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**Between Epic and History: European epic poems  
of the XVI<sup>th</sup> - XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries on Lepanto and the Reconquista**

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## INTRODUCTION

The present research is focused upon the extremely interesting and controversial issue of the ‘contemporary’ historical epic poems composed in the period between the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> - the second half of the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is essential to note that during the period in question, the genre of the epic poem undergoes important transformations, having proceeded by several significant stages: the influence of the canonical models offered by Ariosto, Trissino and Tasso provoking infinite debates and *querelles* upon the nature of the epic genre; numerous theoretical reflexions stimulating literary practise, as well as constant search for novelty, all of these aspects implicating a number of poetic imitations of the above-mentioned models bordering on the firm determination to go beyond the established norms, exploring new approaches and new perspectives generously offered by the very historical reality of modern religious conflicts. In this context, historical epic poems devoted to the recent historical facts can be perceived as an authentic challenge for the European poets, presenting a complex relationship of continuity and deviation; combination of the classical tradition and the modern ambition of innovation – all of these traits are to be taken into account as far as the analysis of the ‘new’ category of epic poems is concerned.

Thus, the crucial aspect of the poems in question consists in the novelty of the argument, the innovation of the classical tradition having implicated a drastic change of the famous rule Tasso had established in his *Discorsi dell’arte poetica*, according to which the action of the epic poem could refer neither to the times too remote, nor to the recent historical facts. From now on, the epic poet does not fear to break the rule, searching for inspiration not only in the glorious past, but as well in the *contemporary* historical events.

As far as the issue of innovation of the epic genre is concerned, it is essential to stress its fundamental link with History inspiring the poets of the end of the Cinquecento - the second half of the Seicento to celebrate the religious wars, focusing their imagination upon the age-long Myth of the Crusade. It is a well-known fact that History had traditionally provided crucial material for the authors of the epic poems, but it is namely in the epoch in question that the poets start feeling encouraged to search for inspiration sources in recent historical facts, notably the religious wars with the Ottoman and Moorish civilisations. The conflicts between mutually hostile civilisations, or, to adopt Fernand Braudel’s terminology, the «external»<sup>1</sup> wars become the incarnation that the Crusaders Myth finds in history, provoking immediate, as well as unprecedented literary response resulting in a totally new stage of the complex process of the epic poetry’s evolution. Moreover, the

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<sup>1</sup> The dichotomy of the «internal» and «external» wars frequently used by F. Braudel in *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*, vol. II, 1966, pp. 170-172.

historical situation reveals to be perfectly inscribed in the model of the heroic epic poem traditionally representing the historical facts in the allegorical context of the absolute good incarnated by the Christians and the absolute evil incarnated by the adversaries of the Christian civilisation.

As has already been mentioned above, we have chosen to focus upon European poems treating the essential religious conflicts between Christian and Islamic civilisations: the turning points of the Reconquista (the Conquest of Granada and the Alpujarra rebellion), as well as the culminating event in the Oriental war with the Ottoman Turks, i.e. the famous Battle of Lepanto. The two seemingly different historical conflicts nevertheless display a number of aspects in common as far as their literary representations are concerned. Thus, both of them, importantly enough can be inscribed into the framework of the ancient struggle of the Christian Europe with the Islamic world, both having been brought to life as the actual incarnations of the well-known Myth of the Crusade. Despite the obvious historical differences, in this literary optic, one may speak of the figure of ‘the same’ enemy – the demonic figure of ‘Other’, i.e. a different, hostile civilisation presenting a considerable menace for the intrinsically Christian identity of the Mediterranean Europe. Yet, it should be noted that the allegorical approach in question still remains a hypothesis that we shall seek to verify by way of analyzing specific texts. Our main objective, thus, comprises the thorough analysis of the heroic epic poems treating the above-mentioned religious conflicts, the selected texts belonging to various European epic traditions: the Italian, the French and the Spanish one. By way of undertaking a meticulous analysis of the selected poetic texts, we are going to trace essential aspects peculiar to the new category of the epic genre, as well as try to investigate the differences and similarities European poems in question display when treating the complex theme of actual historical clashes between Christian and Islamic civilisations.

In Chapter I, we shall introduce the general problematic of the present work, dwelling in particular upon the historical, social and political issues favouring the existence and evolution of ‘historical’ epic poems. A detailed description of the role of the European Court shall be provided to complete the socio-cultural background indissolubly linked with the existence of the epic genre.

Chapter II will deal with the issue of selecting poetic corpus for the given research offering a brief review of the specific literary manifestations of the European epic poets’ unprecedented reaction to the contemporary religious conflicts in question.

We shall start our analysis, adopting the context of the Italian epic tradition as a point of departure of our research. Thus, in Chapter III, we shall analyse the supposedly ‘historical’ approach of Francesco Bolognetti’s *Christiana vittoria maritima*, proceeding with the analysis of the explicitly mythological *Marte* composed by Vincenzo Metello in Chapter IV, both of the poems

being of special interest for our research since, as it will be précised in the second chapter, both of them seem to represent the extremities of the tendencies towards meticulous historicity, on the one hand, and the wilful theatrical spirit of the Baroque, on the other hand.

The Baroque theme will be taken up in the analysis of Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata* undertaken in Chapter V, our primary objective being the one of investigating the coexistence of the classical tradition, the already mentioned poetics of the Baroque and, most importantly, the presence of crucial modern elements in the poem, such as, for instance the figure of Columbus, as well as his role in the outcome of the military conflict with the Moors as shown in Graziani's poetic interpretation.

In Chapter VI we shall turn to Pierre de Deimier's interpretation of the Battle of Lepanto, continuing the ambiguous subject announced in the previous chapter, i.e. the role of the modern historical and in particular military reality tracing as well its relationship with the manifestations of the marvellous in the French poem.

Chapter VII will deal with the Spanish epic poem merging in its bipartite structure literary representation of the two primary conflicts discussed above: the events of the Christian-Moorish conflict and the Battle of Lepanto, both of the parts being united by the figure of Don John of Austria, the protagonist of both of the historical events.

The final chapter of the present work will concern itself with the crucial figure of the 'Other' as incarnated by various types of enemy represented in the previously considered texts, our primary objective being the one of investigating the modalities poets belonging to different epic traditions display in their representation of contemporary religious wars. Essential differences as well as similarities shall be investigated with the aim of showing ways and possibilities of approaching the extremely ambiguous image of the 'other' civilisation whose presence was, as Fernand Braudel put it, continuously perceived as the «demonic» one, impeding the religious, political, social and cultural integrity of the Christian Europe.



# Chapter I

## **The «Crusades» of the XVI<sup>th</sup> - XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries: historical conjuncture and socio-cultural premises**

A clash of civilizations: historical embodiments of the Crusade Myth

### **Lepanto: an age-long conflict between the Western and the Eastern civilizations**

*«(...) aquel día, que fue para la cristiandad tan dichoso, porque en él se desengañó el mundo y todas las naciones del error, en que estaban, creyendo que los turcos eran invencibles por la mar».*

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra,  
*El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*

The antagonism between the Occident and the Orient, as well as the radical opposition between Christianity and Islam, has ancient roots. That is the reason why the famous conflicts that took place in the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> - beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries cannot be considered as isolated historical phenomena, but should be viewed as part and parcel of a highly controversial process that, however, had its culminating moments in the late Cinquecento and gave life to a number of literary works in the period between the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> - the first half of the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The religious wars with the Turks, as well as the whole complicated process of the Reconquista, mark such decisive historical moments when the future of the Mediterranean Europe was at stake. The above-mentioned events were indeed crucial, as far, as European history of the

given period concerned: the religious conflicts between Islam and Christianity imply a fierce struggle for power and territories – and namely, the power in the Mediterranean region. According to Fernand Braudel,<sup>2</sup> the whole series of religious wars between the Ottoman empire and the Christian Europe could have been reassumed as a clash between civilizations, the outcome of the wars marking a decisive turning point in world history: the glorious triumph of Lepanto, as well as the successful end of the Reconquista, *politically* speaking, meant the triumph of European empires, with their system of the courts and highly centralized power, while the prior *historical* meaning concerned itself with the Christianity, suggesting if not an absolute triumph, but definitely, its reinforced position in the long-lasting struggle of civilizations.

The XVI<sup>th</sup>-XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries – the boisterous epoch of religious wars and struggle for power – had undoubtedly a profound impact on literature, epic poetry being duly considered one of the most ‘affected’ genres.

The epic of the end of the period in question is known to have been in a state of flux: as well as other literary genres of the Baroque period, epic poetry finds itself in a constant search of new forms and content – oppressed by the rigid norms and fixed canon of the classical models, it found its source of inspiration in the recent historical events. The empires needed literary works to celebrate their victories and enhance their triumph, while epic poetry was in need of novelty: Lepanto and other historical events of the time, thus, become a crossroad of primary importance, where history and fiction meet, their union giving birth to a number of epic texts where the *marvellous* borders historical facts, the relationship between fiction and historical facts always being different in each individual case. Thus, *recent* history provided rich material for the epic prose of the seventeenth century which, in its turn, endowed it with the much-needed novelty of subject, as well as the opportunity to choose between transformation of the epic tradition and literary continuity, as far as both the content and the form are concerned.

**The Battle of Lepanto** – the glorious naval victory of the Holy League over the fleet of the Ottoman Empire (**7 October 1571**) – can be viewed as a culminating episode of the long-term history of the Oriental War. The triumph of the coalition of European catholic states proved indeed to be a crucial event, not only from the historical, but also from the literary point of view. Thus, Carlo Dionisotti, a renowned Italian philologist and literary critic, wrote of the profound impact the victory of Lepanto had on the course of Italy’s literary minds of the epoch:

È noto che nessun evento storico di quel secolo valse a commuovere l’ingegno, se non la fantasia e il cuore, dei contemporanei letterati italiani quanto la battaglia di Lepanto. Gli studiosi del secolo scorso che

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<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of civilization wars in the Mediterranean, see F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*, 1966, vol. II, especially pp. 96-163.

faticosamente collezionavano i rari quadrifogli della poesia storica-politica qua e là sparsi negli interminabili viali della poesia cinquecentesca (...) giunti a quell'aiuola isolata e tarda, del 1571-1572, si trovavano a un tratto con le mani piene.<sup>3</sup>

An essential question inevitably arises: why, of all significant episodes of the Oriental War, put a special emphasis on the naval combat of 1571 – an episode of primary historical importance that, however, did not manage to put an end to the Mediterranean wars with the Ottoman empire? Why, of all other famous battles, it was namely Lepanto that brought to life the largest number of literary works, having inspired not only the Italian, but also Spanish and French poets, to say nothing of King James I who composed his *Heroicall Song* in order to celebrate the victory of Catholic Europe? **Why did Lepanto become such a primary source of inspiration** for the European poets of the time, having provoked a powerful literary and political reaction not only in Italy, but in the whole Europe?<sup>4</sup> We shall try to deal with the above-mentioned questions, trying to provide a thorough analysis of possible reasons that contributed to the primary role of the Lepanto event.

In order to understand the impact Lepanto had on the late Cinquecento - the early Seicento, it is important to grasp its historical and political value in the context of the complicated historical period Europe was facing in the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century – in other words, **the historical significance** of the Holy League triumph should be made clear.

During the late Cinquecento, Italy – the protagonist of Lepanto – was facing a period of a deep crisis: «politically and even literally, it was a **divided** country»,<sup>5</sup> suffering from discords leading to severe internal conflicts and struggle for power and political influence. Being torn by political discords, Italy, however, could not focus entirely on its internal conflicts: the constantly growing Oriental menace caused by the Ottoman well-known "maritime asphyxia" in the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century came to the fore. The destiny of the whole Europe was suddenly at the stake: the war with the Turks implying a world scale religious conflict rather than a fierce struggle for political and territorial power. According to Fernand Braudel, the Mediterranean has always been by definition considered a region of primary importance as far as European history and culture was concerned: a cradle of the European civilization that preserved its crucial role and symbolical

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<sup>3</sup> C. Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana*, 1967, p. 202. «It is a well-known fact that no other event of the past century affected minds, as well as hearts and imagination of the contemporary Italian literati to the extent the Battle of Lepanto did. Scholars of the last century that had accumulated the rare pieces of the political-historical poetry disseminated here and there in the endless paths of the Cinquecento poetry (...) after having reached the isolated ground of the period of 1571-1572, all of a sudden found themselves with their hands full».

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

meaning in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> Throughout all of its wars and crises, the Mediterranean Europe remained indeed the most important kernel of the Occidental civilisation: to lose it would practically mean an overwhelming definite triumph of its most dangerous rival: the Oriental world. Two radically different universes, two rival religions: the war for the Mediterranean undeniably meant a clash of the two radically different civilisations.

The struggle for the Mediterranean was not, of course, news in the late Cinquecento – yet, it was namely in the second half of the century that the enhancing constant attacks of the Ottoman Empire acquired profound significance. In this context, the position of Venice, well-known for its ‘pacific’ attitude, was particularly important, presenting a thorny issue for the future course of events.

The famous neutrality of Venice as far as the military conflicts with the Turks were concerned, was indeed a well-known fact and accounted not only for the external policy of the *Serenissima*, but also for the literary context: the Venetian literary minds opted for pacifism and nostalgia for the past rather than for a belligerent attitude which, once again, was not a new one.<sup>7</sup> Several decades ago, Francesco Guicciardini alluded to the Venetian political «weakness» in his *Ricordi*:

– Dissemi in Spagna Almazano secretario del re Cattolico, essendo venuta nuova che e Viniziani avevano fatto col re di Francia accordo contro al suo re, che in Castiglia è un proverbio, che in lingua nostra significa che el filo si rompe dal capo più debole. Vuole dire in sustanza che le cose al fine si scaricano sopra e più deboli, perché non si misurano né con la ragione né con la discrezione; ma, cercando ognuno el suo vantaggio, si accordano a fare patire chi ha manco forze, perché gli è avuto minore rispetto (...).<sup>8</sup>

In his *Cortigiano* published in 1528, Baldassare Castiglione, describing the two fundamental talents a noble warrior should possess, bitterly comments upon the lack of willingness to participate in military actions, the remark referring not to Venice, but to the whole context of the Italian military present and past:

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<sup>6</sup> F. Braudel, *op.cit.*, pp. 158-163.

<sup>7</sup> For the Venetian ‘pacific’ literature, see C. Dionisotti, *op.cit.*, especially pp. 216-219.

<sup>8</sup> F. Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, 1969, p. 156. «Word coming when I was in Spain that the Venetians had leagued with the King of France against the Catholic King, Almazano the Spanish Secretary said to me: “We have a proverb in Castile that the rope breaks at the point where it is weakest”. His meaning was, I take it that in such alliances the weakest always fares worst. For men do not govern themselves by considerations of what is right or fit, but all seeking their own advantage, agree to make him suffer, whom, as being the feeblest among them, they least fear (...).» (*Counsels and Reflections of Francesco Guicciardini*, tr. from Italian by N. Hill Thomson, 1890, pp. 64-65).

Non vorrei già che qualche avversario mi adducesse gli effetti contrari per rifiutare la mia opinione, allegandomi gli italiani col loro sapere leggere aver mostrato poco valore nelle armi da un tempo in qua, il che purtroppo è più che vero. Ma certo ben si poria dire la colpa di alcuni pochi aver dato, oltre al grave danno, perpetuo biasimo a tutti gli altri, e la vera causa delle nostre rovine e della virtù prostrata, se non morta, negli animi nostri, essere da quella proceduta. (...) Però meglio è passare con silenzio quello che senza dolore ricordare non si può, e fuggendo questo proposito, nel quale contro mia voglia entrato sono, tornare al nostro cortigiano.<sup>9</sup>

The way Castiglione comments the issues of the lack of belligerent approach may, of course, be a personal and thus controversial belief, yet it partly reflects the general mood: the need for Italy to be engaged in military actions to gain glory, but most of all, to preserve the existing balance of power between the Mediterranean civilisations, as well as its central political and cultural positions – a necessity that could be clearly perceived already by 1530.

On the one hand, the enhancing Oriental menace, on the other, Europe torn by its internal discords, the latter undoubtedly contributing to the gradually expanding invasion of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, starting from the 1520, the Turks attacked and conquered Rhodes, Serbia and Hungary; in 1529 they tried an attack of Vienna – events that in a few decades were followed by other alarm signals for Europe, such as the attack on Malta in 1551, as well as the Great Siege of Malta in 1565, to climax in the invasion of the Cyprus and its tragic consequences. The fall of Nicosia in September 1570 and, finally, the fall of Famagusta in August 1571 marked a turning-point of primary importance as far as the contest for the Mediterranean was concerned: the Ottoman threat could no longer be ignored, the whole European Christianity being in danger.

The succession of the above-mentioned events contributed to **drastic changes of both the Italian political and literary climate**. Politically, Europe was finally ready to consolidate its efforts, being perfectly conscious of the common threat: there was no other possibility of combating the enemy, but to join efforts. Venice had no other choice but to reject its policy of neutrality, as well as come to agreement with the Papal States, whereas Spain promised military support, being perfectly conscious of the global scale of the historical situation. It is a well-known fact that even after the foundation of the Holy League, the relationship between its protagonists was far from being harmonious, still the very fact of the urgent alliance of the leading Catholic Mediterranean

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<sup>9</sup> B. Castiglione, *Il cortigiano*, 2002, p. 78. «I should be far from willing to have an antagonist cite instances to the contrary in refutation of my view, and urge upon me that with all their knowledge of letters the Italians have for some time since shown little martial valour, – which is alas only too true. But it very certainly might be said that the fault of a few has brought not only grievous harm but eternal obloquy upon all the rest; and from them was derived the true cause of our ruin and of the decadence if not the death of valour in our souls (...). Therefore it is better to pass over in silence that which cannot be recalled without pain: and avoiding this subject (upon which I entered against my will) to return to our Courtier». (*The Book of the Courtier by Count Baldesar Castiglione*, tr. from Italian by L. Eckstein Opdycke, 1903, pp. 58-59).

states, including the participation of Habsburg Spain, proved their willingness to resist the common enemy: despite the violent internal conflicts and wars, Europe, as Tasso would have put it, is still perceived itself as one *body*, the various members of which still could and were to be *reunited* under the common Islamic threat.

The social climate was about to change drastically as well: the ‘imbalance’ between *armi e lettere*<sup>10</sup>, as far as the situation of the Italian court nobility was concerned, was soon to be changed in favour of the former ones. The European military engagement and historical consciousness not only favoured changes in the **literary climate**, but rather, as Carlo Dionisotti aptly observed, were anticipated by them, a number of poetic prophecies and poetic works calling for action having been brought to life: «*La poesia dunque precorse anche allora, come spesso fa, gli eventi, perché gli eventi erano ineluttabilmente maturi nel cuore, nella mente, nella vita tutta degli uomini. Né l’ideale della pace né l’esercizio di un’arte raffinatissima (...) potevano bastare alle generazioni nuove, sazie di prudenza e di misura, avidi di grandezza e di certezza*».<sup>11</sup>

Historical changes and important military events have always had a profound impact on literature, and on poetry, in particular: it is therefore not surprising that Lepanto, as well as the whole historical and political background that brought to life the naval triumph of the Holy League, provoked strong immediate response in European literature. However, as far as the Italian literary climate is concerned, it should be noted that the situation was even more complicated, considering the general literary conjuncture: the search for a refuge and an oasis of peace, accompanied by a leitmotiv of nostalgia in the conditions of the historical reality of an Italy tormented by numerous internal conflicts since long time had been a theme that often prevailed in the Italian literature of the epoch, and, in the literature of the Most Serene Republic, in particular. As to the Italian epic poetry, as Carlo Dionisotti puts it, if it was not deeply rooted in the reality of peace, it was still pervaded with the idea of neutrality and search for peace to escape the historical reality.<sup>12</sup> When found face-to-face with the new historical conjuncture, the Italian heroic poetry produced an immediate literary response, but it was a «difficult transplantation»: even in the chivalry-spirited Ferrara the epic of the ‘weapons’ was either encountered as part of the dichotomy of *l’armi e gli amori* (often with a significant imbalance in favour of the latter, as it happened in Ariosto’s *romanzo*), or, as was

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-83.

<sup>11</sup> C. Dionisotti, *op.cit.*, pp. 219-220. «This time poetry had, as it often happens, anticipated the events, since the events were ineluctably mature in the minds, the hearts and in the whole lives of the people. Neither the ideal of peace, nor the most refined art (...) could suffice as far as the new generations were concerned – the ones that were tired of being prudent and wise; the ones that longed for greatness and certainty».

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

the case with Torquato Tasso's poetry, accompanied by a «poignant nostalgia of the peace, as well as by the accentuated themes of violence and death.<sup>13</sup>

The epic tradition needed consequently to adapt, as well as offer an ideologically charged literary response in order to satisfy the contemporary demand of military action. It had, as well, an ambitious task of remodelling the existing *moules épiques*: the models provided by Ariosto, Trissino and their predecessors were to be tailored, in order to represent the contemporary historical reality of the Oriental wars culminating in 1571 in the episode of Lepanto.

It was namely the period preceding Lepanto that saw a sudden major revival of the **Crusade myth**<sup>14</sup>, deeply rooted in the European Christian consciousness. The Crusades, or religious wars aimed at regaining the Holy Land as well as defeating the Eastern Mediterranean, already starting from the Middle Ages, became an idea that obsessed the collective European imagination. Combating heresy, regaining territorial and political control in the Mediterranean, as well as reinforcing the authority of the Catholic Church – such were the principal reasons that accounted for actuality of the Crusade Myth in the late Cinquecento. In the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, when Torquato Tasso started working on the ambitious long-term project of the *Jerusalem delivered*, he already showed perfect understanding of the *Zeitgeist*. The poem was destined to serve as one of the most significant 'classical' models for a vast range of poets of the epoch indeed seized and reflected the grand military expectations, putting a special emphasis on the Crusaders' myth. The action of the poem takes place in the Middle Ages and has no formal link to the historical reality of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century; yet, the very fact of concentrating the narration around the Crusade myth is highly significant, being totally in line with the actual military and religious fervour, as well as with the pre-existing request for heroic and tragic motives, of the «*poesia delle armi*» rather than «*poesia dell'amore e della cortesia*».<sup>15</sup>

A constantly increasing number of prophecies found in a number of poems of the time can be viewed as another important factor indicating the maturing changes in the Italian literary context of the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century. When in 1516 Ariosto evoked in his *Orlando Furioso* the theme of the Crusade, his crusading zeal was aimed at the sovereigns of the leading states of the Catholic Europe, as well as to his native Italy. The poet, in line with Petrarca's similar plea expressed by the Florentine poet in his *Triumphus Fame* in 1374, as well as with Dante's appeal in

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> For the extremely interesting argument of the myth of the Crusade – its origins and historical realization, see A. Dupront, *Du sacré : croisades et pèlerinages, images et langages*, 1987. Thus, A. Dupront insists, in particular, upon the «irrational» component underlying the notion of the Crusade – this «*guerre sainte et sanctifiante*» (*Ibid.*, p. 29) that should be considered in terms of «*une nostalgie d'héroïcité*», «*la volonté d'absolu*» and «*une démarche humaine vers le sacré*». (*Ibid.*, pp. 21-29). («the holy and sanctifying war»; «a nostalgia for heroic deeds»; «the desire for the absolute»; «humanity's march towards the sacré»).

<sup>15</sup> «Poetry of the war» (lit. of «the weapons»); «poetry of love and courtesy», *Ibid.*, p. 222.

*Purgatorio*, exhorts the «*Christianissimi*» monarchs<sup>16</sup> to wage war against the Ottoman Empire to regain Jerusalem, instead of focusing on the internal military conflicts tearing apart the «*misera*» «*serva Italia*»:

Dove abbassar dovrebbero la lancia  
inaugmento della santa fede,  
tra lor si dan nel petto e ne la pancia  
a destruzion del poco che si crede.  
**Voi, gente ispana, e voi, gente di Francia,  
volgete altrove, e voi, Svizzeri, il piede,  
e voi, i Tedeschi, a far più degno acquisto;**  
che quanto qui cercate è già di Cristo.

(Canto XVII, 74)

In *Jerusalem delivered*, the appeal to military action is given a clearer, more concrete shape, Tasso addressing his exhortation neither to all major European Catholic sovereigns, nor to the papal Church, but to his own patron and protector, the «*magnanimo*»<sup>17</sup> Alfonso II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. It is Tasso's fervent hope that his patron will, similarly to his Goffredo, actively engage in the «*glorioso acquisto*» and not only will contribute to the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre, but will even act as a commander of an army or a fleet – quite an accurate prediction of the naval combat of 1571:

**È ben ragion, s'egli averrà ch'in pace  
Il buon popolo di Cristo unqua si veda.**  
E con navi e cavalli al fero Trace  
Cerchi ritòr la grande ingiusta preda, **ch'a te lo scettro in terra o, se ti piace,  
l'alto impero de' mari a te conceda.**<sup>18</sup>

(Canto I, 5)

A poignant allusion to the continued internal Christian conflicts in line with those of his predecessors is accompanied by a feeling of considerable hope: the moment will come when the Ottoman Empire will face the reunited Christian Europe, meanwhile the poet, eagerly awaiting the

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<sup>16</sup> L. Ariosto, 2010, p. 391.

<sup>17</sup> T. Tasso, 2014, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.



day of triumph, exhorts his protector to listen to his heroic «songs» in order to take up arms against the «fierce» Turks:

Tu, **magnanimo Alfonso**, il qual ritogli  
Al furor di fortuna e guidi in porto  
Me peregrino errante (...)  
**Forse un dì fia che la presaga penna**  
**Osi scriver di te quel ch'or n'accenna.**  
**Emulo di Goffredo**, i nostri carmi  
Intanto ascolta, e **t'apparecchia a l'armi.**

(Canto I, 5)

The motives of patronage, or a relationship between a glorious noble protector and a court poet predicting future exploits of his patron merge here with the myth of the Crusade resulting in a clear anticipation of further historical milestones in the perpetual struggle between the two Mediterranean civilisations. The idea of a new crusade against the Ottoman empire continued to gain ground in the context of both historical and literary reality of the late Cinquecento. In the early Seicento, the crusade myth becomes a recurrent theme that appears in a number of 'historical' epic poems, usually imitating Tasso's pattern: a poet eager to celebrate his patron's brave deeds encourages him to engage in a new Crusade against the Turks. It should be noted in this connection that the actual 'urgent' historical issues were frequently viewed from a far more global perspective, i.e. through the prism of the Crusade myth, literature and epic poetry in particular contributing to the merging of myth and historical reality.

It was not of course only due to the profound impact of poetry that the Crusade myth gained new actuality with the enhancing threat of the Islamic Mediterranean. The whole historical and political conjuncture favoured its historical embodiment culminating in the Battle of Lepanto.

According to Carlo Dionisotti,<sup>19</sup> already by 1530, the historical reality was imbued with great expectations: a new Crusade was awaited by nearly all parties, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church, Spain and, partly, the Most Serene Republic. The reasons were simple: the continuous Turkish attacks aiming at gradually gaining the total control of the Mediterranean were a direct threat to Venice, as well as to the Italian and Spanish possessions of Charles V, the Mediterranean zone being of vital importance to the Holy Roman Emperor.

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<sup>19</sup> C. Dionisotti, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213.

The Venetian Republic, as has already been stated above, despite its evident inclination towards neutrality, had no other choice but to engage in the «new Crusade», since already in 1537-1540 its territories were directly threatened, the situation approaching its climax by 1571.

As to the third party, the Roman Church, its reasons to appeal for a new Crusade were evident, still complicated. It is a well-known fact that after the Reformation lesson Rome had to strengthen its moral authority in every possible way: it was namely in this connection, that the Crusade myth could function as a perfect antidote to heresy, at the same time consolidating both the Christian unity and the authority of the Roman Church. The idea of relaunching a myth of the Crusade in the context of the constantly growing Turkish menace proved indeed to be a perfect ideological choice that not only provided the long-awaited reaction of resistance to the Oriental attacks, but, most importantly, was aimed at shifting the focus from internal religious conflict to an external imminent threat:

Non poteva distrarre e impegnare in altra impresa le energie richieste dal compito inevitabile e improrogabile della propria riorganizzazione (...) ma **proprio per questo, per guadagnare spazio e tempo, per riaffermare la propria originaria legittimità e preminenza e per non essere costretta a patteggiare con la Riforma, la Chiesa non poteva cessare di fare appello ai Cristiani per una comune difesa contro gli infedeli.**<sup>20</sup>

Thus, several fundamental reasons paving the way for promoting the idea of a new Crusade in the context of the late Cinquecento reality should be considered in order to understand the background of Lepanto: **1)** the direct military threat of the continuous violent Turkish attacks of the Occidental Mediterranean territories that by 1571 were perceived as common Christian danger; the willingness of all parties to defend their territories; **2)** the ideological motive of bringing into unity Christian Mediterranean Europe torn by continuous internal discords; **3)** the need of both the papal Rome and the emperor to reinforce their hegemony in the Mediterranean world.

All of the above-stated reasons contributed substantially to revitalize the myth of the Crusade, meeting the spirit of the time, as well as popular expectations of drastic historical changes.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* «The Church, was not capable of distracting its efforts from the enterprise of its own reorganization (...) but namely for that reason – for the sake of gaining some space and some time, as well as for the one of reaffirming its original legitimacy and supremacy, unwilling to negotiate with the Reformation – the Church constantly appealed to Christians for common defense against the unfaithful».

<sup>21</sup> As C. Dionisotti puts it, «Le condizioni stesse dell'Europa, della Cristianità, erano mutate. Con o senza Turchi, la pausa degli eventi e il congiunto ideale della neutralità e della pace volgevano al termine. Anche in Italia, persino in Italia, rifioriva un ideale di eroica grandezza». (C. Dionisotti, *op.cit.*, p. 219).

Although the whole succession of the events of the war with the Ottoman Empire can be viewed from the perspective of the modernised Crusade myth, the episode of Lepanto functions as a culminating military engagement. In his detailed analysis of the Mediterranean «new Crusade», Géraud Poumarède draws particular attention to the «religious foundations»<sup>22</sup> of the war with the Ottoman Empire:

À l'époque moderne, la croisade s'incarnerait plus particulièrement dans la lutte contre les Turcs vécue comme une exigence profonde (...) chez quelques grandes figures solitaires comme Pie II, Charles Quint, La Noue (...) parmi ces cohortes de jeunes aristocrates attirés par les guerres d'Orient, dans lesquelles ils s'engagent à la recherche d'un accomplissement, ou encore au sein de ces ordres militaires, et notamment de l'ordre de Malte, qui assurent par leur combat une « présence vivante » de la croisade à des époques tardives.<sup>23</sup>

So why view the Battle of Lepanto a historical embodiment of the grand medieval myth of the Crusade? First and foremost, because of the **historical prerequisites**, among which the foundation of the Holy League namely for the purpose of defending Christian Europe from the impending Islamic threat as well as of its crucial **outcome**<sup>24</sup> – the naval triumph that, despite the fact that it did not mean a definite victory, had still brought about fundamental changes as far as the Mediterranean balance of naval power was concerned. The two primary aspects shall be considered

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<sup>22</sup> G. Poumarède, *Pour en finir avec la croisade : mythes et réalités de la lutte contre les Turcs aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 2004, p. 4. «In modern times, the Crusade would in particular way embody the struggle with the Turks experienced as a profound need (...) felt by some major figures, such as Pius II, Charles V, François de la Noue (...) among these cohorts of young aristocrats attracted by the Oriental wars in which they engaged themselves searching for fulfillment, and, as was often the case, entering the Military Orders, notably the Order of Malta, thus assuring by their struggle a «living presence» of the Crusade in later times».

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> It is essential to mention in this connection the providential character of the Holy League's fleet, frequently stressed by the very witnesses and participants of the historical event. Thus G. Diedo, the Venetian counsellor at Corfu, published a detailed relation of the event that he witnessed in person, putting special emphasis upon the role of the «divine favour»: «(...) *il divin favore (...) ci ha non solamente renduti umili e datoci maggior forze, con farci mettere insieme più numero di legni (...), ed ha donato ogni cosa opportuna alle genti per mantenerle vive e sane, onde ne è seguita una sì chiara vittoria, ma Egli è ancora piaciuto che quella sia avvenuta fuor d'ogni opinione, e che appresso, malgrado di molte difficoltà che bastavano ad impedirle, sia stata riconosciuta venir solamente dal suo divino provvedimento e potenza*». (O. Caetani, G. Diedo, *La battaglia di Lepanto (1571)*, 1995, pp. 178-179. «(...) the divine favour (...) not only rendered us humble and gave us major forces, providing us with more warships (...), but also provided our people with everything so that they stayed safe and sound, hence the magnificent victory; He wished, moreover, that the triumph took place despite the numerous difficulties that might have impeded it, so that nobody could doubt the providential character of the victory that was exclusively the fruit of the divine power and aid». In a similar spirit, another witness of Lepanto, O. Caetani, thus spoke in his one of his letters of the «*felicissima vittoria concessaci dall'infinita bontà di Dio*»: «*Del tutto ne dovremo rendere infinite grazie a Nostro Signore, dalla mano del quale dovremo tener questa tanto gran vittoria che si è degnata concedere a tutta la Cristianità (...)*». (O. Caetani, G. Diedo, *op.cit.*, p. 138). («The most magnificent of all victories granted us by the infinite grace of God»; «We should give our infinite thanks to our Lord who bestowed on us this splendid victory granted by Him to the whole Christianity (...)). For the detailed reflection upon the «*oniologie et la conscience physique du Dieu présent dans la bataille*», see A. Dupront, *op.cit.*, p. 17. («Oneirology and physical consciousness of God's presence during the combat»).

one by one. As it has already been stated, by 1571 the Ottoman menace was rapidly increasing, and the whole Christian Mediterranean was concerned: despite the significant religious discords, as well as numerous political conflicts, after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, the need for the European Christianity to join their efforts became evident. It was obviously not a mere political and territorial conflict that had reached its climax: the eventual triumph of the Ottoman Empire over the Christian Mediterranean would have meant a triumph of one civilization over the other, in a clash between two antagonistic universes. The Mediterranean has always been considered, both historically and culturally, as the cradle of the European Christian civilization that preserved the role of the centre of the Occidental Europe up to the given epoch: losing it to the Turks would have implied irreversible political, cultural, social and historical consequences for the whole Occidental civilization.

