rifletta che ancora così poco si sa di quelle certamente sue (e il romanzo rimasto, con i Reali di Francia, il più diffuso a livello popolare, il Guerrin Meschino, non gode ancora di un’edizione moderna non diremmo critica, ma neppure vagamente attendibile!), importa rilevare quanto il quadro e la conoscenza dello stile, della configurazione linguistica, dell’organizzazione strutturale dei romanzi del Nostro ne risulti ampliato ed approfondito, e quanto più precisi e più definiti in conseguenza la sua caratterizzazione e il posto da lui occupato nella tradizione narrativa della letteratura cavalleresca italiana. Quei romanzi ci presentano uno scrittore ben consapevole delle esigenze e della preparazione del pubblico popolare a cui si rivolge, e affatto meritevole del successo di cui presso quel pubblico le sue storie hanno goduto per secoli.

Dalle indagini e dagli approfondimenti dell’Allaire risalta la figura di un autore che stabilisce accuratamente e conosce perfettamente i termini della sua scrittura codificandoli in sintonia con quelli del suo lettore e/o ascoltatore ideale, e che, secondo un’immagine suggestiva usata nella conclusione, ci appare come “a missing link between the early Italian reworkings of chansons de geste and the Renaissance epic masterpieces” (124). Resta da augurarsi che il presente studio (arricchito alla fine di due “Appendici” in cui si elencano i manoscritti delle opere di Andrea, spesso sinora ignorati, e si offre l’esame comparato dei capitoli del Libro di Rambaldo con altri testi del Nostro; di una notevole “Selected Bibliography” [151-70]; di indice dei lessemi e di indice di nomi e argomenti) segni davvero un punto di partenza “to increase modern awareness of Andrea’s contribution to the chivalric literary tradition” e stimoli in un prossimo futuro “more thoughtful and comprehensive critical treatments of this author and his works” (124).

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A book on an author so diverse and prolific as Ludovico Dolce was long overdue. Terpening’s study is especially welcome because it succeeds in sketching a clear and convincing portrait of this Venetian author who was not only a poet and indefatigable translator of ancient texts, but also a disseminator of literary culture. Like many of his contemporaries, he was a true man of letters, writing love and chivalric poetry, com-
edies, tragedies, historical journals, treatises on lapidary sciences, on social issues (women, ill-fated husbands, marriage, etc.), and he was engaged in a host of other literary and editorial endeavours. Before proceeding to a close analysis of Dolce’s more significant literary exploits, Terpening provides a biographical sketch of the cultural backdrop of sixteenth-century Venice where the author lived and worked. The many extant letters to and from other writers, artists, editors, and noblemen attest both to his popularity and to his wide range of interests. Also, his brush with the Holy Inquisitors, who interrogated him regarding certain books he helped to publish, reminds the reader of the repressive climate of the times. It especially reveals how closely the Church of the Counter-Reformation monitored the spread of printed material.

By and large, Dolce’s literary activities were not suspect to the Church, as he was mostly interested in the diffusion of literary culture and traditions. This propensity is particularly evident in his translation of Horace’s Ars poetica into Italian. At a time when the educated were schooled in Latin and could, therefore, easily read Horace in the original, the importance of this translation can only be seen as Dolce’s express desire to make literary works accessible even to those outside the world of academia. Such a commitment was undoubtedly the driving force behind all the translations and “rifacimenti” or vulgarizations of works which, he believed, contemporary readers would find amusing and useful. Terpening illustrates this determination to propagate literature by relating an anecdote wherein a studious Dolce was asked what he was doing hiding among dead writers. Dolce replied that those authors were very much alive, if readers could only access them. It was, thus, his aim to revive important books by making them intelligible to a modern and wider reading audience. For this purpose, he would go so far as to substitute old examples with more recent ones, risking anachronism and charges of unfaithfulness to the original text.

