

ALBERT RUSSELL ASCOLI

Ariosto's Bitter Harmony

*Crisis and Evasion in the
Italian Renaissance*



PRINCETON LEGACY LIBRARY

ARIOSTO'S BITTER HARMONY

ALBERT RUSSELL ASCOLI

ARIOSTO'S BITTER HARMONY

Crisis and Evasion in the Italian

Renaissance



PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

1987

COPYRIGHT © 1987 BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PUBLISHED BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 41 WILLIAM STREET
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 08540
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, GUILDFORD, SURREY

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION
DATA WILL BE FOUND ON THE LAST PRINTED PAGE OF THIS BOOK

ISBN 0-691-05479-7

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN COMPOSED IN LASERCOMP BEMBO

CLOTHBOUND EDITIONS OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
PRESS BOOKS ARE PRINTED ON ACID-FREE
PAPER, AND BINDING MATERIALS
ARE CHOSEN FOR STRENGTH
AND DURABILITY

★ ★

★

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

*To Mary and Sam Ascoli,
who came in the middle of this book,
but now come before it*

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS	xi
1. THE ORLANDO FURIOSO AND THE POETRY OF CRISIS	3
2. CRITICAL READINGS OF THE ORLANDO FURIOSO	43
i. <i>Ariosto and the Renaissance Hercules</i>	46
ii. <i>Education as "Insegnamento" and "Formazione"</i>	70
iii. <i>Reading the Furioso's Readers</i>	94
iv. <i>Satira vi and the "Arts That Exalt Man"</i>	107
3. ALLEGORY AND EDUCATION AT THE ANTIPODES	121
i. <i>Ariosto between Alcina and Logistilla</i>	122
ii. <i>The Form of the Allegory</i>	135
iii. <i>The Nature of the Education</i>	168
iv. <i>"I Am Become a Name": The End of Education</i>	199
v. <i>From Allegory and Mimesis to Alienation and Mimicry</i>	224
vi. <i>Pegasus into Geryon: "Truth with a Lying Face"</i>	246
4. CASSANDRA'S VEIL AND THE POET'S FOLLY	258
i. <i>Ariosto's Allegory of Poets and Theologians</i>	264
ii. <i>The Signs of Madness</i>	304
iii. <i>Oneness in Nonsense</i>	331
iv. <i>"La Vocal Tomba di Merlino"</i>	361
v. <i>Canto XLVI: Hippolytus' Horses and the Art of Cassandra</i>	376
BIBLIOGRAPHY	395
INDEX	411

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book began as a paper on canto xxi of *Orlando Furioso* in a seminar on Ariosto and Tasso taught by Walter Stephens, who introduced me to many of the basic texts and problems of the Italian Renaissance. It was first written as a dissertation, in which canto xxi survived only as a series of lengthy footnotes, under the patient, generous, and brilliant direction of Giuseppe Mazzotta. Without his teaching I would be a poorer critic and no scholar at all. Much of the research, and a crucial piece of the writing, were carried out in Italy from January to August 1981 with the support of a Fulbright-Hayes grant. From that period I owe special debts to the hospitality and friendship of Guido and Daniela Fink, Lina Baraldi Dessi, Maria Baraldi, and the late, dear, Antonio Rinaldi; to Riccardo Brusciagli for the care he took of us during our stay and for a different view of Ariosto; to John Freccero's informal Stanford Villa seminar; and to Eugenio Garin, for two precious conversations. Back in Ithaca, Carol Kaske kept me as faithful to the Renaissance as she could. Jonathan Culler offered tools for understanding how unfaithful the Renaissance could be to itself and then gave a thesis the push it needed to become a book. The process of transformation, carried out at Northwestern University in the last two years, was aided by the comments and encouragements of colleagues and friends who read some or all of the manuscript. I owe particular thanks to Tim Bahti, Leonard Barkan, Albert Cirillo, Larry Lipking, Patricia Parker, Elizabeth Chesney Zagura and, especially, Daniel Javitch. Parts of the last sections of Chapters 3 and 4 were presented at a conference organized by Larry Silver at the Newberry Library in March 1984. Cynthia Falzer prepared portions of the manuscript for me, a process aided by a modest grant from Northwestern's Research Grants Committee. Tom Stillinger gave Chapter 3 critical and useful editorial scrutiny. Diana Robin gave me expert help with some of the Latin translations. I owe thanks as well to my Princeton editors—Marjorie Sherwood, as well as Marilyn Campbell, and, especially, Charles Purrenhage for his sympathetic, yet rigorous, copyediting. Above all, David Quint was the Aesculapian

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

genius of the recomposition process—I hope I have made the best of his many, incisive, suggestions. Finally, Julie Drew Ascoli saw and survived it all. She helped bring forth this twice-born work both by her patience and her impatience. I thank her as best I can.

Evanston, Illinois

July 1985

NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

In presenting quotations from Italian and Latin I have adopted, with minor exceptions, the following scheme. Primary texts in Italian are quoted in the original with following parenthetical translation. Secondary texts in Italian and all Latin texts are translated into English, with the original reproduced in a footnote. Translations are my own, with these exceptions:

DANTE ALIGHIERI: *The Divine Comedy*, 3 vols., trans. C. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

LUDOVICO ARIOSTO: *The Satires of Ludovico Ariosto: A Renaissance Autobiography*, ed. and trans. P. Wiggins (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976).

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO: *Boccaccio on Poetry; Being the Preface and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*, ed. and trans. C. Osgood (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956; first published 1930).

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS: *The Praise of Folly*, trans. H.H. Hudson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941; repr. 1969).

LORENZO VALLA: *Dialogue on Free Will*, trans. C. Trinkaus, in E. Cassirer et al., eds., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

When, in rare cases, I disagree with one of the translators or feel a different emphasis is required, emendations are inserted between brackets.

ARIOSTO'S BITTER HARMONY

Aspro concento, orribile armonia

(*Orlando Furioso* XIV 134 1)

It is as if you were to match one magician against another, or as if one charmed sword should fight with a man whose sword also happened to be charmed. It would be nothing but reweaving the web of Penelope.

(Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*)

Too real is this feeling of make-believe

(Buck Ram, "The Great Pretender")

I

THE ORLANDO FURIOSO AND THE POETRY OF CRISIS

The famous "sorriso" of Ariosto; the remote, fantastic settings and events of his narration; the remarkable fluidity of the "ottava d'oro": all of these have seemed to thwart from the beginning any attempt to find in the *Orlando Furioso* a sense of the problematic in poetry and history, a troubled awareness of the interrelated crises of faith, of politics, and of culture which cry out in the principal documents and events of Italy in the early Cinquecento.¹ The painfully acquired political stability and independence of the Italian peninsula in the 1400s was shaken in 1494 with the invasion of Charles VIII of France, suffered through the Spanish and French interventions in the early years of the new century (to which the *Furioso* makes such frequent reference), and received an emblematic death blow with the sack of Rome in 1527. As the poem was being written, Italy was also undergoing a "crisi religiosa," alive with mystical, post-Savonarolian currents of reform, while the Reformation itself was just exploding

¹ Eugenio Garin, *Ritratti di Umanisti* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1967), puts it this way: "Il Rinascimento italiano è una splendida stagione della storia del mondo, non una stagione lieta. Savonarola e Machiavelli, Leonardo e Michelangelo, hanno aspetto tragico, non gioioso . . . I paesaggi incantati della Firenze del Magnifico, le immagini di Botticelli e Poliziano . . . costituiscono una sorte di incantesimo per sfuggire alle ferite della realtà" (p. 187). This reading of Poliziano has been applied to Ariosto as well, as we shall shortly see. For a recent anthology of views on several aspects of crisis see Christian Bec, ed., *Italie 1500-1550: Une Situation de Crise?* (Lyon: L'Hermès, 1976). Even Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Harper, Colophon, 1958), vol. 2, p. 427, speaks of a "grave moral crisis," which was also political, at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In point of fact, Burckhardt's theory of the historical emergence of the individual and of creative consciousness in this era depends on a series of ruptures between the self and those institutions and ideologies which, Burckhardt would say, had incorporated the self during the Middle Ages: faith and its institutions; political rule by law; the family. For Burckhardt, the self-consciousness and creative energy of artist and tyrant alike came from a breakdown in belief, a collapse of the medieval corporate political state, and, often enough, illegitimate birth—all of which tended to throw the self back on its own resources in the face of desperate crisis. See n. 38 below on the myth of a corporate, "epic," consciousness.

further to the north.² Finally, the *Quattrocento* revolution in educational and epistemological methods, as well as the ideology of man's dignity and infinite possibility with which Eugenio Garin and others have associated it, continued to constitute a crisis in human self-perception which was often as maddening as it was liberating.³ God, man, and *corpus politicum* were all at risk in the multiple and widening crises of the "High Renaissance." Nonetheless, Benedetto Croce, whose enduring influence on the course of Ariosto criticism is coextensive with his dominance of much of Italian literary study for the last fifty years, describes an Ariosto "not anguished by doubts, not worried about human destiny," the poet laureate of a cosmic *Armonia*.⁴

Croce's romantic formulation has since been "secularized" for modern taste.⁵ It has also been revised in terms of the musical cosmography of Ariosto's own day: the vision of a divinely harmonizing One which tunes the spheres, discovering concordant unity

² See, for example, Delio Cantimori, *Eretici Italiani del Cinquecento* (Firenze Sansoni, 1939), for some of the "voci religiose della crisi italiana" (p. 14). See also Carlo Dionisotti, "Chierici e Laici," in *Geografia e Storia della Letteratura Italiana* (Torino Einaudi, 1967), pp. 45-73, for the literary reflections of the "crisi della chiesa" (p. 59) in the early *Cinquecento*, including Ariosto. Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City States in Renaissance Italy* (New York Knopf, 1979), offers a useful overview of the religious upheaval in a larger context, esp. p. 279 ff.

