

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Metlica, Alessandro. Le seduzioni della pace. Giovan Battista Marino, le feste di corte e la Francia barocca

Marco Malvestio

Volume 43, numéro 3, été 2020

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1075323ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35341>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Malvestio, M. (2020). Compte rendu de [Metlica, Alessandro. Le seduzioni della pace. Giovan Battista Marino, le feste di corte e la Francia barocca]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 43(3), 329–331. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35341>

made throughout the book, and the closing chapter connects with the previous by way of its emphasis on sexualization, this time of counsel and *parrhesia*, or divination. Shakespeare is the critical spine of this book. Early on, Lupić frames his discussion of counsel with references to *King Lear*. He has written an excellent chapter on *King John*, an early and neglected historical play. His analyses of *Henry IV* and *Julius Caesar* are probing and precise. Discussions of *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *Richard II*, and *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrate Lupić's critical sensibility and the ability to use details of historiography to craft an original argument. The closing pages on *Hamlet* are an impressive coda to an engaging book.

The subtitle indicates that the book is a study of early English drama and literature. Yet this engrossing study opens up new critical paths, stretching beyond English drama. This is a book of comparative literary history and historiography; it connects text and theatre within a wide early modern world of cross-linguistic exchange. The critical idiom and methodological approach are unique and refreshing, often polemical and consistently rewarding.

GORAN STANIVUKOVIC

Saint Mary's University, Halifax

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35340>

Metlica, Alessandro.

Le seduzioni della pace. Giovan Battista Marino, le feste di corte e la Francia barocca.

Bologna: il Mulino, 2020. Pp. 346 + 21 colour ill. ISBN 978-8-8152-8762-5 (paperback) €29.

Alessandro Metlica's book has a very ambitious aim: contextualizing Giovan Battista Marino's *Adone* in the wider frame of baroque propaganda. The seventeenth century (the age of Absolutism) is a moment when political authority started investing massively not just in financing but in recruiting poets and artists whose work had the purpose of stupefying the crowds and conquering their favour. Baroque propaganda, however, involves not only poetry, painting, music, and theatre but also a vast series of courtly celebrations, ranging from ballets to tournaments to firework shows. All these artistic products are modelled on what Metlica defines as "a rhetoric of ostentation" (13) that aims

to impress and astonish the viewers with its magnificence, rather than convince them. Metlica's book tries to offer an understanding of Marino's work in this perspective, avoiding the interpretations of his oeuvre that are limited to a single aspect of his poetics (the encomiastic effort or the formalism), and delineating the modern figure of an artist extremely receptive to the world he lived in.

Le seduzioni della pace focuses on Marino's stay in Paris (1615–23), culminating with the publication of the *Adone*, and on the previous stay in Turin at the court of the Duke of Savoy. Metlica carefully and generously reconstructs the political and cultural milieu of the two courts, in a way that is accessible and easy to follow even for a reader who's not familiar with the history of the seventeenth century. Chapter 1 analyzes Marino's relationship with French men of letters, and how the poet adapts his encomiastic work during the passage of power between Louis XIII and Maria de' Medici. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on two examples of this "rhetoric of ostentation": the chivalrous tournaments at the courts of Turin and Mantua in 1608 and in Paris in 1612 (ch. 2), and the royal ballets at the court of the Bourbon (ch. 3). The last part of chapter 2 is also dedicated to a fascinating comparison between canto 10 of the *Adone* and Peter Paul Rubens's Maria de' Medici cycle at the Luxembourg palace. With impressive detail, Metlica proves Marino's familiarity, and indeed his deep knowledge, with these celebrations and their pictorial and literary depictions.

Although immensely popular in his own time, Marino's fame steadily declined in the centuries following his death, and his name stood for a long time as a synonym of dishonest, courtesan poetry, ready to be sold or rebranded to satisfy new investors and *mecenati*. As Metlica outlines in the introduction, this prejudice against Marino's work (and indeed against Marino as a public figure, due to his political opportunism) was formalized during the Risorgimento, which is to say when the political and patriotic aspects of literature were favoured over the flamboyant encomiastic efforts that characterized baroque and Ancien Régime poetry. This idea of the two centuries spanning from 1550 to 1750 as a moment of decadence for Italian culture was formalized by Francesco De Sanctis's *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1870–71), in which, according to Hegel's tripartition, these centuries represented an antithesis to the greatness of the past (Dante and the communal era) and prepared the synthesis represented by the Risorgimento culture.

Given the predominance of Benedetto Croce's idea of the superior status of an allegedly "pure" poetry in twentieth-century literary criticism, it comes

as no surprise that, when a re-evaluation of Marino's work has been attempted, critics have tried to present the *Adone* not as a courtesan poem but rather as a formalist, self-contained literary work. Such an idea is not incompatible with Marino's poetics, as the poet was indeed convinced of the superiority of literature (and, among all literary forms, of poetry) over history, but his work is too rich in references to courtesan life and to his political protectors to be classified simply as a form of literary autarchy. The limits of this approach are evident, for instance, when it comes to canto 5 of the *Adone*, where a convoluted mechanical theatre representing the story of Actaeon is described (Metlica discusses this in chapter 3). Critics have often interpreted this part of the poem as a meta-poetic attempt to state the superiority of literature to theatre, claiming that such a mechanical work would have been impossible to build at the time. Metlica, on the contrary, argues in detail that Marino's description is strongly grounded on Marino's experience (either first-hand or documentary) of plays and ballets at the French court, while the technological aspects of the play of Actaeon closely resemble Tommaso Francini's work as a scenographer for Louis XIII.

While Marino's intertextuality, for the reasons just discussed, has been the subject of a wide discussion in Italian studies, and textual references to his models (from Nonnus to Claudianus, from Dante to Tasso) and rivals (Guido Casoni and Tommaso Stigliani) have been identified, Metlica focuses on the intermediality of Marino's work and, by consequence, of baroque culture. This aspect of Marino's work has not been completely overlooked, but it is worth noticing that it has been researched mostly by Anglo-Saxon scholars, and their work has not been taken into account in contemporary Italian criticism of Marino. Metlica's approach highlights both aspects of Marino's poetry—intertextuality and intermediality—and aims to offer a new understanding of the author's encomiastic poetry as heavily influenced by events and celebrations contemporary to him. By doing so, Metlica succeeds in casting a new light on Marino's work and in presenting an approach to literary texts that can, and hopefully will, be adopted by future generations of scholars.

MARCO MALVESTIO

University of Toronto

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35341>