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TYLAR ANN COLLELUORI

**“IL PIÙ BEL FIOR”: INTERWEAVING GENRES IN
BOIARDO’S “ORLANDO INNAMORATO” AND
MODERATA FONTE’S “FLORIDORO”**

1. *Romance, epic, history*

The complex interplay between the romance and epic genres has been, and continues to be, the source of spirited debate in both Renaissance texts and modern critical scholarship. The boundaries between these two genres are blurry and permeable, with many works inhabiting the intersection between them. This blending of genres perhaps becomes most apparent in the Italian romance (or chivalric) epic, a tradition that has its beginnings in the late fifteenth century largely thanks to Matteo Maria Boiardo’s *Orlando Innamorato*. Among the subsequent works in this vein over the course of the following century is Moderata Fonte’s (pseudonym of Modesta Dal Pozzo) *Tredici canti del Floridoro* (1581), considered to be

the first sustained effort on the part of a woman writer to compose a Renaissance chivalric epic.¹

In the *Floridoro*, Moderata Fonte emulates and explicates Boiardo's multilayered integration of romance and epic. In addition to the innovative blending of both epic and romance *topoi*, she also replicates Boiardo's alternation of the narrative modes of epic and romance, which often (but not always) align with their respective *topoi*. On a third level, Moderata Fonte follows Boiardo in employing the technique of *entrelacement*, creating a complex relationship between the internal chronotopes of the individual episodes and the larger temporal structure of the poem in its entirety. In order to draw attention to her own interweaving of romance and epic, she refashions and connects two metapoetic motifs previously used for the same purpose in the *Innamorato*: the invocation of Venus and Mars, and the metaphor of picking a variety of flowers.

In addition to their parallel implementation of generic interweaving, Moderata Fonte and Boiardo also have analogous motivations in composing their chivalric epics: to pay homage to their respective patrons by constructing mythical dynastic genealogies that augment the political, cultural, and historical significance of these ruling families. Along with their use of romance and epic, Boiardo and Moderata Fonte employ history in the construction of these genealogies. It is in relation to the protracted timelines created by these dynastic genealogies that epic and romance

¹ See V. Finucci, *Moderata Fonte and the Genre of Women's Chivalric Romances*, in Moderata Fonte, *Floridoro: a Chivalric Romance*, With an Introduction by V. Finucci, Translated by J. Kisacky, Annotated by V. Finucci and J. Kisacky, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006, pp. 1-33. Laura Terracina's *Discorso sopra il principio di tutti i canti di "Orlando Furioso"* (1549) consists more of a commentary on and a dialogue with Ludovico Ariosto's *Furioso* than a chivalric epic in its own right. Tullia d'Aragona's *Meschino, altramente detto il Guarino* (1560), while innovative in its own way, is a poetic adaptation based closely on a prose romance by Andrea da Barberino.

merge most cohesively in both of these poems, as the fictional dynastic couples (Ruggiero-Bradamante in the *Innamorato*, Floridoro-Celsidea and Risamante-the king of Cyprus in the *Floridoro*) bind the mythological past to the historical present. Moderata Fonte's implementation of history works in conjunction with her use of epic and romance: in the same way that she adapts Boiardo's metapoetic commentary on genre, Moderata Fonte duplicates and manipulates the historical episodes found in the *Innamorato* in order to further her own poetic mission.

2. *Gods and flowers in Boiardo*

The way in which the thematic content of the romance and epic genres is treated in both the *Innamorato* and the *Floridoro* has a profound effect on how the works are narratively structured. When switching between moments characterized as epic or romance based on the *topoi* they contain, Boiardo also employs the epic and romance narrative modes (which each have their own internal chronotope) in varying degrees to construct his narrative.² On the one hand, there are comprehensive descriptions of the jousts or larger-scale battles between the various armies (those of Charlemagne, Gradasso, Agricane, Sacripante, Marsilio and Agramante), whose goal-oriented linearity adheres to the epic genre. On the other, we have the various episodic romance adventures that recount the miscellaneous exploits of the wandering paladins and serve to insert a