The creation of the Holy League in order to combat the Ottoman threat was in itself a remarkable event and implied great resolution for all parties: indeed, the fact that the major Mediterranean states managed to come to agreement, considering the general climate of discord in the divided Italy, as well as the participation of Spain was in itself a historical miracle. The foundation of the Holy League was possible namely due to the idea of the ‘new Crusade’: these were the exhortations the Roman Church made a special point of, seizing immediately the possibility to strengthen its authority and positions by resorting to the power of myth: the Crusaders’ myth that already for a long time could be perceived in Italy.<sup>25</sup>

Continuous negotiations of the ‘new Crusaders’ finally result in the naval expedition against the common enemy: on 7 October 1571 the fleet of the coalition meets the Ottoman Navy. The determination of the Holy League members to defend the Mediterranean cause thus took shape in the episode of Lepanto. Four hours of extremely violent combats ended with the absolute triumph of the Christian coalition – a triumph that had fundamental impact on the future course of events, as well as on the whole configuration of forces in the Mediterranean.

The **outcome of the Battle of Lepanto**, however glorious and of crucial historical importance for the Mediterranean Europe, viewed in terms of the Crusaders’ myth, did not result in what was supposed to be its primary objective, i.e. further triumphs over the Ottoman Turks. Yet, there was more to the essence of the Crusade myth than the eventual Holy Sepulchre ‘liberation’:

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<sup>25</sup> In his essay on Lepanto, Dionisotti puts a special emphasis on the «plebiscite» character of a number of poems composed to celebrate the naval victory of 1571. The *letterati* of the time, such as Ludovico Dolce, Girolamo Zane and others used it in their poems calling for heroic military engagement, their voices echoing a considerable number of anonymous prophetic folk poems. (C. Dionisotti, *op. cit.*, p. 222.)

the defence and strengthening of Christianity, the demonstration of impeccable bravery, and noble, courageous spirit of Christian warriors to be celebrated by epic poets, as well as demonstration of the mere possibility for the Christian Europe to join efforts in front of the Ottoman threat even in a complicated period of internal conflicts and preoccupations. It was not for nothing that Lepanto provoked such an immediate literary response: the importance of the naval victory of 1571 consisted first and foremost in breaking the spell of the legend of the Ottoman Empire's naval invincibility. The Mediterranean power of the Turks rested with them, since there was no possibility for one, yet crucial, naval battle to change the complicated, deep-rooted historical conjuncture – yet the devastating defeat pointed to the limits of the Ottoman naval supremacy. Lepanto was primarily a moral victory that had influenced both historical and literary context of the late Cinquecento - the early Seicento. Thus, Fernand Braudel puts a special emphasis on the «immediate success» and consequences of Lepanto, stressing its importance for the European history, as well as the mere lack of possibility of immediate drastic changes: *«Mais si, au lieu d'être attentif seulement à ce qui a suivi Lépante, on l'est à ce qui l'a précédé, cette victoire apparaît comme la fin d'une misère, la fin d'un réel complexe d'infériorité de la Chrétienté et d'une non moins réelle primauté turque. La victoire chrétienne a barré la route à un avenir qui s'annonçait très sombre»*.<sup>26</sup>

«The end of a genuine inferiority complex»: the sacred mission of the «*alta impresa*» reached one of its essential objectives: the glorious naval combat of 1571 became indeed a historical embodiment of the literary Crusaders' myth that in its turn immediately brought to life its own literary myths, influencing to a large extent European literary scene of the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> -the first half of the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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<sup>26</sup>F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 397. «However if instead of considering only what happened after Lepanto, we turn our attention to what had gone before, the victory can be seen as the end of a period of profound depression, the end of a genuine inferiority complex on the part of Christendom and a no less real Turkish supremacy. The Christian victory had halted progress towards a future which promised to be very bleak indeed». (F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, tr. from French by S. Reynolds, 1973, p. 1103).

## Spain: a clash of the Spanish and Moorish civilizations

The battle of Lepanto, this crucial episode in the history of the European civilization was a response to the most heightened general expectations. Far from being a simple, unambiguous reaction of defence as has been shown above, it became a historical embodiment of the Crusade myth that has always been deeply rooted in the European imagination. Italy, however, was not a unique country to cherish memories of the medieval Crusades against the Islamic peoples of the Middle East. Already in the second half of the XV<sup>th</sup> century, starting from the times of the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, Spain showed an increasing tendency towards unification and expansion – a policy that brought about and favoured «*la nécessité d'une mystique impériale*».<sup>27</sup> Fernand Braudel in his comprehensive analysis of the political factors influencing the Reconquista, pointed out that Spain in the period of the reign of the Catholic Monarchs was living 'under the sign' of the idea of a new Crusade – a literary myth gradually gaining ground to manifest itself to the full extent in 1492, the year of the Conquest of Granada:

Louis XII peut bien répéter: « je suis le Maure contre lequel le Roi Catholique arme », **n'empêche que ce Roi Catholique est de plus en plus, du deul fait de ses positions, le champion de la Croisade**, avec toutes les tâches que cela implique, tous les privilèges et avantages que cela signifie.<sup>28</sup>

The whole enduring, extremely complicated and ambiguous process of the **Reconquista** proves the historical continuity of the European Crusade myth. Despite the seemingly national character of the ancient fierce struggle between Spain and the Moors, the nature of the conflict was similar to the Italian wars with the Ottoman Empire, i.e., the **struggle of the two, drastically different, civilizations**.

The long-lasting 'Moorish problem' can indeed be viewed from not merely the political, but also from the ideological perspective: a violent confrontation of the «Iberian»<sup>29</sup> (Catholic) and

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. «The necessity for a mystique of empire» (F. Braudel, *op.cit.*, p. 670).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21. «Louis XII might boast: "I am the Moor against whom the Catholic King is taking up arms", but that did not prevent the Catholic King, by the mere location of the territories to be possessed, from coming more and more to fulfil the role of Crusader and defender of the faith with all the duties as well as privileges that implied». (F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 671).

<sup>29</sup> F. Braudel insists upon the use of the term in question: «Je dis bien, *la civilisation ibérique*. Elle est une variété particulière de la civilisation d'Occident, une avancée, une extrémité de celle-ci, jadis presque entièrement recouverte par des eaux étrangères. (*Ibid.*, p.153). «I say Iberian civilization expressly. For this is a particular variety of Western civilization, an outpost or promontory of it, at one time almost entirely washed over by foreign waters». (F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 824).

Moorish (Islamic) civilizations that both had to defend their territorial, political unity as well as, most importantly, ideological and cultural values. The ideology underlying the conflict between the two civilizations coincided with the one of the Crusaders' myth, its primary objective being to combat a 'foreign', 'different' religion that from the European point of view, was a direct menace to the unity of the occidental civilization, and thus a matter of the whole Christianity. It is not for nothing that Fernand Braudel spoke of «Europe» and «militant Christianity», trying to outline the nature of the Iberian conflict:

**Durant le «long» XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, la Péninsule, pour redevenir Europe, s'est faite Chrétienté militante; elle s'est partagée de ses deux religions superfétatoires, la musulmane et l'hébraïque. Elle a refusé d'être Afrique ou Orient, selon un processus qui ressemble, d'une certaine manière, à des processus actuels de décolonisation (...) Elle aurait pu rester un pont entre Europe et Afrique, selon son destin géographique et sa vocation historique, des siècles durant (...). Mais un pont signifie une double circulation. L'Europe gagne la Péninsule par les Pyrénées, les routes de l'Atlantique et celles de la mer Intérieure et, **sur cette marge frontière, elle l'emporte sur l'Islam avec les succès de la Reconquête qui sont aussi les siens**»<sup>30</sup>.**

As can be seen, an important characteristic of the 'new Crusaders' of the epoch in question was their concentration on the defence of their own territory: if, as has already been stated, the idea of the Crusade enjoyed extreme popularity among both monarchs and common people, the actual historical manifestations it found, were all focused upon the objective of defending one's own territory, rather than, in accordance with the real Crusade tradition, trying to regain their own territories occupied by the Islamic enemy. Yet, the monarchs themselves frequently endowed both Lepanto and the events of the Spanish Reconquista with the ideological value of fundamental preliminary stages of the whole complicated and long-lasting process that would eventually lead to regaining the Holy Land and the worldwide triumph of Christian civilization – the actual ideological aim of the whole of the Crusade series dating back to Medieval period.

*«Turning back to being Europe», «regaining their occidental identity as well as religious integrity»* – such were the fundamental ideological connotations proper to the war the Iberian civilization waged against the Moorish one.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154. «During the 'extended' sixteenth century, the Peninsula, in order to reintegrate itself with Europe, turned itself into the Church Militant; it shed its two unwanted religions, the Moslem and the Hebrew. It refused to become either African or Oriental in a process which in some ways resembles that of modern decolonization (...). It could have remained a bridge between Europe and Africa, in obedience to its geographical position and what was for centuries its historical vocation (...) but a bridge implies two-way traffic. Europe conquered the Peninsula by way of the Pyrenees and by the Atlantic and Mediterranean shipping routes: *along this frontier zone it defeated Islam with the victories of the Reconquest which were victories for Europe*». (F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 824).

The *Moriscos*, or the descendants of the Spanish Moors who became converted into Christianity, could not be viewed as a homogenous community, nor could the Reconquista be considered as a uniform process. Fernand Braudel in his thorough reflection on the cross-cultural confrontation, underlined the geographical as well as chronological diversity that characterized various stages of the Reconquista, laying particular emphasis on the fact that there could be no such phenomenon as a unique «Moorish problem», but several ones,<sup>31</sup> as well as stressing the general «slow pace» of the whole military process that proceeded gradually, the Spanish century after century steadily trying to bring the Islamic part of the country under control:

Le débat n'ayant pas commencé au même instant dans les diverses parties de cette Espagne musulmane reprise par le Chrétien, **les problèmes au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle n'y sont pas d'une seule et la même coulée. C'est donc une série de cas divers qu'offre l'Espagne.** Cas inséparables d'ailleurs les uns des autres et qui s'éclairent à être rapprochés<sup>32</sup>.

The slow pace was indeed an essential characteristic of the Reconquista process: started in the XI<sup>th</sup> century with the conquest of Toledo, it lasted centuries, gradually expanding to embrace such cities as Saragozza, Córdoba, Valencia and, finally, Granada.

The conquest of Granada (1492) – the last stronghold of the Moorish resistance – was an event that proved to be a milestone in the civilization conflict, symbolizing «*le lent naufrage de l'Islam ibérique*»<sup>33</sup>. The whole Europe celebrated the Iberian triumph, while Papal Rome granted Ferdinand and Isabella the title of the Catholic Monarchs. The Granada victory was frequently considered a decisive and final stage of the Reconquista – yet, it can only be called so from a merely formal perspective, since it left a number of thorny problems unresolved, among which the question of religious and cultural intolerance remained the most intractable one.

However Granada was guaranteed the liberty of religion, already in 1499 the promise was broken to impose the Moorish population the obligatory conversion – drastic measures that were implemented in the rest of Andalusia as well<sup>34</sup>. The attitude of intolerance towards the Iberian Islam could not but provoke a series of violent rebellions that in several decades transformed themselves into an internal war, involving, at various temporal stages, various parts of Spain – a war that eventually resulted in the irrevocable expulsion of the *Moriscos*.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118-120.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119. «Since the conflict did not erupt simultaneously in the various regions of Moorish Spain which were won back by the Christians, *the Morisco problems of the sixteenth century are far from being identical. Spain presents a range of varying situations; different, yet inseparable from each other and mutually illuminating*». (F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 781).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118. «The slow shipwreck of Islam on the Iberian Peninsula» (F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 781).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



The radical solution of 1609 was, first and foremost, the outcome of the whole complex Reconquista process: dating back to the XI<sup>th</sup> century, it continued its way throughout several centuries, had its culminating moments in the conquest of Granada, as well as in the series of tumults burst by the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, among which the Rebellion of the Alpujarras (1568-1571) and, lastly, the final expulsion in the early XVII<sup>th</sup> century. The latter one was a decision that in the final analyses proved the ideological nature of the conflict. The expulsion decree therefore symbolized the impossibility for Catholic Spain to «*conserver, au milieu de l'Espagne, un irréductible noyau*»<sup>35</sup> of a totally foreign religion: the «Crusade» against the «unfaithful» *Moriscos* was to be carried through at any price.

Among the factors that influenced Philip III to take the irreversible decision was the general Catholic preoccupation as far as the revolt of the Seventeen Provinces was concerned. As Felice Gambin points out, it is not for nothing that the famous expulsion degree was approved on 9 April 1609, exactly the same day the Twelve Years' Truce was signed. The reason behind this "coincidence" leaves no doubt: the prestige of the Catholic Europe, as well as its religious unity was to be maintained. Thus, «*per evitare di mettere in dubbio le credenziali di Filippo III come garante dell'unita cattolica, non rimaneva che presentare l'espulsione dei moriscos come un'azione divina e trasformare il re spagnolo, il suo favorito, cioè il Duca di Lerma, e la stessa regina Margherita, in strumenti di Dio*».<sup>36</sup>

Another factor that might have influenced the expulsion decision – and that in any case presents one more proof of the total unwillingness to put up with a 'foreign' religion and a 'foreign' civilization, is the abundance of the so-called «apologetic» literature in favour of the Moorish expulsion. In his article analyzing the apologetic literature phenomenon, Felice Gambin enumerates the main arguments underlying such appeals:

Gli autori, soprattutto ecclesiastici, ricorrono nei loro testi alle medesime argomentazioni: sostengono che con l'espulsione dei *moriscos* si pone fine alle loro continue cospirazioni con l'impero turco e asseriscono che la Spagna in tal modo porta a compimento il lungo processo della *Reconquista*. In tali opere i *moriscos* vengono presentati come una comunità omogenea e indifferenziata. Essi, si dice, continuano a praticare segretamente la loro religione e sono nemici dichiarati della fede cattolica, eretici incorreggibili dai comportamenti irrispettosi e sacrilegi.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130. «Maintain an irreducible core of Islam right in the heart of Spain», F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 796.

<sup>36</sup> F. Gambin, 2010, p. 106. «(...) in order to avoid questioning the role of Philip II as the guarantor of the Catholic unity, the only possible choice was to present the expulsion of the Moriscos as a divine action, showing the Spanish monarch, as well as his favourite, the Duke of Lerma, and Queen Margaret as instruments of the divine will».

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107. «The authors, and in particular, the ecclesiastic ones, resort in their texts to similar argumentation: they believe that the expulsion of the *Moriscos* put an end to their continuous conspiracies with the Turkish Empire and state that Spain in this way brought to completion the long process of the Reconquista. In their

«Sworn enemies» of the Catholic faith, «secretly conspiring» with the Ottoman Empire, as well as – rumour had it – with Morocco; as it were not enough, the Islamic population of Spain was suspected of trafficking money and precious metals (the famous *tesoro de moros*), transporting them outside the Spanish empire. Moreover, the *Moriscos* were accused of coin counterfeiting<sup>38</sup> and thus of undermining economic prosperity of the empire; legends were made of their avarice, hypocrisy and perfidy. As can be seen, the *Moriscos*, despite the fact of the economic advantages their collaboration with some representatives of the Spanish nobility and politicians represented<sup>39</sup>.

Legendary or not, all these factors contributed to the general intolerance towards the representatives of the Iberian Islam, all of them being largely used as arguments favouring the bitter outcome, or the final «Crusade» – the expulsion of 1609. The authors of the numerous apologetic works, such as Gaspar de Aguilar, Jaime Bleda, Aznar Cardona and many others appealed to Philip III, proving the impossibility of a further co-existing with the Moorish civilization. The essential ideological leitmotif running through the apologetic literature was the need to regain the primary identity of the Catholic Spain by expelling the *herejes*.

To reiterate, the fundamental trait of most of the apologetic authors had in common was «**the divinization**» of the Reconquista process, as well as of the Spanish monarch. Interestingly, the popular messianic motives – that further on inspired a number of poetic works – went hand-in-hand with the predictions of glorious future and prosperity of the empire, a «golden era» to begin after the fulfillment of the expulsion mission. To quote Felice Gambin's words,

(...) va detto che **quasi tutti i testi apologetici sostengono che l'espulsione [degli Moriscos] gode del favore divino, che essa apre per la Spagna un'epoca di gloria e prosperità (...)**.

Non casualmente, agli inizi del suo regno Filippo III era stato salutato da molti autori come **il monarca capace di trasformare la Spagna come impero universale. Ebbene: la letteratura apologetica racconta di un disegno provvidenziale e apocalittico di una Spagna come impero universale. Gli apologeti delineano una monarchia che si inserisce in una temperie di attese messianiche, con continui richiami alla Scrittura, a Isaia e all'Apocalissi, alla riconquista di Gerusalemme e alla sconfitta dell'Anticristo. Un'aura messianica di restauratore del mondo cristiano circonda Filippo III.**<sup>40</sup>

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works, the *Moriscos* are shown as a homogenous, as well as undifferentiated community. In their view, the *Moriscos* continue to secretly practice their religion, being sworn enemies of the Catholic faith – the inveterate heretics known for their disrespectful and blasphemous attitude».

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>39</sup> See F. Braudel, *op.cit.*, p. 123 and F. Gambin, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>40</sup> F. Gambin, *op.cit.*, p. 121. « (...) it should be noted that (...) nearly all of the apologetic texts claim that the expulsion [of the *Moriscos*] enjoys the divine favour, as well as marks the beginning of the period of glory and prosperity for Spain (...). It is not by chance that a number of authors greeted Philip III at the beginning of his reign as the monarch capable of transforming Spain into the universal empire. The apologetic literature speaks of the providential and the

Numerous expectations thus converged in the much-desired outcome of the «Moorish conflict». First and foremost, the expulsion solution was in line with Spain's policy of political unity and expansion, as well as with the «dream of a new golden era»<sup>41</sup> proper to the adepts of the ideology of imperialism. In the apologetic literature, these political factors were aptly mingled with the religious motives of messianic character, Philip III being seen as both the embodiment of the commitment to the imperialist policy and as the legendary «restorer» of Christianity fulfilling the mission confided to him by the whole Catholic Europe. In this perspective, the expulsion could indeed be viewed as a «global» mission of Spain that consisted in putting an end to the religious rift, as well as to the long-lasting ideological confrontation tearing the empire apart. Moreover, as has already been stated, in the context of the impending Protestant menace in the north, the religious unity of the Spanish empire and the prestige of its monarch were to be maintained at all costs.

Another, no less important aspect that precipitated the outcome of the confrontation between the empire and the Moors was the religious, as well as human intolerance the Spanish displayed towards the *Moriscos* – a «hatred of religion» rather than a «hatred of race», i.e. the uncontrollable intolerance towards another civilization 'otherness' rooted deeply in European soil. Reflecting on the reasons accounting for such hatred, Fernand Braudel puts special emphasis on the «unassimilability»<sup>42</sup> as a fundamental characteristic of the *Moriscos*. The fierce resistance the Moorish civilization showed throughout centuries consisted in the tacit determination to maintain their religion, values and national traditions even under the rough conditions of a subdued civilization. A clash of civilizations was the main reason accounting for the continuous confrontations: «the Moor had rejected the Occidental civilization»:

L'Espagne n'a pas agi par haine raciale (...) mais par haine de civilisation, de religion. Et l'explosion de sa haine, l'expulsion, est l'aveu de son impuissance. La preuve que le Morisque, après un, deux, trois siècles suivant les cas, était resté le Maure d'autrefois : costume, religion, langue, maisons cloîtrées, bains maures – il avait tout conservé. Il s'était refusé à la civilisation occidentale; et c'est l'essentiel du débat. Quelques brillantes exceptions, sur le plan religieux – ou ce fait indéniable que les Morisques des villes adoptaient de plus en plus le costume des vainqueurs – n'y changent rien. Le Morisque

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apocalyptic design of a Spain seen as the universal empire. The apologists make continuous references to Holy Scripture, to Isaiah and to Apocalypse, as well as to the reconquest of Jerusalem and the defeat of the Antichrist, thus outlining a notion of monarchy that is inscribed into the current climate of the Messianic expectations. Philip III seems to exude this messianic aura of the restorer of the Christian world».

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>42</sup> F. Braudel, *op.cit.*, p.129.

est resté lié de coeur à un monde immense qui s'étendait, on le savait en Espagne, jusqu'à la Perse lointaine, avec des maisons, des mœurs analogues et des croyances identiques.<sup>43</sup>

That was why after many a continuous attempt to dominate the «other», after an infinite number of 'internal Crusades', Spain opted for the most drastic of all measures – the complete «uprooting»<sup>44</sup> of the phenomenon it had always perceived as extraneous and countering its European origins, as well as its Christian religion. A «clash of civilizations», a «war of religions», a refusal to put up with cultural 'otherness' – a need for unity. To quote once more Fernand Braudel, the Spanish Empire was moving towards «*l'unité politique qu'elle ne peut concevoir, au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, que comme une unité religieuse*».<sup>45</sup> Just as in the case with Lepanto, the historical reality contributed to the revival of a Medieval Crusade myth – a revival that concerned the dimensions of both history and literature.

The complex process renaissance of the Crusade and the way it influenced literature cannot be understood without a closer look at the specific socio-cultural premises serving as a background – a dynamic and controversial one, that, however, could be resumed by the formula «the Europe of the Courts» that we shall now turn to.

## The 'Europe of the Courts'

«(...) lei che raccoglie il meglio, o quasi il meglio, non solo de la città, ma de le provincie e de' regni, e scegliendo il perfetto, s'alcuna cosa riceve di non perfetto, cerca d'aggingerle perfezione».

Torquato Tasso, *Il Malpiglio, o vero de la corte*

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* «Spain's actions were not inspired by racial hatred (...) but by religious and cultural enmity. And the explosion of this hatred, the expulsion, was a confession of impotence, proof that the Morisco after one, two, or even three centuries, remained still the Moor of old, with his Moorish dress, tongue, cloistered houses and Moorish bathes. He had retained them all. He had refused to accept Western civilization and this was his fundamental crime. A few spectacular exceptions in the religious sphere, and the undeniable fact that the Moriscos who lived in the cities tended increasingly to adopt the dress of their conquerors, could not alter this. The Morisco was still tied deep in his heart to that immense world, which as Spain was well aware, stretched as far as distant Persia, a world of similar domestic patterns, similar customs and identical beliefs». (F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 796).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 155. «Political unity, which could not be conceived, in the sixteenth century, as anything other than religious unity». (F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 825).

«O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a King of infinite space».

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

The famous words of the protagonist of Shakespearian tragedy offer an image that could perfectly represent the position of the Court, as well as the general mindset of its inhabitants: the European Court of the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century is indeed a small universe – a universe that despite its geopolitical limits is certain to be the core of the world it historically, politically and culturally belongs to. Its main representatives, could indeed rightly «count themselves» «Kings» of «infinite space», for it is a well-known fact that the notion of the Court, with all the historical, political, cultural and sociological values it implies, should be considered a key notion as far as the socio-cultural context in which the epic poetry of the Baroque period was born, is concerned. Describing the notion of the Court in his well-known satirical comedy, *Poetaster*, Ben Jonson used the image of the «sacred sphere» that evokes the Shakespearian «nutshell», though with the slightly different accent: if the image of a «nutshell» does imply a certain ‘void’, Shakespeare thus underlining the eventual futility, as well the illusory character of the Courtier’s ambitions, Ben Jonson, on the contrary, insists on the «sacred» character and completeness of the European court phenomenon:

Banished the Court! Let me banished life,  
**since the chief end of life is there concluded:**  
**within the Court is all the Kingdom bounded,**  
**and in her sacred sphere doth comprehend**  
**ten thousand times so much, as so much place**  
**in any part of all the Empire else;**  
so every body, moving in her **sphere**,  
contains ten thousand times as much in him,  
as many other **her choice orb** excludes.<sup>46</sup>

As can be seen, the notion of the Court appears to be not only crucial, but also a «sacred» one: a focal point where social, political and cultural life of the European empires of the epoch converge. The poet explicitly affirms the both exclusive and complete character of the court

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<sup>46</sup> Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, IV vi, quoted by A. Quondam in *La corte e lo spazio: Ferrara estense*, v.3, 1982, 1063. In his brief conclusive essay A. Quondam summarizes the «experience of the seminar» dedicated to various aspects of the «Ferrara degli Estensi», suggesting a detailed analysis of Ben Jonson’s image of the «sacred sphere».

phenomenon, not for nothing opting for the perfectly spherical images: «bounded», «sacred sphere» and «choice orb». The very lexemes, as well as the whole metaphor of a Court being a «bounded» «Kingdom» are reminiscent of Shakespearian phrase, thus providing the modern reader with a perfectly valid set of connotations the major European Courts possessed in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century.

Jonson's lines, moreover, perfectly render the situation of the 'Europe of the Courts' of the *ancien régime* in general and the Italian social reality, in particular. Indeed, in the context of an Italy divided into separate city-states, each one in possession of their own cultural, historical and literary traditions, the Court performed a crucial role of the centre attracting both minor and major gravitational forces.

The Court thus reveals to be a nucleus, a centre of all important cultural and, more specifically, literary activities. A poet living in a local court, depending on his patron's benevolence – this kind of a close relationship between a poet and his noble benefactor was a most typical one. The relationship was never a unilateral one, as a rule, implying mutual interdependence which could be viewed as an implicit agreement: the poet engaged in dedicating his *Maecenas* encomiastic poems, glorifying the past, the present and the future of the magnanimous patron's family, whereas the benefactor not only sustained him financially, but also, and, most importantly, provided his *cantore* with a prestigious status of the court poet. Needless to say, epic poetry was among the most adapted forms to express this relationship of mutual advantage and dependence. In the first verses of *Jerusalem delivered*, Tasso pleads his benefactor, the «magnanimous» duke of Ferrara to accept his work that he brings him as a gift «*quasi in voto*», insisting thus on the inviolable, almost sacred character of the implicit agreement. *Further on*, the poet expresses the most fervent hope for his patron to glorify his family with the great deed of contributing to the liberation of Saint Sepulchre, due to the engagement in a new 'crusade' against the Ottoman Turks: despite the undiscussed authority of the patron, the poet permits himself the liberty to exhort the former one to military action, hoping that one day his «*penna presaga*» will glorify his patron's future exploits – a situation that was bound to become topical with most of Tasso's successors and imitators. Thus, not only the noble benefactor, influenced the poet, but also the poet, while following the current of his court and his patron's policy, could still imbue his work with personal exhortations, often expressing popular mood and beliefs.<sup>47</sup>

In the times of the *ancien régime*, the Court becomes the very stage – to use the popular baroque metaphor – of the world where the whole cultural and literary action unfolds. Poets «have their exits and their entrances», depending on their privileged position: the closer they are to their

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<sup>47</sup> As was definitely the case with the historical concept of the crusade (for more details on the way the revitalised idea of a new crusade paved its way with the popular beliefs in Europe see A. Dupront, P. Alphandery, *La Chrétienté et l'idée de Croisade*, 1954-1959, especially pp. 213-453).

Maecenas, the more likely are the chances of a fuller realization of their poetic talent and creative potential. At this point, the Court can actually be viewed as a ‘cradle’ of epic poetry: the latter is born and destined to live primarily in courts, and it is in courts that most of the recently composed epic poems find their ‘audience’. Chivalrous and courteous – the whole cultural and ethical code proper of the literary works of the epic poets of the courts is tailored to a limited, extremely refined audience: the one who is perfectly able to perceive and appreciate complex literary references and allusions this particular type of texts usually pervade with. To be able to read epic poems of the given epoch – and to read them well – a reader should not only be generally well-versed and possess some encyclopaedic knowledge, but, most importantly, he should be in possession of a special gift particularly admired in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century: the one of *arguzia*, or an extreme keenness of mind. A particular type of mind (*l’ingegno*): lucid, perceptive and insightful is a primary requirement as far as the readers of epic poems are concerned: and it is precisely in the complex social context of the court that the formation of such kind of *ingegno* takes place. Thus the Court – be it the grand royal court of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century’s France or one of the smaller courts of Ferrara or Modena, appears to be similar to a universe to those who inhabit it: it generates both the poets and their audience, dictating its conditions, keeping the right to punish the disobedient and recompense the most faithful ones. A poet of the given epoch frequently finds himself compelled to comply with the authority of the Court, every single act of deviation or disobedience leading to an eventual discord with the Maecenas, and to the damage, or even the loss of the prestige within the «nutshell» of the Court universe.

The Court functions as the epicentre not only of social and political, but also of cultural life. It is, therefore, crucial to expand upon the way it was related in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century to the creation of literary works, in particular, historical epic poems. **How did the notion of court evolved** in the late Cinquecento – the first part of Seicento, and, most importantly, **how did these changes influence the position of the authors of heroic poems? Which are the primary aspects a poet cannot disregard if he is to achieve the prestigious position of court poet?** Last but not least: which were **the differences between the evolution of the Court phenomenon in various European countries** – namely, in Italy, France, England and Spain? These are the fundamental questions that inevitably arise, when trying to discern the nature of the complicated relationship between the epic poet and his benefactor, as well as the whole social-cultural background of Baroque art and literature.

The phenomenon of the European Court as the nucleus of social and cultural life is by no means a new one. Being deeply rooted in the European consciousness and tradition, the notion of the Court, like any other historical notion, was naturally subject to transformation. In the period

between the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, the Court was enjoying one of its culminating moments in the history of Europe: even in the countries that were far from political unity and, consequently, were bound to extend the absence of single political power to the absence of a single court (as was the case with Germany and Italy), the courts performed the same fundamental function as the European monarchies' courts (France, England and Spain).

Norbert Elias in his thorough analysis of the evolution of the social structure of the European Court, ascribes to it a crucial, or «representative»<sup>48</sup> function:

Gerade dies, eine repräsentative und zentrale Bedeutung, hatte der Hof für die meisten westeuropäischen Länder des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts. In dieser Epoche bildete noch nicht die »Stadt«, sondern der »Hof« und die höfische Gesellschaft darin den Prägstock mit der weitaus größten Fernwirkung. Die Stadt war, wie man im ancien régime sagte, nur der »Affe« des Hofes<sup>49, 50</sup>.

Despite the fact that the European courts of the given epoch basically shared a number of socio-cultural functions and characteristics, it was namely the **Court of the Bourbon France** that not only can be considered as the most eminent example of the Court as the centre of social, cultural and political life, but also served as a **model** for the other European Court formations of the epoch. Indeed, to answer the above-stated question of the evolution and transformation of the European Court, we should have a closer look on the model of the French Court that, according to Werner Sombart and Norbert Elias, served a source for imitation for all major courts in Europe.<sup>51</sup> Thus, even if the proper historical «precursors» of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century could probably be found in the

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<sup>48</sup> N. Elias, 1975, p. 62. «In the XVI<sup>th</sup> and the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Court had namely the representative and centralized significance for most of West European states. In the epoch in question it was yet not the «city» but the «court», as well as the Court society that represented the matrix capable of exercising the utmost influence at all points. The city was only the «monkey» of the Court, as they put it under the Ancien Régime».

<sup>49</sup> Reference to the famous words of Saint-Cyr: «*La Ville est, dit-on, le singe de la cour*». (P.-A Nolvos Saint-Cyr, *Tableau du Siècle*, Genève, 1759, p. 132). «The City is, it is said, the monkey of the Court».

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> For a detailed analysis of the questions of transformation and continuity of the phenomenon of the European court, see N. Elias, *op.cit.*, where a special attention is given to the court of the Bourbon France, the author expanding upon the specificity of its structure, particularly insisting on the exemplifying function of the social phenomenon: «In fast allen europäischen Ländern gewann von der Renaissance ab der Hof in steigendem Maße an Bedeutung, und wenn auch für die Ausgestaltung der europäischen Höfe des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts der französische Hof, vor allem der Hof Ludwigs XIV., in hohem Maße vorbildlich wurde, der »Hof« dieses Jahrhunderts selbst war Ausdruck einer ganz bestimmten gesellschaftlichen Konstellation der ineinander verflochtenen Menschen und ebenso wenig von irgendeinem einzelnen Menschen oder einzelnen Menschengruppe allein geplant, gewollt, beabsichtigt, wie etwa – um irgendwelche anderen typischen Figurationen zu nennen – die Kirche, die Stadt, die Fabrik oder die Bürokratie». Elias, 1975, p. 61. «In almost all European countries, starting with the Renaissance, the Court became increasingly important; the French court, especially the Court of Louis XIV, was to a large extent the model for the organization of the courts of the XVII<sup>th</sup> and the XVIII<sup>th</sup> centuries; moreover, the «Court» of the given century became the expression of a well determined social structure that consisted of people closely linked to each other but that was not indeed designed, planned and controlled by individual people or groups, such as, for instance, the Church, the city, the factory, or the bureaucracy».



radical «transformations the structures of the State and the army were subject to in late Medieval times»,<sup>52</sup> it was France that gave Europe an «incontestable»<sup>53</sup> model to imitate, each country tailoring it to its relevant state structure.

