



CONSTRUCTING POETIC AUTHOR(TIE)S: RENAISSANCE, BARROC AND ENLIGHTENMENT

2. AUTOCOMENTARIS (TASSO, GUARINI, MARINO)

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Guarini Backs Guarini: from Self-Defence to Self-Commentary in *Il pastor fido*

Giovanni Battista Guarini's work must be considered in light of the (often complex) interaction between three components of literature: creation, criticism and theoretical speculation. The need to offer justifications for his pastoral tragicomedy *Il pastor fido* (initially written, 1583-86; 1st ed., 1589/1590; 2nd ed. with corrections, 1602) in the face of the fierce criticism that emerged even before it was finished, turned Guarini into his own commentator and theorist. This happens in four stages: in *Il Verrato* (ed. 1588), in the form of a dialogue between a critic of his work and a famous actor; in *Il Verrato secondo* (ed. 1593), in the form of an academic speech pronounced by an anonymous "attizzato accademico ferrarese" (irate Ferrara academic); in *Il compendio della poesia tragicomica* (ed. 1601), in the form of a treatise on poetics; and in *Annotazioni*, a meticulously detailed annotation of his tragicomedy accompanying the definitive edition of *Il pastor fido* (1602) whose authorship was not initially specified. In the face of forceful criticism, Guarini responds with rather more sophisticated strategies which enable him to dismantle all grounds for reproof and lay

claim to merits using literary mechanisms that mitigate the (potentially negative) impact of self-commendation and cannonization.

Despite the use of a range of strategies and formats, the conceptual foundation supporting Guarini's construction of himself as an author(ity) is coherent and homogenous across all four interventions. Concepts from the literary theory of the period supply him with justifications for his own decisions (often thanks to the considerable flexibility he grants them) but he also manages to forge an image for himself as a philologist philosopher fit to rival the publishers and commentators of Aristotle's *Poetics*. On the other hand, perhaps it makes sense to question the extent to which the last draft of *Il pastor fido*, particularly his revisions to acts IV and V, may be an attempt to justify his choices in light of early criticism as well as to show off his mastery of classical literature at a time when he was being called out for working at the fringes of (and even against) the Greco-Latin tradition. This paper examines the Aristotelian theoretical foundations underpinning his analysis of his own work, the author(ity) construction strategies he deploys, the brilliant author image he projects of himself and his works' immediate impact, which reached the Catalan sphere and ended up shaping a new dramatic baroque genre, the tragicomedy, and canonizing its author in the process.