² For more on the narrative modes of epic and romance, see T. Greene, *The Descent from Heaven*, New Haven (CT), Yale University Press, 1963; M. Praloran, "Maraviglioso artificio": *Tecniche narrative e rappresentative nell' "Orlando Innamorato"*, Lucca, Pacini Fazzi, 1990; S. Zatti, *The Quest for Epic: from Ariosto to Tasso*, Edited by D. Looney, translated by S. Hill, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2006.

cyclical, timeless romance temporality into the discursive world of the text.³

In addition to interchanging these episodes and their diverse internal chronotopes, Boiardo further complicates his narrative structure through the use of *entrelacement*. While there is a history of the main character completing more than one quest in medieval romance, these episodes are usually ordered in a consecutive, linear fashion, with the hero proceeding from one quest to another. Departing from this sequential structure, Boiardo instead allocates these adventures to multiple characters and chronologically intersperses them in an innovative way to impart a sense of diachronic as well as synchronic time. As a result, the protagonists are constantly going their separate ways, reuniting, appearing in multiple different locations and plotlines (such as the brothers Aquilante and Grifone, who seem to repeatedly end up ensnared in magical traps along with the other paladins), and encountering in a metaliterary way the characters from the stories that have been previously narrated to them (such as Prasildo and Iroldo, or Poliferno). These wayfaring journeys simultaneously play out against a larger, collective backdrop, whose progressive, epic linearity has the end goal of either the siege or defense of Christendom. Because of this *entrelacement*, the various lengthy descriptions of the jousts and the battles are intermittently delayed and disrupted by these seemingly unrelated individual adventures, and vice versa. Just as the oscillating timelines produced by the interchanging episodes of *entrelacement* work to create a balance between digression and unity in the *Innamorato*, so too does Boiardo's variation between the

³ For more on the chronotopes of these genres, see also P. Cook, *The Epic Chronotope from Ariosto to Spenser*, in "Annali d'Italianistica", 12, 1994, pp. 115-141; A. Fichter, *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance*, New Haven (CT), Yale University Press, 1982.

narrative modalities of epic and romance allow him to explore diverse spatio-temporal approaches while also establishing an equilibrium between them.

The first metapoetic motif that Boiardo employs to highlight this interplay of epic and romance distinguishes their subject matter by invoking a different source of inspiration for each. In the proem to the twelfth *canto* of Book II, Boiardo calls on Venus and Mars to aid him as he sings of his two central themes:

“Stela d’Amor che ’l terzo ciel governi,
 e tu, quinto splendor sì rubicondo
 che girando in dui anni e cerchi eterni
 d’ogni pigricia fai digiuno il mondo,
 venga da’ corpi vostri alti e superni
 gratia e vertute al mio cantar iocondo
 sì che l’influxo vostro hor mi vaglia
 poiché de Amore canto e di bataglia.”⁴

The two epithets that Boiardo employs to invoke Venus (“Stela d’Amor che ’l terzo ciel governi”) and Mars (“quinto splendor sì rubicondo”) are both references derived from literary sources that would have been familiar to his readers.⁵ Boiardo then connects this dual supplication of Venus and Mars to his romance and epic subject matter, ending the stanza with “Amore” alongside “bataglia”. Even though there is no explicit reference to their son Cupid, Boiardo’s allusion to Venus as the

⁴ M. M. Boiardo, *L’inamoramento de Orlando*, edizione critica a cura di A. Tissoni Benvenuti e C. Montagnani, introduzione e commento di A. Tissoni Benvenuti, Milano – Napoli, Ricciardi, 1999, vol. II, p. 1104 (II, xii, 1).

⁵ See M. M. Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato*, A cura di R. Bruscaagli, Torino, Einaudi, 1995, vol. II, p. 730 (n. 1): Bruscaagli cites Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Teseida* as the source for this invocation. Dante also uses similar language to refer to the two planets and gods, in *Paradiso*, VIII, 1-3 (“Solea creder lo mondo in suo periclo / che la bella Ciprigna il folle amore / raggiasse, volta nel terzo epiciclo”) and XIV, 85-87 (“Ben m’accors’ io ch’io era più levato, / per l’affocato riso de la stella, / che mi pareva più roggio che l’usato”).