As has been already stated above, the enhancing importance of the Court, as a rule, implies crucial social and historical prerequisites. Among the antefacts accounting for the enormous influence of the European Court, and the French Court, in particular, the increasing authority of the State, as well as gradually centralising monarchical power finally resulting in absolutism were undoubtedly factors of primary importance. Another fundamental aspect of the medieval model's transformation, i.e. the deep structural change that we can call today the 'curialisation'<sup>54</sup> of the military aristocracy, went hand in hand with and was brought to life namely by the centralisation of the monarchical power. The complicated and gradual 'curialisation' process can indeed be considered as a deep change, as far as social and political European climate was concerned: a change that led to the consolidated position of the *noblesse de robe*, while the members of the *noblesse d'épée* eventually lost their primary position. 'Curialisation' was, thus, a radical transition that involved most of the representatives of the old military nobility, causing «part of the chivalric French nobility (...) to transform itself into the aristocratic nobility of the court (...)»<sup>55</sup> – a long-term complicated process that gained progress already in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, to reach culmination during the reign of Louis XIV in the second part of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century. That profound structural transformation consequently implied the loss of independence and authority for the military nobility members – qualities that from time immemorial had been essential with them. Their new condition thus brought about a whole range of restrictions to their prior prestigiously independent status: a considerable part of military nobility was to become part and parcel of the 'universe' of the Court, complying with the fixed rules of the new game. The social change brought about the alteration of mentality of the ancient military nobility: in order to enjoy all of the advantages and privileges offered by the court life, *all* of the nobility members were bound to adopt the implicit code of behaviour suggesting inflexible detailed prescriptions in every single situation. Moreover, the court life required such qualities as the ability to reflect, observe and select – attitudes that required

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<sup>52</sup> W. Sombart, *Der moderne Kapitalismus* (1916), pp. 205-206, quoted by N. Elias, *op. cit.*, p. 66 (« (...) Wandlungen die die Staatsverfassung und das Heerwesen am Ausgang des Mittelalters durchmachen (...) »).

<sup>53</sup> Thus, according to W. Sombart, «(...) für die Geschichte des Hofwesens von entscheidender Bedeutung wurde doch die Herausbildung eines modernen Hofes in dem soviel größeren und mächtigeren Frankreich, das ja dann seit dem Ende des 16. und während der beiden folgenden Jahrhunderte der unbestrittene Lehrmeister in allen Angelegenheiten wurde, die das höfische Leben betrafen». (W. Sombart, *op. cit.*, quoted by N. Elias in N. Elias, *op. cit.*, pp. 66). «(...) yet, the establishment of a modern court in the more powerful France – the country that from the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> during the next two centuries had been an undisputed authority as far as all of the matters regarding court life were concerned – played a decisive role in the whole history of the court».

<sup>54</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the 'curialisation' process, fundamental for a better understanding the historical transformation of the phenomenon of the Court, see N. Elias, *op.cit.*, pp. 320-394.

<sup>55</sup> N. Elias, *op.cit.*, p. 320.

exercising severe self-discipline and rigid self-control. The mentality of the ancient *noblesse d'épée* was thus subject to significant transformations, among which the need to adapt to the worldly values, recognising the undisputed authority of the monarchical power was, perhaps, one of the most tough challenges they had to face – a challenge that, however, already in the course of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century transformed itself into a attitude of a «nostalgic» memory of their previous condition. It is thus essential that Norbert Elias, describing the new status of the military nobility, speaks of the «decline» and «nostalgia» of the ancient noble warriors, drawing an important parallel between historical and literary changes: «*Die Gestalt des großen Amadis und die gesamte Ritterromantik (...) zeigt das stolze mittelalterliche Kriegertum im Abendrot der Sehnsucht nach dem freieren selbstherrlicheren Ritterleben, das im Zuge der wachsenden Zentralisierung der Staaten und damit auch der Heeresorganisation schon im Untergehen ist*». <sup>56</sup> ‘Curialised’ noble warriors gradually lose their former prestige and identity<sup>57</sup>, the latter undergoing a crucial transformation that manifested itself in literature.

Literature naturally tends to reflect historical and social changes: thus, already in 1605, Cervantes, the survivor of Lepanto, offered his readers a disillusioned view on the destiny of ‘classical’ chivalric romances, his «*ingenioso hidalgo*» being a symbol of the radically altered circumstances of the military nobility of the past. The question of the way the above-stated social changes were reflected in literature, with a special regard to the main subject of the present work – the epic poetry – will be further discussed in the chapters to come.

Another essential consequence of the ‘curialisation’ process was the inclusion of the military nobility into a perfectly complete system of interdependencies lying at the basis of the Court at the given stage of its evolution. The military nobles, as anyone involved in the court life, became part and parcel of the whole complex chain of interconnected mechanisms at play at the European Court.

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322. «The figure of the great Amadis and the whole chivalric Romanticism (...) show the proud chivalry in decline: a nostalgic look back at the free and independent chivalric life that came now to the end due to the growing centralization of the estates and the new organization of the army».

<sup>57</sup> The end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> - the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries is a crucial period in this regard, for it was namely under Henry IV that the whole ‘curialisation’ process gained progress. Norbert Elias observed that «*Ganz abgesehen von der Angewiesenheit des Adels auf den König und der Könige auf den Adel innerhalb der sich neu herstellenden Ordnung, auch die Tradition der Verbundenheit von König und Adel und das Ethos dieser Beziehung (...) erloschen im Frankreich des anciens régime niemals ganz, wandelten sich gewissermaßen durch Heinrich IV hindurch langsam von ihrer feudalen in ihre höfische Gestalt.*» (*Ibid.*, p. 272). «Apart from the relationship of mutual dependence between the nobility and the king in this new social paradigm that was increasingly gaining ground, the traditional link between the two parties constituting the ethos of the given relationship (...) had never disappeared in France during the Ancien Régime: it had only become subject to gradual transformation, having lost its feudal character under Henry IV and having substituted it with the system of the court. It was namely the court with the structure it had definitely assumed under Louis XIV that became the social agency that embodied both the functions of dependency and differentiation, according to the new balance of power emerging after the religious wars. From that moment, the majority of the nobility members lost their autonomy and became continuously dependent on the king (...)».

As has already been stated above, the changed condition of the noble warriors was to a great extent linked to the gradually enhancing process of the centralization of the power, the major factor responsible for the complicated process being the gradual shift of balance in favour of the State rather than in that of the nobility. Indeed, if we agree with Norbert Elias who stated that the sociology of the court literally meant the sociology of the monarchy<sup>58</sup>, we shall have to consider the Bourbon court of the XVI<sup>th</sup> – and especially, the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries, as the essential social model as far as other European courts of the given epoch are concerned. Even if the culminating moment of the absolute French monarchy was, by no doubt, the period of the reign of Louis XIV, already under Louis IX the so-called «co-states»<sup>59</sup> were re-united into a single State, adopting a system of single power – a tendency towards an increasing consolidation of the position of the monarch that, through the gradually strengthening system of the Court, was cultivated in the centuries to come, gaining particularly substantial progress in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, under Henry IV, thus laying the basis for the culmination it enjoyed under Louis the Great in the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries.

What were the main characteristics of the royal court in the sixteenth-century France? First and foremost, the social formation of the Court can be viewed as the direct continuation and reflection of the increasingly centralized monarchy, tending to absolutism: the Court, already under Henry IV, was the very core of the social and political life of the country: central, as well as direct zone for all major activities of the monarch. As Norbert Elias put it, «*Die Königsherrschaft über das Land war nichts anderes als die Aus- und Angliederung an die Herrschaft des Fürsten über Haus und Hof*».<sup>60</sup> The court, although brought to life by monarchical power, still exerted its own impact on it, the relationship between the two phenomena having thus an interdependent character:

Durch den höfischen Filter mußte alles, was aus dem weiteren Königsbesitz, aus dem Königreich kam, hindurch, ehe es zum König gelangen konnte; durch den Filter des Hofes mußte alles hindurch, ehe es vom König ins Land kam. Auch der absoluteste König wirkte nur Vermittlung der am Hofe lebenden Menschen auf sein Land. So bildete der Hof und das höfische Leben den Ursprungsort für die gesamte Erfahrung, für die Menschen – und Weltauffassung der unumschränkten Könige des ancien régime.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> «*So ist die Soziologie des Hofes zugleich eine Soziologie des Königtums*». (*Ibid.*, p. 69). «Thus, the sociology of the court is at the same time a sociology of kingship».

<sup>59</sup> For the notion of the «*co-états*» and their role in the historical, political and social context of the French monarchy, see footnote 12 in N. Elias, 1975, p. 70).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69. «The king's power over the state consisted namely in the extension and integration of the power that the prince exercised over the House and the court».

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* «Everything that came from the expanded royal propriety, i.e. from the reign, was first to pass through *the filter of the court* before it could reach the king, as well as everything had to pass through the filter of the court before it could travel from the king to the state: even the most absolute monarch influenced the country through the

The Court as a ‘mediator’ between the monarch and the «country»: the complex system of eventually included the monarch as one of its elements, however dominant and crucial to its very existence: for the system to function perfectly, even the monarch was bound to comply with its rules.

Each member of the ‘court chain’ had its concrete function, each one was included into the system of all those interdependencies which formed its primary characteristics and which provided for the basis of the perfect functioning of the whole chain. The military nobility having converged with the *noblesse de robe*, only added more to the increasing vigor of the Court phenomenon, revealing itself, most probably, the decisive factor responsible for the irrevocable shift of power balance in favour of the Bourbons.

Neither the ‘curialisation’ of the military nobility should be viewed as a single, isolated phenomenon, but can be rightly considered as part of the complex social transformation implying historical, political and social continuity – a continuity that extended to the whole Europe and thus obliges us to considerate types of courts and their functions in other European countries as well.

It is worth noting in this connection that the case of the political conjuncture in **Italy** deserves special attention. One of the most important European countries, a crucial centre of the Renaissance culture and one of the most important European countries that, to adopt Fernand Braudel’s terminology, «irradiated»<sup>62</sup> cultural values of the Baroque, politically, it was a country divided into States, each one, as a rule, pursuing their own policy and political objectives. The absence of common power and common internal policy made it impossible for Italy to have a unique centralized centre of power which would gradually enhance and, as the case was with France, concentrate itself in the social formation of the court. As Carlo Dionisotti put it,

(...) resta il fatto che *politicamente*, e anche, più che oggi non paia, *letterariamente*, *l’Italia era nel Cinquecento divisa*, e sempre giova in ogni indagine partire dalla realtà di fatto, da quella divisione cioè, e arrivare se mai, quando arrivare si possa, a una considerazione comparativa e unitaria. Questo procedimento è tanto più consigliabile quando, come nel presente caso, l’indagine letteraria sia inestricabile dalla storia politica, da *una storia cioè, nell’Italia cinquecentesca, necessariamente e costantemente differenziata*.<sup>63</sup>

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mediation of the people who lived at the Court. Thus, the Court and the Court life constituted the source and origin of the entire experience and set of beliefs of the people and the world under the Ancien Régime ».

<sup>62</sup> For the theory of the Mediterranean civilizations as centers of cultural «irradiation», see F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-105; pp. 158-163.

<sup>63</sup> « (...) the fact remains that *politically*, and, to a greater extent than it may seem nowadays, *literarily*, *in the Cinquecento, Italy was divided* – it is always useful to start from the reality of facts, that is from this condition of division, in order to arrive, if possible, to a comparative and unitary perspective. This method is all the more advisable, in cases similar to the present one, i.e. when literary research reveals to be indissolubly linked with political history –

«The reality of facts» indeed makes it more difficult for Italy to imitate the model of the Bourbon monarchy – only more so in the XVI<sup>th</sup> – the early XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, Italy has undeniably had a deep-rooted tradition of the court life, the Italian courts having always performed the function of important centres as far as social, political and artistic life was concerned. The absence of political unity and common power, as well as discords between the States were the historical prerequisites that had a major impact on the nature of the phenomenon of the Italian Court during the Baroque period: age-old and extremely refined, the Italian courts were as “differentiated” as were the States and the principalities themselves, in the context of the politically divided country. Thus, according to Amedeo Quondam and Giuseppe Papagno, *«la Corte, come in buona parte il paese Italia, è storicamente un fenomeno magmatico; è l’epicentro di un fenomeno che si stenta a definire «Stato» tante sono le caratteristiche di quest’ultimo che gli mancano»*.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, political discords were aggravated by significant religious discords, as well as the important role the papal Rome, frequently trying to impose its own politics, played in the context of the Italy of the time. All the above-mentioned internal discords presented, indeed, one more reason to the Italian stalling the unification of forces, even under the impending common threat of the Islamic Orient.

Located in different states, the Italian Courts of the XVI<sup>th</sup> – XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries may have been politically and culturally «differentiated» – however, all of them performed a common, historically conditioned function: each of them acted as a crucial social and cultural hub of the given State. There was no one, unique centre of the concentration of power, but – to adopt the famous metaphor – the centre was «everywhere» the phenomenon of the court life could be observed. In this sense, both socially and culturally, the Baroque Italy consisted of many such ‘centres’ – a circumstance that, as is well-known, had a major impact on the development of literature – and that will be further discussed in the framework of the present analysis.

Due to the above-mentioned political reasons, the system of the Court in Italy was clearly a heterogeneous and a polyvalent one: even from the territorial point of view, it was characterized by an extremely dynamical evolution that was by no means a linear process and often implied drastic territorial reorganization, as well as continuous redefinition of the States’ borders. Giuseppe Papagno and Amedeo Quondam remark upon the «impossibility» of reducing the Italian Courts to a

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*history that was a necessarily and continuously differentiated one, as far as Cinquecento Italy is concerned*. (C. Dionisotti, *op. cit.*, p. 203).

<sup>64</sup> «The Court, as well as to a large extent Italy as a country, is historically a magmatic phenomenon; it is the epicenter of a phenomenon that one can hardly define as a «State», since it lacks many of the characteristics required». (G. Papagno, A. Quondam (ed.), 1982, p. 823).

single homogenous space<sup>65</sup>, insisting on the «conflictual» and «dynamic» character of the relevant states and drawing attention to their being in a state of continuous flux:

Proprio perché il territorio Italia, specialmente nella sua parte settentrionale (...) è di antica formazione, *ma anche molto mobile* per altri aspetti (...) questo doppio gioco tra situazione preesistente e politica della Corte *rivela una dinamica (e una conflittualità) estremamente intrecciata, non sempre rettilinea e omogenea*, al cui interno si sovrappongono **continuità territoriali**, elementi di lunga durata (...) e *profonde innovazioni*.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the absence of political and territorial unity, it is not for nothing that the **image of the circle, as well as the theme of centrality**, runs like a leitmotiv thorough the given section of social conjuncture analysis. As has been stated above, the Court has a natural tendency to «form a circle»<sup>67</sup>: has Ben Jonson put it, a «sacred sphere», whose focal point was, in the French tradition, *la Maison du Roi*, and the palace of the Prince (*la 'casa' del Principe*). Otherwise speaking, the Court could be considered as an important crossroads where many social, cultural and political phenomena meet and interact. In spite of all the above-mentioned specific particularities conditioned by Italy's geopolitical diversity, the Italian Courts still possess the same «homogeneous»<sup>68</sup> 'classical' structure that characterized the absolutist French Court of the XVI-XVII<sup>th</sup> century: its nature of a «circle» is to a great extent defined by its exclusive, elitist character: hermetism and, to say it with Baltasar Gracián, the «talent of selection», from one hand – as well as its perfect, absolute and complete character symbolized by its spherical form, on the other – the aspects that converge in the image of a «sacred sphere», suggested by Ben Jonson. However a

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 830.

<sup>66</sup> «It is namely due to the territory of Italy being of the age-old formation, especially as far as its northern part is concerned (...), as well as its being highly dynamic in other aspects (...) that this double play involving the preexistent situation and the policy of the Court reveals its extremely dynamic (and controversial) character that is far from being always rectilinear and homogeneous and tends to merge territorial continuities, elements of long lasting nature and intervals of more or less durable character (..), as well as radical innovations». (*Ibid.*, pp. 829-30). Furthermore, the researchers expand upon the nature of the historical process making special emphasis on the particular character of the Italian historical and political condition of the epoch in question: «*Vi sono corti che vengono a trovarsi «naturalmente» al centro di un territorio (Milano), altre che proseguono la Politica di centralizzazione (Firenze), altre che, invece, vengono a trovarsi in posizioni eccentriche (Ferrara), altre che si trovano ad affrontare bi/tri/polarità, come Parma (Parma e Piacenza), Napoli (Napoli e Palermo), altre ancora ancora, come Mantova, che inseriscono una doppia realtà: un centro assai forte, un ampio spazio vuoto di grossi centri intorno alla città-capitale-Corte e infine una cintura di città-fortezza-feudi sui confini (...)*». – «There are courts that 'naturally' find themselves placed in the center of a given territory (Milan), while other courts stick to the policy of centralization (Florence) and other ones, on the contrary, find themselves in eccentric positions (Ferrara), and other courts that have to face bi/tripolarity, such as Parma (Parma and Piacenza), Naples (Naples and Palermo), and other ones that, similarly to Mantua, implicate a double reality: a rather powerful center, an ample space lacking large centers around the city-capital-court and, finally, the tripartite structure of city-fortress-feuds around the borders». (*Ibid.*, p. 829).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 829.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1064.

crossroads, a space that brings into one a range of other spaces of differentiate, often incompatible nature, the Court, as Tasso observed in his *Dialogues*, is a perfectly self-sufficient place that contains in itself everything that it may need, including «una raccolta di tutte l'eccellenze di tutte l'arti e di tutte l'opere le quali sono fatture».<sup>69</sup>

If all of those aspects of the Court structure are true, an important question arises: the Court being thus a perfectly complete and self-sufficient social formation, what was then the nature of its relationship with the monarch or the prince, as well as with the society the system actually produced? In this perspective, the Court can be viewed as a vital element that constituted one whole with the other essential elements of the chain. As Hippolyte Taine remarked, «*La monarchie a produit la cour, qui a produit la société polie*»<sup>70</sup> – the well-known formula insists upon the interdependent character of the relationship between the two notions. For every European Court, a monarch, or a prince, is a central figure, necessary not only for its functioning, but also for its mere existence: the court, in its turn, «produces» and conditions the existence and evolution of the *société polie*, involving all of their members into the complex system of interdependencies, with its own ethos and the necessity of rigid auto-discipline and control. None of the three phenomena is to be disregarded, when analyzing the general socio-cultural context of the given epoch: those were co-existing mutually dependent elements, each one of them contributing to the perfect functioning of the impeccable mechanism<sup>71</sup> they were part of.

Quite an opposite case was the one of the Court system in **England**. One of the most drastic differences that did not give way to the creation of a complex chain *monarchy-court-society* and that as well accounted for the absence of a profound impact of the court as a mediator, lay in a different type of relationship between the «dominant power» and the aristocratic society.<sup>72</sup> While in countries, such as France, Spain and Italy, the courts were literally focal points where all the «kingdom» was «bounded», i.e. the social phenomenon of the court society and high society actually coincided, in England the situation was by far more complicated, since «given the principle of separation of powers in action in the English society, the Court and the Court society in England were far from constituting the centre but, in the best case, made one of the centres of the «good society». Quite often it happened that the aristocratic houses competed with it, being, in their turn, political and social centres of the *Society*».<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> «A collection of the excellences of all arts and works of arts». T. Tasso, *I dialoghi*, 1859, p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> H. Taine, *Les origines. Ancien régime*, vol. I, cap.2, 1, p. 191, quoted in N. Elias, *op.cit.*, p. 87. «The monarchy produced the court that produced civil society».

<sup>71</sup> «Impeccable» is used here to render the complexity of the whole system and of course, does not mean that the court system existed without conflicts, or rivalry: it is a well-known fact that the whole system implied intensive everyday competition for one's privileges and status.

<sup>72</sup> N. Elias, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

Even territorially, unlike the members of the French nobility who, in the course of the ‘curialisation’ process, were frequently bound to leave their country estates in favor of the court life, the English nobility was free to ‘migrate’ from London mansions to their residences in the country where they used to spend considerable time of their lives.

So what social and political factors accounted for this crucial difference? The answer should be searched for in a different, as far as other European countries were concerned, balance of power: the political prestige and impact of Parliament and political parties had a bigger say in regulating the processes of «integration»<sup>74</sup> and regulation of the Society. The political rivalry between the parties was a political factor of primary importance which had a profound impact on the Society and in its turn was an obstacle for the Society to bring itself into unity, similarly impeding the English Court to strengthen its social position, as well as achieve a unique political and social status it enjoyed in Spain.

However, the phenomena of the Court and the *Society* in England do not merge to the full extent, the very notion of the Court has an important part to play in the Elizabethan England. Already starting from the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, the arguments of the Court and the Court life become one of the most popular themes inspiring a number of literary genres<sup>75</sup>: first and foremost, the dramatic ones, but also treatises, poems, novels and biographies.

One of the most significant reasons that account for the progress the concepts of *the Court*, **courtier**, **courtship** gained in the Tudor era, was the extreme popularity that Castiglione’s treatise, with its ideal man of the Court, enjoyed all over world, and in England in particular. Similarly to other European cultures, the English social and literary culture not only absorbed Castiglione’s prescriptions, but also produced a whole range of imitators, who, whether they agreed or not, with the ideal figure of the Courtier suggested by *The Book of the Courtier*, by the very fact of taking over and developing the Court theme, proved its actuality, as far as the social, political and literary climate of the Elizabethan England was concerned.

The literary ideal of the Court has, however, undergone a complex evolution: the XVI<sup>th</sup> century can be viewed as a culminating moment of the English Court, and thus, a perfect socio-cultural background for assuming and reproducing Castiglione’s ideal. As Valentina Poggi Ghigi rightly observed,

**Nell’Inghilterra del Cinquecento (...) la personalità dell’uomo di corte era stata oggetto di un interesse forse anche più urgente e vitale di quello che le aveva dedicato il Castiglione: l’interesse di una**

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the literary origins and evolution of the Court phenomenon, see V. Poggi Ghigi, *L’ideale tradito. L’uomo di corte nel teatro elisabettiano*, 1980.



società che, uscendo da un lungo travaglio interno, cercava ansiosamente di superare i postumi, di riconoscere le proprie strutture per mettersi al passo con le altre nazioni, oltre che sul piano militare, anche su quello amministrativo e culturale. In questa esigenza di definire e consolidare il prestigio di una monarchia di origine recente, di chiarirne l'importanza ai fini del pubblico bene, va inquadrata la letteratura dell'età Tudor che stabilisce i requisiti del perfetto uomo di corte (...).<sup>76</sup>

As to the vocation and duty of the Courtier, to say it with John Lyly, the renowned Elizabethan playwright and politician, it had more a decorative rather than political value and consisted more in «**embellishing** with his culture and his graceful modes of expression»,<sup>77</sup> the already perfect 'habitat' of the Court, sustaining the monarch, as well as his councillors who provided for the political decisions.

The prestige the notions of the Court and the Courtier have known in the Tudor era gradually diminishes in the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, the decline of the English Court dating back to the end of the reign of the Tudors being one of the reasons that accounted for the poignant criticism it receives in a number of relevant treatises.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, the ideal of the Courtier continues to be subject of heated literary debates proving thus its vitality and continuity as far as European literary tradition is concerned.

The XVI<sup>th</sup>-XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries in **Spain** prove to be the «Golden Age» – *el Siglo de oro* – not only for the Spanish art and literature, but as well for the Spanish monarchy. In the Baroque period, Spain, due to its pursuing the integration policy, becomes one of the most powerful Mediterranean empires of the time.<sup>79</sup> The Spanish monarchs constantly reinforce their position – their power tends to absolutism and the Court, as a nucleus of political, social and cultural life of the empire, assumes primary function in the domestic policy of the country, for, as Bartolomé Bennassar put it,

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.12-13. «In England of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, the figure of the courtier sparked an interest that was probably even more intense than the one shown by Castiglione: the interest of a society which after having survived the long-lasting internal crisis, was desperately trying to overcome its predecessors, determining its own structures in order to catch up with the other nations not only at the military level but as well at the administrative and cultural ones. The whole literature of the Tudor period that established the requirements for the perfect courtier should namely be inscribed into the context of this necessity of defining and reinforcing the prestige of a monarchy of recent origin (...).»

<sup>77</sup> See V. Poggi Ghigi, *op.cit.*, p. 98. In her thorough analysis, V. Poggi Ghigi stresses the fact that «social» aspects, for a number of the English literary minds of the epoch, mattered along with the decorative and cultural values: «Dalle opere dei precettisti inglesi di corte emerge anzitutto quale intermediario fra sovrano e sudditi, collocato a metà strada fra il principio dell'autorità e i soggetti dell'autorità medesima: partecipe del potere e dell'obbedienza, rappresentante di ciascuna delle due parti (...) su di lui convergono i doveri di un'adeguata preparazione e di una totale disponibilità al servizio del principe (...)» (*Ibid.*, p. 13). «There is an essential phenomenon of intermediary between the sovereign and his subjects described in the English Court treatises – the one that is collocated somewhere in between the principle of authority and the subjects of the very authority: agent of the power and the obedience, as well as the representative of both parties (...) – it is namely this point where the duty of adequate preparation and unlimited commitment at the service of the prince converge (...).»

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49; for the continuity of the Italian tradition and controversial attitudes towards Castiglione's ideal of the *Courtier*, see V. Poggi Ghigi, *op.cit.*, pp. 11-47.

<sup>79</sup> See F. Braudel, *op.cit.*, especially pp. 19-26.

En realidad, en la España del Siglo de Oro, bajo la etiqueta de la monarquía absoluta se establece lo que José Antonio Maravall denomina «un colectivo de poder». *El absolutismo* no consiste en manera alguna en el ejercicio de un poder sin límites por parte de un hombre solo sobre unos millones de súbditos reducidos a la igualdad de la sumisión. Construido y desarrollado sobre las ruinas de las instituciones representativas, **implica la formación en torno al monarca de «élites»**, cuyos orígenes pueden ser diversos, pero que se reagrupan en los centros de decisión (...).<sup>80</sup>

The «élites» that «gather around» the monarch (or rather that the monarch gathers around himself to favour his absolute power), included both the *noblesse de robe* and the *noblesse d'épée*, as well as a number of *letrados*. The political «decision-making centers»<sup>81</sup> were created namely by the above-mentioned *élites*, who had opportunity to participate in the political life of the empire, forming thus a politically active class. The 'curialisation' of the military nobility that took place in the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, actively promoted by Philip II, gained inexorable progress, the way it did in other European countries. The consequences that the process brought were drastic: according to Bartolomé Bennassar, «*Sin embargo, hacia finales del siglo XVI la mayoría de los grandes nobles habían perdido la costumbre de combatir*»<sup>82</sup> – to the point that already in 1600, when the empire was to combat in Flanders, the State Council failed in finding competent army commanders, since «*tras haber examinado el caso de todas las personas que están en España o en Italia*» they found «*ninguna en la que se den a la vez la grandeza y la práctica y experiencia necesarias para dirigir un ejército*».<sup>83</sup>

Military nobility – and this is an essential aspect of the social structure of the Spanish system of power of the time – turned into a «political class» that, together with the *letrados*, was able to take decisions thus influencing the course of political events. Military competence was consequently substituted with political power: despite the altered status, the authority of the nobility was strengthened. The role of the Court during the Baroque period in Spain was reinforced as well, the Court having acquired, as José Antonio Maravall justly observed, a socio-cultural value that is altogether different from the one it had in the Renaissance times – a value which correlates with the

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<sup>80</sup> B. Bennassar, 2001, p. 53. «It actually happened that during the Spanish Golden Age, a phenomenon that José Antonio Maravall called «a group of power» had emerged in Spain under the label of absolute monarchy. *Absolutism* in no way implies the exercise of unlimited power on the part of one person over millions of subjects reduced to equal submission. A notion that was built and evolved on the ruins of the representative institutions implies *the formation around of the «élites» around the figure of the monarch*. The origins of these «élites» might vary but they are certain to unite themselves into crucial decision-making centres (...).»

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55. «Yet, by the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century most of the nobility members had lost the custom of fighting».

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* «(...) after having considered the state of all Spanish and Italian inhabitants (...) [they found] no one who would be capable of showing the grandeur, the practice and the experience necessary for the commander-in-chief of an army».

political authority, i.e. the régime very close to the absolute monarchy Spain had achieved by the time:

(...) ahora lo [«el valor de la época» que «se le da a la palabra «corte»] podemos definir como centro administrativo y social de manifestación de un poder soberano. Ese autoritarismo barroco no es otro que el del absolutismo monárquico (...) Lo propio de ese régimen de absolutismo, en el XVII, es que el principio del poder absoluto se ha difundido por todo el cuerpo social, integra todas las manifestaciones de autoridad, fortaleciéndolas – por lo menos, en principio –, y, a través de éstas, está presente en muchas esferas de la vida social y, en alguna medida, las inspira.<sup>84</sup>

The European Court during the Baroque period was indeed a crucial influence that among other spheres of life it pervaded produced a profound impact on literature. Poets, dramatists, as well as authors of numerous prescriptive treatises live and create in the Court. The Court life, despite obvious disadvantages, such as the need to adapt, the requirement of a rigid self-control and, last but not least, fierce competition, offered major possibilities to create and earn fame, as well as the prestigious status. The poet usually had his patron – a nobleman, a prince, or a monarch himself who acts as his benefactor, sustaining him materially and expecting, in exchange for his benevolence, to be glorified in his poetical exercises.

The Court, in Tasso's view, is a noble «*adunanza*», «*una congregazione d'uomini raccolti per onore*»<sup>85</sup>, that performs a socio-cultural function of bringing together the most eminent artistic talents and literary minds of the whole Europe. Thus, Tasso offers his readers a definition that embraces not only the Italian, or, as the case might have been, the court of Alfonso d'Este, but the one that goes beyond the national borders and could refer to the European Courts in general<sup>86</sup>. The common will to «serve» their Maecenas is a trait of primary importance, for it turns the Court into a perfect background – or, to use a popular Baroque image, – a perfect scene that stimulates, favours and controls the artistic production and, most importantly, literary activity of the time. The Court

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<sup>84</sup> J.A. Maravall, *La cultura del Barroco: análisis de una estructura histórica*, 1975, p. 160. «(...) we can now define it [the value ascribed to the word «court» in the epoch] as the administrative and social center where the power of the monarch is manifested. This Baroque authoritarianism is nothing else but the regime of absolute monarchy (...). An essential characteristic of absolutism in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century consists in the fact that it had traversed the entire social body, integrating all of the manifestations of power thus reinforcing them – at least, in the beginning – and in this way being not only an essential presence in a number of social spheres, but also to a certain extent giving impetus to them».

<sup>85</sup> «Assembly», «a congregation of people brought together by honour» (T. Tasso, *I dialoghi*, 1859, pp. 9-10).

<sup>86</sup> «(...) *avegnaché la corte sia adunanza di varie nazioni, le quali usano una lingua solamente, ma con gli Italiani sono mescolati i Tedeschi, i Francesi, i Boemi, i Greci (...) fra' quali è gran concordia nel servire al principe (...)*» (*Ibid.*, p. 20). «(...) despite the fact that the court is an assembly of different nations that make use of only one language, it happens that the Italians are mingled with the Germans, the French, the Bohemians, the Greeks (...) who serve the prince in complete concord (...)».

offers ample opportunities for those striving for literary fame: in the Court, the «human value» «shines» in all its splendour, «more brightly than in any other place».<sup>87</sup>

**The relationship between the poet and his patron** is always based on a kind of ‘social engagement’ which leaves the poet little possibility for staying apart from the Court life. Once again, if the Court is a «perfect», as well as «self-sufficient» space that «*a bastanza contiene in se stessa tutto ciò che l'è necessario*»,<sup>88</sup> if it does indeed «select the most perfect», bringing to perfection what is not perfect by nature,<sup>89</sup> and if finally, as has been said, it represents the most desired and advantageous place to gain fame, the poet frequently accepted the rules of the game thus acquiring a status of a *courtier* as well.

An important question arises: what is then **the actual status of the poet** who finds himself working under the aegis of his patron? The answer can be found in the above-mentioned Tasso's dialogue.

In the course of their animated conversation, the characters reflect on the question of the court poet status, questioning themselves whether the poets are «*cortigiani propriamente*»,<sup>90</sup> or have a different status, due to their specific position and social function in the court. The answer is given by the *Forestiero Napolitano*:

Ma propriamente cortigiano è colui ch'attende a l'azione e al negozio. Color dunque che son volti a la contemplazione de le cose grandi e sublimi, *tuttoché non siano cortigiani propriamente, tanto dovrebbero esser partecipi* de la prudenza e de le maniere laudevole de la corte, quanto bastasse a farli più cari al principe ed a ciascun altro.<sup>91</sup>

«Sharing» («*essere partecipi*») appears to be the key-word to a proper understanding of the specificity of the court poet status: although he cannot be viewed as a «proper» courtier, it is still essential that he share the court values, as well as comply with the complex set of socio-cultural norms while living and creating in the context of the court life. It is namely by sharing the rigid etiquette, as well as specific social and moral values, that he could acquire the advantageous position in the court and – most importantly – win his benefactor's favour and sympathy.

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. «Contains in itself a sufficient quantity of everything it needs».

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* «Yet a proper courtier is the one who attends to action and activities. Therefore, even those who are inclined to the contemplation of magnificent and sublime things and thus are not courtiers in the proper sense of the word, all the same should share the prudence and the commendable manners of the court to the extent it will suffice to make them dear to the prince and to everyone else».

