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(re-)encounter with Dante's redeemed 'old flame' Beatrice (*Purgatorio* xxx–xxxI); and finally the 'erotics of salvation' (p. 80) exemplified by the resurrection of the body (*Paradiso* xiv). The next three chapters of Part II ground this analysis in a triple reading of Guittone (Chapter 3), Arnaut (Chapter 4), and Folco (Chapter 5) as poets in their own right as well as lyric (anti-)models for Dante, and voices in the *Commedia*. Here Kay explores the ways in which Dante subverts the binary conversionary paradigms of Guittone and Folco, and reshapes the original, but limited, fusion of vernacular poetry and embodied selfhood offered by Arnaut into his own redeemed love poetics.

Kay's emphasis on a more 'eroticized', 'subjective', and 'bodily' (p. 61) Dante reflects and builds on a growing trend in Dante Studies. His critical practice, however, offers a valuable, and exemplary, lesson for all *Dantisti*. Throughout *Dante's Lyric Redemption*, the scholar demonstrates great respect for 'the signature ambiguity', 'ambivalence', 'tension[s]' (p. 66), and 'fault lines' (p. 89) that animate Dante's work. Following his poet, Kay regularly chooses to 'harmonize', 'integrat[e]' (p. 3), or, in the keyword of the title, 'redeem' (p. 6) the two horns of the various dilemmas he detects along the way, giving a fair hearing to both sides of each antinomy without sacrificing the one to the other even when it may not suit his immediate argument. For its clarity and equanimity, I would warmly recommend *Dante's Lyric Redemption* also to undergraduates who wish to enrich and complicate their view of the Middle Ages beyond that of a time of absolutes, transcendence, and self-denial.

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Ariosto, Opera, and the 17th Century: Evolution in the Poetics of Delight. By EDWARD MILTON ANDERSON. Ed. by NICOLA BADOLATO in collaboration with AMYROSE McCUE GILL. (*Historiae Musicae Cultores*, 132) Florence: Olschki. 2017. xii+278 pp. €32. ISBN 978–88–222–6501–2.

Celebrations of the quincentenary of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* in 2016 focused not just on the epic itself but also on its reception across time and place. A significant part of that reception was by way of opera, starting early in the seventeenth century and reaching a peak in the eighteenth: George Frideric Handel's *Orlando* (1733), *Ariodante*, and *Alcina* (both 1735) are the best-known examples. Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581) had parallel operatic fortunes: both texts are rich in events and magical situations that suited the theatre. *Orlando furioso*, however, also squared with the notion of opera as a particularly 'mad' genre given the patent absurdity of presenting a *dramma*, precisely, *in musica*.

Edward Anderson's study of what he calls 'Ariostean musical drama' in the seventeenth century was left unfinished at his untimely death in 2013, and the Italian opera scholar Nicola Badolato has bravely helped bring it to the press. However much one might sympathize, this book suffers from the inevitable consequences. And churlish though it will seem for me to say, there are issues to be raised particularly for the benefit of the readership that Anderson seems to have most wanted to address: scholars of Italian literature.

Anderson is correct that such scholars tend to minimize the place of opera librettos within the Italian literary tradition, whether because the genre is deemed frivolous or given the musical competencies needed to engage with it. He identifies forty-three music-theatrical works based on Ariosto from the seventeenth century (plus another ninety-six from the eighteenth)—twenty-eight of their librettos are transcribed in a documentary appendix on a CD-ROM—and treats them as illustrative of broader trends in opera starting in the North Italian courts, moving (from 1637) into the ‘public’ theatres of Venice and elsewhere, and becoming codified towards the end of the century under the influence of the Arcadian Academy.

His list expands prior ones generated by scholars in the 1970s and then around 1990. However, Anderson is probably as unreasonable in criticizing them for ignoring Claudio Sartori’s *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800* (Cuneo: Bertola & Locatelli, 1990–94) as I would be in pointing out that Sartori’s massive catalogue is now superseded by the ‘Corago’ database curated by the Dipartimento di Musica e Spettacolo of the University of Bologna (<<http://corago.unibo.it/>>), which also links to copies of these librettos currently available online (this also renders redundant a good part of the appendix here). Anderson’s list is longer than earlier ones, however, because he includes not just *favole* (or *drammi*) *in musica* but also *intermedi*, *tornei*, *balletti*, and the like, as well as librettos that, while designed for music, might never have been performed as such, if at all. Whether all these genres count as ‘musical drama’ is a problem that goes unrecognized here.