“Stela d’Amor” seems to recall the story of the love affair between Mars and Venus, and to suggest an intimate bond between the two genres that they represent, epic and romance. With this invocation, then, Boiardo is able to simultaneously emphasize the thematic variation within his work, while also dedicating space to the juxtaposition of his romance and epic subject matter.

In a second metapoetic moment, Boiardo connects these thematic shifts to his structural *variatio* through the metaphor of picking flowers. By using this analogy to characterize the structure of his narrative, Boiardo shows that he is cognizant of the fluctuation between diverse episodes, and configures these interchanges with intention. Not only do these shifts between episodes elongate the narrative and create suspense through digression, but they will also inevitably appeal to his readers’ varying tastes:

“Colti ho diversi fiori ala verdura,
 azuri e gialli e candidi e vermigli;
 facta ho di vaghe herbe una mistura,
 garofili e viole e rose e zigli:
 tràgassi avanti chi de odore ha cura,
 e ciò che più gli piace, quel se pigli:
 a cui dilecta el ziglio, a cui la rosa
 et a cui questa, a cui quel’altra cosa.

Però diversamente il mio verziero
 de amore e de battaglia ho già piantato;
 piace la guera alo animo più fiero,
 lo amore al cuor gentile e delicato.”⁶

In these two stanzas, Boiardo makes a connection between this “mistura” of floral species and the way that he alternates between themes of “amore” and “battaglia” throughout his work. This metaphor expands

⁶ M. M. Boiardo, *L’ innamoramento de Orlando*, cit., vol. II, p. 1690 (III, v, 1;2, 1-4).

upon the dual invocation of Mars and Venus by creating a correlation between thematic content and narrative structure. Boiardo uses this metaphor of collecting an assortment of flowers to suggest that the inclusion of diverse *topoi* and thematic material also requires the juxtaposition of these episodes and their diverse internal narrative modes through *entrelacement*.

3. *Moderata Fonte: repurposed metapoetic motifs*

Even though Moderata Fonte's poem is significantly shorter than the *Innamorato* (with just thirteen *canti* to Boiardo's astounding sixty-nine), an analysis of the instances in which these same metapoetic motifs also appear in the *Floridoro* demonstrates that she nevertheless emulates Boiardo's use of *entrelacement* and *variatio* in the structure of her poem. Indeed, Moderata Fonte engages with these same two metaliterary devices in order to be even more explicit about the function of these interconnections between subject matter, narrative modality, and *entrelacement* that occur in her work. In the very first stanza of the *Floridoro*, she adapts Boiardo's reference to Mars and Venus in order to emphasize the interplay between romance and epic in her own text. In her opening lines, Moderata Fonte addresses a singular unspecified Muse, as opposed to invoking the gods directly:

“Scegli d'ornati e ben composti accenti
il più bel fior, leggiadra Musa, e canta
gli spogliati trofei, gli incendii spenti
dal tempo, ond' ancor Marte, e Amor si vanta.
Di' le battaglie rie, le fiamme ardenti,
ch'uscir dall'arme, e dalla face santa,
allor, che 'l fero dio gli altari avea,

e Ciprigna adorata era per dea.”⁷

Even though she does not mirror Boiardo’s direct supplication or his cosmological epithets, Moderata Fonte does include allusions to both Mars and Venus in this stanza alongside her Muse. In addition to these two gods, she also personifies Boiardo’s previous reference to “Amor”, who is now paired with Mars. This direct inclusion of the product of the consummated relationship between Venus and Mars further demonstrates a desire to highlight the reciprocity between epic and romance. This stanza also confirms that Moderata Fonte is aware of the related function of the two previously cited stanzas in the *Innamorato*, so much so that she creates an explicit connection between them. While Boiardo keeps his invocation to the gods separate from his metaphor of picking flowers, Moderata Fonte immediately imbricates these two metapoetic motifs in the opening stanza of the *Floridoro*. In the first two lines, just before her references to the gods, she implores her Muse in a line that subtly recalls Boiardo’s use of the floral metaphor and anticipates Moderata Fonte’s own implementation of it two *canti* later. Within the very first lines of her poem, then, Moderata Fonte already demonstrates a profound awareness of the effect that this generic interweaving has on the underlying narrative structure of the *Floridoro*.