Winning the royal Maecenas's sympathy is a complex, as well as an extremely ambitious task. As Baltasar Gracián remarked in his *Hero*, reflecting on various origins of the «sublime sympathy»,

Pero la [simpatia] real es la reina de las prendas, pasa los términos de prodigio, basa, que levantó estatua siempre de inmortalidad, sobre plintos de prospera fortuna.<sup>92</sup>

Apart from obvious practical benefits, such as, for instance, prestigious position in the court, royal sympathy brings about 'gifts' essential for every poet, i.e. fame and even immortality – a perfectly binary relationship, since one of the poet's first duties is to glorify his patron, immortalizing his lineage and future descendants. The pact is by no means new, but in the new social, historical and political context of the epoch (increasingly centralized power that in some countries transforms into the regime of the absolute monarchy) – under such conditions it acquires new actuality and importance, not in the least due to the role of the Court that functions as a perfect background of poet's and Maecenas's implicit pact. On the one hand, the poet has no «proper» courtier status, and it is namely through literary art that he gets the opportunity of «participating» in the court privileges: «*E quelli ancora ch'esercitano l'arti, partecipano de la prudenza de' superiori*».<sup>93</sup> The act of poet's «partaking» extends to embrace as well the supreme qualities and set of moral prescriptions that characterize the «superiors» – by assimilating them, the poet reaches a status that is «almost» the one of the courtier, and, most significantly, endows his work with the qualities he thus absorbed: «*In questa maniera l'arti, quantunque ignobili, prendono qualità e gentilezza de la corte*».<sup>94</sup> This crucial interaction between the Maecenas and the poet becomes possible due to the perfect mediator – the Court whose presence as the background guarantees the inviolability of the value exchange between the two.

Much has been said about the status of the poet – the status and primary role of the Maecenas, or the poet's benefactor, needs to be clarified as well.

In the XVI<sup>th</sup>-XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries, the actual status of the poet's patron was entirely linked to the phenomenon of the Court. Whether he had royal origins, or, as for instance, was the case with Italy, belonged to the high nobility, he was certain to be the dominant element in the context of a given court, enjoying power, influence and prestige with his courtiers and citizens or subjects. Frequently, his status and absolute prestige reached incredible dimensions – to the extent that he was perceived

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<sup>92</sup> B. Gracián, *El Heroe*, 1930, p. 156. «But the most favourable and the most beneficial Sympathy is that which a King has for his Subject (...) a Subject that has real Merit in him, is in a short Time rais'd to the highest Pitch of Greatness». (tr. from Spanish by J. de Courbeville, 1726, p. 196).

<sup>93</sup> T. Tasso, *op.cit.*, p. 20. «Those who practise arts participate in their patrons' prudence».

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* «In this way, the arts – even the ignoble ones – assume the quality and the fineness of the court».

as similar to a saint, or even, God – and it was this sacred aureole that most poets thought to be their duty and part of the implicit accord with their patron to render in their works. This «sacred» attitude was perfectly shown by Baltasar Gracián stating in his *Hero* that «con la cristiandad nació hermanada la grandeza»,<sup>95</sup> referring namely to the notion of royal «grandeur»:

Carlos, primer emperador de Francia, alcanzó el mismo renombre y aspiró al de santo.

Luis, gloriosísimo rey, fué flor de santos y de reyes.

En España, Fernando, llamado comunmente el Santo en Castilla, fué el Magno del orbe (...)

Los dos Reyes Católicos, Fernando e Isabel, fueron el *non plus ultra*, digo columnas de la fe.

El bueno, el casto, el pío, el celoso de los Filipos españoles, no perdiendo un palmo de tierra, ganó a varas el cielo, y de verdad que venció más monstruos con su virtud que Alcides con su clava.

Entre capitanes, Godofre de Bullón, Jorge Castrioto, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, el gran Gonzalo Fernandez, el primero de Santa Cruz y el pasmo de los turcos, el serenísimo señor don Juan de Austria fueron espejos de virtud y templos de la piedad cristiana.<sup>96</sup>

As can be seen, Gracián's 'catalogue' comprises not only monarchs, but also renowned heroes and army commanders who by their military valor, as well as other virtues earned the status of the «sacrosanct heroes»<sup>97</sup> – a status that was inevitably reflected in literature – in particular, in epic poetry. A poet chanting the divine origins of his Maecenas was a literary fact that had ancient roots in the European literary tradition; due to the specificity of social and political conjuncture in Europe of the Baroque times, this epideictic tradition, as well as the belief in the celestial origins of monarchs and some outstanding heroes only became stronger. The latter, as Bartolomé Bennassar put it, is based directly on two medieval models, revitalized indeed in the XVI<sup>th</sup>- XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries: the theory of the social terrestrial hierarchical model of the three Estates of the realm as the imitation of its prototype, the celestial hierarchical model, and, secondly, the theory of a «*cuero místico civil*»,<sup>98</sup> according to which, the monarch is «the heart and the head» of his realm's «body», represented by the above-mentioned three Estates. In line with the models, the monarch is seen as

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<sup>95</sup> B. Gracián, *op.cit.*, p. 163. «Grandeur was born together with Christianity».

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164. «Charles I, Emperor of France, was stiled the Great, when he endeavour'd to obtain a place among the Saints. Lewis IX was the Glory and Ornament of the most Christian Kings, because he added to a great degree of Sanctity, all the perfections of a great Monarch. In Spain, Ferdinand, commonly call'd the Saint of Castile, was likewise accounted a great King (...) King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, the one an Hero and the other an Heroine, were two immovable Pillars of the Catholick Faith. Philip III, that pious and good Prince, who, by his edifying Conduct and Example, reform'd more Vices than Hercules destroy'd Monsters with his Club, preserv'd his Dominions to the very last in all their Extent and Glory. Among the great Captains, Godfrey de Bouillon, George Castriot, Rhoderick Diaz de Vivar, Gonzales Fernando, and Don John of Austria were Patterns of Virtue, and living Temples of Christian Piety». (*Ibid.*, pp. 213-214).

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>98</sup> «Civil mystical body»; see B. Bennassar, *op.cit.*, pp. 38-48.

«*vicario de Dios*»<sup>99</sup>; not only is he being perfectly conscious of his «divine» status, but does everything to correspond to it. As Baltasar Bennassar rightly observed,

*Los reyes interpretaban el papel de divinidades casi inaccesibles (...). El carisma de la persona regia y el abuso de ceremonial contribuían a crear esta distanciaci3n entre los miembros de la familia real y sus s3bditos. Todo acontecimiento de alguna importancia aparente (...) era amplificado por el ambiente festivo que se le ortogaba y se convertía de pronto en algo desmesurado. El brillo de los uniformes y de los trajes, el empleo del oro, de las piedras preciosas y de las telas de elevado precio, la construcci3n de palacios suntuosos adornados con los prestigios del arte participaban en la creaci3n de la ilusi3n y así el pueblo podía creer que sus reyes y sus príncipes eran de una esencia diferente en la que se reconocía la huella de Dios.*<sup>100</sup>

The creation and maintenance of the «illusion» of the divine nature of the sovereign turns to be one of the fundamental functions of the Court – a function that it fulfills brilliantly. All of its members are involved to maintain the above-mentioned illusion: poets, as well as political writers and authors of moral and philosophical treatises – most of the literary minds of the epoch contribute greatly to the fulfillment of the ambitious task.

Such was the **general socio-cultural context** in which European poets of the Baroque period composed their works. As J. A. Maravall put it, «subordination» was a key notion as far the Baroque art (and literature, in particular) was concerned:

En tal sentido, podemos decir de él [del arte barroco] que es el arte de las grandes monarquías (...) porque sociológicamente brota de las condiciones sociales dadas en los regímenes del absolutismo monárquico y porque sus caracteres responden a las necesidades que derivan del programa de apoyar tales regímenes.<sup>101</sup>

«Sustaining such regimes» meant, more specifically, glorifying a particular Maecenas, maintaining thus, by means of literary art, his prestigious position, as well as the prestige of the

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<sup>99</sup> «The vicar of God», *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34. «*The kings interpreted the role of almost inaccessible divinities (...). The charisma of the royal person as well as the excess of ceremonial contributed to the creation of the enormous gap between the members of the royal family and their subjects. The scale of all important events (...) was increased due to the festive ambiance that spread exceeding all possible limits. The splendour of court uniforms and dresses, glistening gold, precious stones and fabrics, the construction of sumptuous palaces with their most refined decorations – all of that had an important part to play in the creation of the illusion making common people believe that their kings and princes belonged to a different race of an almost divine origin.*».

<sup>101</sup> J. A. Maravall, *op.cit.*, p. 296. «In this sense, one may say that it [the Baroque art] is the art of the great monarchies (...) since from the sociological point of view, it is generated by the social conditions proper to the regime of absolute monarchy and its character is thus conditioned by the implementation of the program aiming to support such regime».

Court he dominated. The necessity of compliance with the requirements of the Court policy and norms of course could not be accepted by all literary minds of the epoch<sup>102</sup> – however, those of them who searched for fame and prestige found themselves fully involved in the court life: although not «*propriamente*» courtiers, they lived in the court and depended on their benefactors who granted them their support, as well the prestigious position. The relationship between the poet and his patron was consequently based on a constant interaction, as well as on the implicit obligations the poet could not disregard if he was to accept the rules of the game. The Court served as an essential social background for their relationship that, as has been stated above, influenced the very results of the poetic creation directly, making the poet «assume the quality and *courteousness* of the Court». Moreover, the Court and its inhabitants frequently appeared in literary works, acting as a background of the whole action of a literary works (as, for instance, was the case with the Elizabethan drama); serving as a primary subject and source of inspiration for philosophical reflection and ethical prescriptions (an infinite number of treatises in continuity with Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*); and, finally, as an important explicit and implicit presence in an impressive quantity of epic poems. Explicit – since the latter ones were most often dedicated to a particular Maecenas whose ancestors or descendants were glorified in the poetic text, or even made their appearances as characters of a given poem; implicit, for the poem as the artistic whole was conditioned by the tacit rules of the Court etiquette and traditions the influence of which could not be disregarded if the poet wished his work to be a success.

Europe in the XVI<sup>th</sup>- XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries reveals to be ‘the Europe of the Courts’, the Courts acting as crucial centers of social, cultural and political life that can be viewed as a space with its own well-defined limits, rigid selectivity and inviolable socio-cultural codes all of its members are to comply with, if they wish to be inscribed within the “sacred sphere.

The Court could indeed be perfectly represented by the image of a «sacred sphere», a «bounded» small universe whose masters – whether they rule major European empires, such as France or Spain, or preside their courts in the context of a country lacking political unity, as was the

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<sup>102</sup> A number of writers indeed could not to accept the above-mentioned requirement of complete subordination, nor did all of them see the Court as a perfect background for artistic creation, rather putting an accent on its negative sides. Andrés Fernández de Andrada, the Spanish Baroque poet and military commander, perfectly illustrates this attitude of radical opposition in the well-known lines of his *Epístola moral a Fabio*:

“Fabio, **las esperanzas cortesanas**  
**prisiones son do el ambicioso muere**  
y donde al más activo nacen canas.

El que no las limare o las rompiere  
ni el nombre de varón ha merecido,  
ni subir al honor que pretendiere.



case with Italy, – all of them did indeed «count themselves kings of infinite space», as well as their courts were primary centers that turned themselves into «culturally active» «*macrosigns*»<sup>103</sup> «able to transfer to their every segment / «body» the same hyperconnotative value of the whole / «sphere».<sup>104</sup>

As Amedeo Quondam justly observed in his comment on Ben Jonson's image of a «sacred sphere», the chronological period in question appears to be

*fortemente segnato dalla presenza della Corte e della sua notevole capacità di produrre discorso, autoreferenziale e al tempo stesso rivolto a un destinatario esterno al suo magico «cerchio», discorso cortigiano, insomma. Ben Jonson può ricorrere, direttamente e indirettamente, a un'articolata tradizione (...) che ha ormai modellato in profondità la «forma del vivere» della società europea di ancien régime in quanto «società di corte»: e che ha anzitutto assunto, da subito, quasi, le proporzioni di sua coscienza diffusa, sicura della sua diversità antropologica, persuasa della sua sacralità.*<sup>105</sup>

All literary works composed in the context of the court life reveal themselves to be specific forms of the above-mentioned «*discorso cortigiano*», the Court thus being a dynamic, constantly evolving space that to a different extent influences their form and content.

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<sup>103</sup> A. Quondam, *op.cit.*, vol. III, p. 1063.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1063-1064.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 1065. «(...) to a great extent marked by the presence of the Court and the remarkable capacity of the latter one to produce discourse that at the same time presents itself as a self-referential and directed towards the external recipient, i.e. the one who finds himself outside the Court's magic «circle» – otherwise stated, the Court discourse. Ben Jonson may turn, in both direct and indirect ways, to the well-established tradition (...) that has essentially shaped the «form of life» of the European society of the Ancien Régime that can also be referred to as the «Court society»: the one that most importantly had almost immediately assumed the form of the diffused conscience, deeply convinced in its anthropological diversity as well as in its sacred character».

## Chapter II

### Epic of the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> - the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries: poems on Lepanto and the Reconquista

#### 1.1. Italian epic as a point of departure. A brief review of historical epic poems

*Essendo l'istoria di questa guerra molto piena di miracoli  
non conveniva che meno mirabile fosse il poema.*

T. Tasso, *Lettere*

It would be difficult to think of an epoch that would not abound in crucial historical events that naturally found their reflection in literature, as far as the history of Western Europe is concerned – yet, a radical change could be observed if one reflects on the relationship between history and epic poetry of the Seicento. Before the period that started already in the early Cinquecento and continued throughout the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, epic poets strictly followed the long-established Aristotle's rules<sup>106</sup>, according to which, as Tasso reassumed it, the poet in search for a poetic argument was to consider times «neither too modern, nor too remote»<sup>107</sup>. It was namely the

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<sup>106</sup> Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* first published in 1516 constitutes a case apart, being considered by most critics of the time a *romanzo*, rather than an epic poem, due to numerous violations of the rigid Aristotelian norms it displayed. Yet, as far as the choice of argument is concerned, Ariosto follows the general pattern, opting for the Charlemagne's times. The poem, as is well known, contains a number of references to modern historical events, such as, for instance, the Italian wars that appear namely in digressions, without influencing principal narrative lines.

<sup>107</sup> Thus, in his *Discorsi dell'arte poetica*, Tasso, quite in line with Ariosto's thought, provided the following justification for such choice: «Portano le istorie moderne gran commodità in questa parte ch'al costume e all'usanze s'appartiene, ma tolgiono quasi in tutto la licenza di fingere, la quale è necessariissima a i poeti e particolarmente a gli epici, perochè di troppo sfacciata audacia parrebbe quel poeta che l'impresa di Carlo Quinto volesse descrivere altrimenti di quello che molti, ch'oggi vivono, l'hanno viste e maneggiate. Non possono soffrire gli uomini d'esser ingannati in quelle cose ch'o per se medesmi sanno, o per certa relazione de' padri e de gli avi ne sono informati. Ma l'istorie de' tempi né molto moderni né molto remoti non recano seco la spiacevolezza de' costumi, nè della licenza di fingere ci privano». (Tasso, *Opere*, 1999, p. 4).

end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century that gave birth to a literary trend that was to exert a profound influence on a number of literary minds, as well as spark off fierce debates on the question. To adopt Antonio Belloni's words, the poetry of the above-mentioned epoch has known a real «fever»<sup>108</sup>, or even a «mania» of epic<sup>109</sup> – an epic that may have abounded in imitations and *loci communes*, but that still managed to introduce a number of significant innovations. Time-honoured literary rules of composing epic poems that dated back to Aristotle and had been so far observed by poets during centuries were no longer considered inviolable. Old authorities started to be intensely questioned by the new poetic generation, **the choice of argument**<sup>110</sup> being one of the numerous thorny issues regarding epic poetry. The new tendency consisted namely in rejecting the prescription to avoid making «contemporary» events the background of the poem's action: from now on, poets felt free to choose historical facts, as well as epochs and protagonists, deciding both the form and the content of their works on their own. That meant an important move towards innovation, as well as transformation of the epic genre: although classical tradition continued to influence it to a great extent, one could no longer speak of the genre's 'death', nor of it being transformed into a *moule épique*<sup>111</sup> containing nothing but a collection of well-known clichés.

Before we shall expand upon the new historical trend, we shall briefly consider the very term of «the epic poem» trying to offer a definition to a literary genre that, according to S. Zatti, is anything but easily 'catalogable'<sup>112</sup> due to its complicated nature, as well as the evolution it has continuously undergone:

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<sup>108</sup> Thus, R. Brusciagli remarked upon the epic «fever» characterizing the given epoch: «I "miglior plettri" si moltiplicano in effetti, dal Cinquecento al Settecento almeno, configurando un universo testuale tanto variegato quanto, probabilmente, incontrollabile, o, almeno molto difficile da catalogare». (R. Brusciagli, *Studi cavallereschi*, 2003, p. 85). («The number of the "miglior plettri" indeed increased, configurating a textual universe that was as variegated as, probably, uncontrollable, or, at least, not easily catalogable».)

<sup>109</sup> A. Belloni, 1893, p. VIII.

<sup>110</sup> It is essential to note in this connection the gradual transformation of the ratio between the two «primary motives» of the Italian epic poetry, «l'arme» and «gli amori» that started already in the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century. According to S. Jossa, «sul piano tematico il poema di metà Cinquecento deve prima di tutto fare i conti con le arme e gli amori, la cui congiunzione era uno dei motivi fondanti della tradizione cavalleresca italiana. Nel transito del poema rinascimentale si verifica una progressiva riduzione dello spazio dell'amore, cui corrisponde un direttamente proporzionale **ampliamento dello spazio della guerra**. L'amore e la guerra sono dunque inversamente proporzionali». («As far as the choice of subject is concerned, the poem of the second half of the Cinquecento had first and foremost to deal with the themes of «l'arme» and «gli amori», whose conjunction was one of the primary motives of the Italian epic tradition. During the transition period, the Renaissance poem revealed an increasing reduction of the space of love that was matched by the directly proportional extension of the space of war. Love and war became thus inversely proportional». This new trend in epic poetry implied that the theme of «gli amori» was frequently reduced to the «esigenze del decoro» («requirements of decorum»), whereas the increasing importance of the theme of war («l'arme») was conditioned by the very «*realtà storica caratterizzata dal mutamento delle armi e della tattica bellica* (...)». («Historical reality characterized by changes concerning weapons and military tactic (...)»). (S. Jossa, *La fondazione di un genere. Il poema eroico tra Ariosto e Tasso*, 2002, p. 179).

<sup>111</sup> A. Belloni, *op.cit.*, p. 470.

<sup>112</sup> See S. Zatti, *Il modo epico*, 2000, pp. 15-16.

Si può dire, grosso modo, che è una poesia narrativa di ampie dimensioni che tratta in linguaggio alto di una singola figura, o di una comunità eroica, e concerne un evento storico – una guerra o una conquista, oppure ancora una ricerca eroica o altra significativa realizzazione mitica o leggendaria – che è centrale nelle tradizioni e nelle credenze della cultura che la esprime. Connessa con l'idea di epica è il concetto di inizio, di origine, di racconto delle cose prime. A epico è legata infatti l'idea di gesto, o testo fondatore: ciò che fissa in forma mitica le origini di una civiltà<sup>113</sup>.

In the framework of the present research we shall concern ourselves namely with a specific category of the epic – the «*epica colta*»<sup>114</sup> that, to quote once again Sergio Zatti, differs from the «more ancient epic forms», being «*elaborata da un autore singolo e prestigioso all'interno di tradizioni letterarie assai raffinate, è dedicata alla celebrazione di particolari regimi ed è destinata a un pubblico più smaliziato di quello dell'epica primitiva*»<sup>115</sup>. Needless to say, the very «prestigious» status of the epic poet presupposes the existence of the essential models to be revisited and imitated by the next literary generations – models that, in the case of the Italian, and generally speaking, the European epic tradition, had been offered by Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*. The two above-mentioned poems have been traditionally considered as the two polar approaches to the epic poetry and, as is well-known, sparked off extensive debate between the adherents of *Orlando furioso* and the ones of *La Gerusalemme liberata*. Importantly enough, the Ariostesque epic model was not even considered as an «epic» in the strict sense and was most frequently referred to as «*romanzo cavalleresco*». Zatti thus delineated the controversy in question:

Essa si focalizzò intorno a due capolavori di stile radicalmente differente come il testo di Ariosto – **romanzo cavalleresco** caratterizzato da trame avventurose e romanzesche, intrecci multiformi, frequenti digressioni – e la *Gerusalemme liberata* di Torquato Tasso, **poema eroico** dalla più lineare struttura epica improntata all'unità narrativa e alla verosimiglianza storica<sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>113</sup> S. Zatti, *op.cit.*, p. 15. «One can say, all in all, that it is a long narrative poem that deals in an elevated language with a single figure, or a heroic community, and concerns itself with a historical event – a war or a conquest, or, as the case may be, a heroic search or some other significant mythological or legendary realization – that occupies central place in the traditions and the beliefs of the culture that produces it. The concept of the beginning, the origin and the primordial is closely linked with the idea of the epic, similarly to the idea of a heroic deed, or the 'founding' text: the one that recurs to the form of the myth in order to fix the origin of a civilisation».

<sup>114</sup> «Cultivated epic poetry».

<sup>115</sup> S. Zatti, *op. cit.*, p. 16. «Is created by a single and prestigious author in the framework of rather refined literary traditions, being devoted to the celebration of a certain regime and addresses a more sophisticated audience than the one of the primordial epic».

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57. «It was focused on the two masterpieces of the drastically different style: the text of Ariosto – **chivalric romance** characterized by an adventurous fictional plot, variegated narrative lines and frequent digressions – and Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem delivered* – a **heroic poem** revealing a more linear epic structure characterized by the narrative unity, as well as historical verisimilitude».

It is namely in the context of this heated debate that one should consider the epic poem of the end of the Cinquecento - the first half of the Seicento that was literally evolving under the sign of the dialectic relation between the «fictional» and the «historical» poles offered by the above-mentioned models<sup>117</sup>.

If one turns to the fundamental question of the **subjects** chosen by the epic poets in the epoch of interest for our research, one shall immediately notice that during this period, **modern history** became an essential source of inspiration for the poetic Muse of the Seicento, the literary climate of the Baroque period favouring the final result: poems that constituted a most bizarre combination of classical legacy and innovating tendencies. Obviously, poems featuring modern historical events represented only one of the tendencies of epic poetry of the time, yet, being an unprecedented case in literary history – a prove that heroic epic poem was a genre subject to possible evolution, as well as continuity – they by no doubt deserve a closer look.

Which were the events capable of giving new life to a genre that throughout its whole existence did not seem to leave its well-trodden path of continuing the already established theoretical postulations of the past? The answer lies in understanding the nature of the epoch, literally torn by violent religious conflicts, on the outcome of which largely depended not only the destiny of the Mediterranean civilisation, but, most importantly, the one of the European Christianity. Continuous wars with the Muslim world were of course not an unprecedented case, but it was namely during the end of the Cinquecento - the beginning of the Seicento that they reached their culminating moments, bringing Europe together and even making it forget for a time the numerous ‘internal’ religious and political discords. On the other hand, the literary climate of the Baroque favouring all kinds of experiments, *bizzarrieries* and liberties paved the way for some

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<sup>117</sup> Despite the variety of the attempts suggesting epic models for imitation, Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* remain the two essential poles of epic narration. An important, yet unsuccessful attempt was made by Gian Giorgio Trissino who composed his *Italia liberata dai Goti* (1547-1548) strictly in line with the Aristotelian tenets. In the preface to the epic text, the poet demonstrates his predilection for Aristotle and «the divine Homer»: «(...) nel costituire la favola di una azione sola, e grande, e che abbia principio, mezo, e e fine, mi sono sforzato servare le regole d'Aristotele, il quale elessi per Maestro, sì come tolse Omero per Duce (...)». (G. Trissino, *L'Italia liberata dai Goti*, 1548). «(...) when trying to create a narrative structure that would consist of only one action that would be lengthy and contain the beginning, the midpoint and the end, I sought to preserve Aristotelian rules, whom I had selected to be my *Maestro*, as I had chosen Homer to be my *Duce*». The rigid approach of Trissino's provoked a negative reaction with a number of the authors of the time, and was indirectly criticised by Lodovico Dolce in his preface to Bernardo Tasso's *Amadigi* (1560): «Dico adunque, che se coloro, che tengono sempre in mano le bilancie d'Aristotile, e hanno tutto di in bocca gli essempli di Virgilio e di Homero, considerassero la qualità dei tempi presenti, e la diversità delle lingue, e vedessero ch'a la prudenza del Poeta si conviene l'accomodarsi alla diletatione, e all'uso del secolo nel quale egli scrive; non sarebbero d'opinione, che si dovesse scriver sempre ad un modo». (L. Dolce in B. Tasso, *L'Amadigi*, 1583). «I thus state that if those who always hold in their hands the scales of Aristotle and all the time refer to the examples of Virgil and Homer, took into consideration the quality of the present times, as well as the difference of languages – if they understood that the prudent Poet should accommodate himself to the delight and the usage of the century in which he composes – then they would not be of the opinion that one should always write in the same manner».

radical changes in European literature, the **Italian** one being no exception. Already Ariosto made frequent references to the Eastern danger in his digressions, urging the European monarchs to take action and defend their Christian legacy – the beginning of the next century saw a whole generation of poets who made a further step towards historical self-consciousness, making culminating moments of the *modern* religious wars the very core of their poems. Tasso's contemporaries and followers indeed perceived the Eastern threat in a most anxious way: the East was considered a tangible danger that required a prompt reaction. Major European states had to unite their efforts in order to resist the impending menace – as Antonio Belloni put it,

Gli animi turbati sentivano da lungi romoreggiar la bufera; la cristianità era minacciata dal Turco invadente, la cui audacia provocava ne' fedeli più vivo, con lo spavento, il desiderio di riscossa; bisognava destare gli animi all'entusiasmo, prepararli al cimento ricordando loro le fiere lotte già combattute cogli infedeli. Era quindi naturale che si presentasse come ottimo argomento di epopea la guerra santa per la conquista del Sepolcro.<sup>118</sup>

The poems that appeared in the given epoch thus carried important social-historical connotations, being not merely literary works, but also a call for vigorous action as far as the upcoming «ordeal» was concerned. However, the poets' turning to the «battles that had already been fought» against the Eastern enemy since time immemorial was only one of the two crucial strategies they resorted to in order to encourage their powerful benefactors to action. Another strategy concerned itself with *contemporary* Christian triumphs and was most obviously aimed at glorifying the bravery of the present Italian nobles who to a great extent decided the future course of events.

**The Italian literary background** of the end of the Cinquecento and especially the beginning of the Seicento provided plenty of examples perfectly illustrating the latter 'strategy'. Choosing several texts from an impressive number of poems dedicated to the argument proved to be a real challenge, considering the abundance of texts dedicated to the complex issue of religious wars. Our interest lay primarily in texts that concerned themselves with *contemporary* religious conflicts – the ones that by the very choice of argument brought about innovation and transformation of the epic genre. Antonio Belloni's *Epigoni della Gerusalemme liberata, con un'appendice bibliografica* (1893) was chosen as a guideline in the given task, due to its being an

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<sup>118</sup> «Many an agitated mind had been anticipating the upcoming war since long; Christianity was threatened by the invading Turks whose audacity was far from scaring Christians, but, on the contrary, made them ardently wish for a reconquest; their religious spirits and enthusiasm were to be awakened to the ordeal by reminding them fierce battles that had already been fought against the unfaithful enemy. It was thus natural that Christian Holy war aiming to regain the Holy Sepulchre could be justly considered a perfect argument for epic poetry». (*Ibid.*, p. 23).

overall catalogue of epic poems of the given period. Apart from the excellent bibliography suggested in the appendix, Belloni's work contained numerous observations as to the content of the poems, the author's aim being to provide a synthetic analysis of the poems' *materia*, as well as summarize the specific ways of treating the argument. Moreover, the author of the *Epigoni della Gerusalemme*, suggested a brief comparative analysis, trying to delineate principal diversities and points in common the given poems displayed. The information provided by Belloni's catalogue which remains the most comprehensive one, as far as epic poetry of the given period is concerned, proved to be of cardinal importance as to the selection process – reasoning that shall be illustrated below.

Belloni's overview brings into focus fifteen epic poems entirely dedicated to recent religious military conflicts<sup>119</sup>. Interestingly enough, only two of them, *La Roccella Espugnata* (1630) by Francesco Bracciolini and *L' Enrico overo Francia Conquistata* (1623) by Giulio Malmignati deal with the experience of the 'internal' civilisation conflict, the rest of the poems being all dedicated to 'external' military wars, or, as Fernand Braudel put it<sup>120</sup>, fierce religious struggle between two drastically different civilisations. While the two above-mentioned poems are centred around the very recent historical events in France, bringing into light the most important religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants, the remaining thirteen poems deal namely with the conflict between Eastern and Western worlds. The quantitative relation speaks for itself: in the period during which the discord between Catholics and Protestants presents itself as one of the most considerable European issues, the Italian epic poets' attention seems to be almost entirely drawn towards the 'external' problematics<sup>121</sup>. Substantial majority of the texts is dedicated to military conflicts with the Ottoman Empire – a vast category that includes six poems dedicated to the Lepanto triumph of 1571, whereas texts focusing on the Moorish conflict constitute the minority (*La Briglia del furore overo Alessandria difesa* (1658) by Alessandro Cassola, *Bona Espugnata* (1694) by Vincenzo Piazza and, most importantly, Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata* (1650) ) whose importance, however, is constantly stressed by Belloni and his contemporaries.

The nature and particularities of the 'civilisation clash' have already been discussed in the previous chapter, with special reference to Fernand Braudel's overall analysis on the Mediterranean situation. To reassume the sense of the 'external' conflict – a term coined by Braudel, it can be reiterated that despite all the diversities as far as historical reasons, socio-political premises and the course of the conflict are concerned, in both cases, Europe had to face a radically different, hostile

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<sup>119</sup> For the complete list of the poems see the Appendix.

<sup>120</sup> For the theory of 'external' and 'internal' religious wars, or conflicts between different, mutually hostile civilisations, suggested by F. Braudel, see Chapter I of the present work.

<sup>121</sup> I refer here namely to the statistics of epic texts representing 'modern' historical facts.

civilisation – a threat of major scale, since the outcome of both conflicts implied drastic consequences of religious, political, social and cultural character for all European states. Despite all the differences, both the Ottoman Turks and the Moors were perceived as the invading menace of the Muslim world – the only threat capable of uniting the efforts of the European monarchs at the moments that acted as turning points in the history of Western civilization. Antonio Belloni in his analysis stressed crucial aspects in common as to the threat of the two representatives of the Eastern world:

È inutile, ch'io faccia rilevare la importanza grandissima dell'argomento, per la quale certo il poema del Graziani può star con onore al fianco della *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Infatti dalla presa di Granata, che chiude una lunga e sanguinosa lotta di otto secoli contro i più feroci nemici di Cristo, procede non pur la posteriore grandezza della Spagna, ma, sotto un certo rispetto, la salvezza del mondo cristiano, il quale dopo la presa di Costantinopoli era, per dir così, minacciato da due fuochi all'occidente e all'oriente. Era dunque non solo una impresa nazionale, che il Graziani cantava, ma una lotta combattuta in nome della fede contro quegli stessi nemici, ai quali Goffredo avea strappato di mano il Santo Sepolcro.<sup>122</sup>

Significantly enough, Graziani's poem is not only dedicated to the Duke of Modena Francesco I d'Este, but contains as well exhortations aimed at his patron's engaging himself into the war with the Turks. In his verses, the poet gives a solemn promise to celebrate Francesco's future triumphs over the «perfido Ottomano», proclaiming his poetic duty to inflame his benefactor's heart to the «*alta impresa*»:

E s'or, che move il perfido Ottomano  
D'Asia e di Libia i numerosi regni,  
Del popolo fedel tu capitano  
N'andrai de l'empio a rintuzzar gli sdegni.

(*Il Conquisto di Granata*, Canto I, p. 1)

The dedication of the poem to the poet's patron and the promise of the future glory of the latter one, as well as the anticipation of historical events, seem to be quite in line with the epic tradition, yet an interesting aspect comes into the fore. These verses, being to a major extent

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<sup>122</sup> «It would be difficult to overestimate crucial significance of the subject – the one that places Graziani's poem on an equal footing with *Jerusalem delivered*. Indeed, the conquest of Granada marking the end of the eight-century bloody struggle against Christ's sworn enemies, constitutes a starting point not only for Spain's posterior prosperity, but in a certain sense, for the salvation of the whole world of Christianity that after the Fall of Constantinople was threatened by the two fires, in the West, as well as in the East. Thus, the war celebrated by Graziani meant a struggle fought against the common enemies – the ones from whom Godfrey had regained the Holy Sepulchre – rather than a mere national triumph». (A. Belloni, *op. cit.*, p. 322).



reminiscent of Tasso's opening lines, perfectly illustrate the way the Oriental threat was actually perceived. The very fact of the Italian court poet composing epic entirely dedicated to the highly actual historical problem is in itself a tangible proof of the importance, as well as the global scale of the event in question. By adopting the whole argument of the poem (the posterior Christian triumph in the Moorish conflict) with a view to inciting the Italian nobility to defend Europe from the Ottoman Turks, Graziani actually makes the Moorish and the Ottoman civilisation merge into one in the given historical context. The conquest of Granada is viewed here as a crucial milestone in the long-lasting European attempt to defend Christianity – an endeavour that constitutes a perfect argument for 'modern' historical epic. Even despite the fact the poem deals with a relatively modern historical event (more precisely, the end of the Quattrocento), it still manages to create an obvious link with the highly significant for the Seicento Muslim threat. ***Il conquisto di Granada*** thus appears, due to its religious fervour, military zeal and explicit remarks of the author, perfectly inscribed in the historical context of the time, the well-versed reader obviously having no difficulties in discerning its actuality and implicit call to action. These have partly been the reasons that made us consider the text for our comparative analysis: its obvious actuality and inclusion into a modern context, its main subject and, last but not least, the originality of the numerous interesting aspects concerning the poem's content. Graziani's epic presents itself as a curious, eye-catching way of narrating a relatively recent historical event that, as has already been stated above, regained actuality during the period in question. Despite its evident link with 'modern' history, the text, however, fully absorbed all of the controversial literary tendencies of the time: its «being *entirely* based upon»<sup>123</sup> such devices as recognition and disguise, the abundance of the *meraviglioso* as compared with the historical part, its theatricality and strong presence of the *romanzesco* element – all of these characteristics, along with the historical actuality<sup>124</sup> account for its having been included as part of the present work's general corpus<sup>125</sup>.