³ The theme of philological and educational revolution is repeatedly developed by Garin. See especially *L'Educazione in Europa 1400-1600* (Bari Laterza, 1957), as well as his splendid anthology of *Quattrocento* didactic writings, *Il Pensiero Pedagogico dello Umanesimo* (Firenze Sansoni e Giuntina, 1958). See also Joseph Mazzeo, *Renaissance and Revolution: The Remaking of European Thought* (New York Pantheon, 1965), esp. chap. 1, "Renaissance Humanism and the New Education."

⁴ Benedetto Croce, "Ariosto," in *Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille*, vol. 11 of *Opere di Benedetto Croce* (Bari Laterza, 1968), pp. 23-25. The original Italian phrase is "non angosciato dai dubbi, non pensoso del destino umano" (p. 40). Though he gave the theme its fullest development, it was not entirely new with him. Cf. Ugo Foscolo, "Poemi Narrativi," in C. Foligno, ed., *Saggi di Letteratura Italiana* (Firenze LeMonnier, 1958), pt. 2, p. 124.

⁵ Among the notable "secularizers" and revisers of Croce's romantic deity are Giorgio DeBlasi, "Ariosto e le Passioni," pts. 1 and 2, *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 129 (1952) and 130 (1953), Lanfranco Caretti, "Ariosto," in *Ariosto e Tasso* (Torino Einaudi, 1961), and Walter Binni, *Metodo e Poesia di Ludovico Ariosto* (Messina G. D'Anna, 1947), esp. p. 89. DeBlasi and Caretti focus on the psychological equilibrium and ethical "harmony" of the poet, while Binni demonstrates the musical harmony of the versification. See also Chapter 4, nn. 166-67, below.

in the discordant multiplicity of creation ⁶ Nor is it my intention to deny that these applications of *armonia* to the poem, particularly the last, are appropriate. There is no doubt, in fact, that the poem's light tone, fluid prosody, and imaginative subject matter are designed specifically to elicit such a response, or that Ariosto is openly aware of constructing a festive art of "l canto e l'armonia" ("song and harmony" XLII 81-4), one which he likens to the successful blending of disparate sounds by a musician ⁷

*Signor, mi far convien come fa il buono
sonator sopra il suo instrumento arguto,
che spesso muta corda, e varia suono,
ricercando ora il grave, ora l'acuto*

[VIII 29 1-4]

Lord, I must do as the good player does upon his keen instrument, often changing chord and varying sound, seeking now the solemn, now the sharp

On the other hand, perhaps readers of the poem have underestimated the complexity and sophistication which marks Ariosto's understanding of the musical cosmology of his day, have failed to note his sense of its limits as a model either for his own artistry or for the grandly tormented world in which he lived

Thus rather than rejecting the critical concept of *armonia* out

⁶ For traditional concepts of *armonia*, see Leo Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963). For classical and Renaissance ideas of poetic and musical harmony applied specifically to the *Furioso*, see Robert Durling, *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 123-24 and p. 251 (nn. 7-10). For the presence of the theme in a variety of Renaissance poetics, see Concetta Greenfield, *Humanist and Scholastic Poetics, 1250-1500* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1981). In addition to the sources listed by these three, see Augustine, *Confessions* VIII 3; Baldassare Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano*, in C. Cordie, ed., *Opere di Baldassare Castiglione*, Giovanni della Casa, Benvenuto Cellini (Milano and Napoli: Ricciardi, 1960), I xlvi; Cristoforo Landino, "Proemio al Commento sopra la *Commedia* di Dante," in *Scritti Critici e Teorici*, ed. R. Cardini (Roma: Bulzoni, 1974), vol. I, p. 120. For additional sources and discussion, see Chapter 4, sec. III.

⁷ Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. L. Caretti (Milano and Napoli: Ricciardi, 1954). Consult also the diplomatic-critical edition of Santorre DeBenedetti and Cesare Segre (Bologna: Commissione per i Testi di Lingua, 1960). All references to the third and final version of the poem (1532) are to the former edition, all references to the first (1516) or second (1521) versions are to the latter edition.

of hand, one might pursue Ariosto's treatment of it a little further to find the moments when the tranquil exhilaration of "l canto e l'armonia" gives way to "aspro concento, orribile armonia" ("bitter unison, horrible harmony" XIV.134.1). I want to argue that Ariosto does sing his great song, with at least superficial success, as a means of evading, domesticating, and/or dominating impending crises of the self, the city, and the temple. But I also claim that an attentive listener might sense a bitter edge, a disturbing crack, in the singer's voice—one which betrays awareness of a poetic project doomed to failure and to being swallowed by the madness and death it so yearns to transcend. I will do this by a close reading of the poem, its images and metaphors, its narrative and other structures, in terms of texts and events of the time, as well as of the peculiar and contradictory responses the *Furioso* has evoked in readers over the centuries. As we shall see, even the apparently "modern" theme of *crisis* has its specific textual (even etymological) equivalent in the opposition between "errore" and "giudizio." In the last chapter I will show how the various thematic and structural crises of the poem are ultimately related to a complex Ariostan poetics (revealed in brief glimpses throughout the *Furioso*) of concord and discord, one and many, harmony and dissonance: a poetics which continually metamorphoses "discordia concors" into "concordia discors" (and vice versa) and which enters into crisis in the very act of fleeing from it.

That the poem's strongest impulse is toward evasion from historical claims of church and state is clear from the first. The poem begins with a thematic swerve from epic "arme" toward romance "amori," from the besieged city of Paris, capital and last outpost of Charlemagne's Christian Empire, into the dark forest of imagination and desire:

[pazzia] è come una gran selva, ove la via
 conviene a forza, a chi vi va, fallire:
 chi su, chi giù, chi qua, chi là travia.

[XXIV.2.3-5]

[love madness] is like a great forest, where the path deceives whoever goes there: one up, one down, one here, one there—all stray.

And as the heroes of the poem depart from historical "impegno" in *their* world, the poem takes a distance, both spatial and temporal, on the world of its author. Even the usual strange and desolate haunts

of romance wandering are sometimes abandoned for places beyond all charted geographies and all readerly credibility: the fantastic island of Alcina; the splendid lunar surface itself. Purporting to be a Virgilian epic of genealogical and political origins, where past should be prologue to the historical moment of writing, the poem more often than not seems to be ridiculing any such connection—for instance by its insistent reference to the transparently bogus authority of Bishop Turpin—and to be seeking refuge from an unsettled present in a purely mythical past.⁸ The famous narrative strategy of deferral and interlacing matches the deferrals by characters, particularly Ruggiero and Orlando, of all definitive choices and commitments: of political and military duty, of religious faith, and of marriage. The incessant interruptions of adventures at their midpoint, the practice of putting off from one canto to the next the conclusion of a narrative sequence, the immediate passage of heroes and heroines from the end of one adventure to the beginning of another, even more threatening, the potentially endless proliferation of events, characters, landscapes, and so on: all these contribute to the sense that no final closure will ever be reached, no decisive contact between poem and reality made.

It is this technique of narrative, thematic, and structural evasions which led Attilio Momigliano to his brilliant comparison of the poem to the labyrinthine palaces of Atlante where “*donne e cavalieri*” wander endlessly after the magical figments of their own fantasy and desire, where they, and especially Ruggiero, Atlante’s beloved adopted son, are sheltered from the encroachments of time and from the brutal, treacherous death which inevitably attends the young knight’s conversion and marriage to Bradamante.⁹ As I will show, however, the poet as an Atlante is early set against another prophet-poet-magician, Merlin: a principle of evasion from history and its threatening crises encounters and is countered by a prophetic

⁸ See Durling, *The Figure of the Poet*, p. 250 (n. 4), for a list of the (mostly ironic) references to Turpin as historical *auctoritas*. Refer to nn. 53 and 55 below on the general question of Ariosto’s imitation and/or originality in the use of sources.

⁹ Attilio Momigliano, *Saggio sull’ “Orlando Furioso”* (Bari. Laterza, 1928), pp. 7–50. For the view that Atlante stands not for Ariosto, but for his predecessor, Boiardo, in the *Furioso*, see David Quint, “The Figure of Atlante: Ariosto and Boiardo’s Poem,” *MLN* 94 (1979), to whose views I will return in Chapter 4.

celebration of political dynasty and active heroism ¹⁰ For most of the poem Ariosto seems indeed more closely tied to the former than to the latter, to be a poet of aesthetic delight more than of moral utility, of fantastic departure from, rather than allegorical commentary on or mimetic representation of, "reality." Atlante, however, is a poet somewhat different from the one described by Croce—his retreat is motivated precisely by his anguish, while his evasions are strategies to impede a destined, tragic, reality all too clearly foreseen. In other words, he takes his flight *in relation to* crises already on the horizon. If this line were followed, and it will be, we would learn that Ariosto is a poet oppressed by an awareness of crisis and moved by an overwhelming desire to stand outside of it, to interpose an aesthetic distance between himself and his age, himself and God, himself and himself, yet frankly aware of the futility of such a project. The first focus of this study will be the "crisis of identity," but it will appear soon enough that this crisis cannot be separated or judged apart from the religious beliefs and institutions or from the political commitments and events which both threaten the autonomy of the individual person and yet offer it definition and self-realization.