This tendency to re-work old texts points to his conviction that literature should delight and teach, and, above all, should be more responsive to the needs and expectations of the reading public rather than to stifling academic standards. Dolce was a keen literary critic avant la lettre, as literary criticism had not yet developed into the genre we know today. He was among the early defenders of Ariosto and one of the first to appreciate the harmony and unity of the Furioso, anticipating by centuries Croce’s well known assessment of the poem. His appreciation of chivalric poetry was no mere fancy, for he also wrote four chivalric poems. Terpening discusses the most original, albeit youthful, Sacripante, which continues the action of the Furioso, and the more mature Prime imprese del conte Orlando, which takes the action back to the times that precede Boiardo’s Innamorato. Refraining from a tempting comparison with the great models of the past in which Dolce’s poems would undoubtedly fade, Terpening praises Dolce’s poetic versatility and calls attention to the post-Tridentine morality informing both works.

The portrait of Dolce as a man of letters comes more into focus as Terpening discusses the poet’s fascination with the theater. Following an overview of the critical reception of the comedies, praised mostly for their reflection of the times, he places Dolce “among the truly versatile men of letters in the sixteenth century” (91). This is hardly an exaggeration, for he was also the most prolific tragedian of the Cinquecento, having translated all of Seneca’s plays and adapted numerous classical tragedies. Though much is owed to him for all this work, most critical attention has centered on
his two original dramas Didone and, especially, Marianna. Focusing his discussion on the latter, which deals with Herod’s jealous suspicions of his wife Marianna and her execution, Terpening goes on to formulate a “World-View of Cinquecento Tragedy.” He identifies the tragic conflict in the role of the tyrant’s captain or counselor, who is torn between his loyalty to his lord and to the “human rights” of the lord’s victims. The argument draws strength from other canonical Renaissance tragedies in which the captain vainly advises the ruler against the use of excessive violence. His failure to prevail over the tyrant’s disposition to undermine the stability of order signifies man-kind’s insufficiency to influence the course of events. As it pertains to Marianna, this view of tragedy is quite sound; however, in its ambition to include other tragedies it falls short of its mark, for, as may be seen in tragedies such as Trissino’s Sofonisba, Aretino’s Orazia, and Grotto’s Adriana, the conflict does not always lie in the captain’s dilemma of divided loyalties or conflicting emotions.

Terpening appropriately entitles the last chapter “non mai stanco di giovarne” (never too tired to be helpful). I say appropriate because from the Giornale delle historie del mondo, a sort of historical notebook or ‘zibaldone’, to the Trattato delle gemme, a translation of Leonardi’s Speculum ladipum, one comes to appreciate the full extent of Dolce’s commitment to popularizing knowledge, and to luring more readers to the well of literary culture. Terpening is right on the mark when he concludes that, without Dolce’s indefatigable efforts, “the history and development of Italian literature would surely be the poorer” (169).

With this balanced, well articulated, meticulously researched, and very informative study, Terpening has rendered a great service to students of the Renaissance. Readers will appreciate the wealth of information offered in the numerous and detailed endnotes, which take up almost a third of the entire book. The extensive bibliography will undoubtedly be of immense value to scholars wishing to study in detail cultural or literary aspects that were either peripheral to the book’s premise or simply too vast to receive adequate treatment here. Aficionados and readers with casual interest in the Italian Renaissance will read this book with delight and profit.

SAL DI MARIA

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The starting point for Laura Benedetti’s study of the Gerusalemme liberata is the obvious fact that there exists in Tasso’s epic masterpiece a fundamental “discrepanza tra la presenza femminile pagana [represented by Clorinda, Armida and Erminia] [...] e quella cristiana [represented by Sofronia and Gildippe]” (7). This discrepancy suggests the presence of an “interferenza” between the “discorso assunto ufficialmente” and an “intenzione che, rifiutata a livello cosciente, riemerge con effetti perturbatori” (31). For the author, this hidden intention reflects a desire on Tasso’s part to suppress non-traditional ideals of femininity symbolized by the pagan goddess Diana, ideals which the pagan heroines Clorinda, Armida and Erminia embody. For Tasso and the