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<sup>123</sup> «L'intreccio è tutto basato (...) sul travestimento de' personaggi; e questo artificio, comune alla commedia del cinquecento, dà all'azione un cotal carattere drammatico, che, se riesce a tener viva l'attenzione del lettore, toglie alquanto di severità al complesso dell'opera». «The plot is entirely based upon (...) the characters' being in disguise; and this device, proper to the Cinquecento comedy, endows the poetic action with a dramatic character that succeeds in keeping the reader's attention but at the same time deprives the poetic whole of all severity». Belloni makes further comments on the merging of epic and dramatic elements, stressing its diversity compared to *Jerusalem delivered*: «Mentre il Tasso aveva ben saputo contemperare l'elemento classico e l'elemento romanzesco, ne' poemi successivi quest'ultimo soverchiò per lo più il primo, e se da una parte si innalzavano così gli eroi da farne delle astrazioni, dall'altra si cercava, come nella commedia, di avvolger variamente le fila dell'azione allo scopo di renderla più che potesse interessante». (A. Belloni, *op. cit.*, pp. 338-339). «While Tasso knew perfectly well how to reconcile the classical and the *romanzesco* elements, in the works of most of his successors the latter element clearly dominated over the first one; if on the one hand, the heroes appeared thus elevated to the level of abstractions, on the other hand, the poets, similarly to the authors of comedies, sought to mingle the narrative threads in various ways, so as to make the narration as interesting as possible».

<sup>124</sup> A proof of the actuality of the 'Moorish' question, as well as of the global perspective from which it ought to be seen, is its sudden popularity with the Italian poets of the Seicento. Besides Girolamo Graziani, such poets of the time

Allusions have already been made as to the structure and the content of our corpus. The core and essence of the latter being religious military conflicts between Eastern and Western civilisations, the poems dedicated to the ‘Moorish’ wars constitute its first part, whereas the second one primarily concerns itself with texts featuring wars with the Ottoman Turks.

As proved by Belloni’s comprehensive catalogue, the period of the end of the Cinquecento-the beginning of the Seicento was extremely prolific, having produced quite a few epic poems related to the Christian conflict with the sworn enemy, the Ottoman Empire. Texts dealing with the above-mentioned problematic could be divided into several categories, depending on the concrete historical episodes they represented:

- Poems dedicated to the glorious episode of the Battle of Lepanto (1571): *La christiana vittoria maritima* (1572) by Francesco Bolognetti, *Il Marte* (1582) by Vincenzo Metello, *La rotta di Lepanto* (1573) and *La Vittoria della Lega* (1582) by Tommaso Costo, *La vittoria navale* (1633) by Ottavio Tronsarelli and its namesake written in about a decade later, *La vittoria navale* (1646) by Guidubaldo Benamati;
- Poems that concerned themselves with the Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (Cavalieri dell’Ordine dell’Ospedale di San Giovanni), and thus represented the Italian attempts of re-conquering territories of Rhodes and Malta: *La Malteide* (1596) by Giovanni Fratta and *Amedeide* by Gabriello Chiabrera;
- Poems representing essential military triumphs involving European forces resisting the Ottoman Turks, such as, for instance, the Siege of Vienna episode (1529) and the battles fought by the Holy League: *Vienna difesa* (1690) by Giovanni Pierellio, *La Sacra Lega* (1696) by Marco Rossetti;
- Poem unique in its subject and represented background, entirely devoted to the Albanian resistance wars fought against the Ottoman Empire in the Cinquecento – *La Scanderbeide* (1623) by Margherita Sarrocchi;
- Poems devoted to ‘modern crusades’ in the territories of the Near East: *La Briglia del furore, ovvero Alessandria difesa* (1658) by Alessandro Cassola and *Bona Espugnata* (1694) by Vincenzo Piazza.

As can be clearly seen, the group of poems concerning the Battle of Lepanto constitutes the largest of the above-stated categories dedicated to the complex theme of ‘contemporary’ religious

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as Scipione Errico and Ridolfo Arlotti were known to have projected to compose epic poetry on this topical event. Their poems, however, as reported in Belloni’s catalogue, failed and the poems were neither completed nor published. (For further references see A. Belloni, *op. cit.*, pp.323-324).

<sup>125</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the *Conquest of Granada*, see Chapter III, as well as the last chapter of the present work dedicated to comparative analysis of the selected poems.

wars. Moreover, Lepanto, as has already been discussed in the previous chapter, being a milestone victory and the culminating moment, as far as the whole story of Western Europe's and Ottoman Empire's opposition is concerned, is undoubtedly a perfect choice of theme for 'modern' historical epic poems and thus reveals to be a subject of considerable interest for literary research. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned reasons, the following chapters of the present work will concentrate themselves namely on the 'Lepanto' epics. Another important aspect 'in favour' of such choice should be mentioned in this connection: the unanimity which characterised the way European poets approached the naval triumph of 1571. It is a well-known fact that Lepanto triumph aroused strong immediate reaction that was not confined to the national context, but involved the whole European literary scene. France, Spain and even the protestant England provided prompt response to the event, thus emphasizing its sense and value for the whole Christian world. Needless to say, all of the related reasons favoured our choosing Lepanto cycle from the rather vast category of historical 'modern' epic poems.

Our further selection was thus limited to the texts dealing with the 'recent' Holy League triumph of 1571. Next steps implied concentrating on the texts making part of the given category that would be of special interest for the present research. In this context, Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima* (1572), Tommaso Costo's *Rotta di Lepanto* (1573) and *La Vittoria della Lega* (1582), as well as Vincenzo Metello's *Marte* (1582) could be viewed as texts of particular interest.

Our starting point during the given selection stage was suggested by Antonio Belloni's comparative analysis of the poems in question. Considering the specificity of the 'modern' historical epic, we took as point of departure the idea of searching for two texts that would ideally represent the main controversial literary tendencies of the epoch – the predominance of the historical, or the marvellous (either *mythological* or *Christian marvellous*) elements<sup>126</sup>. Such hypothesis of the two 'extremities' was inspired by our taking a closer look at Vincenzo Metello's poem written only a decade after the naval triumph. ***Il Marte (1982)*** can indeed be seen as a curious combination of the Christian and the pagan elements, the latter one revealing a particularly strong

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<sup>126</sup> Thus, Belloni puts special emphasis on the two dominant trends («*le due correnti*») that, however radically differed from each other, yet «non si staccarono subito decisamente l'una dall'altra» («were not definitely separable from each other»: «*La qual intrusione della mitologia pagana non è già cosa nuova, ben s'intende, nella storia dell'arte nostra, ma qui venne da me osservata di proposito, perché, come ho detto, essa segna un punto di distacco tra i poemi che s'attengono all'esempio di Tasso e quelli che accettano invece un elemento che la «Gerusalemme» non conosce, e gli danno un tale sviluppo da trasformarlo, di accessorio ch'era, in essenziale e caratteristico*». (A. Belloni, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26). «The insertion of Pagan mythology was certainly, not a new device in the history of our art, but I make special emphasis upon it here since, as I have already said, it marks crucial difference between the poems that follow the model offered by Tasso and the ones that on the contrary contain an element that cannot be found in *Jerusalem* – an element that undergoes substantial transformation, as it assumes an essential and characteristic – no longer secondary – role to play».

presence in the epic text, while the Christian part seems to be of nominal importance. However, a more close textual analysis has shown that although the *mythological pagan* dimension (*il meraviglioso pagano*), together with the abundantly present encomiastic element, conditions and determines the course of events, such predominance proves to be a refined artistic technique that makes extremely large use of the pagan-mythological element only to express the authentic Christian values and ideas in a ‘disguised’ or metaphoric way<sup>127</sup>. This subtle interplay of the three dimensions (the historical, the pagan-mythological and the Christian marvellous), the theatricality and the strong presence of the Baroque elements, as well as the actuality of the text constituting a response to the actual historical reality – all of the above-mentioned characteristics conditioned our choice of the text for further comprehensive analysis.

If Metello’s *Marte* strikes the reader by its apparent contrast of the Christian subject, the Holy League’s triumph and the predominance of the pagan mythological element, it should still be viewed rather as an example of the first ‘extreme’ literary tendency that was in its turn contrasted by a number of epic poems bearing a totally different character. **Francesco Bolognetti’s *Christiana vittoria maritima* (1572)** is among the texts that perfectly illustrate the point, making evidence of a quite different literary perspective of the Lepanto event. Unlike *Il Marte*, Bolognetti’s poem contains a number of historical details referring to the actual battle, as well as to its general historical background, characters and circumstances. Another aspect accounting for the essential difference between the two poems in question is the absence of the mythological dimension in the *Vittoria maritima*. The marvellous certainly reveals its presence throughout the whole poem – one can hardly imagine the epic genre transform itself in such a brief time to the extent of totally rejecting one of its essential traits – still, it is the marvellous of a different kind. In line with the Tasso’s theoretical reflexions, Bolognetti opts for the marvellous of strictly Christian origin, without resorting to the authority of ancient mythology. The marvellous element in this context serves the aim of celebrating the triumph of Christianity in a quite explicit way, the opposition of the Heaven and Hell underlying and defining the events of the whole poem, once again, quite in line with the concept of the Christian marvellous. The two poems thus narrate the same historical event in a different way, forming a perfect basis for the theory of the two ‘extremes’ proposed as the starting point for the analysis. Both texts belong to the genre of historical poems; both apparently illustrate the two tendencies as far as the process of the epic genre evolution is concerned: both to a different extent reflect the ‘recent’, as well as the traditional currents of literary thought. All of the above stated prerequisites still cannot be taken as a grant: only a thorough analysis of the two texts will be capable of revealing their actual differences, as well as points in common.

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<sup>127</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the poem, as well as for the verification of the above-mentioned hypothesis, see Chapter III of the present thesis.

A few words should be said about the remaining text constituting the Lepanto category. The two poems composed by Tommaso Costo, *La rotta di Lepanto (1573)* and *La vittoria della Lega (1582)* are both of particular interest, as far as the evolution of Costo's poetic thought is concerned. The two texts cannot be considered separately, since the second text is namely a further re-elaboration of the thematic outlined by the poet in the first 'version'<sup>128</sup>. Since the poems thus constitute rather two parts of one whole, than two isolated texts, a more appropriate approach would suppose studying the way they interact with each other, establishing affinities they share and differences they reveal. Such kind of analysis seems indispensable, before undertaking the next step of selecting one of them for a further comparative analysis with the other texts devoted to Lepanto. As to the choice of the Italian corpus for the present work, an analysis concentrating more on the evolutionary path of a single writer in the context of a single national tradition would have been difficult to undertake without neglecting our main objective: an overall comparative analysis of various approaches to narrating the Lepanto event.

The last two poems taken into consideration in order to determine the final corpus, as far as the Italian epic is concerned, both belong to the period of the late Seicento and thus cannot be considered an 'immediate' response to the milestone event. According to Belloni, the second half of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century was not particularly rich in «*soggetti poemizzabili*»<sup>129</sup>, Italian poets insisting on their developing the already existing themes. On the one hand, by this time the Lepanto episode had already formed its own literary tradition of celebrative texts; on the other hand, Tasso's *Jerusalem delivered* had since long acquired canonical character, and was constantly engendering an immense number of imitations.

**Ottavio Tronsarelli's *Vittoria Navale (1633)*** dates back namely to the period in question and had naturally absorbed the already existing traditions, as well as modern literary tendencies. The poem contains an extensive collection of clichés, including an impressive number of *topoi* borrowed from *Jerusalem delivered*. The intent of glorifying the Lepanto episode forms the basis of the poem, historical events largely interacting with the Christian marvellous. *Loci amoeni* and *loci horridi*, enchanting islands, errant warriors, celestial guidance and spectacular sea storms hindering the Christian fleet, not to mention constant divine and infernal interventions – the whole action of Tronsarelli's poem is based upon exploiting the marvellous element as presented in Tasso's poems to the full extent. Little place is left to novelty, as well as to the historical element of the poem: the persistent *marvellous* reaches its culmination in the final episode, representing the symbolical

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<sup>128</sup> For a detailed analysis of Tommaso Costo's poetic interpretation of the Lepanto event, see S. Capuozzo's doctoral thesis, *Tomaso Costo e la battaglia di Lepanto. Edizione e studio de La vittoria della Lega* (S. Capuozzo, Università di Napoli, 2008).

<sup>129</sup> A. Belloni, *op. cit.*, p. 410. «Subjects suitable for [epic] poems».

transformation of the Christian warship into a magnificent temple, a perfect background for the topical final praise.

The *Vittoria Navale (1646)* by **Guidubaldo Benamati** comes the last in the Lepanto cycle, and, similarly to Tronsarelli's poem, can be characterized by a strong presence of *topoi* dating back to both *Jerusalem delivered* and the classical tradition. The poem is a perfect example of further transformations Italian historical epic undergoes in the second half of the Seicento. The poem's structure reveals an important change as far as the ratio of the *romanzesco* and the historical elements is concerned: the first one seems to have definitely prevailed over the last one. The proof is the strikingly unbalanced bipartite structure of the poem whose title seems to promise the kind of narration entirely focused on the Lepanto event. The promising title is, however, another illusion quite in line with the spirit of Baroque: from the 32 *libri* forming the poem's content, only the last three concern themselves with the description of the glorious battle, while the remaining 30 books are entirely devoted to «azioni romanzesche, che in qualsiasi altro poema potrebbero essere inserite»<sup>130</sup>. Similarly to Tronsarelli, Benamati seems to continue the tradition of historical epic poem mainly by imitating and amplifying, endowing his 'epic' text with all the relevant characteristics of the Baroque period. Despite their being highly illustrative of the most 'recent' Seicento literary tendency, the last two texts of the Lepanto cycle appear of little interest for our further comparative research. Moreover, in this case, historical 'actuality' and the very 'recentness' of a literary text being an example of a prompt reaction to the historical event is missing. Both epic poems are largely representative of the already fixed literary canons, as far as the tradition of approaching the triumph of 1571 is concerned.

Thus, during the preliminary stage of our work, Italian epic poetry was chosen as a point of departure forming the basis for our selecting the texts for the comparative analysis. After having considered Italian epic poems devoted to the subject of 'recent' religious wars, we have restricted our corpus to one essential type of conflicts, i.e. military conflicts between Western and Eastern civilisations. As a result of further reflexion, it was decided to focus the thematic of our research upon two more specific categories: poems narrating the event of the Battle of Lepanto (the largest group of texts) and epic texts dedicated to the culminating moments, during the period of the Reconquista wars. Within the above-mentioned categories, three texts have been selected for an overall comparative analysis: Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritime* (1572), Vincenzo Metello's *Marte* (1582) and Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata* (1650). The first two poems were chosen with a view of verifying our hypothesis of two 'extremities', as far as 'modern' historical epic poems were concerned. As to the third text, our point of departure consisted in

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 411. «Actions of the *romanzesco* character that could be easily introduced in any other poem».

finding a poem devoted to ‘the other side’ of the Christian ‘external’ wars with the Eastern world, i.e. an epic text that would reflect principal turning points of the Moorish conflict. Next steps of the selection process implied our turning to other European epic traditions in order to find texts that could be seen as ‘equivalents’ of the chosen Italian poems, i.e. would treat the same kind of *recent* historical events and would thus be perfectly adopted for our further analysis, permitting to establish aspects in common, as well as differences of treating the same historical subjects.

## 2.2. Searching for epic ‘equivalents’ in the context of Spanish, French and English epic traditions

It would indeed prove a difficult task to find a country that would have shown a greater inclination for historical epic than it was the case with **Spain** during the period of *Siglo de oro*. In his famous monograph dedicated to the Spanish epic poetry of the Seicento, Frank Pierce commented upon the Spanish poets’ particular predilection for heroic epic poems, suggesting the following explanation of this literary phenomenon: «*Nosotros creemos que ha de haber relación entre los cauces por los que España invirtió sus energías espirituales y materiales y esas múltiples tentativas épicas de reflejar, recordar y vivificar las empresas de la llamada época imperial*»<sup>131</sup>.

In his attempt at establishing this «link» of socio-political character, Pierce, as can be seen, insists on the «extraliterary factors»<sup>132</sup>, putting special emphasis on the «imperialist» ambitions, as well as on the naturally belligerent and religious Spanish mentality:

(...) el alma de España era entonces más española que nunca, sí está a nuestro alcance comprobar que España tuvo una actividad extraordinaria en esas esferas de la vida pública que son, normalmente, tema y objeto de la épica. Poco a poco el hombre español se fue dando a la aventura militar, se lanzó a descubrir nuevas tierras y también se entregó a la meditación y a una intensa actividad religiosa. Estos factores extraliterarios tienen fuerza decisiva en las actividades literarias de la España del Siglo de Oro<sup>133</sup>.

Spain of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century was indeed an extremely prosperous empire whose constant military successes and expansionist policy favoured the poets’ inspiration for «*épica imperial*» to a

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<sup>131</sup> «We believe there exists a link between the reasons accounting for Spain’s having converted its spiritual energies and materials, as well as the numerous epic’s attempts at reflecting, recollecting and bring new life to the glorious deeds of the so-called imperial epoch». F. Pierce, 1968, pp. 220.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> «The Spain’s soul was then more Spanish than ever, if it can be proved that Spain exercised an extraordinary activity in those spheres of public life that normally make the theme and subject of the epic. The Spanish man, eager to discover new worlds, was increasingly attracted by military adventures, but as well by meditation and intense religious activity. These extraliterary factors have a crucial role to play as far as literary activities of the Spain of the *Siglo de Oro* period are concerned». (*Ibid.*).

major extent. On the one hand, the growing necessity for glorification of the recent conquests; on the other hand, the characteristic age-long Spanish need to «*proyectar su espíritu religioso en lo épico*»<sup>134</sup> had been the essential factors that accounted for the abundance of historical epic poems, as well as for the remarkably favourable reception they enjoyed in the Spanish empire throughout the Seicento period.

As has already been stated, historical epic poems, frequently being part of the «imperial epic» were, alongside the ‘religious’ epic, among the most significant, as well as popular categories of the genre. The interest Spanish poets showed for contemporary historical events embraced a large number of military exploits, the themes of military religious conflicts and national exploits remaining the most popular in the Spanish epic repertory. To quote once again Frank Pierce, «(...) *así la épica absorbió, con avidez lucanesca, temas poéticos, como las hazañas de Carlos V, las conquistas de Cortés, la batalla de Lepanto, la rebelión y expulsión de los moriscos*»<sup>135</sup>.

Searching for epic poems that would treat the same ‘recent’ historical subjects as the selected Italian texts, we did not take into consideration poems dedicated to the military exploits of Charles V, nor the conquests of Pizarro and Cortés, since the events described in them were part and parcel namely of the *national* Spanish epic, while our interest lay namely in the texts inscribed into a more global European context, i.e. the ones referring to the complex military-religious conflicts between different civilisations. Due to this reason, we did not consider the famous Carlo famoso (1566), an epic poem composed by Luis Zapata in order to celebrate the glorious deeds of the Spanish monarch. Yet, the text, being an «*inmensa crónica versificada, con largas narraciones de los descubrimientos y conquistas de Cortés y Pizarro y varias aventuras en África del Norte*»<sup>136</sup>, contains interesting remarks that prove the poet’s being fully conscious of the transformations the epic genre was undergoing during the given period of time. In his prologue, Zapata insists on his role of a ‘historian’ promising to narrate the historical facts – «*casos y jornadas del Emperador nuestro señor*» «*con toda verdad, que a ningún historiador en prosa dará la ventaja*»<sup>137</sup> – a promise that nonetheless does not exclude the strong presence of the marvellous element, nor the numerous epic *topoi* to be encountered throughout the whole poem.

Jerónimo Sempere’s Carolea (1560) refers to the same historical cycle dedicated to the epoch of Charles V. Similarly to Luis Zapata’s poem, the poet positions himself as a defensor of the

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<sup>134</sup> «Project their religious spirit into the epic», *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> « (...) and thus the epic absorbed, with the avidity similar to the one of Lucan, such poetic subjects as the exploits of Charles V, the conquests of Cortés, the Battle of Lepanto, as well as the rebellion and the expulsion of the Moors.» (*Ibid.*)

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235. «An immense chronicle written in verses – a detailed narration of the discoveries and conquests of Cortés and Pizarro, as well as of various adventures in North Africa».

<sup>137</sup> «Days and deeds of our Lord, the Emperor»; «a narration that in its truth will exceed any historical work written in prose».



«verdad de la Historia», while the text displays a continuous alternation of the historical and the marvellous elements, the latter frequently prevailing over the first one. The poem being of an undoubted interest as far as whole process of epic poetry evolution is concerned, our research aims still required our focusing on the texts belonging to different categories of historical poems.

According to Frank Pierce's catalogue of Spanish historical poems of the Seicento period, the Lepanto episode can be encountered in the following epic poems:

- *La Araucana* (1569) by Alonso de Ercilla;
- *La Austriada* (1584) by Juan Rufo;
- *Felicissima victoria concedida del cielo al señor don Juan d'Austria* (1578) by Jerónimo Corte Real.

Juan Ercilla's *Araucana* (1569) can justly be referred to as one of the most famous poems produced by the Spanish epic of the Seicento. Being entirely devoted to the colonial overseas conquests, the poem, however, does not limit itself to narrating the events from the perspective of the conquerors, paying considerable attention to the 'other side' of the military conflict. Ercilla, in his attempt at producing a 'historical chronicle', similarly to his contemporaries, did not avoid the strong presence and a frequent predominance of the *romanzesco*<sup>138</sup> and the *meraviglioso* elements, yet parting from the actual historical fact of primary national importance. The Battle of Lepanto appears to be an episode inscribed in the narration by Ercilla's poetic will that does not hesitate to make abundant use of the existing *topoi* in the descriptions of the naval episode. The poet's including the Lepanto event into the context of a text almost entirely centred upon the Spanish Conquest of Chile can hardly be considered as a random choice and should rather be viewed as a proof of special attention and resonance the naval triumph of 1571 received in the whole Europe. Yet, Ercilla's epic being only an episode in the framework of the narration dedicated to a different historical fact, we had to turn to other Spanish texts searching for poems where the episode in question would have a more central role to play.

Our further choice lay between the two Spanish poems both dedicated to the Lepanto event: Jerónimo Corte Real's *Felicissima victoria concedida del cielo al señor don Juan d'Austria* and Juan Rufo's *Austriada*. Both of the poems are focused on the Holy League's victory over the Ottoman Turks; both proved, as was the case with Alonso de Ercilla, the significance of the naval

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<sup>138</sup> Thus, according to M. Chevalier, the influence of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* can be undoubtedly perceived in this poem, the author being in search for novelty and variety: «(...) pour atteindre à une variété qu'il prise si fort, il entrecroise des actions diverses, passant de l'une à l'autre par des transitions rapides». (M. Chevalier, *L'Arioste en Espagne (1530-1650)*, 1966, pp. 337-338). «(...) in order to reach the variety that he appreciates so much, he mingles various actions, passing from one to another in an extremely rapid way».

episode that obviously went far beyond national scale. Jerónimo Corte Real's *Felicissima victoria* (1578), according to Frank Pierce, narrated the battle «with great poetic liberty»<sup>139</sup>, the poet making frequent use of the marvellous element. It is worth noting that the marvellous in the case of Corte Real's poem, is not only the *meraviglioso cristiano* Tasso encouraged the poets to adopt in his *Discorsi sull'arte poetica*: the author of the *Felicissima victoria* tends more to use the marvellous of the pagan origin (*il meraviglioso pagano* as described by the author of *Jerusalem delivered*<sup>140</sup>).

A similar coexistence of the historical and the marvellous elements reveals to be characteristic of Juan Rufos's famous *Austriada* (1584). This poem, being, as the author described it quite in line with the poetics of the Baroque, «*una curiosidad escripta en verso*»<sup>141</sup>, belongs to the category of epic poems treating 'recent' historical events. Among the most striking aspects of the poem is its bipartite narrative structure that combines namely the two subjects presenting a considerable interest for the present research: the Battle of Lepanto (1571) and the rebellion of the Alpujarras (1568-1571). The two culminating events of the 'external' religious wars are made the two centres of poetic narration. The choice of bringing the two seemingly different arguments into one text is far from being a random choice, since both parts are united by the principal character of the poem: Don John of Austria. The poem already by its being focused on the figure of Charles' V son, military commander enjoying the glory of a national hero, can be defined as part of the Spanish imperial epic, that, however, goes far beyond national scale. *La Austriada* not only narrates the Lepanto event – the victory Spain had largely contributed to, but also contains references to the more general thematic of the Oriental religious wars. Thus, for instance, in *cantos* XI-XIII the poet offers his readers the descriptions of the Cyprus events chronologically preceding the famous battle. In this way, Rufo provides an overall chronicle of the essential turning points in the history of Christian Europe, resulting in a poetic work that, according to the existing classical epic tradition, merges the fictional and the historical into one poetic whole. The poem displays a strictly chronological narration of events – an attempt at historical veracity and precision that still appears to be counterbalanced by the author's constant use of the Christian marvellous, as well as the traditional *topoi* and literary techniques. The Cordovan poet's attempt at bringing together the events of both the Oriental and the post-Reconquista wars under the form of a poem celebrating the bravery of Don John d'Austria, makes *La Austriada* extremely interesting for an overall comparative analysis with the already chosen Italian texts. At this stage, only further comparison of

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

<sup>140</sup> F. Pierce emphasizes in his detailed analysis of the poem the poet's Portuguese origins, suggesting his being considerably influenced by «Lusiadas» and thus making use of the «*sobrenatural*» «*dentro la misma línea de mescolanza pagano-cristiana de Camões*» («within the same line of the interacting Pagan-Christian elements as can be found in Camões»), *ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>141</sup> «Bizzarrie written in verses», J. Rufo, prologue to *La Austriada*, 1584.

the important aspects of the texts in question can lead us to a better understanding of the common basis, as well as to the outlining possible common points and differences, as far as the historical-literary perspective of seeing the religious conflicts in question is concerned.

As to the second subject our research concerns itself with – the religious conflict with the Moors – it is worth noting that Spain, interestingly enough, did not produce a large number of poems dedicated to the thorny national issue. Presumably, the long and complicated process of the Moorish expulsion can hardly be viewed as a subject that would be perfectly adapted to its celebration by Spanish court poets of the *Siglo de oro* epoch. Perhaps it is namely in the extreme complexity of the subject that one should look for a possible explanation of the almost unanimous decision to avoid the given argument in the epic works of the period in question. Indeed, the only Spanish epic poems dealing with the Morisco conflict are the already mentioned *Austriada* (1584) and *La Expulsión de los Moros de la España* (1610) by Gaspar Aguilar.

We have already considered the reasons accounting for our choosing *La Austriada* as part of the present work's general corpus. As to Gaspar Aguilar's poem of 1610, it belongs to the so-called 'brief' historical poems' cycle and offers no complicated perspective of the Moorish problem, nor focuses on specific culminating episodes of the military actions. Significant part of the text is devoted to national Valencian feasts and celebrations rather than military events, the whole of the poem being inscribed into the narrative structure that Frank Pierce defines as «rather a simple one»<sup>142</sup>.

Thus, after having considered epic poems belonging to the category of 'recent' heroic poems, or, more specifically, the ones treating the Battle of Lepanto and the conflict between Christian Spanish and the Moors, we decided to opt for Juan Rufo's well-known 'historical' poem *Austriada* (1584) – the text that due to its bipartite structure, as well as historical and political engagement as far as European Christian wars with the Eastern world are concerned, perfectly lends itself to a close comparative analysis with 'equivalent' texts belonging to other European literary traditions.

Similarly to Spanish poets, literary minds of **France** did not stay indifferent neither to the challenge launched by the Italian epic models, nor to the culminating historical moments marking recent European religious wars. The historical background, however, differed drastically: firstly, unlike Italy and Spain, France did not take part directly in the Lepanto event, neither felt concerned with the Morisco issue. During the epoch in question, France was actually torn by the Protestant-Catholic discords that represented a constant threat for its political stability. In this context, the French poets certainly realized the need for such national epic that would favour the political unity

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<sup>142</sup> F. Pierce, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

of the French nation, as well as contribute to the monarchy's authority in the world. Siegbert Himmelsbach in his «*reflexion poétologique sur l'épopée nationale en France*», emphasizes the extremely favourable reception *Jerusalem delivered*, to say nothing of Tasso's theoretical prescriptions, enjoyed in France starting from the Counter-Reformation period:

Le succès remporté par la *Jérusalem* devait nécessairement avoir une résonance considérable dans une France en proie, elle aussi, aux problèmes religieux. A une époque où la contre-réforme battait son plein, on ne pouvait ignorer le fait que ce genre, qui, par tradition, était voué aux guerres, était parfaitement apte à devenir le symbole du combat religieux. Non seulement le poème du Tasse donnait aux Français de nouveaux motifs de jalousie, mais il fournissait aussi une nouvelle formule qui pouvait encore ajouter à la haute idée qu'on se faisait du genre. Le poème héroïque chrétien : tel est le but que les théoriciens allaient désormais proposer aux poètes. Ce qui caractérisera l'idée qu'on se fera de l'épopée au siècle suivant, ce sera, d'une part, la préférence donnée aux sujets chrétiens et, d'autre part, le respect de règles qu'on se plaît d'attribuer à Aristote<sup>143</sup>.

The prestige enjoyed by the epic genre in France can thus be proved by an impressive number of theoretical treatises that appeared in the France throughout the Seicento, developing the whole complex problematic of the genre issues launched by the Italian theoreticians<sup>144</sup>. Yet, according to Siegbert Himmelsbach, the political conditions for the creation of the national French epic were not so favourable as they may have seemed at first sight. The explanation lay, first and foremost, in the «*complexité même de la situation et (...) les scissions qui font se désagréger la nation en groupes irréconciliables*»<sup>145</sup>, the whole situation leading to further inevitable discords:

Que l'auteur s'adresse à l'un des partis en lutte pour l'indépendance ou pour le raffermissement du pouvoir, ou qu'il prêche la cohésion au niveau de la nation, son message se trouvera toujours en contradiction avec les attentes d'une bonne partie du public (...) l'époque des guerres de religion, mais aussi celle des nouveaux conflits sous le

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<sup>143</sup> «The success that *Jerusalem* enjoyed in France was bound to result in a major resonance in the country tormented as well by religious issues. In an epoch when the Counter-Reformation was at its height, one could not ignore the fact that this genre, traditionally devoted to wars, was perfectly tailored for becoming a symbol of religious struggle. Tasso's poem had not only provided new reason for jealousy, but had also offered a new formula capable of adding more to the elevated idea one made of the epic genre. The heroic Christian poem: that was now the objective theoreticians wished to offer to the poets. Preference was given to the Christian subjects and the respect of the norms one usually ascribes to Aristotle – these were the main traits that will characterize the epic genre in the next century». (S. Himmelsbach, *L'épopée ou la 'case vide'*, 1988, p.7).

<sup>144</sup> For an overall catalogue of theoretical treatises of the period, see S. Himmelsbach, *op.cit.*, pp. 288-309.

<sup>145</sup> «The very complexity of the situation (...) and the scissions destroying the nation's unity by splitting it into irreconcilable groups».

ministère de Richelieu, n'étaient que très peu favorables à la réception des messages contenant un appel à la cohésion ; à trop de destinataires celle-ci ne paraissait pas désirable.<sup>146</sup>

The lack of political stability indeed influenced the choice of subjects for epic poems to be composed, religious tensions resulting in the absence of a single religious, social and political perspective in epic poetry. Thus, Pierre de Ronsard's *Franciade* (1572) and Agrippa d'Aubigné's *Tragiques* (1615) are among the most well-known poems of the period that significantly enough represent the two opposed ideological trends: the first one, «catholique» and «royaliste», the second one «passionnément protestante»<sup>147</sup>. The consequence of such irreconcilable 'internal' religious conflicts lay in the impossibility of projecting a single ideological message destined to consolidate the current monarch's prestige – one of the traditional tasks of the epic poetry that could not be successfully implemented in the given historical context. Moreover, the Protestant-Catholic wars drew the most of the poetic attention, distracting it from the 'external' religious wars significant for Christian Europe. Nevertheless, a few exceptions to the general 'rule' were made, some literary minds of France having reacted to the European major events by producing poems that did not concern themselves with the above-mentioned national historical issue. Texts constituting the given category of the «sujets autonomistes»<sup>148</sup> include<sup>149</sup>:

- *La Savoysiade* (1609) by Honoré d'Urfé;
- *L'Amédéide* (1586) by Alphonse Delbene;
- *L'Austriade* (1601), *La Néréide ou histoire navale. Ensemble de Destins héroïques de Cléophile e de Néréclie* (1605) by Pierre de Deimier.

Honoré d'Urfé's *Savoysiade* (1609), a text, composed with a view of celebrating Charles Emmanuel I, Duke of Savoy<sup>150</sup>, remained incomplete and thus presented difficulties for undertaking a thorough comparative analysis, first of all due to its fragmentary character. Moreover, the text,

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209. «Whether the author addresses to a party striving for independence or consolidation of power, or stands for the unity at national level, his message will be bound not to meet the expectations of a considerable part of the public (...) the epoch of the religious wars, as well as the one of the new conflicts under Richelieu's ministry, did not show a favourable attitude towards messages appealing for unity and cohesion, for too many recipients would find such message undesirable».

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> «Autonomous subjects», *Ibid.*, p.209.

<sup>149</sup> Among the so-called «sujets autonomistes», Siegbert Himmelsbach mentions as well texts devoted to «un grand suzerain, une province ou à un peuple» (*Ibid.*). We shall not provide the complete list here, since the poems constituting it do not fall into the specific 'recent' historical thematic we were interested in.