Moderata Fonte reprises the Boiardan metaphor of picking flowers more explicitly at the beginning of the third *canto* of the *Floridoro*. She begins her proem of this canto with an elegy dedicated to the “gran virtù de cavallier passati”,⁸ and a reference to Risardo as an archetypal example of a

⁷ Moderata Fonte, *Tredici Canti del Floridoro*, a cura di V. Finucci, introduzione di V. Finucci, Modena, Mucchi, 1995, p. 3 (I, 1).

⁸ See *ibidem*, p. 44 (III, 1, 1). Boiardo also includes multiple proems dedicated to famous knights of the past.

“gentil guerrier”.⁹ After dwelling on this topic for eight stanzas, the narrator then notes a desire to shift the narrative attention back to Risamante:

“Ma perché son vari *i soggetti*, e *i versi*
vari, e *l’un l’altro il proseguir contende*,
tal io son, qual fanciul che di *diversi*
fiori formar bella ghirlanda intende,
che acciò del bel d’ognun possa valersi,
non sempre il *giglio*, o la *viola* prende,
ma or l’uno, or l’altro, e in *variar* colore
si serve alfin d’ogni suo *colto* fiore.”¹⁰

Reading this stanza with Boiardo’s proem in mind, we can see that Moderata Fonte is employing much of the same language, down to including two of the same flowers, the “giglio” and the “viola”. Whereas Boiardo’s description of his narrative variation suggests that readers choose among episodes depending on their personal tastes (“tràgassi avanti chi de odore ha cura, / e ciò che più gli piace, quel se pigli”),¹¹ Moderata Fonte seems instead to go a step further and use her imagery to more thoroughly illustrate the interaction between these two genres. Her addition of the framework of the “ghirlanda” takes this language of variation and difference (“vari”, “l’un l’altro”, “diversi”, “variar”) and binds it together into a single structure, one that is simultaneously heterogeneous and synergistic.

⁹ See *ibidem*, p. 46 (III, 7, 1).

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 47 (III, 9). My emphasis. The use of “ghirlanda” foreshadows another metapoetic intervention in the thirteenth *canto*, in which Moderata Fonte refers to the composition of her work as weaving. With this metaphor, she creates an additional connection between her use of *entrelacement* and that of Ludovico Ariosto in the *Orlando furioso*, a topic that falls outside of the scope of this current study.

¹¹ M. M. Boiardo, *L’inamoramento de Orlando*, cit., vol. II, p. 1690 (III, v, 1, 5-6).

As we have seen in the previous citations, both Boiardo and Moderata Fonte make connections between Venus and Mars and the thematic content of the romance and epic genres, respectively. In the stanza where Boiardo employs his floral metaphor, he adds to this a second level of variation: that of narrative structure. He recognizes that this shifting between themes of “guera” and “Amore” also inherently necessitates the *entrelacement* of these episodes throughout his poem to satisfy his audience and maintain their attention. Moderata Fonte’s use of this same metaphor, however, emphasizes a third level of variation that is never commented on directly by Boiardo. In addition to theme and structure, it seems that Moderata Fonte is also explicitly recognizing that shifting between the two genres also requires a different type of poetry (“e i versi / vari”). In other words, inserting different generic *topoi* also necessitates the use of different narrative or poetic modalities. Therefore, within the first two lines of this stanza, she manages to augment Boiardo’s previous metapoetic commentary by parsing out the three levels of variation in which they both engage: thematic variation (“i soggetti”), differences in narrative modes (“i versi”), and *entrelacement* (“l’un l’altro il proseguir contende”).

