

Offprinted from
MODERN LANGUAGE REVIEW

VOLUME 114, PART 2

APRIL 2019

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

stable place where authentic ‘persuasion’ can be achieved. The difference between Petrarch and Michelstaedter (according to Ilvano Caliaro) is that, for the former, stability can be projected only in the dimension of religious transcendence, whereas for the latter it is only in the complete possession of the present that absolute value can be found.

The fifth and final chapter of the work is devoted to a thematic comparison between Michelstaedter and the Triestine writer Scipio Slataper (1888–1915). It is not known whether the two knew each other, although both attended, in partially coinciding years, the Istituto di Studi Superiori in Florence, and the latter reviewed the first volume of Michelstaedter’s writings when it was published in 1912. One point of contact between the two is, once more, the interpretation of Christianity and, in particular, of the figure of Jesus and his teaching, seen as attributing value to a life deemed good precisely because it embraces the present, transcending itself not towards a distant future, but in the absolute immanence of giving to the other. Both reject the enslavement of a person to society; but, if Michelstaedter comes to a complete rejection of society, Slataper instead maintains his commitment to practical activity and engagement for the common good. In Slataper’s words: ‘Quello che è stato disastro per Papini, Michelstaedter — felicità per noi. [. . .] Ci siamo accorti che nel lavoro, nell’esprimerci nel sodo, c’era una felicità.’

Michelstaedter had killed himself on 17 October 1910. He was barely twenty-three years old.

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GIUSEPPE STELLARDI

Montale, the Modernist. By GIUSEPPE GAZZOLA. Florence: Olschki. 2016. 232 pp. €27. ISBN 978–88–222–6482–4.

‘Sometimes you can see a celestial object better by looking at something else, with it, in the sky.’ This is what Anne Carson writes in *Economy of the Unlost: Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. viii, where she sets the sixth-/fifth-century BC Greek poet Simonides of Keos in dialogue with the twentieth-century German poet Paul Celan. Although this is not a comparative enterprise, in *Montale, the Modernist*, Giuseppe Gazzola proposes to bring Montale into productive conversation with some of the central literary voices of Anglo-American modernism, with the aim of suggesting a new understanding and coherence of our major twentieth-century poet, as well as offering a better understanding of modernism itself.

The author reads Montale alongside Eliot, Pound, Svevo, Larbaud, and Joyce. Gazzola’s principal objective is to highlight the specific historical, scientific, and philosophical contingencies of that time that Montale and these other modernist literary figures shared. The modernist issue, as well as its protagonists, work, however, more as a background to a study of Montale’s oeuvre. Although considerable attention is given to the historical and socio-political context of Montale’s time as well as his biography (especially his experience of the war and his relationship with