Until recently, if some readers have been willing to find in the *Furioso* the traces of an historical upheaval, these were always taken to be, as it were, negative and involuntary, never to be mistaken for profound creative engagement with history or a genuinely anguished scrutiny of the self by itself. G. W. F. Hegel, in a famous passage from his *Aesthetics*, links Ariosto's name to that of Cervantes as the ironic devastators of the medieval chivalric tradition and its values. ¹¹ Francesco DeSanctis refines the brief Hegelian characterization to discover an Ariosto who takes refuge in the tranquil domain of "pure art," from which is excluded any reference to politics, ethics, or religion. ¹² Both Hegel and DeSanctis make Ariosto

¹⁰ Merlin is introduced in the crucial canto III, while Atlante makes his first major appearance in canto IV. They are clearly linked by their involvement, at opposite extremes, in the genealogical plot.

¹¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 591–92, 605, vol. 2, pp. 1107–1108.

¹² Francesco DeSanctis, "Ariosto," in M. T. Lanza, ed., *Storia della Letteratura Italiana* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 451–52, 468. Cf. Momigliano, *Saggio*, p. 292, on "la consonanza del *Furioso* con il suo secolo."

the uncritical reflector of a certain historical crisis of values, the epitome of what they take to be the "Spirit" of his age. The critique which DeSanctis aims at Ariosto is, at the broadest level, indistinguishable from that which he directs at Boccaccio, and at the Renaissance in general.¹³ Nonetheless, "Ludovico della tranquillitate," heir apparent of "Johannes tranquillitatis," has, like his genial predecessor, now begun to be spoken of in contemporary criticism as a poet of historical and personal crisis.¹⁴

Even before the recent attempts to represent Ariosto's "seriousness," most critics recognized one work in his canon as the reflection of a violent crisis, even as they denied that the *Furioso* was in any sense contaminated by this moment in Ariostan poetics. The *Cinque Canti*, written for inclusion in the *Furioso* and yet finally omitted by the poet, even from the third and last edition of the poem (1532), have often been cited as evidence that Ariosto recognized how alien their bleak and desperate spirit was to the dominant tones and themes of the *Furioso*.¹⁵ The "dark" elements of Ariosto's poetic consciousness were thus consistently relegated to a

¹³ This study is influenced throughout by work done by Giuseppe Mazzotta on the *Decameron*. See in particular his articles "The *Decameron*: The Marginality of Literature," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 42 (1972), "The *Decameron*: The Literal and the Allegorical," *Italian Quarterly* 72 (1975), and "Games of Laughter in the *Decameron*," *Romanic Review* 69 (1978). Of immediate pertinence here is Professor Mazzotta's exploration of the complex significance of the flight of the storytellers from plague-ridden Florence, a symbol of the historical realities of pestilential disease and death, into the temporary refuge of pastoral life, from which perspective, nonetheless, they continue to reflect upon the world they have abandoned. Ariosto too is concerned with the marginal situation of literature, its double, and duplicitous, character as gloss on and departure from history. Thus, if I partly subscribe to the notion of Ariosto as the heir of Boccaccio (and Ovid), it is not in opposition to the "high seriousness" of Virgil, Dante, and Milton.

¹⁴ For the transfer of epithets, see Antonio Baldini, "Ludovico della Tranquillitate," in *Ariosto e dintorni* (Caltanissetta and Roma: Salvatore Sciascia, 1958).

¹⁵ This judgment is almost universally repeated in twentieth-century criticism of Ariosto. The following passage from Giorgio Petrocchi, "Lettura dell'*Orlando Furioso*," in *I Fantismi di Tancredi* (Caltanissetta and Roma: Salvatore Sciascia, 1972), is representative in pointing out "quegli elementi di crisi e di disagio che segnarono il passaggio dal pieno al tardo Rinascimento, e dei quali Ludovico Ariosto ebbe in qualche senso a soffrire negli ultimi anni della sua vita, riflettendone il clima di dubbio nei *Cinque Canti*" (p. 282). For a survey of some of the important studies on the *Cinque Canti* see Caretti, *Ariosto e Tasso*, pp. 159-60.

lesser work, thereby, as one hoped, dialectically excluding or exorcising them from the poet's most famous text. But the critical winds have shifted dramatically of late. In an early essay, Lanfranco Caretti defines the *Cinque Canti* as "different and more serious than the first, more authentic, inspiration of the poem," precisely because they foreshadow the "profound crisis" which was about to destroy an already fragile political equilibrium.¹⁶ In a recent, palinodic "Codiccillo," however, he concedes that in the 1532 edition the *Orlando Furioso* too is marked by the uneasy awareness of political turmoil and by a series of disillusioning personal experiences, notably the brutal period passed by the poet as governor of Garfagnana.¹⁷ Caretti still rescues the picture of a sunny, untroubled, affirmative Ariosto, wholehearted celebrator of the Estense court and author of an "unified image of life," although only by narrowing its existence to the first edition, published in 1516. It may eventually be shown, though if this study does so it will be only incidentally, that even this further retrenching cannot be sustained and that the Ariostan sense of crisis goes stubbornly beyond the various historical and autobiographical schemes which have been imposed on it.

As early as 1952, Giorgio DeBlasi published a brilliant though uneven essay which focused on the poem's dramatizations and thematizations of the psychological limitations of man—his blindness and irrationality—even though he then went on to argue that those perceptions of mental and moral crisis were recontained and overcome in the very act of recognizing their existence.¹⁸ Giorgio

¹⁶ "Ariosto," p. 40: "diverso e 'seriore' rispetto alla prima e più autentica ispirazione del poema." An earlier version of the essay appears as the introduction to Ludovico Ariosto, *Opere Minori*, ed. C. Segre (Milano and Napoli: Ricciardi, 1954), from which all citations of the poetic works of Ariosto other than the *Furioso* itself will be taken.

¹⁷ Caretti, "Codiccillo," in *Antichi e Moderni* (Torino: Einaudi, 1976). For the stormy years in Garfagnana and other biographical questions, first consult Michele Catalano, *Vita di Ludovico Ariosto* (Genève: Leo S. Olschki, 1930–1931). See also the *Lettere*, ed. A. Stella (Verona: Mondadori, 1965). For a provocative reading of the *Lettere* as sublimated expression of psychological/linguistic/cultural crisis, see Neuro Bonifazi, *Le Lettere Infedeli* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1975), pp. 1–80.

¹⁸ In "Ariosto e le Passioni," DeBlasi sees the recuperation of value and stability taking place through the rhetorical poet-figure who is able to recognize his own and others' limits and thus partially to escape them. His work seems to me, as to

Padoan and Vittore Branca confirm that today the image of Ariosto as a poet caught up in a far-reaching political and cultural crisis, and, to a lesser extent, a crisis of the self and its identity, is gradually winning favor.¹⁹ Branca attacks in particular the view of the *Furioso* as "a masterpiece apparently sunny and apollonian, unproblematic and disengaged" and wishes to place it in the context of a Renaissance "troubled and anxious, on the edge of infernal or apocalyptic abysses, obsessed by irrationality and folly" although he still sees Ariosto as a (besieged) defender of the values of the Renaissance as they and it have been traditionally understood.²⁰ Eduardo Saccone, who himself draws a sharp line between the *Furioso* and the *Cinque Canti*, nonetheless accurately describes how a crisis of the poet's sense of himself may be reflected in a crisis of poetics: "the greatest novelty in the *Cinque Canti* . . . is the crisis of a poetics understood as demiurgic ordering, building out of chaos, and a consequent . . . transformation [of poetry] into humble and resigned witness, a difficult and risky writing."²¹

Coordinate with this substantial reduction of the quasi-divine powers claimed by the poet-narrator for himself from the *Furioso* to the *Cinque Canti*, Saccone discovers in the latter work alone a pointed attack on the Renaissance vision of integral and autonomous human selfhood. In particular, the insidious metamorphoses

Durling (*The Figure of the Poet*, p. 252, n. 20), the most important precursor of the best recent American critics of the poem, including A.B. Giamatti's chapter on Ariosto in *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

¹⁹ Padoan, "L'*Orlando Furioso* e la Crisi del Rinascimento," in A. Scaglione, ed., *Ariosto 1974 in America* (Ravenna: Longo, 1976). Branca, "Ludovico non della Tranquillitate," *Veltro* 19 (1975), contests Baldini's characterization.

²⁰ Branca, "Ludovico," pp. 75-76: the *Furioso* is a "capolavoro apparentemente solare e apollineo, aproblematico e disimpegnato" but actually reflects a Renaissance "turbato e ansioso, sull'orlo di abissi infernali o apocalittici, ossessionato dall'irrazionale e dalla follia."

²¹ Eduardo Saccone, "Appunti per una Definizione dei *Cinque Canti*," in *Il Soggetto del "Furioso" e Altri Saggi tra '400 e '500* (Napoli: Liguori, 1974), p. 132 (first published in *Belfagor* 20 [1965]): "la novità maggiore dei *Cinque Canti* . . . [è] la crisi di una poetica intesa come demiurgica ordinazione, architettura del caos, e il conseguente . . . trasformarsi [della poesia] in testimonianza umile e rassegnata . . . un poetare difficile . . . e rischioso."

of the demon Vertunno are taken to represent a crisis of human identity itself.²² This reading shifts attention from the question of objective conditions of political turmoil to the question of the subjective self in crisis. In a later essay the same critic begins to suggest how the same concern is addressed in the greater work, though in a far more affirmative key.²³ Nor should this seem like such a surprising discovery in a poem which in its title and throughout focuses on the related themes of madness and the loss or acquisition of identity.