While Moderata Fonte does not explicitly identify the themes of love and war alongside her floral metaphor (as Boiardo does), the narrative shift facilitated by this interjection confirms that she is referring to the interplay between romance and epic episodes. The *canto* starts with Risardo’s journey, before Moderata Fonte uses this metapoetic intervention to turn the attention back to Risamante. The choice to utilize her commentary on generic intertwining to facilitate this particular transition between storylines seems deliberate, as neither of these two episodes fits neatly into a romance-epic dichotomy. At the end of the previous *canto*, Risardo has just left Thrace to undertake a quest motivated by love, saving the beautiful

Raggidora. And yet, in the fourth *canto*, Risardo's fickleness makes him change course, diverting him from this romance quest to witness the larger, epic battle between Risamante's forces and those of her twin sister, Biondaura. After meeting Odoria, Risardo chooses instead to accompany her to Delphi, where they hear a prophecy about Risamante's battle with her sister before ultimately reaching Artemita to witness her triumph firsthand. In this prophecy, we also learn that one of the knights accompanying Risardo, the King of Cyprus, will eventually marry Risamante. Only at the end of the final *canto* does it become apparent that Risardo's capricious (romance) wanderings inevitably play a part in bringing about Risamante's marriage and the start of her genealogy. Instead of pursuing Risardo's storyline in the third *canto*, however, Moderata Fonte utilizes her narratorial interjection about the "ghirlanda" as an opportunity to shift the attention to Risamante, who is about to partake in her own first adventure: fighting a serpent that has emerged from the surrounding trees. Her adventure, much like that of Risardo, initially seems to operate within the bounds of a traditional romance trope. And yet, Risamante's defeat of the serpent directly leads to her encounter with the fairy, whose delivery of the first dynastic prophecy ties Risamante's progeny to the foundation of the Medici line. Instead of employing this metapoetic metaphor in a moment of clear transition between romance and epic episodes, Moderata Fonte uses it to highlight the way that these genres inextricably work together in service of one of the poem's larger goals: the dynastic legitimization of the patron.

4. *Historical reinterpretations*

When considering the positionality of the dynastic couples in both poems, between an epic past (with the inclusion of figures such as Ulysses, Hector's son Astyanax, and Alexander the Great in their lineages) and the

historical present, their movement through the fiction takes on a deeper meaning. As these characters maneuver through their various quests, jousts, and battles, the dynastic plot is the continuous, underlying force propelling them towards their eventual roles as genealogical predecessors to the respective patrons of each work. In Boiardo's case, the goal of these genealogies is to bolster the Este family of Ferrara during a time of political struggle (in particular, the war with Venice alluded to at the ending of Book II). For Moderata Fonte, it is to celebrate her patrons Francesco I de' Medici and Bianca Cappello, and especially the city of Venice in light of the ongoing wars with the Ottoman Empire. In the construction of their respective dynastic genealogies, both Boiardo and Moderata Fonte employ another genre: history. Following what Boiardo does for Ferrara, Moderata Fonte uses ekphrasis to insert the recent history of Venice into the timeline of the fiction, thus allowing it to become observed and imparted as a prefigured future. Just as she refashions Boiardo's metapoetic commentary to further illustrate her poetic mission, here she reframes the historical events used in the *Innamorato* to underscore her political objectives. In particular, historical details evoked by Boiardo to portray the Este family and Ferrara in a positive light are cited from a perspective that instead lionizes Venice, the birthplace of her own patron, Bianca Cappello.

In Book II of the *Innamorato*, Brandimarte and Fiordelisa gaze upon the walls of a courtyard inside Febosilla's palace. They observe four paintings that serve as a miniature history lesson, moving from a broader history of Italy to that of Ferrara and the Este family more specifically.¹² The first wall depicts the struggle between the northern Italian city-states and Frederick Barbarossa at the 1158 Battle of Cassano d'Adda, with

¹² See J. Cavallo, *The World Beyond Europe in the Romance Epics of Boiardo and Ariosto*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, pp. 95-111 and pp. 211-234.