<sup>150</sup> For the poet's close relation with the Italian background and in particular with the Savoy court, see Bruno Méniel in his *Renaissance de l'épopée : la poésie épique en France de 1572 à 1623*, 2004, pp.203-204.

despite its title and dedication to the poet's patron, Charles Emmanuel, is not centred upon 'modern' historical events, its action being entirely based on the medieval legend of the Saxon prince who founded the royal family of Savoy<sup>151</sup>. During the next several years, the poem, whose original title was *La Beroldide*, underwent a number of modifications to be definitely abandoned in 1609. As it contains no references to the 'modern' historical reality, it can hardly be of interest for the given type of research.

As for Alphonse Delbene's *Amédéide* (1586), the very title of the poem seems to prove its author's will to glorify the House of Savoy. However, it is worth noting that Delbene's primary aim consisted in pleasing his benefactor: as shown by Bruno Méniel, the poem was commanded by the Duke of Savoy as a work that «*pourra concilier ses goûts pour la poésie et pour la généalogie: un poème héroïque sur le comte de Savoie Amédée VI, qui a entrepris une expédition contre les Turcs en 1366*»<sup>152</sup>. *L'Amédéide*, projected as a poetic gift to Charles Emmanuel, was initially destined to be read by an extremely narrow circle of poet's friends<sup>153</sup>. The 'privacy' of the poet's intention, the poem's incomplete character, as well as the choice of a rather chronologically remote subject made us turn to other texts, while searching for a French 'equivalent' epic poem for our corpus.

Pierre de Deimier's *Austriade* (1601) and *Néréide ou histoire navale. Ensemble de Destins héroïques de Cléophile e de Néréclie* (1605) are poems that differ from the above-mentioned texts in a drastic way. Finally, France has given a literary reaction to a *recent* historical event, the Battle of Lepanto of 1571. The two poems reveal a complex evolution Pierre de Deimier's poetic thought underwent in the several years dividing the texts. Thus, *L'Austriade*, one more poetic work dedicated to Charles Emmanuel of Savoy, is entirely dedicated to the historical event, the poet almost rejecting the *romanzesco* element. If the first poem can justly be referred to as 'historical', the other one – as can already be seen by its title – implies clear predominance of the *meraviglioso* and the *romanzesco*. *La Néréide* was supposed to become a complete re-elaboration of the first text, focusing on the «amours héroïques» of the invented characters, prince Cleophile and princesse Néréclie, the whole Lepanto episode serving merely as framework for their adventures. According to Bruno Méniel, «*la Néréide devait comporter vingt-quatre livres ; seuls cinq ont été publiés. Les*

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<sup>151</sup> B. Méniel, *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201. («Will be able to reconcile his preferences for poetry with his taste for genealogy: a heroic poem devoted to Amadeus VI, Count of Savoy»).

<sup>153</sup> Thus, B. Méniel makes reference to the preface «*Au lecteur*» («To the reader») preceding the printed version of 1586 by Claude Pomar: «L'auteur de ce premier livre de *l'Amédéide*, l'a voulu faire imprimer (...) non pour la mettre en lumière ou le publier, mais seulement pour avoir plus grande commodité de le pouvoir communiquer à ses amis (...)». (*Ibid.*, p. 202). «The author of this first book of the *Amédéide* wished to print it (...) not in order to bring it to light, or publish it, but his only aim was to have a better convenience to communicate it to his friends (...)».

*trois premiers et le début du quatrième décrivent la bataille de Lépante*<sup>154</sup>(...)). Thus, of the two texts, the first ‘Lepanto’ poem appears to be by far more adapted, considering the aims of the present research. *La Néréide*, although positioned as the ‘improved’ version of the first text, actually shows being a totally different poem, while *L’Austriade*, being focused namely on the historical fact of Lepanto, seems to ideally represent the French poets’ response to the event of global importance and thus fit the main criteria of our selection process.

Thus, having used the three Italian epic poems as point of departure, we have examined texts belonging to different European traditions with a view of establishing possibilities of finding poems that could function as literary ‘equivalents’ as far as their thematic was concerned. The following chapters dedicated to a detailed analysis of the selected texts will verify our hypothesis of textual ‘equivalents’ thus enabling us to compare various aspects and perspectives revealed by the literary interpretation of the most culminating moments in the history of Western Europe.

## APPENDIX

### ITALIAN CORPUS

1. G. Benamati, *La Vittoria Navale*, Bologna, Giacomo Monti, 1646.
2. **F. Bolognetti, *La christiana vittoria maritima*, Bologna, Benaccio, 1572.**
3. F. Bracciolini, *La Roccella Espugnata*, Roma, Mascardi, 1630.
4. A. Cassola, *La Briglia del Furore over Alessandria Difesa*, Bergamo, Rossi, 1658.
5. G. Chiabrera, *Amedeide*, Genova, Fratelli Pagano, 1620.
6. T. Costo, *La Vittoria della Lega*, Napoli, G. B. Capelli, 1582.
7. G. Fratta, *La Malteide*, Venezia, Zaltieri, 1596.
8. **G. Graziani, *Il Conquisto di Granata*, Modena, B. Soliani, 1650.**

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.210-211. «*La Néréide* was to consist of twenty four books; only five were published. The three first books and the beginning of the fourth describe the Battle of Lepanto». In Bruno Méniel’s opinion, such radical change ought most probably be explained by the second poem’s being aimed at a totally different recipient: while *L’Austriade* was composed to be dedicated to the catholic monarch, *La Néréide* was addressed to «*assidus des salons où les femmes sont à l’honneur*».

9. G. Malmignati, *L'Enrico overo Francia Conquistata*, Venezia, 1623.
- 10. V. Metello, *Il Marte*, Venezia, Frezzaria, 1582.**
11. G. Pierellio, *Vienna Difesa*, Parma, Pazzoni, Modena, 1690.
12. V. Piazza, *Bona Espugnata*, Pisa, 1694.
13. A. Rossetti, *La Sacra Lega*, Padova, Tipografia del Seminario, 1696.
14. M. Sarocchi, *La Scanderbeide*, Roma, Fei, 1623.
15. O. Tronsarelli, *La Vittoria Navale*, Roma, Corbelletti, 1633.

### *FRENCH CORPUS*

- 1. P. de Deimier, *L'Austriade*, Lyon, Th. Ancelin, 1601.**
2. P. de Deimier, *La Néréide ou histoire navale. Ensemble de Destins héroïques de Cléophile e de Néréclie*, Paris, P. Mettayer, 1605.
3. A. Delbene, *Le Premier Livre de L'Amédéide*, Chambéry, Cl. Pomar, 1586.
4. H. d'Urfé, *La Savoysiade*. [fragments in:] *Nouveau recueil des plus beaux vers de ce temps*, Paris, T. du Bray, 1609.

### *SPANISH CORPUS*

1. G. Aguilar, *La Expulsión de los Moros de España*, Valencia en casa de Pedro Patricio Mey, 1610.
2. J. Corte Real, *Felicissima victoria concedida del cielo al señor Don Juan de Austria en el golfo di Lepanto*, Lisboa, Antonio Ribera, 1578.
- 3. J. Rufo, *La Austriada*<sup>155</sup>, Madrid, en casa de Alonso Gomez, 1584.**
4. J. Sempere, *La Carolea*, Valencia: por Ioan de Arcos, 1560.
5. L. Zapata, *Carlo Famoso*, Valencia, en casa de Ioan Mey, 1566.

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<sup>155</sup> In Chapter VII of the given research I mostly worked with the recent edition of J. Rufo's poem accompanied by meticulous comments of E. Cicchetti (J. Rufo, *La Austriada*, E. Cicchetti (ed.), Como – Pavia, 2011).



## FINAL CORPUS

- F. Bolognetti, *La christiana vittoria maritima*, Bologna, Benaccio, 1572.
- P. de Deimier, *L'Austriade*, Lyon, Th. Ancelin, 1601.
- G. Graziani, *Il Conquisto di Granata*, Modena, B. Soliani, 1650.
- V. Metello, *Il Marte*, Venezia, Frezzaria, 1582.
- J. Rufo, *La Austriada*, Madrid, en casa de Alonso Gomez, 1584.

## Chapter III

### Italian epic on «contemporary» Crusades: Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima*

#### The Battle of Lepanto: where Epic tradition meets Modern History

In his incisive comments upon the origins, the nature and the posterior destiny of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, Italo Calvino wrote on the discrepancy between the original historical facts and their successive literary representation:

Tra tante guerre che Carlomagno combatté e vinse contro Bàvari, Frisoni, Slavi, Àvari, Brètoni, Longobardi, quelle contro gli Arabi **occupano, nella storia** dell'imperatore dei Franchi, **relativamente poco posto**; invece, **nella letteratura, s'ingigantirono fino a coinvolgere tutto l'orbe terracqueo**, e riempiono le pagine di biblioteche intere.<sup>156</sup>

According to Calvino, the «perspective of the myth», or «mythological perspective», can be viewed as the key notion capable of explaining the nature of the complex interaction between historical facts and poetic inspiration:

Nell'immaginazione dei poeti – e prima ancora nell'immaginazione popolare – i fatti si dispongono in una prospettiva diversa da quella della storia: **la prospettiva del mito**.<sup>157</sup>

This was namely the case of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* – a poem that in less than a century became one of the canonical texts for the generations of epic poets: the artistic whole of the poem is based upon a «historical anachronism», i.e. the «mythical conquest»<sup>158</sup> of the Moorish Spain by Charlemagne. A century later, the authors of epic poems still frequently found their inspiration in

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<sup>156</sup> I. Calvino, *Orlando furioso di Ludovico Ariosto*, 2017, pp. 1-2: «Of all the numerous wars Charlemagne fought and won against the Bavarians, the Frisians, the Slavs, the Avars, the Bretons and the Lombards, wars against the Arabs occupy a relatively small place in the history of King of the Franks, while in literature, these conquests, on the contrary, become enormous, extending themselves to the whole terrestrial globe and becoming the subject inspiring an impressive number of authors».

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*: «In the poetic imagination – and, first and foremost, in the popular imagination – the facts assume a perspective that is rather different from the historical one, i.e. the perspective of the myth».

<sup>158</sup> I. Calvino, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

the historical facts of the past, treating them from the above-mentioned perspective of the myth, yet, a radical change takes place namely in the period of the end of the XVII<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> centuries: modern history, largely influenced by the literary Crusades Myths assumes the very form of the latter, naturally bringing into life new literary variations of the already existing myths and topical images and situations. On one hand, epic poets of the new generation undoubtedly make abundant use of the inherited venerated models of the previous literary epoch; on the other hand, they found themselves in a totally new situation implicating a new literary challenge to face: the necessity to deal with the historical artefacts that already reveal a mythological character in themselves. The Oriental war with the Turks and, in particular, its most crucial episode, the Battle of Lepanto, appear to be a most striking example, as far as the new thematic repertoire of the epic poets is concerned. The glorious naval combat of 1571 was, to reiterate, an event that already in its historical reality carried the halo of myth and that sparked off an immediate overwhelming literary reaction. Which were the approaches epic poets adopted to tackle the novelty and the continuity of the argument? How exactly did the authors of the chosen texts represent historical facts that had no need of being mythicised? Did they still, as suggested by Calvino, traditionally take as point of departure from the mythological perspective, either than from the historical one? And, in case both perspectives were to be found, which were the functions they performed? What traditional epic *topoi* were preserved, and, more generally, can one speak of the continuity, as well as of the innovation of the traditional *moule épique*? These are the questions we shall try to answer, by way of analyzing some of the essential aspects of the three texts belonging to the Italian epic poetry of the end of the Cinquecento – the first part of the Seicento.

We shall first proceed by casting light on the general and, most importantly, the most striking characteristics of the first poem of our Italian corpus: *La christiana vittoria maritima* by Francesco Bolognetti to pass to the analyze of *Il Marte* by Vincenzo Metello in the next chapter. Both texts are dedicated to Lepanto, i.e. one of the most significant events of the ‘clash’ of Eastern and Western civilizations taking place during the war of the Holy League with the Ottoman Turks. Further on, in Chapter V, we shall proceed with the analysis of Girolamo Graziani’s *Conquisto di Granata*: an essential epic text, as far as the conflict of the Christian and the Muslim worlds in the context of the Iberian Peninsula is concerned, trying to define the peculiarities of the author’s way of dealing with the historical fact that had by all means surpassed all national borders. According to the approach suggested in the given thesis, the culminating events of the Oriental war with the Turks and the Reconquista will be viewed in line with the significance they acquired throughout the whole history of the European civilization as the watershed events of the continuous struggle between the Christian and the Islamic worlds. The above-mentioned approach, as has already been

said, is based on the «external wars» notion proposed by Fernand Braudel and should be viewed as a hypothesis to part from, while investigating the reality of epic texts, one of the objectives of the present analysis being namely to find out whether the poets went beyond national borders and managed to inscribe the two seemingly different historical events into the context of the continuity of civilization wars, as well as endow their poetic works with the particular spirit of the ‘Modern Crusades’ dominating in Europe of the times.

### **Historicity and allegorical dimension** **in Francesco Bolognetti’s *Christiana vittoria maritima***

One of the most striking examples of the poetic works in question is **Francesco Bolognetti’s poem *La christiana vittoria maritima* (1572)** – a text that, anticipating Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*, appears as an apt combination of the religious argument, i.e. the one of crusades against the infidel, on the one hand, and the classical heroic fabula, on the other. The innovation Bolognetti brings into the epic genre consists as well in the source of his poetic inspiration: a very recent historical event of primary importance for the whole Occidental civilisation taking place only one year before the creation of the poem. A few words should be said about the poem’s *prehistory* before we shall have a closer look at the poem’s thematic and structural peculiarities. *La christiana vittoria maritima* is not the poet’s first attempt at the epic genre, nor can it be viewed as a ‘gift’ from the poet of the court to his Maecenas aimed at winning his benevolence and patronage. Francesco Bolognetti has indeed never been a court poet in the proper sense of the world: according to Albert N. Mancini, the author of *Costante* and *La christiana vittoria maritima*, was first and foremost a representative of a well-known noble family, as well as a statesman highly engaged in his native city’s political activities who has occupied, throughout his life, a number of important governmental positions<sup>159</sup>:

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<sup>159</sup> In his monography on Francesco Bolognetti’s identity and poetic legacy, A.N. Mancini puts a special emphasis on the place political activities had in his life: «*Nella città natale, accanto alla cura dei complessi interessi familiari, accettò di agire all’interno dell’organismo politico strettamente legato ai commissari della Curia romana, che garantiva alla vita cittadina (...) ordine e stabilità amministrativa (...) Il Bolognetti rimase a lungo immerso nella vita cittadina, pur non avendo la prospettiva e l’opportunità di un’attività politica ad alto livello: fu nominato senatore nel 1555, gonfaloniere di giustizia nel 1556; più tardi podestà di Castel Bolognese*». (*Ibid.*, p. 19). «Taking into consideration the complicated family interests in his native city, he accepted to act within the political body closely linked to the members of the Roman Curia providing for order and administrative security as far as the citizens’ city life (...) was concerned (...). For a long time, Bolognetti was engaged with the city life, yet without a perspective and opportunity of exercising political activity at a high level: he was appointed senator in 1556 and later magistrate of Castel Bolognese».

**La sua vita è condizionata, quindi, se non dominata, dalla preoccupazione delle cure familiari e pubbliche.** A queste sono subordinate l'otium aristocratico, **fra ricerca creativa e lettura professionale;** testimonianza ne è anche la sua estrema prudenza nel pubblicare non soltanto le rime e i capitoli, ma anche i suoi impegnativi contributi al genere epico.<sup>160</sup>

In line with the tradition of the Cinquecento, Bolognetti managed to combine his social and political engagement with literary activities. His passion for poetry, and for the epic genre in particular, becomes obvious, having been proved not only by the number of literary works he produced, but also by his active communication with the most refined literary circles of the time, among which Giraldi Cinzio, Bartolomeo Ricci, Giovanni Battista Pigna, Luigi Groto and other renowned Italian humanists and court poets<sup>161</sup> of the Cinquecento. A number of the Bolognese poet's *capitoli letterari*, or poetic letters prove indeed the fact that Bolognetti was not only well acquainted with the literary polemic between the above-mentioned literary circles, but also took part in the *querelles* himself.

Another important factor that influenced the Bolognetti's works was his religious zeal, as well as his «political-religious engagement»<sup>162</sup> in the Counter-Reformist ideology – and, as a consequence, a close friendship with the important clerical authorities. To quote Albert N. Mancini,

**Il Bolognetti condivide pienamente l'ideologia della Controriforma** e lo troviamo in amichevole dimestichezza con potenti uomini di chiesa come il cardinale vescovo di Trento Cristoforo Madruzzo, il cardinale Alessandro Farnese, il cardinale vescovo di Bologna Gabriele Paleotti, il cardinale Alessandro Sforza e il cardinale Giovanni Morone; fu caro allo stesso Pio IV e imparentato con Ugo Buoncompagni, il futuro Gregorio XIII.<sup>163</sup>

While Bolognetti's political and social position favoured the inclination to bring and maintain order into the society of the epoch of the Counter-Reformation, as a representative of the intellectual élite, he absorbed all its essential trends and aspirations: the need for religious unity, as well as «invitations to the crusade» and, last but not least, the necessity to offer the modern reader a

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<sup>160</sup> «His life is conditioned, if not dominated, by domestic or professional concerns. Undoubtedly, the latter ones make divide his time between creative research and professional reading – a fact that is also proved by his publishing not only verses and *capitoli*, but also making significant contributions into the epic genre». (A.N. Mancini, 1989, p. 22).

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155-160.

<sup>162</sup> «Bolognetti fully shared the ideology of the Counter-Reformation and cultivated friendship with such influential clergymen as Cardinal Bishop of Trento, Cristoforo Madruzzo, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, Cardinal Bishop of Bologna Gabriele Paleotti, Cardinal Alessandro Sforza and Cardinal Giovanni Morone; he was highly appreciated by Pio IV and related to Ugo Buoncompagni, the future Gregorio XIII (*Ibid.*).

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

well-defined «iconographic» literary repertoire – or, in other words, literary works that would perfectly reflect the new religious, political and historical ideas.

Già nel 1570 e 1571, prima di quella insperata, miracolosa vittoria di Lepanto, il Bolognetti si era associato all'opera di promozione della crociata della Controriforma cattolica sul duplice fronte dei Turchi nel Mediterraneo e degli eretici in Europa in una serie di cinque componimenti di minor respiro, indirizzati a figure prestigiose della cultura bolognese. Non esito a sottolineare **il tempismo con cui seppe drizzare le antenne verso l'immaginario dell'operazione di riscossa controriformistica**, come avvalora sia il riguardo usato ai temi d'obbligo della propaganda curiale, per esempio inviti alla crociata e alla pacificazione fra i cristiani, sia un censimento del repertorio iconografico che il poeta volle ivi stesso offrire al lettore.<sup>164</sup>

*La christiana vittoria maritima* can thus by no means be considered as a fortuitous work, but rather as a poem that reflects perfectly both the essential historical concerns of the epoch and Bolognetti's individual poetic development, as well as the essential stage of the poet's socio-political engagement. The poem indeed marked a turning point in Bolognetti's poetic evolution, as it implied a significant deviation from his previous epic poem – *Costante* (1565), a poem upon the historical events of the times of the Roman Empire dedicated to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. Three striking differences are to be noted when comparing the two epic poems concerning such aspects as **1)** the choice of the epoch; **2)** the use of the marvellous (*il meraviglioso*); **3)** the dichotomy of the historical 'truth' and poetic invention.

We have already mentioned the innovation Bolognetti brings into the epic genre by way of choosing to deal with the facts of the immediate historical reality in his *Christiana vittoria maritima*: a radical change compared to the choice of the Roman imperial epoch for *Costante*. One of the essential Aristotelian tenets, implying that the action of the poem should take place in a period that would be «*non molto remoto né molto prossimo*»<sup>165</sup>, was thus called into question and had therefore lost its undisputed authority. Similarly, an important change can be observed as far as the use of the *meraviglioso* is concerned: in his early epic, Bolognetti does not hesitate to recur to the marvellous of Pagan origin, inserting a number of Pagan deities as characters in his poem. It

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<sup>164</sup> «Already in 1570 and 1571, before this unexpected, miraculous victory of Lepanto, Bolognetti took an active part in promoting the Counter-Reformist crusade on the double front, i.e. the Turkish one in the Mediterranean and the Heretic one in Europe, by producing a series of five minor works addressed to the most prominent figures of the Bolognese culture. It is without doubt that I highlight the perfect timing for focusing entirely on the process of the Counter-Reformation resurgence – an attitude that is proved either by the poet's adopting mandatory arguments of the curial propaganda, such as, for instance, invitations to the Crusade and the pacification of the Christians, or by his re-elaborating the iconographic repertoire the poet himself was eager to offer his readers. (*Ibid.*, p. 163).

<sup>165</sup> Tasso wrote in his *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* reflecting upon the epic poet's choice of an epoch: «*Prendasi dunque il soggetto del poema epico (...) di secolo non molto remoto né molto prossimo alla memoria di noi ch'ora viviamo*». – «The epic poem's subject (...) should be taken from a century neither very remote, nor very close to the memory of us who live now».

was namely the abusement of the Pagan element that brought a disapproving reaction of such influential figures as Torquato Tasso and Sperone Speroni who contested as well another aspect of the ‘Roman’ poem, i.e. the author’s wilful treatment of the historical facts. For the author of the *Discorsi del poema eroico*, as well as for the Paduan critic, the totally fictitious ending of *Costante* ran contrary to the well-known historical truth and thus could in no way be viewed as a plausible one. As Tasso wrote with regard to Bolognetti’s epic attempt,

**Lasci dunque il nostro epico l’origine e il fine de l’impresa, e alcune cose più illustri e ricevute per fama, ne la loro verità, o poco o nulla alterata;** muti poi, se così gli pare, i mezzi e le circostanze, confonda i tempi e l’ordine de le altre cose (...) <sup>166</sup>.

Compared to *Costante*, *La christiana vittoria maritima* presents itself as a «picciol mondo» that is in many aspects differs from the poet’s previous poetic experience <sup>167</sup>. Bolognetti seems to have learned his critics’ lessons and followed some of their advice as to the use of the *meraviglioso* and the ‘faithfulness’ to the origins, the end <sup>168</sup> and the turning points of a given historical event – all of the above-mentioned aspects being in line with the poet’s source of inspiration, i.e. the glorious exit of an event which was frequently considered a modern Crusade in the imagination of many of the Bolognese poet’s contemporaries.

The first edition of *La christiana vittoria maritima* was accompanied by one of Bolognetti’s *capitoli* – a ‘poetic letter’ addressed to an old friend, one of the most well-known literary critics of the Ferrara court – Giovanni Battista Pigna. The *capitolo*, found in the appendix to the poetic work, is imbued with the same spirit as the poem and presents itself not as a mere decorative element, but has an important part to play in the whole artistic intention of the author, as well as offers the reader a more profound insight of Bolognetti’s historical vision and position concerning the Oriental question. First and foremost, it is an important manifestation of a «solidarietà intellettuale per lui

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<sup>166</sup> «Let, therefore, our epic remain faithful to the origin and the final of the emprise, as well as to the most renowned things and leave them little, if at all, changed in their veracity, and let him, if he so wishes, change the means and the circumstance; confound time and order of all other things». (T. Tasso, *Prose*, pp. 565-566, cit. in A.N. Mancini, *op.cit.*, p. 92).

<sup>167</sup> It is interesting to observe how Bolognetti’s approach to the epic genre changed, in many aspects, due to the profound effect the Counter-Reformation had on his further poetic development: thus, for instance, in the period between the creation of *Costante* and *La christiana vittoria maritima*, Bolognetti composed his *Vita di San Tomaso d’Aquino* (1570) a hagiographic poem on St. Thomas Aquinas that remained unpublished. Only one year later, the poet’s interest for heroic argument and religious enthusiasm in line with the spirit of the Counter-Reformation will merge to produce the whole of *La christiana vittoria maritima*. For the more detailed analysis of the poem and the context it was created in, see A.N. Mancini, *Dal romanzo all’epopea agiografica nella età della Controriforma: La vita di San Tomaso d’Aquino di Francesco Bolognetti* in *Rivista di Studi Italiani*, III, 1985.

<sup>168</sup> The ending of *La christiana vittoria maritima* is of great interest for our analysis and shall be discussed later in the framework of the given chapter.

*importante*<sup>169</sup>: the act of dedicating the whole poem to a most recent «*vittoria maritima*» of Western Europe over the Ottoman Turks undoubtedly meant sharing and promoting the fundamental values of the Counter-Reform. As the poem itself, Bolognetti's *capitolo* is a solemn **celebration of the «Modern Heroes»**<sup>170</sup>, rather than a glorification of the heroes of the past. Secondly, it is a direct and almost «peremptory»<sup>171</sup> invitation to join the celebration of the «*bel fatto di Lepanto*» addressed to one of the most renowned literary authorities in Ferrara. Bolognetti thus urges Pigna for immediate 'poetic action', suggesting him giving up writing lyric poetry and awakening his Muse so that she could inspire him to compose heroic poem «*senza temer del tempo inganni*»<sup>172</sup> – the one that implies «*quel più grave stil*»<sup>173</sup> that is proper to the epic genre:

**Ben tempo è Pigna homai, che la tua Musa  
Dal pigro sonno svegli e che la cetra<sup>174</sup>  
Deposta, ond'era di cantar sempr'usa,  
Con quel più grave stil, ch'ella t'impetra,  
Ti ponghi al labbro la sonora tromba,  
Che render può di cera un cor di pietra.**

(*La christiana vittoria maritima*, p. 63)

The poet is addressing his Ferrarese friend, but the verses also introduce his own reasons for producing the epic in question. His own «*sonora tromba*» will thus serve him to celebrate and perpetuate the glorious naval triumph, making so that

Onde **il bel fatto già scorre, e rimbomba** (...)  
Tal che non pur Corinto, Ambracia, e Sparta,  
Che fur vicine il san **ma l'alta voce**

<sup>169</sup> «An intellectual solidarity essential to him» (A. N. Mancini, *op.cit.*, 1989, p. 157).

<sup>170</sup> « (...) i fatti alteri de gli Heroi moderni», *Cristiana vittoria maritima*, p. 63.

<sup>171</sup> A.N. Mancini, *op.cit.*, pp. 157-158. Once again, the invitation presents itself as a call to action not in merely formal way, but acquires a special significance, since, as it is well-known, Ferrara «*era rimasta estranea appunto per i suoi rapporti stretti con la Francia alla Santa Lega e ai fatti d'arme contro il Turco*». «Since Ferrara, due to the close relationship it maintained with France, remained indifferent to the cause of the Holy League and the war against the Turks». (*Ibid.*).

<sup>172</sup> «Without fearing the deceitful time», Bolognetti, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>173</sup> «That more solemn style».

<sup>174</sup> «(...) e che la cetra deposta» – the same motive we shall encounter in the introductory part of Girolamo Graziani's *Conquista di Granata*.



**Per tutto il mondo è divulgata, e sparta.**

*(La christiana vittoria maritima, p. 63)*

Bolognetti explicitly stresses the global scale of the historical event whose fame, according to him should travel far beyond the actual geographic context, and it is his task as a poet to contribute to the victory of Christian Europe by «divulgating» it in his epic in order to stir up the emotions – «*render di cera (...) un cor di pietra*»<sup>175</sup> of the readers in «the whole world» – a task, that, in poet's mind, every talented poet, Pigna, of course, being no exception, should undertake out of their historical consciousness, as well as solidarity with the Christian Europe world.

In his poetic letter, Bolognetti indeed puts a special emphasis on the notion of **unity** – a factor of primary historical importance, the one that had essentially contributed to the outcome of the battle:

**D'unirsi i nostri Heroi** fur le cagioni

Potenti, havendo il temerario Thrace

Scorse varie, e diverse regioni.

*(La christiana vittoria maritima, p. 63)*<sup>176</sup>

The notion of **unity** reappear as well in the following lines, Bolognetti introducing the «invincible Heroes» that due to their capacity to forget about the internal, 'national' discords, were able to triumph over the powerful ancient enemy that was the «fearless Turk»:

Ma i gloriosi, e sempre invitti Heroi

D'Hesperia, ciò compreso, *uniti* andaro

D'ardente zelo armati a regni Eoi.

**Et l'orgoglio Barbarico abbassaro**

**In guisa tal col sopra human valore,**

Che ben può gir ciascun d'ogni altro al paro.

*(La christiana vittoria maritima, p. 63)*

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<sup>175</sup> «Transform into wax (...) a heart made of stone».

<sup>176</sup> Lines taken from the *capitolo* dedicated to Pigna (*Al Sig. Gio. Battista Pigna*) concluding the first edition of *La christiana vittoria maritima* (1572).

As can be seen, the author of the *capitolo* summarizes the actual significance and final consequence the single battle had in European history: reducing the power («*le forze del rio Turco in Oriente*»<sup>177</sup>) and the reputed invincibility of the Eastern enemy. In these lines, Bolognetti alludes to the ‘miraculous’ aspect of the battle, playing on the lexeme «*sopra humano*»<sup>178</sup>: it is a well-known fact that the victory of the Holy League not only demanded from its ‘Heroes’ ‘superhuman effort’, but also contained in itself some elements that largely contributed to its ‘mythologization’, such as, to quote an example, the undisputed numerical advantage of the Ottoman fleet, or such unforeseen impediment as the violent sea storm and the no less unexpected favourable change of the wind<sup>179</sup> – even the fact that the Holy League commanders managed to put an end to the serious discords menacing the European unity seemed possible in this context only due to the «prodigious» common effort of the Ottomans’ Western adversary.

It is worth noting that the poet sees the triumph of 1571 as an opening for further ‘Crusades’ in the Orient under the spiritual guidance of Saint Pius V, as well as the military guidance of the Lepanto protagonist, «*quel gran GIOVANNI, / Che d’Austria splendor nuovo accresce al nome, / Spiegando al Ciel di vera gloria i vanni*»<sup>180</sup>:

Et sotto il Pio Pastor felicemente  
**Ridurrà l’Istro, e ridurrà l’Eufrate,**  
**L’Arasse, e Nilo, e il Tigre obediante.**

(*La christiana vittoria maritima*, p. 64)

These prophetic motives illustrate, once more, the global perspective from which the events of the Oriental war with the Turks were seen by the intellectual elite in the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup>

<sup>177</sup> «The forces of the blasphemous Turk in the East».

<sup>178</sup> The lexeme «*sopra human*» stands for «prodigious, or superhuman valour», but can also be an implicit allusion to the benevolence of the divine forces, who, as we shall see later, indeed take part in the course of the historical events in *La christiana vittoria maritima*.

<sup>179</sup> Classical *topoi* of the genre of the epic poem perfectly coinciding with the very historic reality of the event. Thus, A. Barbero wrote in his *Lepanto. La battaglia dei tre imperi*: «*La verità è che il vento, come riferiscono concordemente tutte le fonti, era davvero contrario, e che alla battaglia, ormai, non credeva più nessuno*». «The fact is that all the historical sources agree that the wind was indeed adverse, and that nobody at that point believed in the possibility of the battle». (A. Barbero, *Lepanto. La battaglia dei tre imperi*, 2010, p. 528). The historian expands upon the ‘miraculous’ character of the sudden change of the wind in favour of the Christian army traditionally ascribed to the intervention of the divine Providence: «*(...) la maggior parte dei testimoni dà più importanza al fatto che all’improvviso il vento cadde, e sul mare regnò una bonaccia del tutto insolita in una stagione così avanzata (...). I piloti affermarono che era un miracolo, perché in quella zona di solito al mattino il vento, anziché calare, si rafforzava, e i cristiani ricordarono quell’improvvisa bonaccia come il primo segno sicuro che Dio stava dalla loro parte*». (*Ibid.*, 535). « (...) the majority of the witnesses stress the fact that the wind had all of a sudden dropped, and the sea had calmed down in a most unusual way considering the low season (...). As the pilots stated later, it was indeed a miracle, since in this region the wind on the contrary tended to rise in the morning hours».

<sup>180</sup> *La christiana vittoria maritima*, p. 63.

century. Lepanto could not be viewed as a single victory but as a watershed triumph that not only destroyed the myth of the Ottoman Turks' invincibility, but, even more importantly, was to give rise to a whole chain of other military conquests in the future, that would eventually lead to the worldwide dominance of Christian civilization, as well as the reconquest of the territories of the Oriental world. These political and religious ambitions that embraced Europe of the time went far beyond national perspectives and were fully in line with the spirit of the Crusade permeating the minds of both the common people and the intellectuals during the Counter-Reformation, Bolognetti stating his position clearly in the poetic letter to Giovanni Battista Pigna. The latter one is not only encouraged to create an epic, but is also given meticulous 'instructions' about the way of treating the main subject of the epic to come: «*i fatti alteri de gli Heroi moderni*»<sup>181</sup>. The poet consequently provides a detailed catalogue enumerating the heroes of the battle, starting, naturally with Don John of Austria and his glorious deeds: «*Cantar Primier potrai quel gran GIOVANNI, / Che d'Austria splendor nuovo accresce al nome (...)*»<sup>182</sup>. After having introduced the protagonist of Lepanto, the poet passes to other prominent commanders, all of which are namely «modern Heroes», i.e. real *historical* characters that took part in the actual military event, notably, he does not forget to mention the three principal commanders, i.e. Marcantonio Colonna (the commander of the papal flagship), Sebastian Venier (the commander of the Venetian contingent) and Gian Andrea Doria (the admiral of the Genoese fleet): «*l'alto Colonna*», «*duo Sforza, un Farnese, un Feltrio, un Doria*», «*tanti Orsini Heroi*», «*quel robusto Vitellio, Ascanio, e d'Adria il maggiore Duce*»<sup>183</sup>. After enlisting the most famous military figures, the poet insists on the importance to celebrate every single combatant that fought and perished at Lepanto:

**Né quei lasciar, che a la superna luce  
 Salir, cadendo nel mortal conflitto,  
 Che ogni nuovo astro in Ciel riluce**<sup>184</sup>.

