

*Die doppelte Pragmatik der Fiktionalität: Studie zur Poetik der Gerusalemme Liberata (Torquato Tasso, 1581).* Katharina Kerl.

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The present book on the poetics of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* — a revised version of Kerl's PhD thesis — addresses the broad issue of the relation between a fictional text and the reality of its reader. The aim of the book is twofold: first, to gain a clear insight into the intricate and sometimes chaotic discussion nowadays about theories of fiction in order to take a stand in this debate about both terminological problems and the applicability of some contemporary categories, especially those of fictivity and fictionality, to early modern texts. Because of its extreme theoretical complexity and its enormous historical meaning, the *Liberata*, together with Tasso's poetological writings, represents the perfect working ground for one aiming to shed light on the "spezifischen Konditionen vormoderner fiktionaler Kommunikation" ("specific conditions of fictional communication in the early modern period"; 25). Hence the

second goal of Kerl's book is to provide, on the basis of its own theoretical results, not only an innovative but also an integrative understanding of Tasso's epic poem in particular, i.e., a reading capable of sorting and incorporating earlier models of interpretation, especially those based on a biographical or psychological approach.

The structure of the book reflects its author's twofold aim. The content is divided into two parts: while the first one (chapters 1–3) is devoted to several issues of theory of fiction and research methodology, the second one (chapters 4–5) examines in both a diachronic and a synchronic way Tasso's thought about the relation to be posed between fictional literature and truth (his theory of poetry), and provides an analysis of Tasso's masterpiece (his praxis of poetry). The book also contains a summary of its own research results (391–96), an appendix providing an analysis of the plot of the *Gerusalemme* in summer 1576 (397–406), and a bibliography listing a few sources and several studies (407–08, 408–17).

It is well known to Italian literature scholars that conflict and possible compatibility between poetic fiction and historical-philosophical-theological truth are crucial questions in Tasso's oeuvre. Readers have repeatedly tried to explain the complexity and the ambiguities of Tasso's epic poem by means of biographical, psychological, literary-sociological, or literary-theoretical approaches. On the contrary, Kerl reads the *Liberata* and Tasso's theory of poetry on the grounds of modern theories of fiction. She focuses particularly on the eponymous notion of "doppelte Pragmatik der Fiktionalität" ("double pragmatic of fictionality"). On the one hand, by means of the writer-reader contract ensuring, as such, the suspension of disbelief, fictional texts are able to communicate fictions without deceiving the reader ("fiktionale Pragmatik"); on the other hand, these same fictional texts can also — and at times they must — disclose factual and ideological (i.e., theological, moral-philosophical, or political) truths in order to meet historical or practical purposes ("faktuale Pragmatik") (24, 39–40). The contrast between "Fiktionsfreiheit" and "Fiktionsrestriktion" (freedom and restriction in fiction), whose level depends always on historical factors, determines the tensions and paradoxes that mark the *Liberata* as well as Tasso's attempt to integrate different models of fiction in his poetological works, by using concepts such as *meraviglioso cristiano* (Christian marvelous), *varietà nell'unità* (variety in unity), or, as Kerl suggests and proves in her analysis of the *Liberata*, the "Poetik der Affekte" ("poetics of emotions").

Undoubtedly, Kerl's work is a convincing, well-structured, systematic, and analytical study, providing the reader with a clarifying contribution to modern theories of fiction as well as with a consistent, brilliant interpretation of the *Liberata*. Nevertheless, there are unconvincing details in the exegesis of some poetic passages and in the selection of the sources to be employed in the analysis: e.g., the explanation of the "Musa" of *Ger. Lib.* 1.2–3 as the Virgin Mary (21–22, 393) is very unlikely; and in the reading of *Ger. Lib.* 20.94 (375), the quotation of Petrarch, *Canzoniere* 327.12–14, must at least be joined by that of Virgil, *Aen.* 9.446–49, a reference setting in an epic mood too, and not only in a lyrical one, the words addressed by the poet to Gildippe and Odoardo. Despite her explanations, it is, for instance, quite surprising that, in the analysis of Tasso's

poetological thought, Kerl does not take into consideration the autograph notes the poet left in the margins of the books he was reading (the so-called *postillati*), or that in the reconstruction of Tasso's knowledge of the debate on fiction Fracastoro's important dialogue *Naugerius siue de poesia* is left aside (see, however, 171, 224).

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