



Giraldi Cinthio on Romances

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Giraldi Cinthio's *Discorso intorno al comporre dei romanzi*, here translated into English for the first time, was one of the most important critical works of the Renaissance. Written as a defense of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Giraldi's discourse is an inquiry both into the nature of poetry and into the characteristics of the "heroic" or epic genre, in which some of the world's richest poems fall.

Henry L. Snuggs introduces this translation with an incisive interpretation of Giraldi's critical theory. Giraldi was the first, Snuggs states, to make a significant plea in sixteenth-century criticism for the poetry of that (and our) time. The modern heroic poem cannot imitate the ancient in every respect, he held, for the principles of both decorum and verisimilitude required it to reflect the mores of its own age, although this did not mean the creation of a new genre. That which distinguishes Giraldi as a critic perhaps more than anything else, Snuggs concludes, was his recognition of a poetic unity other than that defined by Aristotle.

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