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Francesco Guardiani. *La meravigliosa retorica dell' Adone di G.B. Marino*. Florence: Olschki Editore, 1989, Pp. 165.

The concluding sentence of *La meravigliosa retorica dell' Adone* serves as the key to understanding its meaning and also its significance within the context of studies dealing with both Marino and, more importantly, the Italian Renaissance and Baroque. The final words of the book inform us that in final analysis Marino's poetics is a form of philosophical thinking: "... non resta che ... riconoscere che la poetica mariniana è filosofia." (p. 158). Guardiani is here troping on Ernesto Grassi's conviction that "rhetoric is philosophy." Such a critical attitude leads Guardiani to promote Marino the artist on the ontological scale: that is, from a mindless hedonistic juggler of words (as many a critic would have us view the Neapolitan) to a "cultore del pensiero" (p. 128), a poet who is acutely sensitive to the ontic relationships between the senses and thought. But this totally justified promotion is enough to spark a clash with the prevalent interpretation of both Marino's art and the Seicento which (save the rehabilitating efforts of scholars such as Giovanni Pozzi and Marzio Pieri) have been generally denigrated in Italy since the Arcadia. In a largely hidden sense, Guardiani's reading of the *Adone* also clashes with Heidegger's uncompromisingly negative assessment of Italian Renaissance thought. I will return to this latter point.

The external anatomy of *La meravigliosa retorica* is constructed under the muse of the three parts of rhetoric: Chapter 1, "Inventio: dal madrigale al 'poema grande'"; Chapter 2, "Dispositio: La narrazione negata"; Chapter 3, "Elocutio: la logica della parola." In the pages that precede the opening chapter Guardiani pinpoints the current of rhetorical ideology he will subscribe to: what will be favoured are the positions put forth by Ernesto Grassi and Renato Barilli both of whom have independently developed an "existential rhetoric." Such a choice is conditioned by the fact that Guardiani aims to show the great extent to which Marino's poetry is about the interplay between the *mundus* of the imagination and reason. But it is Northrop Frye who nourishes the aesthetic ideology that is defined in this monographic study.

The initial chapter deals with the artistic circumstances that give rise to the conception of an epic poem based on the mythological god. In the second chapter Guardiani traces the many details involved in the development and the realization of the *Adone*. The third chapter, unlike the first two which emphasize the macrocosmic picture of the poem, gravitates upon isolated fragments so as to flesh out their artistic bearing.

In less than one hundred and fifty pages of actual text Guardiani offers many insightful observations. These are supported by an arsenal of textual evidence and

are arrived at through both a critical orchestration of ecdotic data along with a will to discover the dynamics of the rhetorical figures that garb the *Adone*. I will cite a minimum of examples: Adonis' death is likened to that of the Saviour's (p. 52ff); the *Adone* is an open work, but not only within the economy of Eco's definition of the concept. What is privileged is not so much the relationship between reader and text but the rapport between the work and the world it depicts: "L'apertura dell'*Adone* è fondata sulla cosciente visione mariniana di un universo spalancato a tutte le possibilità di realizzazione" (p. 98). Finally, because it is keyed in a non-Cartesian mode the *Adone* is very much in tune with the postmodern sensibility (pp. 157-158).

Paul O. Kristeller was convinced that the Italian Renaissance (and, I would add at the risk of putting words in the great scholar's mouth, by insinuation and extention also the Italian Baroque) offered a bare minimum of what may be generically termed "philosophical thought." We can trace a parallel stance in Heidegger who in the *Letter on Humanism* accused Renaissance Humanism of being a naive form of anthropomorphism which was oblivious to the question of Being. As we all know by now, Ernesto Grassi corrected these historically flawed views by showing the great extent to which Italian figures from Mussato, Salutati and Pontano through to Tesauro in the Seicento on to Vico in the following century were at task at elaborating a form of philosophy that hinged on the cognitive capacities of metaphor and rhetorical utterance in general.

But to arrive at Grassi's conclusions we must overcome the worn tendency to perceive philology as textual antiquarianism and understand it instead the way the Italian Humanists did, namely as a tropology which studies the many turns and twists words and texts undertake throughout time (I wish to posit emphasis on the "twists" and the "turns" for these are the same elements which will obsess Freud and Derrida; both of whom treat the sign as a helpless victim of diachronic erosion and displacement). This is why Guardiani's book is of significance. His attitude toward Marino is one that privileges the erring and disfigurations (he does not employ these very terms) of the rhetorical figures that breathe life into the *Adone*. It is this same critical disposition that leads him to conclude that the rhetorical figures that were staple diet for any Baroque poet are not unorganic embellishment placed there to mask any supposed lack of poetic and philosophical depth. It is the very rhetorical circuitry of the *Adone*, as Guardiani discovers, that serves as the fount of any philosophical possibility.

Finally, Guardiani's study is a confirmation of the fact that we are well on our way to salvaging the forgotten value of not only one of the most important poets Europe has ever produced, but also an historical period, the Renaissance-Baroque, that has been reduced to an academic formula. For this reason, *La meravigliosa retorica* is necessary reading for all those concerned with Marino and the Cinquecento-Seicento.