

knights deprive the narrative of a central focus, they reverberate with each other through formulaic language and decorations, allowing readers to fill in the missing parts.

The fifteenth-century *Tavola Ritonda*, with its magnificent pen-and-ink drawings interspersed throughout the text in Tuscan *volgare*, embodies the evolution of Italian Arthurian manuscripts and validates Molteni's analytical approach: both image and word work together, establishing a system of mutual *entrelacement*, texts with texts, images with images—and, as Molteni so brilliantly proves in this excellent study, images with texts.

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The Italian Love Poetry of Ludovico Ariosto: Court Culture and Classicism.

Giada Guassardo.

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Florence: Olschki, 2021. viii + 244 pp. €26.

An evolution of Guassardo's doctoral thesis, *The Italian Love Poetry of Ludovico Ariosto* may be considered a seminal work for Italian Renaissance studies. The book brings to the foreground, and compellingly analyzes, a marginalized piece of Ariosto's oeuvre: his love poems.

After a preface by Lina Bolzoni, Guassardo opens with a very informative introduction, which outlines the philologic history of these poems and sheds light on the general aspects of this corpus, including its topics, lyric forms, cultural context—particularly the Latin models and Ariosto's classicist contemporaries, especially Bembo and Calcagnini—and Ariosto's relationship with the court. The three chapters then analyze in depth a few poems, selected according to thematic commonalities.

Chapter 1, “Between Love and Duty: Ariosto's Elegiac Self-fashioning,” focuses on a number of *capitoli*, which offer a more rounded perspective on Ariosto's portrayal of historical events, such as battles or political missions, and of his duties toward the court. In dialogue with his *Satire* and the *Furioso*, as well as similar contemporary pieces, such as Tebaldeo's works, these poems enlighten on Ariosto's unique ability to assimilate contemporary poetical fashions, as well as innovate those very features, while searching for his poetic “I” between love—the main subject of this elegiac poetic form—and duty.

The second chapter, “Ariosto, the Lyric Lover,” considers the main theme of the *rime*, love, by analyzing Ariosto's variations on this theme. Of particular interest is the interconnection between these poems and the *Furioso*, especially as far as the theme of fidelity is concerned, which interlaces love elegy and chivalric expressions. Another key element is what Guassardo calls the “courtly-Petrarchan celebration of the woman,” to which the third part of the chapter is dedicated. This section explores

the balance of power between the poet and the lady and reveals Ariosto's innovative portrayal of equality between the two, connected also to his more earthly and mundane tones of love's representations. Key to this portrayal of love is the influence of Latin and contemporary sources, including Ovid and, more prominently, the works of Catullus, Bembo's *Asolani*, and Castiglione's *Cortegiano*.

Chapter 3, "The Portrayal of Women," reexamines and expands on the question of Ariosto's position on the *querelle des femmes* by illustrating not just how the poet approaches the canon but how he modernizes the tradition through the use of classical models such as Horace and Catullus. Here Guassardo shows how Ariosto's evolved canon takes into consideration not only the physical features of the lady, but also her way of dressing, as well as her intellectual, behavioral, and social dynamics, which put the woman at the center of the court. Once again Ariosto proves to be interested in a more realistic and concrete representation of the woman, mediating the Petrarchan canon through Catullus and Boccaccio.

The book also provides useful tools for research, starting with the rich bibliography, as well as an appendix that collects all the titles of the lyric poems, referencing both editions under examination. Nevertheless, there are a few notes to consider: the frequent switching between English and Italian, midsentence or in the middle of the paragraph, without any footnote translation, tends to make this reading quite inaccessible to the nonnative speaker. While the lack of translation is understandable if the book's target readership is the niche of Ariosto specialists, this study has the potential to become required reading in graduate courses and may offer selections for undergraduate courses as well. One added difficulty in following the discourse is the impossibility of accessing the full text of the poems, since the main edition of reference is an unpublished dissertation by Maria Finazzi, and Guassardo does not report the full text of the poems. Still, the book remains a cornerstone reading for Italian Renaissance studies.

In fact, while Ariosto never reached a final decision on a selection of his poems or their order, and rejected their publication, studying them may clarify aspects of his style and complete his corpus, as Guassardo proves with this book. Her investigation portrays the poet as a complex writer who experimented in search of variety and innovation—a poet artistically conscious of his style, of contemporary trends, and what was worthy of his readers, or even what could be bettered. The study shows that he was a poet in tune with his times but always grounded in the classics.

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