In the last fifteen years, the imaginative barrier between the *Cinque Canti* and the *Furioso* has been repeatedly breached. The poem has been seen as a reflector of the great epistemological crisis of its age and as the site of a complex crisis in the language which mediates between psyche and society.²⁴ Above all, Eugenio Donato has most cogently and effectively illuminated the darker side of the *Furioso* with a brilliant demonstration of the "centrality" to the poem of the self caught and dispersed in the errors of decentering desire and of the deceptive language which expresses it.²⁵ Donato draws heavily on René Girard's analysis of novelistic treatments of deceit and desire, although he believes that Ariosto subverts the optimistic Girardian model of an "autobiographical" narrative which begins by expressing its own entrapment in desire's illusions but ends with a liberating perspective outside of passion. In stark contrast then is the inconclusive Ariostan narrative which never claims to emerge from the toils of error, never constitutes its author as a coherent and masterful "io."²⁶ In Donato's version of the *Furioso*, the representation of political crisis is all but for-

²² Ibid., pp. 133-35.

²³ Saccone, "Il Soggetto del *Furioso*," in *Il Soggetto*, pp. 201-247.

²⁴ The first position is that of Elizabeth Chesney, *The Counter-Voyage of Rabelais and Ariosto: A Comparative Reading of Two Renaissance Mock Epics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982). The second is that of Bonifazi (*Le Lettere*, pp. 81-120).

²⁵ "'Per Selve e Boscherecci Labirinti' Desire and Narrative Structure in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*," *Barroco* 4 (1972). Regrettably the limited diffusion of this Brazilian periodical in the United States has kept Donato's article from receiving the recognition it deserves.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 31. See also René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965)

gotten: it is a "self-referential" narrative, and not one which successfully refers to the author's self *or* to the "real world" ²⁷

In spite of the fundamental value of this analysis, a number of objections may be raised against it. Since, in fact, the poem does finally, at least superficially, appear to predict an escape from narrative error (XLVI 1) and does clearly attempt to shape a masterful "figure of the poet," it might be better to speak not of its refusals to make these claims, but rather of its resistance to and reversal of its own claims. At the same time, in order to avoid anachronism, and to reveal more fully the intertextual play of the *Furioso*, one might wish to refer the Ariostan perspective on language and desire not only to Derrida and Girard but also, more persuasively, to the traditions available to the author: rhetorical humanism, neo-Platonism, and even the Augustinian discourse on language as agent of absence and desire—which, as we shall see, are extraordinarily problematic in their own right.²⁸ Most important, although the discovery of a crisis within Ariosto's language may appear to be relatively, if not radically, new, the formulation of "self-referential narration" remains within the DeSanctian tradition of "art for art's sake," even when it ostensibly serves a frontal attack on Croce's vision of the divine totality of the poet's perspective. DeSanctis furnishes the hint that Croce develops into the image of Ariosto as omniscient God, while Donato says that the *Furioso* subverts any "theological concept of the book."²⁹ DeSanctis, however, closes on a seemingly opposite note with which Donato would be likely to agree: "the creator has disappeared into the creature" ³⁰

²⁷ Donato, "Desire," p. 32

²⁸ Donato himself, in a note (*ibid.*), raises the possibility of consulting neo-Platonic sources to elucidate the "selva" of passionate error, but then demurs, calling for a study of the *Furioso* based on a "yet to be elaborated" theory of the intertextuality of the poem, its playful twisting and revision of the traditions. In this regard, see Giamatti's suggestive invocation of the Platonic tradition of the "horses of desire" in his "Headlong Horses, Headless Horsemen: An Essay in the Chivalric Romances of Pulci, Boiardo and Ariosto," K. Atchity and G. Rimanelli, eds., *Italian Literature: Roots and Branches* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). For Augustine on the relation between language and desire, see *Confessions*, bk. 1, chaps. 6–8.

²⁹ Croce, "Ariosto," p. 46. Cf. DeSanctis, "Ariosto," p. 453, and Donato, "Desire," p. 31.

³⁰ DeSanctis, "Ariosto," p. 471: "il creatore è scomparso nella creatura."

And one is even tempted to refer both of them back to perhaps the earliest of Ariosto's critics, G.B. Giralaldi-Cinzio, who wrote that "like the chameleon, which takes its color from whatever it leans against, so Ariosto adapts his style to each thing he wishes to treat."³¹ The image of the chameleon in turn reminds us that Pico della Mirandola, thirty years before Ariosto first published his poem, had imagined man as chameleon, a creature whose very ability to lose himself in an infinite series of identities is precisely that which offered him the possibility of approaching the comprehensiveness and oneness of God himself. Thus the Renaissance was certainly *able* to set side by side, as part of a single dialectic, the dispersal and constitution of the self. And the *Furioso* was therefore in a position to sustain both theological and anti-theological interpretations, while calling both into question—making affirmative reference to its "divine" author *and* subverting both his identity and its own power to refer to him.

The critical question of the referentiality of the *Furioso*, especially of its references to crises of one kind or another, cannot be resolved simply, or perhaps at all. In many ways, however, this is precisely the question to which my book will be addressed, implicitly and explicitly, throughout. Whether it will ever reach that address, much less answer the question fully on arrival, is not something I am prepared to decide. What I am interested in, and I believe Ariosto was as well, is the troubled itinerary of reference: whether of the text to its author, of the text to "history," including its readers, or of the text to "itself." In the last instance, one might ask whether the text is always, or ever, "self-identical" in such a

³¹ Giambattista Giralaldi-Cinzio, *Lettera a G.B. Pigna*, March 28, 1554, partially reprinted in A. Borlenghi, *Ariosto* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1961), p. 125: "come il camaleonte, che, come egli da quella cosa prende colore alla quale si appoggia, così l'Ariosto da ogni cosa che vuole trattare addatta . . . lo stile." For the *topos* of writer as chameleon, see Landino, "Proemio," p. 120, where it is applied to Alberti. A similar note is in fact struck by DeSanctis in treating Ariosto: "il suo ingegno è trasmutabile in tutte guise . . . secondo la varia natura delle cose" ("Ariosto," p. 253). The same thought reappears in Croce, "Ariosto," p. 43. For additional material on the image of the chameleon in the Renaissance (esp. in England), see Jonas Barish, *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 98–112.

way as to permit "self-referential" narration, since to speak of a self is to attribute *a priori* to the text a certain unity, which in the case of Ariosto at least has always had to be laboriously and doubtfully reconstructed. Perhaps an insistence on this devious referential process will turn out to be something like an answer, after all.

For the moment, an heuristic survey of some of the prominent names of Ariosto criticism has furnished three versions of crisis to which the *Furioso* may be referred: crises of an historical epoch (whether political, cultural, or religious), crises of the self caught in its temporal predicament, and crises of the process of reference itself. The first two of these are, in a sense, already thematically juxtaposed in Ariosto's canon. The life of Ariosto, or rather his "autobiographical" writings (the *Satire*, not to mention the *Lettere*), reflects the tension, crucial for so many Renaissance authors, between the active life and the contemplative, though one might prefer to use the humanistic categories of *negotium* and *otium* in order not to confuse Ariosto's desire for time to write poetry with the defense by Cristoforo Landino and others of neo-Platonic spiritual ascent by contemplation.³² This oft-cited passage from one of the *Lettere* exemplifies a recurrent theme:³³

³² On this subject, generally, see Segre, "La Poesia dell'Ariosto," in *Esperienze Ariostesche* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1966), p. 9, first published as the introduction to Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* (Milano: Mondadori, 1964). See also the *Lettere* and the *Satire*, which give the clearest first-person image of Ariosto's discontents. In particular, see *Satira* I, entire, and *Satira* VI, line 238, with its bitter complaint against Ippolito who "di poeta cavallar mi feo" (cf. Chapter 4, sec. v, below). A recent article by Caretti, "Autoritratto Ariostesco," in *Antichi e Moderni*, pp. 109-120, and first published in *Terzoprogramma* 2-3 (1974), maintains that the *Lettere*, unlike the *Satire*, are not conscious and artful fictions of the self, and thus offer a more "direct" and "spontaneous" view of Ariosto. In addition to a cautionary note regarding the patent artfulness of most epistles in the Renaissance (witness Petrarch, and even Machiavelli), one would also hesitate to assume that any form of writing offers unmediated access to its author's "frame of mind." In Ariosto's case, one almost supposes that the author is most himself when he is being most coy and is most carefully veiling himself in disingenuous fictions. Finally, for the active vs. contemplative debate, see Landino, bk. 1 of the *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, ed. P. Lohe (Firenze: Sansoni, 1980), pp. 3-49, which is also excerpted, with facing-page Italian translation in E. Garin, ed., *Prosatori Latini del Quattrocento* (Napoli and Milano: Ricciardi, 1952).

³³ This and all future citations of the *Lettere* are from Stella's edition.