Thus, in his *capitolo*, the poet sets his friend an ambitious task, praising his poetic talent and authority and jokingly pretending not to be able to produce a poem of the kind himself, due to his numerous social and political activities:

**Che tu canti non io, parmi ben dritto;**  
 Tu cinto il capo d'honorata fronde;

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

Io da pungenti cure ognihor trafitto<sup>185</sup>.

Despite its humorous ending<sup>186</sup>, the aim of the *capitolo* is more than explicit: as has already been mentioned above, rather than being a mere poetic letter addressed to a close friend, it is first and foremost a call to action for the representatives of the literary elite in all of the Italian city-states, independently of the attitude they assumed to the process of the creation of the Holy League. In this succinct poetic work, Bolognetti manages to show the very essence of the historical event, i.e. its reasons, significance and consequences for Christian Europe. On the one hand, he insists that Lepanto is not only worth being celebrated by the best epic poets in Italy, but also is a perfect argument for a poet in search of a source of inspiration for his future epic. Such seems to be the quintessence of Bolognetti's poetic thought, while the last verses where he rejects the opportunity of producing himself a worthwhile epic work should of course not be taken seriously, as the *capitolo* was first published in the appendix to the poem entirely dedicated to Lepanto event – it is to this epic Bolognetti seems to deny the possibility of, *La christiana vittoria maritima* that we shall now turn to.

The poem is preceded by topical passages containing a detailed dedication to the «*illustrissimo et reverendissimo sig. mons., Alessandro Cardinale Sforza, legato di Bologna*»<sup>187</sup>. Already in the dedicatory part of his poem, Bolognetti introduces the argument of his epic: the deeds of the «*incomparabile Vittoria maritima à Noi concessa dalla onnipotente mano del Signor Dio contra il già invitto Imperator de' Turchi*»<sup>188</sup>. Thus, in one sentence, the poet reassumes the main aspects of the way the historical fact will be represented in the text: throughout the whole poem, **the allegorical level** of the narration will indeed co-exist with **the historical one**. It was not for nothing that the poem is dedicated to an influential clergyman, close to Saint Pius V: the victory over the Turks was clearly perceived as a 'Crusade' of the modern times, however, having a defensive character. In the second part of the sentence, the essential consequence of the 'spiritual' triumph of Lepanto is formulated: for Bolognetti and his contemporaries the victory of 1571 had an obvious ideological meaning – the one of destroying the legendary power and invincibility the «*già invitta*» Ottoman Empire enjoyed over the last centuries. It is remarkable that the dedication has only an apparently topical character: Bolognetti not being a court poet, was not linked to Cardinal Sforza by a complex relationship between the court poet and his Maecenas and dedicated his *christiana vittoria maritima* out of solidarity and the profound spiritual impact the values of *La*

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> Further in this chapter we shall have an occasion to see to what extent do the *capitolo* and the poem analyzed below differ as far as the intonation and the content of their respective endings are concerned.

<sup>187</sup> *La christiana vittoria maritima*, 1572, p. 2.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

Counter-Reformation, together with the spirit of new Crusades exerted on him. Indeed, a part from the conventionally solemn tone of the dedication, Bolognetti does not make encomiastic references in the very text of the poem, neither Cardinal Alessandro Sforza is mentioned in the end of the poem<sup>189</sup>.

As is well-known, protasis has always been an important structural element in the epic tradition. Starting with Homer, an epic poem would usually start with a classical invocation to the Poet's Muse who was to provide inspiration necessary to immortalize heroic actions. This kind of invocation being an obligatory element of an epic, the poem could, however, also start with a brief introduction of the argument and, as a rule, the main protagonist of the story to be celebrated. As tradition would have it later, the poet also frequently evoked the divine forces reverently asking them for the gift of poetic enthusiasm, the introductory part, containing also references to a poet's benefactor and, sometimes, to the benefactor's family.

As to the protasis of *La christiana vittoria maritima*, Bolognetti, in line with the epic tradition, starts his poem by introducing to his readers Don John D'Austria, the main hero of Lepanto:

**D'Austria l'invitto, e glorioso Duce**  
**Di Barbariche spoglie adorno io canto,**  
Vero splendor **d'Hesperia**, et vera luce  
Di **Roma**, e gloria del **Monarca santo** (...)

(Libro I, p. 3)

In the very first lines, the poet makes an emphasis of unity of Italian and Spanish forces, giving, by using the lexeme «Hesperia», that, according to *Enciclopedia Treccani*, was used both to refer to Western Europe, and, later, to designate «now Italy, now Spain».<sup>190</sup> Thus, by adopting the ancient poetic form to refer to Italy *or* Spain, Bolognetti not only suggests a more global, *European* perspective of the event, according to which all internal discords seem temporary and less significant, but also invokes the authority of the ancient poetic legacy: his poem will of course be innovative, considering already the choice of a recent naval combat, but the poet is still not willing to reject poetic authorities of the past. However, Bolognetti's reader will not find some of the

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<sup>189</sup> When Bolognetti makes further references to the Sforza family in his epic, they concern not the cardinal, but his brothers: their «prudence» (a quality that was to become essential in the Baroque period) and «valour» are praised as the qualities of the brave military commanders and do not possess encomiastic connotations.

<sup>190</sup> «*Esperia – nome con cui i Greci originariamente designarono le terre occidentali (gr. Ἑσπερία «occidente»), poi, con il progredire delle conoscenze geografiche, ora l'Italia ora la Spagna*». (*Enciclopedia Treccani*, [www.treccani.it](http://www.treccani.it)).

traditional invocations proper to the epic genre, i.e. invocations to the Muse (an obligatory element of classical epic poems) and the ones to the poet's benefactor (a highly recurrent, almost obligatory element in most of the poems of the late Cinquecento – the Seicento period). The author of *La christiana vittoria maritima* substitutes the above-mentioned elements with the images belonging to Christian Catholic tradition: God the Father «*il Padre eterno*»<sup>191</sup> and Jesus Christ «*vero huomo, e Dio*». Thus, the «*glorioso Duce*», Don John of Austria was sent by Heaven to glorify the divine will by his heroic deeds, as the poet suggests, directly addressing the glorious hero:

**Dal Ciel mandato a noi** dunque o GIOVANNI

Deposta alquanto ogni più grave cura

Per la mia lingua ascolta intento, **a gloria**

**Del Padre eterno, la tua gran Vittoria.**

(Libro I, p. 3)

It is namely the Divine authority that the poet is praying to inspire him to compose verses that would be worthy of such an «elevated» subject:

**Ma tu vero huomo, e Dio**, che da la frode

Del Serpe hai col morir salvati Noi;

**Apri la bocca mia, fa che si snode**

**La roza lingua. Che sol farlo puoi:**

Ond'io possa cantar la vera lode

Del gran GIOVANNI, e de i moderni Heroi;

**Fa che il mio dir sia dal primier diverso,**

**Alzando a par del gran soggetto il verso.**

(Libro I, p. 4)

Thus, in the introductory part of his poem, Bolognetti seems to remain faithful to the epic tradition, but, at the same time, already the first verses of the poem perfectly illustrate new tendencies in the air, pervaded with the influence of the values and the rigidity of the Counter-Reformation. All references to pagan deities, or even, those to the poetic Muse, are therefore substituted with a reverent 'prayer, for, in the author's mind, «only» («sol») God can grant a poet the divine gift of poetry.

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<sup>191</sup> Libro I, p. 4.

Next question that comes up when taking into consideration the artistic whole of the poem concerns itself with the way Bolognetti approaches the historical reality of Lepanto; what are the main principles he makes use of to represent the historical reality of the famous battle and how does the historical element coexist with the marvellous one?

The whole action of the poem is based on such narrative devices as parallelisms and oppositions. The actual specific historical artefact, i.e. the naval combat between the fleets of the Holy League (represented by such nations as Italy and France) and the Ottoman Empire is immediately positioned at the **allegorical level** which, despite the use of the *marvellous*, still does not abolish the co-existence of the more specific **historical level**. Bolognetti makes the two levels co-exist in his poetic text: both of them do not exist separately, but found themselves in a constant interaction. This **interplay of the two levels of narration** is not surprising, if we take into consideration the ambiguous literary challenge Bolognetti was faced with: one of the first poets to produce an epic dedicated to the very recent, contemporary events, he only had in his disposition the legacy of the classical epic tradition, with all of its *topoi* and conventionalities that were now to be reviewed, as well as revalued, according to the new criterion, i.e. whether they were adapted or not for being used in the ‘new’ type of the epic poem. In this context, the latter one actually presented itself as a pure experiment: even if the answer to the above-mentioned question was positive, absolute fidelity to the old canons was no longer possible, the very specificity of the ‘contemporary’ content making the poet question the authority of the classical models. If it is true that changes were inevitable, it leaves still no doubt that the fixed canons could not completely disappear, or be substituted, in such a short period of time: a combination of the old and the new, the generally accepted and the experimental thus seemed almost an inevitable choice, suggesting an individual solution in the case of every single poem that appeared in such circumstances.

So how do the historical and the allegorical dimensions actually manifest their coexistence, laying the basis for the whole text? The answer to the question lies in **the dichotomy of Good and Evil** that permeates the whole of the poetic text.

*La christiana vittoria maritima* is indeed based on the two core elements: 1) the specific historical event serving as source of inspiration for the poet and 2) the Manichean struggle between the Good, incarnated by the Christian forces, and the Evil, incarnated by the representatives of the Muslim world, respectively. These are the two levels Bolognetti bases his narration upon – two seemingly different dimensions that never exist separately, but tend to constantly interact and even merge together in the poetic reality of the text. In Bolognetti, the historic reality is seen through a prism of the allegorical reality of Christian (obviously, Catholic) character: the whole complicated chain of the war between the Western and the Eastern worlds is paralleled by the war between

«*l'empio Infernal Sathan*» and «*il gran figliuol di DIO*», or, rather, is the direct consequence of the latter:

**L'empio Infernal Sathan perverso, e rio,**  
Che a i danni sempre de i mortali attende;  
**Triomphar visto il gran figliuol di DIO,**  
**Il cui poter nel centro anchor si estende;**  
Et che dal sangue sparso, ond'ei morio,  
Vigore ogni nostr'opra, e merto prende;  
**Non resta mai di rabbia, e d'ira ardente**  
**D'assalir, d'ingannar l'humana gente.**

(Libro I, p. 3)

This allegorical fragment is essential for understanding Bolognetti's way of treating historical reality: it was in the context of the legendary rivalry between Heaven and Hell that all the events to be dealt with in the poem are inscribed. «*L'empio Infernal Sathan*», craving for revenge, sows heresy, as well as cults of «*nuovi, e falsi Dei, / tra gli Africani, e i Phrigii, e i Siri, e i Persi (...)*»<sup>192</sup>. As a result of these impious actions, the «ignaro» Oriental world absorbs the «*false dottrine*»<sup>193</sup>: the «*atro veneno*» that empoisons the minds with doubts, «errors» and confusion. This was only the beginning of the infernal project: the «insatiable»<sup>194</sup> Demon, «*rio mostro atroce*» could not settle for his triumphs in Asian and African continents, but also succeeded in his primary aim – the gradual conquest of Christian Europe by way of directing there the Ottoman aggression, making so that «*anco in Europa l'odiata Insegna / Spiega il rio Turco, e in Occidente regna*»<sup>195</sup>. The **historical** narrative level is now introduced and starts its gradual development, thus interwoven into the allegorical discourse: the poet mentions the Ottoman attacks in the Mediterranean, and, in particular, the conquest of Rhodes. The **marvellous-allegorical** dimension remains in vigour: the reader is immediately transposed to Heaven to witness a pathetic dialogue between Christ and «*l'alta Dea (...) al conspetto humile, e gloriosa*»<sup>196</sup>. Mary addresses «*il Rè del Cielo*», begging him to save Christians from «*il Tiranno Oriental*»<sup>197</sup> thus putting an end to the ambitions of the Eastern

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<sup>192</sup> Libro I, p. 3.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4 «*Et sì per tutta Arabia lo diffuse, / Che ne rimase ogni alma, ogni cor pieno; / Lasciò le menti anchor dubbie, e confuse / D'errori dentro à l'Africano seno (...)*».

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*



world that, in her words, is an incarnation of the infernal forces, plotting the eventual total dominance over Christianity. Christ responds to his «afflicted Mother» by delivering a solemn promise to send Christians a hero – «*un divin Duce*», the young prince, who will triumph over the «*crudel Thrace*», and thus – once again, the poet emphasizes the global scale of Lepanto triumph – the whole universe will regain its «*salute*» and «*pace*», the hero being «*d'Europa afflitta (...) speme, e consorto*»<sup>198</sup>. Don John of Austria had been, therefore, «*fin da principio in mente nostra eletto / (...) a l'alta impresa*»: in other words, according to the divine will, the son of Charles V was initially chosen and predestined to combat the Oriental enemy at Lepanto, however, the whole proceeding had to remain a mystery «*a gli altri ignota*»<sup>199</sup> until the present day. After the divine revelation, Christ sends to the earthly world a «glorious» *nuntio* who assumes the appearance of a «*venerabil Sacerdote*»: one of his angels encharged to communicate Pope Pius V<sup>200</sup>, God's «*Vicar*»<sup>201</sup> in the Earth, the divine will: to oppose to the «heresy», tormenting Europe, as well as to prepare to combat the main source of the danger that is now shifted from the 'internal' discords between Catholics and Protestants to the menace impending over the whole Christian Mediterranean:

**L'Heresia**, ch'or sen va lieta, e sicura;  
Et se pur dianzi star soleva nascosta (...)  
**Non pur lunge in Britannia hoggi dimora,**

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5: «(...) *vinca il crudel Thrace, / Dando e salute a l'universo, e pace*».

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> The way Bolognetti treats the *topos* of the divine messenger could be viewed as another proof of the essential impact the ideology of the Counter-Reformation had on the poet. What we deal within in this case, is a topical situation of the apparition of the divine messenger: not only the classical epic tradition suggested, naturally, that the *nuntio* appeared to the hero, communicating him the divine will, but even the later poems, produced in the context of the Counter-Reformation and imbued with Christian ideology, as a rule, followed the classical tradition, i.e. the messenger visiting either a ruling monarch, or, more frequently, the military commander who was to become the protagonist of the future battle. Thus, for instance, in the *Jerusalem delivered*, Archangel Gabriel is sent to Godfrey of Bouillon, Commander-in-Chief of the Christian army during the First Crusade – a military hero and not a representative of the clerical elite. Later on, we shall encounter the classical version of the apparition episode as well, but the crucial first apparition of the divine *messaggio* contributes to emphasizing the role of the Clergy as mediators between the divine forces and the earthly world.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7. «*Da Dio per suo Vicario eletto*».

**Ma fra l'Adria, e il Tirreno, e l'Alpe ancora.**

(Libro I, p. 8)

The divine messenger urges Pius V to action, promising infinite support of Heaven to every his deed and thought, making then a prophetic revelation concerning the end of the Oriental war, i.e. the eventual glorious triumph of the Christian army over the Ottoman enemy:

**E il mostro Ottoman rigido, e fero,**  
Che sì ti cruccia, e sì ti affligge il petto,  
**Fia rotto, e i Duci suoi fian parte estinti,**  
**Parte havrai sotto i piè di lacci avinti.**

(Libro I, p. 8)

It is not only the power of the «*incarnato Verbo*»<sup>202</sup> that Christ recurs to in order to encourage Pius V: through his Angel's mediation, he infuses the spirit of the «*sommo Pastor*»<sup>203</sup> with the «*celeste almo liquore*» that fills the latter with fervour, enthusiasm, joy and vigour<sup>204</sup>. In this way, as Tasso would have put it, the marvellous of the Christian order is introduced: under the effect of the divine substance, Pius finally succeeds in putting an end to the internal disagreements tearing the Christian states apart – «*la già scossa Barca*»<sup>205</sup> of Catholic zeal regains its balance and is once again brought under the control of the authority of the Catholic Church. As a result, unity between the Christians and creation of a powerful fleet to combat the Eastern menace becomes possible:

Giochi, e furti, e bestemmie, e liti, e risse  
**Cessaro almen, se non in tutto, in parte;**  
Cessar le false opinioni fisse  
Ne i vani petti da Sathan con arte;  
**Con quel, che tanto già l'Italia afflisse,**  
**Crudel furor del furibondo Marte;**  
**Et de i passati danni ampio ristoro**

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

**Prendendo ogni un, surgea l'età de l'oro.**

(Libro I, p. 8)

Due to the marked presence of the Christian marvellous, the poet obviously idealizes the situation, ascribing to the divine intervention the miraculous effect of «restoring» the Golden Age – still, the general idyll is tempered by an allusion to the historic truth: «*cessaro almen, se non in tutto, in parte*». In the following episodes we shall assist to a further evolution of this «partly»: the problems within the world of Christian Europe are thus viewed as a serious impediment to the «*alta impresa*» of removing the Ottoman menace and, according to the author, were not to be underestimated: even the divine forces are capable of bringing only a *partial* solution to overcome them.

The divine intervention is immediately counterbalanced by the infernal one: contrasts and parallelism reveal to be of primary importance, as far as the narrative structure of the *Vittoria maritima* is concerned. If **Christ** has sent one of his «glorious» angels to inspire Saint Pius V who assumed the looks of a «venerable» clergymen, **Beelzebub** himself acts as an infernal messenger, making his appearance to Selim II, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Similarly to the Christian *nuntio*, the Demon presents himself disguised, adopting «*la forma (...), l'habito, e il viso / D'un gran Turca Bascià colmo d'ingegno (...)*»<sup>206</sup>. As a «*finto Bascià*», i.e. one of the wisest and esteemed people close to the emperor, he makes his discourse, instigating Selim to attack and conquer the «*Christiani in Occidente*». The historical reality of the Ottoman aggression towards the Mediterranean Europe is thus **entirely inscribed in the allegorical context of the struggle between Good and Evil**: the Turkish emperor seems not even having had in mind the project of conquering the Mediterranean *before* the apparition of the Demon, his mind and ambitions having been totally engrossed by the numerous possibilities in the East. Thus, Selim answers the pathetic discourse of Beelzebub by expressing his various other military projects aimed at extending the Ottoman Empire's boundaries:

Tù sai, ch'essendo il nostro Impero grande,  
Egli hà confini anchor molti, e diversi;  
Tal ch'io posso assalir da varie bande  
Latini, Arabi, e Moschi, e Scithi, e Persi (...)»<sup>207</sup>.

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<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

However, Beelzebub easily directs the emperor's thoughts in the 'Christian' direction, aided by the infernal magic device: the «*atro veneno*» that affects directly Selim's heart and mind, already full with fury and zeal for conquest:

Così dicendo **un raggio dentro al petto**  
**Per gli occhi à quel mandò d'atro veneno,**  
**Che fascinollo con mirabil effetto**  
Nel cor già pria di rabbia, e d'ardor pieno;  
**Tal che il Tiranno fù spinto, e costretto,**  
Qual destrier facil da voltar col freno,  
**A lasciarsi guidar là dove vuole**  
**Quel mentitor di faccia, e di parole.**

(Libro I, p. 10)

In this way, Bolognetti develops the parallel opposition between the celestial liquor that invigorates and strengthens Christian zeal and military fervour and the infernal «ray» inciting to aggression and completely subordinating the monarch to the infernal forces, the opposition being completely in line with the general allegorical dichotomy «Good - Evil»; «Western Europe – Eastern world»; «Christian vs. Islamic civilizations». The Demon resorts to all of the rhetoric devices to convince Selim II to set his mind upon the war with the Christian Mediterranean, but it is namely after having resorted to such magic element as the infernal potion, that he finally succeeds in his plans:

Mentre il Serpe Infernal colmo d'horrore  
Verso l'empio Selim così dicea;  
**Giunto era in tanto al misero nel core**  
**Quel tosco, ch'entro al sen sparso gli havea**  
**Ond'ei già colmo d'Infernal furore**  
Paciente ascoltar più non potea;  
Hor mordendosi l'unghie, et hor le labbia  
**Fremea di sdegno, di furor, di rabbia.**

(Libro I, p. 13)

Magic devices apart, it is interesting to have a closer look at the arguments in favour of the war against the Christian world, deployed by the Demon, the most compelling of which perfectly corresponds to the historical reality, i.e. *the absence of unity* in the Mediterranean Christian Europe. Thus, on the one hand, Spain that is too largely engaged in resolving the religious military conflicts with the Protestants in Flanders and with the Moors in its own territories («*Et co i Belgi, e coi Mori à tutte l'hore / quel Rè contrasta, ch'è trà quei maggiore*»<sup>208</sup>), and, on the other hand, Italy, France, Germany and England involved with internal wars and controversies sparked off by the Reformation:

**Et quando pur si unisser tutte insieme  
Germania, Italia, e di Filippo i regni;  
Il Rè de' Galli, con le gente estreme  
De l'Anglia, romperà gli alti disegni;**  
Et rotta in tutto la già presa speme  
**Suscitaran trà lor novelli sdegni;**  
Et scoprendosi quei, ch'erano occulti,  
Per tutto nasceran risse, e tumulti.

(Libro I, p. 13)

Making his best to convince Selim, the Demon insists that this lack of unity between the Christians is due not only to the internal discords of Catholics with Protestants, but it is not in the least conditioned by excessive ambitions of each respective European state, as well as by their unwillingness to unite themselves even in the dangerous context of the Islamic menace:

**Ma posto anchor che uniti fosser, questo  
Più ch'altra cosa grato à me sarebbe;  
Poi che palma, e triumpho manifesto  
D'essi con più facilità havrebbe;**  
**L'Hispano al Gallo, e l'Italo molesto,  
L'uno à l'altro ubidir mai non vorrebbe;  
Tal che per le discordie non palesi  
Sarian tutti sconfitti, e morti, e presi.**

(Libro I, 13)

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

This pathetic monologue, in combination with the infernal «*atro veneno*» affects the Ottoman Emperor to the extent that he forgets all of his previous expansive ambitions and focuses himself on the aim suggested by Beelzebub, i.e. the one of conquering immediately the Mediterranean area. The whole episode runs contrast and, at the same time, unfolds exactly in parallel with the scene of the divine apparition to Pope Saint Pius V: the infernal *nesso* is contrasted by the divine one, both addressing to the recipient on whose decision will largely depend the further direction of the events; the «*celesti almo liquore*» is paralleled by «*tosco*», «*atro veneno*», both messengers not limiting themselves to rhetoric devices, but making use of the marvellous effect of the above-mentioned magic substances. Moreover, both monologues project the same message: a call to military actions, in both cases reinforced by the prophetic promises of divine / infernal forces. Both episodes result in the same way: the recipients are determined to engage themselves in the new religious war that in this way is bound to break out as soon as possible.

Enraged, the Sultan attacks the Cyprus region, committing large-scale violence against Christian population, so that the rumours about the impending «*alto periglio*»<sup>209</sup> start spreading and finally reach Rome, only to encourage Pius V to favour Christian unity, gathering the fleet of the Holy League that would be able to resist the «*empio Thrace*», putting an end to further violence against Christians.

The demonic forces respond to this initiative by convening an Infernal Council<sup>210</sup> deciding to impede the unification process, by intervening directly in order to abolish further attempts at stopping the Ottomans. Thus, the marvellous element is introduced once again: Beelzebub sends his demons, each one equipped with «*un'ampolla*» full of another magical substance, the «*Tartareo tosco, / Maraviglioso, e sopra humano effetto*»<sup>211</sup>. The infernal messengers, having assumed the looks of the warriors' servants, parents, or friends, secretly enter the Venetian warships, each of them «spilling» «*l'Infernal liquore*»<sup>212</sup> at all of the most glorious warriors and commanders. The results are overwhelming: the Christian militaries are subject to the effect of the potion and change themselves completely, absorbing all of the demonic characteristics:

Se **prima** eran magnanimi, e cortesi,  
Giusti, prudenti, affabili, e benigni;

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>210</sup> An important *topos* of the epic genre. On the topical situations of the infernal councils, see G. Bettin, 2006, pp. 717-735.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

Fur **poi** constretti à dimostrar palesi  
**Furor, superbia, e cori empii, e maligni;**  
**Rapaci, avari, e d'ingordia accesi.**

(Libro I, p. 16)

The reader of the poem assists to a complete metamorphosis: one of the topical subjects of the ancient Greek and Roman literature that regains its significance during the Baroque period. In this way, the senior officials of the fleet seem to have changed their looks, attitudes and, in the last analysis, their identity, having gained an almost complete resemblance to their Eastern counterparts:

**Parean proprio in Harpie cangiati Cigni,**  
**D'Agnelli diventar Tigri arrabbiati**  
Contra i sudditi lor, contra i soldati.  
Come si legge, che l'antica figlia  
Del Sole **in varii mostri, et in diverse**  
**Belve, con incredibil maraviglia**  
**I compagni d'Ulisse empia converse (...)**  
E con l'usata lor forma, e figura  
Cangiar costumi anchor, voce, e natura.

(Libro I, p. 17)

Due to the infernal plots, the presumed unity of the Christian fleet is broken: the transformed commanders start even to incite their subordinates to commit acts of treachery and violence. This malevolent interference is, however, counterbalanced by the scene of the divine contemplation that, similarly to the previous episode, is introduced into the narration by the conjunction «*ma*»<sup>213</sup>: «*Ma l'alto Iddio, che dal suo regno scorse / Tanti enormi delitti, e in tante guise, / Gli occhi di pieta colmo indietro torse / Da loro, in cui le luci havea pria fise (...)*»<sup>214</sup>. The situation in Venice, and, particularly, the Ottoman violence in Cyprus moves the «*alto Iddio*» who will shortly provide his support for the Christians by sending a divine *messo* to the «*d'Adria i saggi figli*»<sup>215</sup>.

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<sup>213</sup> Compare the previous parallel episode of the Infernal Council: «*Ma per troncar Sathan l'alta speranza, / Ch'ogni fedel s'havea trà sé concetta, / Consiglio fe nell'Infernal sua stanza*». (*Ibid.*, p. 16).

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, Pius V, «*di Roma l'alto, e PIO Monarca*»<sup>216</sup>, extremely afflicted and preoccupied by the events in Cyprus, continues his attempts at bringing together Spain and Italy, in order to be able to defend Nicosia and other cities. As a result, Philip II of Spain finally accepts sending his fleet in Crete, «*per impedir l'empio, e feroce / Tiranno, e le sue voglie ingorde, e ree*», where it will unite with the Italian allies<sup>217</sup> and embark on the military expedition, with a view of «*dar soccorso a Cipro*»<sup>218</sup>. The first part (*Libro I*) of the poem finishes by a brief description of the failed operation and the eventual return of the fleet: this part contains no miraculous actions and perfectly corresponds to the historical events, the historical level thus coming to the foreground.

After the reunion of the military commanders, the wisest «*Duci*», the fleet of the Holy League had to retreat, since it was too late to save Cyprus from the Ottoman aggression, but the destiny of Cyprus, «*d'un Regno tal perduto in Oriente*», had left every participant of the Holy League initiative «*pien di doglia, e sbigottito, / (...) disperato, e d'ira impaziente*», that the unity between them had only been strengthened by the common feeling of the «*alta rabbia ardente*»<sup>219</sup>, as well as the extraordinary, undiminished enthusiasm to undertake another, successful military expedition – a military zeal that, once again, was perfectly in line with the historical facts, as, despite all the internal controversies, the Holy League's second attempt resulted in the most glorious event of the Oriental War, the Battle of Lepanto.

The beginning of the second part of the poem (*Libro II*) is marked by the return of the Christian *marvellous*, the action taking place in the Divine Realm. The Holy Virgin for the second time begs her Son to support Christians, so that they put an end to the Ottoman violence. It is in this fragment that one of the essential **Baroque leitmotifs** can be perceived, i.e. frailty and transitory nature of all things subject to inevitable radical changes and transformations. Thus, the narrator, commenting upon the prayer of the «*alta Vergine Madre*», comments that the Infernal forces, by way of plotting and supporting the Ottoman Turks, had managed to destroy her agreement with Christ, «*e tutto in doglia il suo piacer cangiato*»<sup>220</sup>. The very formula reveals the Baroque intonations: the dichotomy of «pain - pleasure», brought together in one verse by the key Baroque lexeme «change». The leitmotiv is at the same time developed and tempered by Christ himself, who remarks the extreme frailty and fleetingness of everything, not only in the Earth but also in Heaven:

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<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> The author remains faithful to the historic reality of Lepanto and mentions the names of authentic historical protagonists of Lepanto: «*il gran Colonna*» and «*Doria Duce*» (*Ibid.*, p. 18).

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* A dichotomy that is perfectly in line with the spirit of the Baroque: cf., for instance the famous lines in the *proemio* of *L'Adone* featuring the affects of pain and pleasure as extremely dynamic, almost interchangeable emotional states: «*Però dal vel che tesse or la mia tela / in molli versi e favolosi e vani, / questo senso verace altri raccoglie: / smoderato piacer termina in doglia*». (G. Marino, *L'Adone*, I, 10).



**Tutte le cose alfin passano in fretta,  
Et passerà la terra, e il Cielo istesso;  
Ch'ogni cosa è caduca, e frale, e inferma,  
Ma sempre sta la mia parola ferma.**

(Libro II, p.19)

The pessimistic philosophy of these verses is, however, mitigated by the last line of the octave: nothing is steady and durable, but for the «*Verbo incarnato*», the divine word.

Thus, Christ consoles his Mother, and makes the second promise, as well as another prophecy upon the future protagonist of Lepanto, Don John of Austria who will assume the command of the Holy League fleet defeating the Ottoman forces. The figure of the illegitimate son of Philip II is thus inscribed in the allegorical perspective of the poem: however, an authentic historical character, Don John will win, aided by the divine forces, and acting as a mediator, carrying out their plan. The aim of destroying the Ottoman Turks goes far beyond the mere defence of the Mediterranean territories and, according to the spirit of the Crusade, reigning over the Europeans in the given period, implies, in this context, an eventual glorious triumph of Heaven over the forces, i.e. the triumph of the absolute good over absolute evil, as well as the expansion of the Christian faith all over the Earth: «*Di Sathan l'arti, e di Sathan gli inganni / Renderà vani, e fia con virtute / D'Europa, e d'Asia, e d'Africa salute*»<sup>221</sup>.

The prophetic discourse is followed by a range of divine interventions: firstly, Christ «infuses» the mind of the «*gran Monarca santo*»<sup>222</sup>, Pope Pius V, a heavenly ray that, similarly to the celestial liquor in the first part, stimulates him to continue his even more feverish attempts at bringing together the Italian and the Spanish fleet, to «*conchiuder la lega*» and, finally, undertake the second expedition. Secondly, a divine messenger is sent in order to convince Philip II of Spain of sending Don John of Austria as supreme commander of the Christian fleet. The Angel, disguised as a noble Lusitanian, in line with the famous *topos* of the epic genre, makes his appearance to the Spanish Monarch at dawn, and easily dispels all of the royal doubts by a passionate monologue, as well as by infusing in his heart «*gratia divina*»<sup>223</sup>. Thirdly, the divine messenger arranges the situation in Venice torn by chaos and controversies sparked off by the infernal forces:

**Et d'ogni macchia ria tutto il Senato**

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<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

**Purgò, che per lor danno, e lor ruina**  
**Sathan crudo apportò,** mentre nel seno  
Sparse à quei Padri l'Infernal veneno.

(Libro II, p. 22)

Due to the divine aid, everyone «*in contrario alhor poi fur cangiati*»<sup>224</sup> – such immediate transformation brings back unity in the Venetian fleet, the Senate quickly choosing the commander of the Venetian forces a «*Duce prudente, e d'animoso core*».

Thus, the divine will is accomplished and the commanders<sup>225</sup> of the Holy League start preparations to the 'Crusade', «*tutti poi dentro al cor di zelo ardenti*»<sup>226</sup>.

Meanwhile, the interplay of the two narrative levels continue, the allegorical dimension once again coming to the foreground. Beelzebub, the ancient enemy of the Divine Realm, assumes the appearance of an eminent Count and enters the Spanish fleet, similarly to the celestial messenger<sup>227</sup>, at dawn, infusing in their minds Styx venom. The effect of the poisonous substance is immediate: the commanders start seeing dreary, pseudo-prophetic dreams predicting their defeat, if they engage themselves into a combat with the Turks. The infernal action is however paralleled by the divine response: an Angel is hidden, disguised, among the glorious «*Duci*» – the war between heaven and hell continues, being, in fact, the main war of the poem.

When the Don John and the three commanders finally join each other and unite their fleets in Messina, it is a moment of common joy and religious zeal: the militaries follow the example of the admiral of the Holy Alliance fleet, making confessions and praying. A historically important detail is introduced and insisted upon in this fragment, i.e. the numerical superiority of the Ottoman Turks<sup>228</sup>, confronted to the European forces. Don John namely asks Heaven for help and advice,

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<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> Bolognetti does not introduce fictional characters, but explicitly privileges the role of the historical ones: thus, he makes reference to the third of the main Christian commanders at Lepanto, Giovanni Andrea Doria («*il gran Doria*»), while describing military preparations: the respective fleet of Don John d'Austria, Marcantonio Colonna and Sebastian Venier are to meet Doria's fleet in Messina, «*per gir con gli altri (...) in Oriente*». (See *La christiana vittoria maritima*, p. 23).

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>227</sup> Thus, the parallelism of the marvellous interventions continues, always in the context of the dichotomy of absolute good and absolute evil.

