Rebuilding post-Revolutionary Italy

Leopardi and Vico's 'New science'

Series:
Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment
Volume:
2018:04

Author:
Martina Piperno
Publication Date:
2018
ISBN:
978-0-7294-1208-7

The rediscovery of the thought of Giambattista Vico (1668-1774) – especially his New science – is a post-Revolutionary phenomenon. Stressing the elements that keep society together by promoting a sense of belonging, Vico’s philosophy helped shape a new Italian identity and intellectual class. Poet and philosopher Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837) responded perceptively to the spreading and manipulation of Vico’s ideas, but to what extent can he be considered Vico’s heir?

Through examining the reasons behind the success of the New science in early nineteenth-century Italy, Martina Piperno uncovers the cultural trends, debates, and obsessions fostered by Vico’s work. She reconstructs the penetration of Vico-related discourses in circles and environments frequented by Leopardi, and establishes and analyses a latent Vico-Leopardi relationship. Her highly original reading sees Leopardi reacting to the tensions of his time, receiving Vico’s message indirectly without a need to draw directly from the source. By exploring the oblique influence of Vico’s thought on Leopardi, Martina Piperno highlights the unique character of Italian modernity and its tendency to renegotiate tradition and innovation, past and future.

Note on conventions
Introduction
i. Vico’s legacy, Vico’s ‘heir’
ii. Diffraction
iii. The structure of this work
1. Forms of Italian modernity
i. The power of the origins
ii. Belief
2. Principium
i. The pride, the origins and the destiny of the nation
ii. Epics, poetry, creation and nation-building
3. Fictio
i. Redefining fiction
ii. Translating and mediating the ancient world
iii. Was Vico Classicist or Romantic?
iv. Fiction and/as belief
4. Mythos
i. Mytho-logein: Vico and Leopardi as mythologists
ii. Towards ‘Alla Primavera’: Leopardi’s itineraries in myth (1815-1818)
iii. ‘Alla Primavera’: about (un)poetic logic
5. Philology and epos
i. Florence 1827-1828: refoundation, recovery, reconstruction
ii. Zibaldone 4311-4417: Leopardi inside Homer’s system
6. Recourse
i. Rereading Vico in post-Revolutionary Naples: history, progress, perfectibility
ii. ‘Cantare la religione civile’: Vico’s ideas in poetry
iii. Regress, disbelief and fable in Leopardi’s last works
Conclusion
Bibliography
Index

Pages:
284
Price Sterling (£):
65