E vero ch'io faccio un poco di giunta al mio Orlando Furioso, cioè io l'ho cominciata, ma poi da l'un lato il Duca, da l'altro il cardinale, havendomi l'un tolto una possessione che già piu di trecent'anni era di casa nostra, l'altro un'altra possessione m'hanno messo altra voglia che di pensare a favole

[xxvi 4-5]

It is true that I am making a little addition to my *Orlando Furioso*, that is, I began it, but then the Duke, on the one hand, and the Cardinal, on the other, the former having taken from me a property which had been in our family for more than three hundred years, the latter another property , have given me other things to think about than fables

The early humanist proposal of a balance between public engagement and private study, which was in jeopardy from the 1440s on in any case (as the myth of a Florentine Republic gave way increasingly before the fact of Medici domination), though in a sense repropounded by such neo-Platonist bureaucrats and diplomats as Bembo and Castiglione, is clearly in trouble for Ariosto³⁴

The tendency, however, has been to see the dialectic as a stable one Ariosto's unhappy life as an Estense official, on the one hand, and his private world of poetic fantasy on the other But the *Furioso*, which in this scheme should be the inviolate *locus amoenus* of literature, reproduces within itself a thematic tension between public and private (as well as between outer and inner, words and intentions, etc) In particular, at the narrative and thematic levels of the poem, "public" trauma and private crises of desire and identity are inextricably intertwined and in fact seem to determine one another This is certainly true in the case of Orlando, whose solitary pursuit of Angelica and consequent fall into madness are among the principal causes of the aggravation of the public crisis in Paris under siege In fact, as we shall see later on, the madness is doubly attributed to the "private" causes of Angelica's betrayal (xxiii 128) and to the "public" cause of Orlando's failure to honor commitments to

³⁴ See the selection from Matteo Palmieri's *Della Vita Civile* in C Varese, ed., *Prosatori Volgari del Quattrocento* (Napoli and Milano Ricciardi, 1955), p 359, for a classic example of the *topos* of writing as the fruit of the brief intervals of "ozio" afforded by a life of active civic commitment For the retreat from civic humanism into a purely "academic" philology and philosophy under the rule of Lorenzo de' Medici, see, for example, Garin, *L'Umanesimo Italiano* (Bari Laterza 1952), esp chap 3, sec 1, "La Crisi della Liberta "

Carlo, to Christendom, and to God (ix.1; xxxiv.63-64). By the same token, Ruggiero's protracted dilemma is first enacted as a choice between situations of crisis: the private world of Atlante's labyrinthine castle (or of Alcina's island), where he will live long but never win public identity, or the historical world into which his marriage and conversion will lead him, conferring a name on him at the cost of his premature death.

On the one hand, the "separation" of self from the city leads toward the generalized dissolution of the community and the disappearance of the self into forgetfulness and/or madness, while, on the other, the inevitable reclaiming of the self by a series of authoritarian structures (from Carlo's empire to God's) has a devastating effect on the private identity, equaling its death. It is within the perspective of this awkward play between history and subjectivity that one ought to place the *Cinquecento* debate, largely inspired by the *Furioso*, on the existence or nonexistence of a genre of narrative plurality and subjectivity which is complementary to the unified public world of epic, that is, the *romance*.³⁵ One might even say that the poem was written to generate the critical controversies which immediately began to swirl around it. For that matter, one might say that it was written proleptically as a critique of the distinction made by Lukács between epic and novel: the one the document of an unreflective self in harmony with its culture, whose

³⁵ See, of course, G B Giraldi-Cinzio, *Discorso Intorno al Comporre dei Romanzi* and G B Pigna, *I Romanzi*. For the unfolding of the controversy throughout the *Cinquecento* and its importance for the later Ariosto/Tasso polemic, see Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), esp. vol. 2, pp. 954-1073. Patricia Parker, in her fine chapter on Ariosto in *Inescapable Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), begins by emphasizing the elements of romance in the *Furioso*, but goes on to show how the poet juxtaposes epic and romance elements to undercut or qualify both genres (p. 44). See Quint ("Atlante"), who has argued instead that Ariosto imposes epic closure on the open-ended romance form of Boiardo. See Pio Rajna, *Le Fonti dell' "Orlando Furioso,"* ed. F. Mazzoni (Firenze: Sansoni, 1975), for the romance sources of the poem and for the opinion that Ariosto's only "originality" consists in his fusion of medieval romance with the Latin classics (pp. 37-38). See Daniella DelCorno-Branca, *L' "Orlando Furioso" e il Romanzo Cavalleresco Medievale* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1973), for an instance of the laudable trend toward taking the presence of the romance tradition in the poem more seriously (cf. Chapter 3, n. 69, below).

voice it makes its own; the other the record of an alienated and inauthentic self, forever "separated" from its cultural context.³⁶ Ariosto instead reveals what may have been implicit in the epic from the beginning: the splits within the self, within the city, and between the two of them. The *Aeneid*, as modern criticism has recognized, has as its itinerary the suppression of an individual and his desires in order to found a nation, even as it mourns the violence of that suppression.³⁷ Even the *Iliad*, upon which almost all theories of "pure" epic and unified cultural consciousness come to rest, narrates precisely the "crisis" of Achilles' separation from the Greek camp and consequently from his own apparent destiny, which causes *and* reflects a crisis in the Achaian war effort.³⁸ It is one of the little ironies of the history of criticism that the first "romance," the *Odyssey*, which traces the "errors" of the ironic hero *par excellence*, culminates, as the *Iliad* clearly does not, in a relatively successful reintegration of self, family, and community. To the extent that the *Furioso* repeats or discovers the common feature of prior epics, one is moved to inquire further as to whether the represen-

³⁶ Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971)

³⁷ W.R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). See also Adam Parry, "The Two Voices of Virgil's *Aeneid*," *Arion* 2 (1963); as well as Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, pp. 42-43, who, though contrasting Ariostan error with Virgilian epic, still notes the Odyssean, erroneous, element in Virgil. Though William Kennedy, *Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), observes that "as in Virgil's poem, the chief source of drama is between role and selfhood" (p. 138), he follows up with a discussion of the discrepancy between the desires and the powers of the self, which is not the same thing. He does suggest that this tension exists within the poet's dual role as celebrant of the Este and as private ironist (p. 142).

³⁸ From at least Vico on, a vision of the primitive poets, and Homer above all, as "unreflective," integrated wholly with their cultural and natural surroundings, as yet untainted by the modern fall into ironic self-consciousness and alienation, has circulated in Western thought, although often modified in interesting ways. One influential twentieth-century version is Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar," in *Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). The same, questionable, interpretation can be seen in C.M. Bowra's distinction between "authentic" and "literary" epics, in *From Virgil to Milton* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945), and in C.S. Lewis' separation of "primary" from "secondary" epics in *A Preface to "Paradise Lost"* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942). For a very useful survey of critical attitudes toward Homer from Plato forward, see Fausto Codino, *Introduzione ad Omero* (Torino: Piccole Edizioni Einaudi, 1965).

tation of these two kinds of crisis and their relation is "public" or purely conventional, or whether it reflects the "private" and troubled consciousness of its author. Ultimately the dialectic here elaborated might be supposed to inhere in the fabric of language itself, understood as a contradictory structure which functions only because it is available to a whole community regardless of internal differences and specificities but which is, at the same time, a series of expressions by individuals, provoked by their thoughts and desires. Thus the representations of crises point toward a crisis within language in general and within Ariosto's poetry in particular.

In the light of these observations, my recently proposed division of crises into historical, subjective, and referential appears to be contrived and even deceptive, since every crisis of the self is enacted in terms of the self's relation to the otherness of history, while every generalized historical crisis is documented and filtered by the reactions of individuals to it. As Lauro Martines, an acute historian of the Renaissance, puts it: "historical crisis is at once in the mind and outside of it."³⁹ Nor can the first two sorts of crisis ever really be separated from the last one, since they are always mediated by, represented within, a text or series of texts (or within such related semiological systems as painting, architecture, and so on, which yield up their reference to crisis only when translated by and into an interpreting language) which are themselves torn between the subjective origin and the objects of representation. Nonetheless, the tripartite scheme has its uses, as long as it is thus qualified, since it reflects and at the same time limits the theses of several generations of Ariosto criticism and since the text deploys such oppositions itself only to collapse them. It allows us to see, for example, that one would err in excluding public crisis, just as one would err in insisting only on moments of historical upheaval. The special task of this study, in any case, will be to chart the devious paths between the attempted representations of external or internal crises and the "crises of representation" which inform, limit, and perhaps even defeat such attempts.

The primary guide to this exercise in "mapping" the *Furioso* will be the *Furioso* itself, in imitation of Ariosto's final, emphatic, de-

³⁹ Martines, *Power and Imagination*, p. 297.

claration to the "donne e cavallieri" who are both his subject (I.I 1) and his audience (XLVI 3.1-2).

