

Resignifying Epic Language and the Role of Ancient Myth in Mantuan's Religious Poetry

Ivan Parga Ornelas
(Jesus College Oxford)



This talk will explore the use of ancient myth in the religious epics of Giovanni Battista Spagnoli “Mantuan.” I posit that Mantuan’s use of pagan myths within Christian contexts, rather than an attempt at harmonising the two traditions, is meant to accentuate the contrast between them. This contrast allows Mantuan to contend with the ancient poets for cultural superiority. At the same time, the poet highlights the fact that important notions (such as love, death, victory, or heroism) take new meanings in a Christian post-classical world. Mantuan, therefore, by contrasting pagan myths and views with Christian stories, attempts baptize the genre of epic by applying new meanings to key terms and poetic images.

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