Ferrara at the forefront symbolized by a white eagle.¹³ The following three walls depict a progression of the feats of three Estense figures: the struggle between an unnamed Este hero and the tyrant Ezzelino III da Romano, an ally of Frederick II; the tensions between Niccolò d'Este and his various political enemies (notably Florence and Venice); and an encomium of Ercole d'Este. Boiardo is therefore able to utilize his ekphrasis to quite literally paint a picture of the Este family as a line of rulers who acted as a force against formidable foes throughout history, protecting Italy from both foreign and internal enemies and guarding the Christian faith against those who wanted to extinguish the Church's earthly power. By allowing Brandimarte and Fiordelisa to witness these historical scenes as prophecies of a distant future, Boiardo emphasizes the chronological continuity created by his dynastic genealogy, one that begins in mythological antiquity, continues with Ruggiero in the fictional timeline of the *Innamorato*, and finally extends to the present-day Italy of his own patrons. The ekphrasis' depiction of heroic Estense deeds therefore introduces historicity into the genealogical narrative, allowing the mythology, fiction, and history to mutually bolster one another.

This process becomes slightly more complicated in the *Floridoro*. Whereas Boiardo is writing for Ercole d'Este (and, by extension, his family and the city of Ferrara), Moderata Fonte must pay equal homage not only to both of her patrons, Francesco I de' Medici and Bianca Cappello, but also to their respective cities, Florence and Venice. On the one hand, it is possible for Moderata Fonte to fashion a genealogy of the Medici following the model that Boiardo uses for Ruggiero and the Este family: starting with the marriage of Risamante's daughter to Floridoro's son, she traces the

¹³ M. M. Boiardo, *L'inamoramento de Orlando*, cit., vol. II, pp. 1442-1443 (II, xxv, 44).

lineage of the Medici in a way that simultaneously serves as a brief history of their rise to power and subsequent oligarchical rule over Florence.¹⁴ Moderata Fonte cannot, however, follow this model for her second patron and fellow Venetian, Bianca Cappello. Due to the non-hereditary structure of Venice's dogeship, it is impossible to trace a lineage of Bianca's family that also aligns with the ruling of the Venetian Republic.¹⁵ Instead, Moderata Fonte mirrors her first genealogy with a history of Venice. This history, while similarly told through an ekphrasis, links Bianca not to a family, but to the very foundation of Venice itself.

In the ninth *canto* of the *Floridoro*, Silano and Clarido arrive on Itaca and meet Circetta, the daughter of Ulysses and Circe. She invites them inside the banquet hall of her palace, where the surrounding jewel-encrusted walls display reliefs sculpted by Circe herself. Circetta narrates the scenes, beginning with the founding of Venice and subsequently highlighting the city's key interventions in the macro-history of Italy. Within this extended ekphrasis, Moderata Fonte reconsiders the role of Venice in four historical episodes that correspond to those on the four walls of Febosilla's palace in the *Innamorato*. The first of these moments includes a reference to Venice's position against the forces of the Holy Roman Emperor:

“E non pur quei ma 'l re de' Siciliani
Fa con Venezia pace e si collega.
Ecco il Michael terzo ch'i Pisani
Vecchi nemici ad amicarsi piega.”¹⁶

¹⁴ See Moderata Fonte, *Tredici Canti del Floridoro*, cit., pp. 53-59 (III, 40-70).

¹⁵ See M. G. Stampino, *A Singular Venetian Epic*, in L. Marinella, *Enrico, or, Byzantium Conquered: A Heroic Poem*, Edited and Translated by M. G. Stampino, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 3 (nn. 6-7).

¹⁶ Moderata Fonte, *Tredici Canti del Floridoro*, cit., p. 205 (XII, 50, 3-6).

These lines refer to the Greater Lombard League, in which Sicily and Venice became allies against Frederick Barbarossa under Doge Vitale II Michiel. The following stanza describes the naval battle in which Venice's fleet defeated the Emperor's forces, a victory that supposedly led to negotiations between Barbarossa and Pope Alexander III in Venice in 1177.¹⁷ Moderata Fonte links this event to one of Venice's most notable traditions: one of the pope's rewards for this victory, a golden ring, purportedly instituted the annual symbolic marriage between Venice and the sea.¹⁸ While Boiardo uses the first wall of his ekphrasis to give Ferrara a place of prominence in the victory over the Holy Roman Emperor and his allies in the 1158 Battle of Cassano d'Adda, Moderata Fonte instead recognizes the doges of Venice and their forces as playing a more direct role in the Emperor's ultimate concession in the decades that followed. Moderata Fonte, like Boiardo, also reserves space in her ekphrasis to condemn Ezzelino III da Romano, but she manages to do so while centering Venice. As part of the second wall in Febosilla's palace, Boiardo describes the tyrant's horrific act of setting fire to eleven thousand Padua citizens, and shows the Estense eagle defending the papacy while Ezzelino meets his eventual death in battle.¹⁹ In Moderata Fonte's version, however, Ezzelino is distinguished specifically as an enemy of Venice:

“Mirate un'altra impresa assai maggiore
 contra Ezzelin di Padua allor tiranno,
 del cui furoro fia d'Attila minore
 l'usata crudeltà, men grave il danno
 [...]