*Or se mi mostra la mia carta il vero
non è lontano a discoprirsì il porto,
sì che nel lito i voti scioglier spero
a chi nel mar per tanta via m'ha scorto,
ove, o di non tornar con legno intero,
o d'errar sempre, ebbi già il viso smorto*

[XLVI I 1-6]

Now, if my chart tells me the truth, the port will reveal itself before long, so that I hope to fulfill my vows to the one who accompanied me during the long sea-journey—though I had earlier paled with fear that I would not return with a sound vessel, or that I would wander forever

The "sea of error" from which the poet escapes by ending the poem is the labyrinthine structure of the poem itself (and he clearly did not escape it so easily, since for the remaining sixteen years of his life after its publication he continued to rework it) But the "carta," "chart" or "map," but also "paper" and thus traditionally "poem" as well, by which he charts his way out of the poem is also the poem Few other poetic images have more powerfully evoked the necessities and the perils of reading as of writing ⁴⁰ Or

⁴⁰ The uses of "carta," Latin "charta," meaning primarily "paper," as a synecdoche for "poem" are helpfully documented by E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 309, 329. Curtius also documents numerous medieval and classical sources for the equation of writing and nautical voyages (pp. 128-30). Curiously enough, the intersection of "carta" as chart or map and "carta" as a poem does not appear in any of the passages cited by Curtius (if anything, it is the double sense of "velum" as veil or poetic surface and as "sail" around which the image turns). Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, pp. 16-17, points to the evident double meaning of "carta," but does not trace its sources. The importance which I attach to the image might be compromised if Ariosto's use of it proved to be merely a repetition of those sources, but, at least in the two most promising analogues (Dante's *Purgatorio* I 1-5 and *Paradiso* 2 1-7, 13-15, as well as Boccaccio's *Filostrato* IX 3-4), key elements are missing. Neither uses the word "carta." In Boccaccio, the closer analogue of the two, it is the object of his desire which is his guide across the sea (the boat/book is also the "legno dei nostri amori"). In Dante, it is the poet who guides and the reader who risks losing himself forever. Both, however, do create complex images of the poet/poem, poem/reader relations. See also Boccaccio, *Filocolo* V 97 1, Pulci, *Morgante* I 4, II 1, III 1, XXVIII 2-3, 146, *Mambriano* XV 1.

rather, of writing which is also a reading for to end his poem, Ariosto "reads" it to discover where he/it is. The author is a writer and a reader of his own writing, and between the two halves of this doubled self is a text which is both sea, the realm of error, and the mapping of a sea, the means of escaping out of error into a fixed and coherent location. This conflation of functions, of course, makes error and the interpretation of error "literally" indistinguishable, even synonymous. The use of the reflexive "discoprirsi" to indicate a self-discovery or revelation makes this process of doubling all the plainer. Such, I would suggest, is also the fate of the interpreters of Ariosto, condemned to illuminating some part or all of the *Furioso* by referring to some other part, as I am doing now, only to discover that the "chart" has suddenly itself become "sea" and must then be reviewed from another perspective and so on infinitely, or rather, indefinitely. By the same token, the critical reading must itself be read and subjected to "erroneous" interpretations. If the "charting" of interpretation seems to close, or to desire to close, the meaning of the *Furioso* and thus to avoid the risk of "erring forever," nonetheless, the task of traversing the enormous sea of the longest poem in Italian literature protracts the process of interpretation into inconclusive wandering, thus giving extraordinary force to the dubious "se" with which Ariosto opens the stanza cited above.⁴¹ One would be tempted to assume that the glossing of the poem by the poem is precisely that "self-referentiality" which has been the constant theme of the poem's critics. But the circuit of reference, as we have just seen, is hardly direct, much less closed,

⁴¹ See Parker for an especially acute exploration of the theme and poetics of error in the *Furioso*. The theme of error, however, has been reiterated in criticism of the poem from the *Cinquecento* to the present, as Parker herself observes. Also of interest is D. S. Carne-Ross, "The One and the Many: A Reading of the *Orlando Furioso*, Cantos 1 and 8," *Arion* 5 (Summer 1966), esp. pp. 198–200 and p. 232 (n. 2), with its list of literary and philosophical sources for the image. As a source for Ariosto one should add his friend Pietro Bembo's *Gli Asolani*, in *Opere in Volgare*, ed. M. Marti (Firenze: Sansoni, 1961), esp. bk. 1, pp. 11–13, 19, 84–85, 90 (cf. Chapter 3, n. 149, below). Recent elaborations of the concept of error can be traced in part to Friedrich Nietzsche, see, for instance, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor, 1956), p. 10. I owe a particular debt to Mazzotta's elegant treatment of poetic and interpretive error in *Dante: Poet of the Desert* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

and is therefore so liable to invite straying that one might almost be afraid that one was actually interpreting the poem as something else entirely while passing it off as a reference to itself. DeSanctis, for example, might think that he was referring to the poem's autotelic nature, whereas in fact he was assuming that the poem refers, *avant la lettre*, to an eighteenth-century theory of aesthetics, perhaps to Kant's definition of the work of art as a "purposive object without purpose."⁴² If, as I shall argue below, the *Furioso* anticipates and dramatizes such critical blindspots in its readers, Ariosto will appear not only as a reader of his own poem, but of its numerous critics as well, *avant la lettre* indeed.⁴³

It is clear that within the terms of the extended metaphor which opens canto XLVI the only assured destination of the poem is precisely its audience, the "donne" and "cavallieri" who await the poet on the liminal shoreline, a powerful figure for the ambiguous zone of contact between any text and its readers. By including this review in the poem, Ariosto seems to be trying, as poets regularly do, to enclose and create his readers within the world of the poem, thus escaping the violence of (mis)interpretation and arrogating a godlike mastery.⁴⁴ Thus the poem seems more than ever determined to refer only to itself. But there is a second moment, later in the canto, which revises the first, and makes such a conclusion problematical. The contemporary knights and ladies reading the *Furioso* find an echo in the analogous viewers and readers of the

⁴² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, excerpted in H. Adams, ed., *Critical Theory since Plato* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 384.

⁴³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), announced, in one of the best known phrases of recent theory, that "criticism can talk, and all the arts are dumb" (p. 4). I obviously disagree with this statement, which represents a great body of critical-aesthetic opinion, including Croce's, and which simultaneously exalts and trivializes poetic language. For me, the poem is both "sea" and "chart," both object of commentary and a commentary in its own right. On the theme of poetic silence, see Chapter 4, sec. III, below.

⁴⁴ See, for example, the critical attention which has been given to Dante's attempt to constitute the reader within the *Commedia*, especially Auerbach, "Dante's Addresses to the Reader," *Romance Philology* 7 (1954), and Leo Spitzer, "The Addresses to the Reader in the *Commedia*," in *Romanische Literaturstudien* 1936-56 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1959). More recently, see Mazzotta, *Dante*. For Ariosto, cf. Chesney, *Rabelais and Ariosto*, p. 167.

tapestry of Cassandra ⁴⁵

*Le donne e i cavalier mirano fisi,
senza trarne construtto, le figure,
perché non hanno appresso che gli avvisi
che tutte quelle sien cose future
Prendon piacere a riguardare i visi
belli e ben fatti, e legger le scritture
Sol Bradamante da Melissa instrutta
gode tra sé, ché sa l'istoria tutta*

[98]

The ladies and knights gaze intently at the figures, though without understanding them because they have no one to alert them that these are things to come. They take pleasure in looking at the faces, lovely and well-crafted, and in reading the inscriptions. Only Bradamante, taught by Melissa, delights inwardly because she knows the whole story.

These readers treat the canvas as a pure, self-enclosed, aesthetic object, which refers, as far as they can tell, to nothing beyond itself. In fact, however, as the exceptional complicity of Bradamante reveals, the tent is not only not self-referential, but also refers precisely to its readers and their descendants. Even as it attempts to define its readers, the poem hints that it will always be misconstrued by them.

Bradamante's delightful knowledge seems to leave open a place for a privileged reader who sees how the poem opens onto the self and its place in history. Nonetheless, her reading is in some ways the most perverse of all, since her delight implies a willful blindness to the violent truths of history which the tapestry unfolds: the "tradimento" ("treachery" XLVI 95) within the very Este family which should be the climactic genealogical product of her marriage.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Welles, "Magic in the Renaissance Epic: Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto, Tasso" (Diss. Yale 1970), takes the tapestry as a figure of the poem (p. 124), as does Mary M. Farrell, "Mentors and Magi in Ariosto and Rabelais" (Diss. Yale 1976). Farrell takes it as the image of self-referential art for its own sake; Welles sees the festive reading of the tent as partly undercut by the violent battle which follows, but does not inspect closely either its "con-tents" or its "author," and overemphasizes its optimistic side. See Chapter 4, sec. v (esp. n. 224), below, for the conclusion of this discussion.

to Ruggiero Bradamante can gloss the tapestry because in canto III Merlin and Melissa had given her a magical preview of her illustrious progeny. That "rassegna," however, opens with a clear reference to Ruggiero's demise by "tradimento" and closes with the same treachery of Ferrante and Giulio d'Este which the tapestry evokes (III 24, 60-62).⁴⁶ In fact, Bradamante comes to the cave in the first place because of Pinabello's treachery (II), while in canto IV Atlante reminds her of the treachery which will destroy her beloved. Thus the motif of celebration is placed within a frame of treacherous violence.

For the reader of the *Furioso*, who shares Bradamante's special insight, the implication of violence should be all the more evident since she or he has recently been reminded of Ganelon's treacherous intentions toward Ruggiero (XLVI 67) and has just been told that the first owner of the pavilion, Hector, whose armor Ruggiero typologically bears, "a tradimento ebbe la morte" ("died by treachery" 82 I), just as Ruggiero will shortly after his marriage.⁴⁷ The world of civil war, deceitful intentions, and a dissolution of order in death and madness, which is painfully explicit in the *Cinque Canti*, is already an implicit presence, and all the more insidious for its implicitness, in the *Furioso*. It is near this point, in fact, that the *Cinque Canti* were to have been inserted. The poem both stages the collapse of untroubled genealogical celebration into a crisis of political violence and, at the same time, dramatizes a crisis of reading—since the readers of the tapestry, and by analogy the readers who await the *Furioso* on the shore, fail to discern the signs of crisis which the text subtly offers them and thus, in their own way, do violence to poem and poet. In the terms of the *Furioso* itself, therefore, the failure of generations of critics to go much beyond Momigliano's description of the poem as the bearer of "wisdom without problems" and to recognize it as a text of crisis is unsurprising.⁴⁸ After all, one aspect of the crisis it represents is

⁴⁶ For the historical background of the plot of the Este brothers and an interpretation of Ariosto's developing attitude toward the episode, see Riccardo Bacchelli, *La Congiura di Don Giulio d'Este* (Milano: Mondadori, 1958).

