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PLATONISME



FUROR POETICUS

La teoria del furor poeticus come arma dottrinaria:

Ficino, Landino e il Cinquecento

[The theory of *furor poeticus* as a doctrinal tool:

Ficino, Landino and the Cinquecento]

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The topos of poetic furor was widely disseminated in the Renaissance. Renaissance theories of poetic furor are often classified as Platonists since they usually refer to Plato's dialogues, especially *Ion* and *Phaedrus*. However, this paper focusses on other, quite different interpretations and developments of the topos within Early Modern Platonic tradition. The wide range of different interpretations of the theory of poetic furor shall be considered a representative feature of Renaissance culture, which displays a continuous shift of tendencies that, on the one hand, stimulates pluralism, while, on the other, consolidates authoritative discourses in order to restrain and control diversity.

Ficino conceives of the *furor poeticus* as a doctrinal tool. According to the Platonic model, he integrates it within a system of four furors, organized under the more general term of the *furor divinus*. These furors are hierarchically related and, as a whole, have the function of making effective one of the ways of knowledge of Ficino's philosophy, that is, they have to allow the soul to leave behind its mundane concerns and to move toward the Divine, ascending to God through the hypostatic levels of cosmic structure caused by emanation. Poetic furor integrates poetry (or rather, the specific form of poetry posited by Ficino) as a function in this ascending way to knowledge: this theory concedes poetry the sublime form of the veridical discourse emanated from the oracle and it commissions poetry with the function of spreading Ficinian doctrine.

Since Ficino's metaphysical conception of poetry is not concerned with the technical aspects of literary creation, it collides with the interest in the textual aesthetics of contemporary prescriptive and normative poetics, mainly Horatian in the Quattrocento. Landino attempts to defend a Ficinian poetics, which is grounded on inspired poetry and puts aside artistic issues while, at the same

time, he assumes that poetry is a discipline that can be learned through studying, a principle that Ficino constantly subverts.

Thus, while in the late Quattrocento the Platonic theory of furor calls into question the consistency and authority of the rhetorical, pragmatic and normative poetics, in the Cinquecento Ficinian's poetic furor has to face a powerful Aristotelianism. On the one hand, Platonism suffers the pressure of the scientific and empirical approach of Aristotelianism: it is from this point of view and with arguments based on rationalism that Lorenzo Giacomini dismantles Ficino's poetic furor. On the other, a new Aristotelian theory of literary genres emerges and questions the metaphysical poetics. In order to preserve Platonic theory from this threat, Francesco Patrizi has to sacrifice the metaphysical and dogmatic grounds of poetic furor and to deprive it of its original premises and purposes. The theory of poetic furor is gradually replaced by a poetics of the marvellous and it will be only under its auspices that in the Baroque Age the idea of the *furiosus* poet will emerge again.