¹⁷ Ibidem (XII, 51).

¹⁸ For the historical context of these stanzas, see M. Fonte, *Floridoro: A Chivalric Romance*, cit., pp. 352-353 (nn. 29-31)

¹⁹ M. M. Boiardo, *L'inamoramento de Orlando*, cit., vol. II, pp. 1445-1446 (II, xxv, 48-49). For more on this historical context, see also J. Cavallo, *The World beyond Europe in the Romance Epics of Boiardo and Ariosto*, cit., pp. 220-221.

E Padoa, sciolta da sì grave incarco,
respirar sotto il protettor San Marco.”²⁰

By describing Ezzelino’s cruelty as overshadowing even that of Attila (whose invasions, according to the myth of Venice, caused the migrations that led to the foundation of the city), Moderata Fonte places him among the ranks of definitively Venetian enemies. She also portrays Venice as the protector of Padua, omitting any reference to Ferrara’s role in the defeat of Ezzelino and the Emperor’s forces. In his third ekphrastic episode, Boiardo highlights Venice as an enemy of Niccolò d’Este (1383-1441), while Moderata Fonte instead references a positive juncture in the relationship between the two cities: just a few years prior, Ferrara was an ally of Venice in the war against Genoa and Padua (1377-1380).²¹ Lastly, Boiardo’s panegyric to Ercole d’Este on the fourth and final palace wall loses some luster when read alongside Moderata Fonte’s history, as she does not hesitate to remind her readers that Venice played a direct role in supporting the duke of Ferrara himself against a usurper in 1476: “Ecco poi che per lor fia stabilito / nel suo ducato il buon Ercol da Este”.²²

Including an allusion to a moment in which Ferrara (and, more specifically, Ercole d’Este) is indebted to Venice, Moderata Fonte makes a bold statement regarding Venetian-Ferrarese relations (perhaps in response to Boiardo’s anti-Venetian sentiment at the end of Book II). By citing the same figures and conflicts that Boiardo centers in his ekphrasis from a new perspective, she reframes and amplifies Venice’s role in Italian history. In conjunction with the dynastic genealogies, this historical reinterpretation also allows Moderata Fonte to situate her characters and her patrons in

²⁰ Moderata Fonte, *Tredici canti del Floridoro*, cit., pp. 206-207 (XII, 58, 1-4 and 59, 7-8).

²¹ See *ibidem*, p. 209 (XII, 69).

²² *Ibidem*, p. 210 (XII, 75).

chronological, geographical, and literary proximity to Boiardo's own work in the chivalric epic tradition.

Through an examination of the ways in which the complex relationship between romance and epic is utilized and commented on in the *Innamorato* and the *Floridoro*, it becomes clear that both Boiardo and Moderata Fonte construct their respective works on a foundation of interchange and interdependence between the two genres. Moderata Fonte's appropriation and manipulation of Boiardo's metapoetic commentary on this generic interaction demonstrates her awareness that this interplay extends beyond a simple inclusion of diverse subject matter and permeates the narrative structure of their respective works. In conjunction with Moderata Fonte's selected citation of Boiardo's historical ekphrases, these considerations of generic interplay can also open up new discussions about how both authors utilize these genres in the creation of their respective dynastic genealogies. Indeed, the Italian Renaissance chivalric epic may be understood not only as a genre that simultaneously includes various features from both epic and romance in the same narrative, but as a genre that specifically utilizes the permeable boundaries between the two genres as a space in which to construct a mythic dynastic genealogy, one that connects their fictions to the historical present and imparts on their literature a larger political and historical significance.

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