⁴⁷ The specifically non-Homeric detail of Hector's death by Achilles' treachery comes from Dictys Cretensis, *De Bello Troiano*, bk. III.

⁴⁸ Momigliano, *Saggio*, p. 293: "sagezza senza problemi."

an interpretive blindness, an inability of the self to see itself or history reflected in poetry, or if it does see, its obstinate refusal to perceive tragedy beneath a comic surface.

The author is found and lost in the sea-map which is his poem, and the poem depicts itself read and misread by its readers. But we have not yet exhausted the possibilities of understanding how the author appears as a reader, the poem as reading. There is a passage in Ariosto's own *Satira* III, written well after *Furioso* XLVI.1, which picks up the imagery of maps and sea voyages, deploying them in a context primarily of reading rather than of writing, and which is clearly a companion to and a gloss on the longer work:

*Questo mi basta; il resto de la terra,
senza mai pagar l'oste, andrò cercando
con Ptolomeo, sia il mondo in pace o in guerra,
e tutto il mar, senza far voti quando
lampeggi il ciel, sicuro in su le carte
verrò, più che sui legni, volteggiando.*

[61-66]

[This is enough for me: I will search through the rest of the earth in Ptolemy's company, without ever paying an innkeeper, whether the world is at peace or at war; and I will traverse the seas secure, without making vows when the skies flash lightning, on charts rather than on ships.]

These lines have often been cited as a sign of Ariosto's "disimpegno," as a retreat from the risks of reality into the fantastic security of literature. At the same time, the safety he claims to enjoy in this domain, the lack of vows and of other commitments, seems to deride the sense of risk which in XLVI.1 is associated with the adventure of poetry. In these lines there appears an Ariosto embarked on a journey of reading, who might be said to have himself fallen into the complacencies of the readers who, from the security of a shoreline or marginal position, interpret the poem as delightful map rather than as difficult sea.

We thus have two images of the poet and his poetry: one of precarious crisis; one of comfortable complacency. In this double focus we can localize the dilemma of a poem which both obviously engages in Atlantean evasions and yet persistently, if obliquely, effects

a serious exposé of those evasions and of the dangers, both historical and psychological, which provoked them. It may be helpful here to recall Roland Barthes' opposition of the "lisible" to the "scriptible," the former applied to conventional works which offer themselves to the reader's complacencies, the latter to texts which turn the act of reading into the adventure of writing.⁴⁹ In the "writerly" moment of XLVI I, the points of perilous resemblance between the two experiences, textual and nautical, are emphasized, while in the "readerly" image of *Satira* III, it is the soothing difference which emerges. Taken together, and this is really the point, the passages suggest a complex relation of figurative resemblance and difference between "text" and "reality," as well as between "reading" and "writing." In fact, even taken alone *Satira* III may seem to imply this complexity, since the "carte" are both a representation of and an escape from the perilous world of geography, and since the trip Ariosto takes with his atlas is sufficiently unspecified as to allow it to be read either as the reading of the books of others or as the writing of his own.

In any case, just as the *Satire* imply and perhaps constitute readings not only of the *Furioso*, but also of Horace's *Satires*, of Dante's *terza rima*, and of other works and styles, so the *Furioso*, to adapt its own metaphor, weaves, or is woven together out of, strands furnished by the reading of an enormous number of authors, ancient and contemporary. Many of the prospective readers in the final canto of the poem are themselves authors, whom Ariosto in his turn had read, as for example, Pietro Aretino, Bernardo Tasso, Girolamo Fracastoro, Iacopo Sannazaro, Gianfrancesco Pico, Pietro Bembo, and many others. Bembo is an obvious case of a reader of Ariosto who is also partly responsible for the writing of the poem. The reference to him was added only in 1532, after a process of revision which critics have generally agreed was inspired by his

⁴⁹ Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), p. 4. Barthes' opposition is troublesome because it is never clear whether the adjectives are supposed to denote qualities intrinsic to texts or whether they apply to modes of reading those texts. Nonetheless, the value of the terms, for me, lies precisely in this ambiguity, since it illustrates the key point that the line between passive reader and active text (or between active reader and passive text) is always "under erasure."

Prose della Volgar Lingua.⁵⁰ His earlier *Asolani*, as we will see, also had a pervasive influence on the thematics and poetics of the *Furioso*. There are also certain contemporaries of Ariosto whose absence from the list speaks more loudly than their inclusion would have, the most obvious example being Machiavelli.⁵¹ Thus even as the poet seems to master his readers and their writings by circumscribing them within his text, the roles are suddenly reversed, and the *Furioso* appears as itself a collage of other texts, not only literary, to which it refers, or perhaps, passively, to which it is to be referred, and into which its own originality and integrity may begin to disappear. In this suspension of the poem between creative revision and passive reflection of prior texts can again be seen the problematic triple structure of crisis discussed above. In fact, by posing from the beginning as the continuer of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* (which he nonetheless coyly refrains from naming), Ariosto has de-

⁵⁰ See especially Gianfranco Contini, "Come Lavorava l'Ariosto," in *Esercizi di Lettura*, 2nd ed (Torino. Einaudi, 1974). See also Bembo, *Prose della Volgar Lingua*, in Marti edition Caretti, in the "Codicillo," advances the suggestive proposal that Ariosto's new adherence to Bembo has not only a stylistic, but a political-cultural significance as well, insofar as the conversion to a "national" language is a way of battling the political fragmentation and subjection of Italy after 1527 (p. 107). For the successive revisions of the poem, see the DeBenedetti-Segre edition.

⁵¹ Machiavelli was himself an admirer of the *Furioso* and attached no little significance to being omitted from the list in canto XLVI "Io ho letto ad questi dì Orlando Furioso dello Ariosto, et veramente el poema è bello tucto . . . se truovi costì, raccomandatemì ad lui, et ditegli che io mi dolgo solo che, havendo ricordato tanti poeti, che m'habbi lasciato indreto come un cazo" (*Lettera a Lodovico Alamanni*, December 17, 1517, in *Tutte le Opere*, ed. M. Martelli [Firenze: Sansoni, 1971]). That Machiavelli expected to be included at all suggests that Ariosto indeed knew some of his work, though it is not clear which—the *Principe* being one possibility, given Ariosto's close connections with the Medici circle. See Giambattista Salinari, "L'Ariosto fra Machiavelli ed Erasmo," *Rassegna di Cultura e Vita Scolastica* 21 (1957), nos. 10–12, for a few, relatively uncertain, echoes. See also Charles Klopp, "The Centaur and the Magpie. Ariosto and Machiavelli's Prince," in A. Scagione, ed., *Ariosto 1974 in America*. The only certain allusion that I know of comes in *Satira* IV 94–102 (composed 1523), where the combination of a reference to Lorenzo de' Medici (the one to whom the *Principe* was dedicated), with an allusion to *Inferno* 27 73–75 (echoed famously by Machiavelli in Chap. 18) and a truly Machiavellian description of princely behavior is very persuasive. See also Peter DeSa Wiggins, ed. and trans., *The Satires of Ludovico Ariosto. A Renaissance Autobiography* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), p. 112 (n. 12).

liberately sacrificed his "title" to originality, although in the very boldness of this gesture he may seem to be all the more in charge of this threat to poetic identity.⁵²

Pio Rajna, whose classic source study, *Le Fonti dell' "Orlando Furioso,"* is as unsophisticated from an interpretive standpoint as it is valuable from a scholarly one, took the vast extent of Ariosto's debts to other authors as proof of his unoriginality.⁵³ There is by now widespread agreement that the poet's use of his sources is

⁵² Riccardo Brusagli points out this significant omission in his fine study, "Ventura e 'Inchiesta' fra Boiardo e Ariosto," in C. Segre, ed., *Ludovico Ariosto Lingua, Stile e Tradizione* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1976), p. 111, now in *Stagioni della Civiltà Estense* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1983). One wonders, idly, whether the importance given to the wise horse, "Baiardo," in canto 1 is not meant as a sly pun on "Boiardo," whom Ariosto is "following" much as Rinaldo pursues his (apparently errant, actually purposeful) steed.

⁵³ Rajna, *Le Fonti*, pp. 33-39. Beginning with the echo of Boiardo in the title and the extravagant claim of representing "cosa non detta in prosa mai né in rima" (1.2.2)—itself an "unoriginal" claim, borrowed from Dante's *Vita Nuova*, chap. 42, cf. Milton's *Paradise Lost* 1.16—Ariosto forces the issue of origin and originality upon his readers. Ugo Foscolo, poet and critic, long ago made the best defense of Ariosto's creativity: "il n'y a peut-être pas de poète qui ait plus imité qu'Ariosto, et il n'y en a aucun qui, en ajoutant aux inventions des autres, et en s'en servant en conquérant victorieux, ait mérité plus de lui nom de créateur" ("Poemi Narrativi," p. 126). Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, p. 39, offers an up-to-date version of the same theme. According to her, the poet discredits the priority and authority of any single predecessor by the habitual conflation of two or more sources (the most obvious examples being the Boiardo-Seneca mixture in the title and the Dante-Virgil combination in the first line). Also of interest in this regard is Daniel Javitch, "The Imitation of Imitations in *Orlando Furioso*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985). No one, to my knowledge, has situated the poem in close relation to the polemics on imitation and originality which were still going on as it was being written and which, in one especially famous case, involved his friends Bembo and Gianfrancesco Pico. See Giorgio Santangelo, ed., *Le Epistole "De Imitatione" di Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola e di Pietro Bembo* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1954). For this and other quarrels and a general survey of the problem in the Renaissance, with special attention to the metaphors of digestion and assimilation of borrowings (e.g., the bees distilling honey from flowers), see Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). See also Quint, *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), as well as G. W. Pigman III, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 33 (1980). For an anti-imitation polemic by one of the period's most successful assimilators of sources, see Angelo Poliziano, *Lettera a Paolo Cortese*, in E. Garin, ed., *Prosatori Latini*, pp. 902-904.