There are other issues of genre and its corollary: function. The chief difficulty of basing any opera on Ariosto was how to shift from an epic mode to a dramatic one. Translating narration into representation challenged seventeenth-century librettists: an early solution was for them to create extraneous characters (minor gods were useful) to ‘tell’ the story or parts thereof. This has important narratological consequences. But how ‘dramatic’ the results might be is also matter for debate. Works based on Ariosto or Tasso form a tiny proportion of the total number of seventeenth-century operas, and they tended to be limited to specific contexts. For example, of the fourteen Anderson identifies from 1642–75—a ‘golden age’ of Venetian public opera—only three actually stemmed from Venice. Whether these works are somehow representative of the genre more broadly thus becomes an issue. Here, Anderson’s trajectory focuses on poetic structures, with a gradual shift from texts predominantly in eleven- and seven-syllable *versi sciolti* to the increasing insertion of *versi lirici* using strophic forms and other poetic metres (*quinari*, *ottonari*, etc.). But while Anderson is correct to associate *versi sciolti* with the declamatory *stile recitativo*, and *versi lirici* with the trend in favour of tuneful arias (and eventually, the all powerful ‘da capo’ aria), matters are not so straightforward: early opera composers took a flexible approach to *versi sciolti*, setting them in quite different musical ways.

Indeed, *Orlando furioso* seems to have prompted such musical flexibility precisely because its characters veer so abruptly between emotional extremes. Anderson does not evince much interest in what encouraged seventeenth-century librettists to consider Ariosto in the first place, whether his transgressive women (as witches or

Amazons) or what makes Orlando 'furioso' and how he is to be cured of it. Here lie perhaps the most important consequences of these operas' engagement with Ariosto as a mirror of their times: Anderson maps out some of the ground, but there are many paths still to explore.

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Per una vita che sia vita: studi su Carlo Michelstaedter. By ILVANO CALIARO. Florence: Olschki. 2017. vii+111 pp. €20. ISBN 978-88-222-6521-0.

The starting point for this book is the idea that Carlo Michelstaedter (Gorizia, 1887–1910) represents at the same time a solitary voice, speaking 'a se stesso e per se stesso' (p. 2), and an original synthesis of many voices coming from the past, some very ancient and some more recent. These voices resonate in *La persuasione e la rettorica*, but also in a vast mass of diverse materials which the premature and tragic death of the author left in various stages of incompleteness. Among these voices, Caliaro identifies in particular those of Socrates, Jesus, Petrarch, and Tolstoy as being more salient in the composite polyphony of Michelstaedter's thought.

Within the cohort of the philosophers, a privileged place is reserved for Socrates, whose teaching is fundamentally a reawakening of the consciousness, aimed at achieving not only a new capacity to understand, but also a transformation of the way of living itself. It is the role of the (true) philosopher to lead the interlocutor to become aware of him- or herself, to generate his or her own wisdom, and to identify the individual value on which a life worth living may be built. This is the meaning of 'persuasion' for Michelstaedter: that is, the state of someone who, first of all, refuses to create or accept for reality a meaning that it does not have, and then—guided by reason—pursues the absolute good, namely justice. 'Man is, as opposed to merely existing, when he is "just"' (p. 25). The genuine philosopher is in unavoidable antithesis to the 'professional' philosophers (best represented by Aristotle), the 'builders of systems' or encyclopedias who, by pursuing a false and mercenary semblance of wisdom, create a model of someone who does not ask why, does not reason, but obeys, and avoids the challenge of truth.

Tolstoy represents for Michelstaedter, at the same time, the ultimate proof that there should be no difference between art, life, and thought, and the example of someone who slowly and painfully manages to free him- or herself from all social, ideological, and emotional constraints to reach a state of personal freedom, coinciding with universal love for the whole of humanity. For Tolstoy what made this transformation possible was the encounter with Jesus, not a figure of transcendence but a 'maestro di vita', an educator on the path from 'rettorica' to 'persuasione'.

Similarly profound is the impact of Jesus on Michelstaedter, probably mediated via the reading of Tolstoy (in particular *What I Believe*); the message that he extracts from Christ's teaching, and even more from his life, is uncompromising: only those who are prepared to lose their (inauthentic) life will find their (true) life.

Petrarch is, for the Goritian, above all the author of the *Triumph*, and primarily a philosopher, whose fundamental preoccupation is to locate the *ubi consistam*: the