"creative" and often polemical, but the infinitely complicated question of the *Furioso's* relations with other texts is still wide open. Is Ariosto reducing recognized texts of crisis—the Virgilian epic of political collapse and renewal, the Dantean comedy of spiritual struggle and ascent, the Petrarchan lyric pursuit of poetic identity—to the status of "mere" literature, deluded projects of "engaged" writing or "*humanae litterae*" in the sense of the civic humanists, which appear through the *Furioso* as delightful fictions and nothing else? Is he, instead, or in addition, taking seriously the failures of previous poets of crisis to represent adequately, much less to influence or resolve, various moments of crisis, and thus, as we have already suggested, not only showing his own awareness of the crises of self and history, but also of a crisis in the function of poetry itself? And further, is it legitimate to pose the questions, as I have done so far, exclusively in terms of Ariosto's masterly rewriting of other texts? Is it not equally true that the *Furioso* is a pastiche, at times complacent indeed, of the Barthian *déjà lu*, the intersection of the literary, philosophical, historical, and other codes which are its context? Merely the reflection and typification of a certain time and place, a particular cultural patrimony, and not their ironic critic? These are questions which it will take the whole of this study (at least) to consider, but the *Furioso*, at least in the few stanzas so far examined, seems to sponsor the asking of them.

In any case, the methodological implications of these reflections are plain enough. It is not sufficient to found an analysis exclusively on the devious relations which the poem establishes between itself and itself, itself and its author, itself and its readers. One must also take Ariosto seriously as a reader of other poetic and nonpoetic works, and especially of the canonical "texts of crisis," and try to place the *Furioso* within a network of writings and events which form part of its historical context (and at the same time see how the poem metaphorically places or displaces those writings and events within itself).⁵⁴ In the wake of Rajna there have been nu-

⁵⁴ In the list of relations to be considered may be discerned the well-known scheme of M H Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 3–29, which divides critical orientations into four categories which he orders historically as well as conceptually: (1) "mimetic," text as imitation of "nat-

merous source studies as well as occasional attempts to show how the poem faithfully mirrors, without critical reflection, certain motifs and values of the Italian Renaissance. On the other hand, the efforts directed toward exploring the extensive, ironic, critical engagement of the poem with the *topoi*, the motifs, the intellectual and ethical systems of the epoch in which it was composed, have been relatively modest. And this is not really so surprising since if the paths which lead between the *Furioso* and itself are as contorted as suggested, the ways in which the poem reads and/or rewrites other works will be at least as devious, perhaps more so. This supposition is borne out by a simple survey of the incredible variety of Ariostan sources: dozens of French and Italian romances (including Pulci and Boiardo); the "Three Crowns" (Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio) of the early Italian tradition; Latin and Greek lyrics, epics, and dramas; Alberti's *Intercenali*; Poliziano; Castiglione; Bembo; the hermetic philosophers; the magical and astrological

ure", (2) "pragmatic," text's influence on its readers, (3) "expressive," text as reflection of its author's consciousness, (4) "objective," text as object with intrinsic significance. Compare this scheme with Roman Jakobson's six-fold description of the communication situation (addresser, addressee, context, message, contact, code) in "Linguistics and Poetics," in T. Sebeok, ed., *Style in Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960). Though Jakobson has clearly been more attentive to the detail of communication (Abrams collapses the last three elements into his fourth, "objective" category), he limits his treatment of poetry to the "poetic" function, i.e., to the highlighting of the "message as such." Abrams' more limited descriptive model, on the other hand, opens onto a broader concept of literature which can be examined from any one of four (or six) perspectives, each of which has been the point of departure for a poetics in the course of literary history. It is clear by now that I do not believe these aspects can ever be fully and successfully separated in reading a text, nor am I convinced that the poetics of the Renaissance are exclusively "pragmatic" in the way that Abrams indicates, though the rhetorical approach certainly does receive considerable emphasis. Although I begin my discussion of methodology by adopting the "objective" approach which is characteristic, in very different ways, of both Abrams and the "New Criticism," I hope the development of the argument has taken me beyond that position. Like Abrams, however, I am particularly interested in the poetic metaphors which govern the logic of criticism. For me, this involves the further step of considering how criticism fails to obtain the detached authority of objective "statement" and is continually implicated in the imaginative crises of the literature that it reads. I try to explore criticism and criticized objects as a semiological complex, unfolding in history, which even as I analyze, I enter into

traditions; and so on, quite endlessly. By establishing himself as the author of a sequel, Ariosto may have surrendered his own claim to being an "origin," but his use of an astounding mixture of sources in any given episode makes it nearly impossible to determine, even momentarily, one external authority upon which the poem depends.⁵⁵ My own method will be to move between a more traditional history-of-ideas (and images) approach, using certain key Renaissance texts to illustrate and define problems which find parallel treatments in the *Furioso*, and a study of "intertextuality," the direct or oblique relations which the poem establishes with many of the same texts.

In the three longer chapters which make up the balance of this study, I will try to suggest more specifically how the *Furioso* defines itself as a text both of crisis and of evasion from crisis, as both Merlinesque and Atlantean, and how it inevitably does so in relation to classical and contemporary "texts of crisis." Chapters 2 and 3 will focus on the permutations of a certain key Renaissance theme, and its

⁵⁵ A perfect example is the Alcina-Logistilla sequence, to be examined at length in Chapter 3, which, for the motif of metamorphosis alone, draws on Ovid, Virgil, Dante, Petrarch, and others. For this technique, see n 53 above. In general, studies of the poem tend to assign priority to one source or another in a given textual circumstance. Even Parker and Javitch are talking about the controlled play of two easily opposable sources, for instance Virgil and Ovid. Notwithstanding Parker's excellent discussion of the romance elements of the poem's structure, she also participates in the widespread practice (at least among American critics) of neglecting Ariosto's use of hundreds of specific medieval and Renaissance, French and Italian, romance sources. What I am getting at is the existence of a major difficulty for the "intertextual" reader (such as myself) who is in hot pursuit of elaborately, but not *too* elaborately, anguished traces of an "anxiety of influence," "burden of the past," or "polemical revision." The multiplicity of echoes may cleverly decrease the poet's specific indebtedness to precursors, but it also makes it harder to locate a definite object-of-interpretation, intention or structure as this may be. At a certain point, only the "simple-minded" positivism of a Rajna can cope with the proliferation of "facts" in the text, facts whose sheer number makes any operation beyond simple cataloguing an instance of reductive speculation. In any case, one must agree with C. P. Brand, *Ludovico Ariosto: A Preface to the "Orlando Furioso"* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), that "the literary tradition is in some sense the subject of the poem" (p. 56). Whether this means that the poet is writing, deliberately and masterfully, a kind of perverse "literary history," or whether it means that language itself has taken the place of authorial subjectivity, so that "speech speaks," would be difficult to say.

corresponding poetics: education, the programmatic "formazione" of the self, represented in and potentially effected through poetic form. The last chapter will then concentrate on the counterthemes and structures which continually haunt the possibility of education and which offer both negative subversions of and positive alternatives to it: on the one hand, the threats of madness and death to the well-formed Renaissance self, the collapse of allegorical reference into fantastic nonsense, the sharp contrast between poetic characters and the historical personages they are meant both to represent and to instruct; on the other, the hope of a wise folly, *in bono*, and the resurgence of faith in a life beyond physical death, the recovery of the divine Word which transcends the failures of human language, as well as the possibility of a triumphant intersection of poetry and history at poem's end.

Chapter 2 will prepare a double context, before and after, for the *Furioso*: in the first place, an introduction to Renaissance texts and traditions of education of which it is an engaged reader (sections i and ii); in the second place, a survey of the critical tradition which has read it and hypothesized a variety of apparently contradictory links between it and the Renaissance (sections iii and iv). The goal of this chapter is twofold, in keeping with the double method of contextualization just defined: both to assemble the historical tools and terms which *my* reading of the poem requires and to suggest that the poem itself is a reading, a series of readings actually, and not just of precursor texts of crisis, but also, proleptically, of the possible critical responses it will call forth.

The first section shows how deliberately the *Furioso* in its very title, and through its two principal male heroes, is connected with a crucial and extraordinarily complex emblem of choice (will) and understanding (intellect): Hercules. Around this figure, as we shall see, clusters a great deal of humanistic discourse on autonomous human identity, as well as the rhetorical-pedagogical formation thereof. For instance, the son of Jove is allegorically appropriated both by "civic humanist" promoters of the active (political) life and by neo-Platonic polemicists in favor of contemplative transcendence. At the same time, however, Hercules also bears within himself the potential for madness which is the limit and threat to either kind of education. From the very first, the poem links itself to the interpen-