<sup>228</sup> «*Calcolare quante galere avevano i comandanti musulmani non è facile, ma sommando le varie squadre partite quella primavera da Constantinopoli, su cui abbiamo gli avvisi dettagliati dei diplomatici e delle spie cristiane, (...), si arriva a un totale di circa 200 o 205 galere*». «It is not easy to calculate the exact number of the Muslim commanders' galleys, but if one puts together various data upon the squadrons that had left Constantinople that spring found in the detailed accounts of the diplomats and the spies of the Christian fleet (...), one arrives at a total of about 200-205 galleys». (A. Barbero, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 536). In his detailed historical work devoted to the Battle of Lepanto, A. Barbero remarked that the numerical superiority of the Ottoman Turks was far from being unquestionable, as the Christian forces in some aspects exceeded the Ottoman ones in some important aspects, such as, for instance, their more

realizing that despite the obvious advantage enjoyed by the enemy, it is no longer possible to delay the combat: the Turk only becomes more «*gagliardo*», increasing his violence and crimes:

Ma qual si è detto, **il Turco ogni anno riede**  
**Più gagliardo, e più forte; uscendo fuori**  
**Con numero maggior sempre di navi,**  
Onde Adria, e noi di nuovi gioghi aggravati.

(Libro II, p. 30)

It is important to stress that it is namely in the discourse of Marcantonio Colonna, one of the main commanders, that we first encounter the authentic reason of the battle, as far as the *historical* level is concerned: stopping the Turks, removing the Oriental menace until it is not too late to do so: «*La battaglia naval dunque non deve / Tardarsi punto, per giudizio mio; / Ma tosto farsi, perché il tempo è breve (...)*»<sup>229</sup>. Even despite the passionate military and religious zeal, the argument of the Ottoman numerical superiority seems to some commanders a considerable impediment and the idea of the naval combat – a rather risky enterprise, the situation being as well aggravated by the fact that the Turkish fleet had only one commander, while the Christian one, despite its being subordinated to the Spanish admiral, Don John of Austria, was entrusted to the three commanders, hence, subject to possible discords.

Another historical detail, a sudden ferocious storm, presents itself as co-existence of the historical events and the poet's use of the *meraviglioso*: an Angel makes an appearance to Don John telling him to sail to *Hesperia* and save Venice, as well as defend Rome from the impending Turkish menace. The divine messenger aids the warriors literally, by infusing into their minds celestial rays, as well as asks Neptune and his daughters<sup>230</sup> to accompany the fleet of the Holy League, sending their ships a prosperous wind. Another divine intervention helps the Christians to

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powerful military equipment: «*In realtà, la flotta turca era più numerosa per la quantità delle vele, ma non per le galere, che erano di gran lunga i vascelli più importanti nel combattimento (...). La flotta di don Juan era salpata con 208 galere (...) più le 6 galeazze, che quanto a "imperiosità" e artiglieria valevano ciascuna ben più d'una galera sottile*». (*Ibid.*). «The Ottoman fleet was actually more numerous as far as the amount of the sailing ships was concerned, while the advantage of the Christian fleet lay in their galleys that were by far the most important warships (...). Don John's fleet numbered 208 galleys (...) and 6 galleasses, each of them that as far as 'imperiousness' and artillery were concerned, was worth much more than a subtle galley». The same figure of 208 galleys and 6 galleasses of the Holy League's fleet is mentioned by F. Braudel in his *Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen*, vol. II, 1966, p. 395.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>230</sup> The first and, along with the brief topical reference to Fame, the last time the reader encounters the Pagan marvellous in the poem. The reference bears a succinct and a very formal character, Neptune and his daughters making their appearance indeed *en passant*, by mediation of the divine Christian will.

arrive unnoticed by the Turkish spy, Hali the pirate: another messenger from Heaven envelops the European fleet in a dense cloud so that only a small part of the «*Armata fedele*»<sup>231</sup> is visible.

Further on, a detailed description of the eve of the battle is given, the conventional *topoi* of the epic genre revealing their presence, but for the *topos* of the catalogue of the Christian warriors that, as shall be discussed below, appears only in the end of the poem. On the contrary, the commander's – or, in the case of our naval combat, – the admiral's discourse in front of his fleet, whose function is to encourage and inspire the warriors to the battle. It should be noted in this connexion that the historical motives behind the general allegorical scheme reveal their presence in the episode, developing the theme suggested previously, in Marcantonio Colonna's discourse. Thus, the crucial objective of the whole 'Crusade' is saving the whole world, as well as providing for the security of the Christian Church and the capital of the Catholic faith, «Holy Rome»: «*Convien che prenda ogni un sì giusta impresa, / Salvando il mondo da continui guai; / Et Roma santa, e la Christiana Chiesa (...)*»<sup>232</sup>.

The classical scene of the prayer and the discourse of the supreme commander is perfectly paralleled by the Ottoman adversary. If Don John of Austria was sending his prayers to the Christian God, Ali, the commander of the Turkish fleet, is praying to Mohammed. As if reflecting his Western enemy's actions, he makes a discourse in front of his warriors, concentrating on the fundamental argument: the aim of defeating the Western *armata*, starting with demolishing the pillar of the Christian world, Italy which is referred to as the «*giardin del mondo*»:

**Scorrer tutta potrete Italia, e Spagna**

**Senza contrasto**, ov'è l'argento, e l'oro;

La Fiandra, e la Borgogna, e l'Alemagna,

Piene d'ogni ricchezza, e di thesoro (...)

**Che d'Europa non sol, ma il mondo tutto**

**Sarà del nostro speme sparso il frutto.**

(Libro III, p. 40)

Ali's words, thus, evidence the global scale of the seemingly specific battle: obtaining power over the whole Western Europe, eventually spreading Mohammed's faith across the world; reinforcing the worldwide authority of the Ottoman Empire, contributing in this way to the legendary image of its invincibility: « (...) *Che vincitori subito potrete, / Scorrer l'Europa da tutte*

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<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

*le bande (...)*». Scoring a triumph over the Holy League fleet, in this perspective, would pave the way to future Islamic conquests over the Western civilization and would prove a direct menace not only to this «irradiation»<sup>233</sup> that, according to Fernand Braudel, formed part and parcel of the Mediterranean Europe, but would even go beyond the cradle of the Christianity, expanding gradually to the whole world. This prophetic statement of the commander of the Ottoman Turks is equally true if seen from the point of view of his Christian adversary: winning the Lepanto Battle did not imply an immediate end of the Oriental war<sup>234</sup>, but losing it would mean more than losing a single battle. A Christian defeat at such an important moment, when Europe had already lost Cyprus to the Ottoman Empire, would first and foremost give the latter a *carte blanche* as far as its expansive ambitions were concerned, irrevocably diminishing the power and authority of the European participants involved. Bolognetti demonstrated a perfect historical consciousness when he thus reassumed the global historical meaning of the Lepanto triumph and of the ideological values at stake: «*Certo apprendo à mille prove note, / Ch'ancho esser vinto il fero Thrace puote*»<sup>235</sup>.

The poet succeeds in rendering the premises and eventual complicated consequences of the Christian victory or defeat: in the poem, both adversaries seem to be fully aware of the crucial point of this historical moment. Bolognetti's historical consciousness may, from this perspective, account for the way the very course of the battle is shown in the poem. What makes for the specificity of the poet's approach to the military event? To put it in a nutshell, it is a combination of the classical *topoi* with the historical content – namely the aspect in which consisted the innovation Bolognetti brought into the epic genre. In the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, it was, no doubt, impossible for him to reject the conventionalities of the long-established epic genre – that is why the detailed description of the naval combat still contains a number of topical situations, among which the poet's praying the angels for inspiration and, most importantly, the interventions of the divine and the infernal forces. The *meraviglioso* is introduced in the historical narration without, however, directly contradicting it directly, but, as a rule, serves as a device to relate the historical reality. Thus, for instance, the essential event of the death of Ali Pasha<sup>236</sup>, the commander-in-chief of the Ottoman naval forces, is a well-known historical fact<sup>237</sup>, however, there exists no final exact relation of what had really happen<sup>238</sup>. Bolognetti could by no means omit the episode crucial for the outcome of the

<sup>233</sup> For the concept of Mediterranean civilisations' irradiation», see F. Braudel, 1966, pp. 101-105.

<sup>234</sup> As could indeed be clearly perceived in the historical reality: Bolognetti, as a poet that managed to maintain the spirit of the historical truth, was not euphoric about the glorious victory of October 7: a consciousness that is proved by the final of *La christiana vittoria maritima* to be analyzed further in this chapter.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>236</sup> *Hali Bascia*, in the text of Bolognetti's poem.

<sup>237</sup> For the historical episode of Ali Pasha's death, see A. Barbero, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 558.

<sup>238</sup> Thus, R. Crowley in his *Empires of the Sea* remarks upon the absence of a single detailed version of the event contributing to its gradually acquiring a legendary character: «*Ci sono una decina di racconti diversi sugli ultimi*

battle and had to invent his own poetic version in line with the Christian, Counter-Reformation spirit pervading the whole poetic work. To render the essence of the historical event – Ali Pasha killed in action – the poet resorted to the Christian marvellous, having inserted the figure of Archangel Michael who, after having assumed the looks of an «Iberian», enters the hostile flagship and, with his celestial sword<sup>239</sup>, kills the Ottoman admiral whose soul finds itself in the «crudi artigli»<sup>240</sup> of Satan. The death of the commander-in-chief of the adversary fleet marked, undoubtedly, the loss of the morale of the Ottoman *armata*: despite its numerical superiority, the bravery and the perfect technical preparation of the European League's warriors favoured their eventual glorious triumph.

Bolognetti provides a poetic version of the historical episode of the defeat of the Knights of Malta<sup>241</sup> participating in the battle. It is known that despite the courageous resistance they mounted to the Eastern enemy, considerable part of them perished in action, while almost all were wounded<sup>242</sup>. The scene related in the poem in rather a detailed way, paying tribute to the combatants' bravery. It is worth noting that no divine or infernal interventions are introduced to decorate or re-invent the episode of the destroyed ship of the «*Guerrieri da la bianca Croce*»:

Quei, benché fosser coraggiosi, e forti,  
Et che facesser lunga, e gran difesa,  
Sì fero assalto sostenedo accorti,

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*momenti di Ali, in accordo ai diversi livelli di eroismo attribuiti al pascià. Con ogni probabilità, l'ammiraglio, facile bersaglio con le sue vesti vistose, fu abbattuto da un'archibugiata; un soldato spagnolo gli tagliò la testa e la piantò sopra una lancia. Ci furono grida di «Vittoria!» mentre la bandiera della lega veniva issata sulla testa dell'albero». «About ten different accounts had been written upon the last moments of Ali, all of them showing a various degree of heroism attributed to the pasha. It is highly probable that the admiral, being an easy target due to his eye-catching clothes, was killed by an arquebus; a Spanish soldier cut his head off and put it upon his spear. There were people shouting "Victory!" as the League's standard was raised on the masthead». (*Ibid.*, p. 277).*

<sup>239</sup> A classical *topos* in the epic poems that remained extremely popular with the poets of the end of the Cinquecento – the beginning of the Seicento.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>241</sup> For the details of the Siege of Malta see A. Petacco, *La croce e la mezzaluna*, 2005, pp. 53-79 casting light upon the crucial historical episode – «*l'epica resistenza dei cavalieri di Malta, che per la prima volta avevano dimostrato che la minaccia islamica poteva essere respinta (...)*». «The epic resistance of the Knights of Malta that for the first time proved that the Ottoman threat could be repelled (...)». (A. Petacco, *op. cit.*, p. 79). For the analysis of the event of the «*brusque arrivée de l'armada turque sur Malte en mai 1565*» – «*cet ouragan – par ses conséquences, l'un de très grands événements du siècle*» («this hurricane that in terms of its consequences was considered as one of the greatest events of the century»). See also F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-325.

<sup>242</sup> Thus, A. Petacco in his work states, referring to the diary of the arquebusier F. Balbi da Correggio that «*i cavalieri della Religione caduti in combattimento sono stati 239 e quasi tutti gli altri lamentarono ferite più o meno gravi*». (A. Petacco, *op. cit.*, p. 77; F. Balbi da Correggio, *Diario dell'assedio all'isola di Malta: 18 maggio - 17 settembre 1565*, Genova, 1995; published for the first time in Spain in 1568). «*(...) 239 Knights of the Order perished in action, while almost all of the remaining ones suffered major or minor injuries*». See also R. Crowley, *op. cit.*, p. 186: «*Degli ottomila difensori, solo seicento erano ancora in grado di portare armi, e duecentocinquanta dei cinquecento Cavalieri erano caduti*». («Out of the eight thousand defenders, only six hundred were able to carry their weapons, while two hundred and fifty Knights perished in action»).

Con gran danno de i Thraci, e grave offesa;  
Pur finalmente fur da l'acque absorti  
Con gran giattura di quell'alta impresa;  
La nave lor da varie, e da diverse  
Machine rotta, al fin tutta si aperse.

(Libro III, p. 50)

The Christian marvellous appears only in the end of the tragic scene, the poet presenting the death of the heroes as the ascension of their souls into Heaven where they are solemnly greeted and given immortality:

**Nessun d'essi moriò, ma tra soave**  
Canto raccolto con letitia l'alma;  
**Quel supremo Rettor, pien d'infinita**  
**Pietà, lor diede in Ciel perpetua vita.**

(Libro III, p. 50)

As far as military episodes are concerned, **the historical element** reveals its presence through a number of important historical details. Thus, the author provides a detailed description of the famous six Venetian galleasses that, according to Geoffrey Parker, «the Turkish fleet mistook for merchant supply vessels»<sup>243</sup> :

**Quelle sei navi tutte, che maggiori**  
**De l'altre, innanzi à l'altre poi fur poste,**  
**L'aria fendean con strepiti, e romori,**  
**Per le dense bombarde in lor disposte.**

These historical innovative warships in many aspects accounted for the victory of the Holy League, due to their impressive firepower, according to Bolognetti, must have produced a dramatic effect on the Ottoman Turks:

Onde convien che a i Thraci traditori

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<sup>243</sup> G. Parker, 1996, p. 87.

Troppo homai caro il vicin farsi coste;  
**Non è tra quegli alcun di cor sì franco,**  
**Che non si mostri e sbigottito, e bianco.**

(Libro III, p. 42)

Bolognetti puts a special emphasis on the role of the highly modern warships in the battle, according them several panegyric descriptions:

**Che sei gran navi, et alte in tal maniera,**  
**Ch'altra non vide mai, che quelle agguaglia,**  
Da l'altre navi eran tirate in schiera  
Con polve, e palle, e remi, e vettovaglia;  
**Dentro a cui sapea certo, che non era**  
**Pur'un picciol tormento da battaglia;**  
Pur'un soldato vil, pur, una spada,  
Però sicuro ad incontrarle vada.

(Libro II, p. 36)

Another important historical trait present in the epic narration is the disposition of the Western *Armata* that perfectly corresponds to the historical situation: the left wing led by the Venetian commander Agostino Barbarigo; the right wing entrusted to Giovanni Andrea Doria and the center division commanded by Don John of Austria<sup>244</sup>. Bolognetti renders this disposition, providing as well a brief portrait of the commanders and their adversaries<sup>245</sup>. Thus, for instance, situation of the left wing, commanded by the celebrated Barbarigo is represented in the following way:

Ma che direm **del Barbarigo franco**  
Guidato da felice, alto destino?  
**Che in suo governo havendo il corno manco (...)**  
Benché fosse di pel canuto, e bianco,

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<sup>244</sup> For the historical description of the Holy League fleet's disposition, see, for instance, A. Petacco, *op.cit.*, p. 163: «L'ala sinistra era affidata al comando di Agostino Barbarigo (...). Don Giovanni d'Austria comandava il settore centrale (...). Sulla destra, verso l'alto mare, avanzava la squadra di Gianandrea Doria (...)». «The left wing was entrusted to the command of Agostino Barbarigo (...). Don John of Austria commanded the central sector (...). On the right, Gianandrea Doria's squadron was facing the high seas».

<sup>245</sup> Thus, the introduction of the Venetian commander of the left wing is paralleled by the succinct portrait of his historical adversary, the Ottoman commandant Scirocco: «Contra di lor venia Scirocco al dritto / del destro corno Duce ardito, e fero; / Che non pur d'Alessandria, ma d'Egitto / Tutta havea per Selim libero impero (...)», *La christiana vittoria maritima*, p. 53.



Per mostrarsi ben degno cittadino  
De l'Adria altera, fè quel giorno cose,  
Che fiano al mondo eterne, e gloriose.

(Libro III, p. 53)

The elevated register, the solemn prophetic intonation of the description perfectly correspond to the requirements of the epic genre, the poet thus entirely transposing the historical character into the poetic reality of the heroic epic poem – the reality that successfully merges the marvellous and the historic dimensions.

The interplay of the two above-mentioned dimensions continue as the poet describes the course of the naval combat: most of the military episodes contain a number of realistic descriptions, however, when it comes to the combats concerning the protagonists of the battle, Don John of Austria and the main commanders, the *marvellous* makes its appearance mostly through the divine interventions. Thus, for instance, when Don John is seriously menaced by the hostile arrow, the divine forces intervene immediately, protecting the Spanish hero:

Scoccò lo stral d'ascoso un crudo Armeno,  
Per coglier d'Austria il grande Heroe nel petto;  
**Ma tosto un'Angel giù dal Ciel sereno**  
**Calò, da Dio mandato à questo effetto.**  
**Et fè, che il colpo non lo colse à pieno,**  
Ma ne la destra gamba il Duce eletto  
Restò ferito leggiermente alquanto;  
Ma non però colui se ne diè vanto.

(Libro III, p. 46)

We have already mentioned the scene of the Ali Pasha's death caused by the intervention of Archangel Michael; the episode is echoed by the fate of the Venetian commander of the left wing, the glorious Agostino Barbarigo who dies due to the intervention of the infernal forces: «*L'Infernal Belzebù l'empia saetta / Con l'ivisibil man portò di peso / In fronte al Barbarigo illustre Duce, / Et lo privò de la mondana luce*»<sup>246</sup>. Similarly to the episode of the Ottoman admiral, the historical

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

episode of Barbarigo's death<sup>247</sup> is inscribed into the allegorical context of the war between the divine and the infernal worlds, Bolognetti once again confirming the fundamental principle upon which the poem is based, i.e. the principle of contrastive parallelism.

Depicting the outcome of the battle, Bolognetti does not hesitate to mention the scale of losses inflicted on the Christian army, as well as describe the historically exact atmosphere of panic and confusion among the Ottoman Turks. The Holy League triumphs over the Turkish fleet, the latter one retreating, or even committing suicides, throwing themselves into the sea. When outlining the essential consequences of the battle, Bolognetti offers his readers a well-founded historical conclusion: the definite demythologization of the unrivalled superiority of the Ottoman Empire in naval battles. A crucial consequence of Lepanto is the fact the Turks themselves lost the faith in their invincibility, being morally destroyed: «*colmi (...) di timor, e privi di speme*»<sup>248</sup>:

De lo schermir perduta havendo l'arte;  
**Che a vincer stati in fino alhor sempr'usi,**  
**Ne mai pronato pria contrario male;**  
Che se medesimo uccide, e che scampato  
Da l'un, giunge à morir da l'altro lato.

(Libro III, p. 57)

The final part of the *Libro III* of *La cristiana vittoria maritima* reveals to be crucial for the understanding the fundamental message behind the artistic whole of the poetic text. The poem does not finish with the topical episode of prayers of gratitude to Heaven of the Commander-in-chief of the Christian fleet, but strikes the reader with a surprisingly realistic open ending. Thus, after the Don John of Austria releases some of the Ottoman captives, he summons the commanders of the Holy League fleet and, after the solemn prayer, «*pien d'infinito diletto*», he starts exalting his brave combatants, praising each of the survived ones and paying tribute to all of the perished warriors. In this episode the reader is provided a kind of 'catalogue' of the warriors, Bolognetti thus deliberately inverts the canonical structure of the epic poem. If in classical epics, the detailed catalogue solemnly describing the combatants took place before the main battle, with Bolognetti, the topical

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<sup>247</sup> See A. Petacco, *op. cit.*, p. 557: «*Ma nel pieno dell'azione il Barbarigo, che teneva la celata alzata per farsi sentire dai suoi uomini e si riparava dalle frecce con uno scudo, lo abbassò per gridare un ordine, e una freccia gli si conficcò in un occhio; venne trasportato sotto coperta ancora cosciente, ma aveva perso la parola, e morì due giorni dopo*». «Yet, in the midst of action, Barbarigo, who held his armet up so that his people could hear him and defended himself from the arrows with a shield, dropped it to shout a command, as an arrow suddenly hit him in the eye; he was covered and carried away; he did not lose his consciousness but was unable to speak and died two days later».

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

element in question is introduced in the text only in the end of the poem<sup>249</sup>. Which could be the reasons accounting for such structural change? Let us consider the general context serving as a background for the whole scene, as well as the way Bolognetti deals with the classical *topos*. It is essential that the eminent «*Duci*» are mentioned by Don John D’Austria, who evokes their names in order to praise them for their glorious deeds. We do not find in this catalogue the detailed descriptions of the warriors’ armour and coat of arms, the narrator limiting himself to their names, origins, most importantly, qualities, using such lexemes<sup>250</sup> as «*valor*», «*ingegno*»; «*valoroso*» «*altero*», «*invitto*», «*fero*», ecc. The most probable reason of such poetic choice lies in the ideological message behind the poem coming to the foreground namely in the ‘open’ ending of the poem: a strong presentiment of other battles to be fought and thus the increasing need to encourage the real historical characters by exalting their already performed deeds. Bolognetti, not being a court poet, due to his acute historical consciousness, developed a sense of a kind of a poetic mission he was to accomplish as poet: conveying enthusiasm and zeal necessary to perform further military actions. That is why the poet postpones the topical situation to the end of the text, convinced, similarly to the protagonist of the poem, Don John d’Austria, that «*ad ogniun la loda è grata, / Et che suol crescer la virtù lodata*»<sup>251</sup>. This possible explanation is closely linked with the open ending of the poem that differs drastically from ‘classical’ epic finals. The end of the poem proves to be entirely based on the dichotomy «*dolce-amaro*», the general atmosphere of joy and enthusiasm being all of a sudden changed to flash of unexpected pain: «*D’Hesperia nuova tal da i Duci udita, / D’improvviso dolor colmi restaro; / Piacque a Dio di temprar quella infinita / Dolcezza universal con questo amaro*»<sup>252</sup>.

The episode of prayers and the catalogue of the valiant commanders are followed by the arrival of the Christian warrior who brings tragic news of incredible violence the Turks committed in Famagusta and begs the Commander-in- chief for help in his pathetic monologue. At this moment the historical perspective is the one that completely dominates the text: the warrior’s story abounds in extremely realistic historic details as to the violence and depredation committed in Famagusta<sup>253</sup>. The survived warrior relates the Holy League commanders the tragic end of Marcantonio Bragadin<sup>254</sup>, Captain-General of Famagusta tortured and killed by the Ottoman forces: by appealing

<sup>249</sup> An exception is made for the main commanders of the Christian fleet, who are introduced in the text before and in the course of the battle.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.58-59.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>253</sup> For the detailed account of the tragic events in Famagusta, see A. Barbero, *op.cit.*, pp. 440-472 and A. Petacco, *op.cit.*, pp. 134-144.

<sup>254</sup> See A. Barbero, *op.cit.*, p. 468 for the description of the «*insensata violenza*» committed by the Ottoman Turks towards the city’s governor, Marcantonio Bragadin: «*Il Bragadin venne imprigionato e riserbato a uno spaventevole*

for help and support, the warrior actually transmitted the final cry for defense the glorious Bragadin addressed to Heaven:

**Difendi, ò Signor mio, l'humil tuo gregge**

**Da quei Lupi, e il tuo popol Christiano;**

Difendi la tua vera, e santa legge

Dal Turca, Infernal Mostro in corpo humano;

**Difendi il PIO Pastor,** che per Tè regge

Di tre corone adorne in Vaticano;

Et così detto, fuor del mortal velo

L'alma felice andò volando al Cielo.

(Libro III, p. 62)

The poem finishes by the solemn promise of Don John of Austria to come back with his fleet and liberate all the Christians as soon as possible<sup>255</sup>:

E quivi commandò, che far ritorno

Dovesser tutti à casa i Duci suoi;

Dove in riposo havessero soggiorno

Tutto il verno vicin; **ma tosto poi**

Che il Sol scaldasse e l'uno, e l'altro corno

Del'auro, **per tornar ne i Regni Eoi**

**Con le sue genti armate ogniuno in schiera**

**Seguir devesse la Regal bandiera.**

(Libro III, p. 62)

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*supplizio, prolungato per una decina di giorni, e in cui le torture si accompagnarono volutamente alle umiliazioni*. «Bragadin was imprisoned and put to an atrocious torture that lasted about ten days and was accompanied by deliberate humiliations».

<sup>255</sup> The historical context indeed did not seem favourable for undertaking immediate military operations: despite the general enthusiasm and the extremely high morale following the Battle of Lepanto, the Christian army suffered great losses and was, moreover, short of weapons and victuals. A. Barbero quotes the fragment of the letter that don Luis de Requesens wrote to Venice in order justify the decision to postpone further military attacks: «(...) *il signor Don Juan desiderava infinitamente andare avanti e tentare la conquista di Lepanto, ma dopo aver ispezionato la sua armata, ha trovato una gran quantità di feriti e di malati, e molti di quelli che erano in buona salute erano mal equipaggiati d'armi, perché dopo la vittoria c'è stato un enorme saccheggio e disordine*». « (...) our Commander-in-chief, Don John of Austria ardently desired to continue our way and endeavour to conquer Lepanto, yet, after having examined his fleet, he found a lot of wounded and sick, as well as those were in good health but were short of weapons, since after the victory there had been major plunder and disorder». (See A. Barbero, *op.cit.*, p. 587).

The final episode is thus extremely ambiguous: Lepanto is perceived as a crucial, but in no way absolute victory of the Christian civilization. Bolognetti insists on this ‘open’, ‘realistic’ final forming an interesting contrast with the general narration pervaded with miracles and the strong presence of the marvellous, showing the true ideological message underlying the poem. The essential conclusion stressed by the poet is that the definite defeat of the Eastern enemy will most certainly demand, the idea being an echo of actual historical mood reigning in Europe of the given epoch. If we compare Bolognetti’s open final, with final episodes in Tronsarelli and Benamati’s poems dedicated to Lepanto, the difference will be perceived immediately, both of the latter poems suggesting us the classical final episode of the common prayer of gratitude:

1. E al Dio della VITTORIA offron devoti / Per ara i cori, e per incenso i voti.<sup>256</sup>
2. Onde de l’Opra il Capitan sul’ fine / Da le stragi respira, e da le Morti. / Dice ai Duci. Habbiam vinto; ecco il confine de i nostri stenti. Hor riposianci, ò Forti: / Dando lodi a MARIA; ch’ à DIO per essa / tanta NAVAL VITTORIA a noi concessa.<sup>257</sup>

As can be seen, Bolognetti’s open ending differ drastically from the two quoted finals: ending with the topical situation of the prayer, they are far from expressing consciousness of the actually impending Islamic threat, as well as promoting an appeal to further *urgent* military action – the concept that pervades the final verses of his *Christiana vittoria maritima*, expressing the essential message behind the heroic poem: other, no less glorious victories will be needed so that the chivalric myth of the Crusade might attain its full realization.

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<sup>256</sup> O. Tronsarelli, *La Vittoria Navale*, 1633, p. 538.

<sup>257</sup> G. Benamati, *La Vittoria Navale*, 1646, p. 306.

## Chapter IV

### *L'armi e gli amori in Il Marte:*

### **A Fusion of History, Allegory and Myth**

In the previous chapter, we took into consideration essential aspects concerning Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima* – a text written as an almost immediate literary reaction to the event of Lepanto. We have seen how everything regarding Lepanto, a specific event of the Oriental war of Mediterranean Europe with the Ottoman Turks, was, on the one hand, placed into a global context of the struggle between absolute Good and absolute Evil, and, on the other hand, have seen the poet doing his best to remain faithful to the historical fact, not only having parted from the actual historic reality, but also having included a considerable number of accurate details corresponding to the truth of the historical event on question. The very synthesis of history and the marvellous of strictly Christian origin was an innovation, as far as the epic genre was concerned: an extremely popular Myth of the Crusade was superimposed, in the literary reality of the epic text, onto the very recent historical fact, the poet facing thus difficulties that required an immediate, as well as unprecedented solution. Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima*, as well as Metello's *Marte*, can namely be considered poetic responses to the dilemma represented by the modern historical reality – it is now to the second poem that we are going to turn to, with a view of answering the questions put in the previous chapter: which was, exactly, the perspective chosen to relate the event that immediately became a contemporary myth? Did the poet, similar to his Bolognese contemporary, make an attempt to maintain the crucial balance between the fixed norms and the topoi of the epics of the past, or, did he opt for a different, less balanced and more individual approach to the historical reality? We shall try to seek for appropriate responses to these questions by having a closer look at the epic poem, trying to bring it into confrontation with the previously analysed poetic text.

Vincenzo Metello's<sup>258</sup> *Marte* presents itself as an extremely interesting case for textual analysis, and it is, first of all, due to the specific way the poet deals with the above-stated dilemma of Modern History and time-honoured epic tradition. Metello's 'mythological' approach to the historical reality is announced already in title of the poem, featuring the name of the Roman god of war: facts of the Oriental *war* will indeed make the main subject of the poem, and the mythological dimension will not fail as far as the narration of the historical facts is concerned. This presumption is only strengthened by the subtitle that specifies the author's poetic intention: «*Il MARTE, di M. Vincenzo Metelli Giustinopolitano, OVE SOTTO BELLISSIME favole, et inventioni si describe tutta la guerra di Cipro*»<sup>259</sup>. In this way, Metello announces a) a strong presence of the fictitious (*marvellous*) element in his poem and b) the actual role of the *marvellous* dimension, the whole of it to be subordinated to the *historical* essence of the poem, i.e. to serve as a poetic device to be adopted in order to «describe» the events of the war with the Ottoman Empire.

Yet no references to «*bellissime favole*», «*inventioni*», or allusions to the pagan mythology, in general, can be found in **the dedicatory part of the poem**. Metello's preface to the poem is indeed a classical one: completely in line with the spirit of the Court poetry, the poet exalts his presumable benefactress<sup>260</sup>, Bianca Cappello, the wife of Francesco I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany. The contrast with Bolognetti's dedicatory part reveals drastic: if Metello's text incarnates the spirit of the «*virtuosa servitù*», the Bolognese poet's preface is such only in appearance. Even if the latter one explicitly mentions his ardent desire of making his best to «serve» Cardinal Sforza, to whom *La christiana vittoria maritima* is dedicated, the main purport of the poem is defined no less explicitly: the celebration of the event of Lepanto, as well as its protagonists. The epic may be declared as «*quest'umil dono*»<sup>261</sup> to the cardinal, but the reservation the poet makes immediately after remains in vigour: the poem should please the addressee not «*per ornament alcuno che in se contenga*», but exclusively with its extraordinary *historical* subject («*per la qualità d'un tanto soggetto*»)<sup>262</sup> that is namely «*l'incomparabile Vittoria maritima à Noi concessa dall'omnipotente mano del Signor Dio contra il già invitto Imperator de' Turchi*»<sup>263</sup>.

<sup>258</sup> Extremely little is known on Metello's personal identity, as well as his activities as a poet. Thus, he is not even mentioned in *Treccani (L'Enciclopedia Italiana di scienze, lettere ed arti)*; Antonio Belloni, when mentioning him in his *Epigoni della Gerusalemme liberata*, refers exclusively to the poet's above-mentioned epic *Il Marte*, whereas the *Istituto Centrale per il catalogo unico* ([www.edit16.iccu.sbn.it](http://www.edit16.iccu.sbn.it)) informs the reader that Metello was a poet and a philosopher who lived in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, supposedly from Brescia: «*poeta e filosofo presumibilmente bresciano vissuto nel secolo XVI*».

<sup>259</sup> V. Metello, *Il Marte*, 1582.

<sup>260</sup> As has already been mentioned, little is known about the Metello's life; as to the circumstances in which the poem was written, we have to rely on the facts deduced from the preface to *Il Marte*.

<sup>261</sup> F. Bolognetti, preface to *La christiana vittoria maritima*.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

Quite on the contrary, Vincenzo Metello does not even mention the historical events forming the quintessence of his poem. The preface of *Il Marte* is concentrated upon the figure of the «*Sereniss. Signora Bianca Capello Consorte altissima del Serenissimo Gran Duca di Toscana Francesco de' Medici*» and, unlike Cardinal Sforza, who only appears as the addressee of *La christiana vittoria maritima*, Bianca's figure is introduced to become, further on, a central image in the context of the whole poem. In line with the *topos* of the divine origins of the poet's benefactors, Francesco de' Medici's wife is presented to the reader as a «*gran fattura divina*», a source of infinite admiration and «stupefaction» for the whole world. Moreover, Bianca, addressed by the poet as «*sua divina Altezza*» is viewed as a kind of a divine 'mirror' that reflects «*tutte le gratie, e le bellezze del Cielo*», capable of «moving» every human being, as well as provoke a state of «*sì gran meraviglia*». The way Metello treats his «*veneratissima*» addressee is not a mere homage to the traditional relationship between the influent Maecenas and the poet, solemnly celebrating the latter one in return for his benevolence, but should be, as well, seen in light of the literary tendencies proper to the Baroque period. An excessive use of hyperboles and such lexemes as «stupefaction», «stupefy», «marvel», «immense», «incomparable» and «miraculous», as well as the metaphoric usage of the suggestive image of the «mirror» – all of these traits undoubtedly 'reflect', in line with the metaphor used by the poet, the considerable influence the poetic of the Baroque had on the genre of the epic poetry.

The whole poem, according to the author, is, thus, a fruit of his «*estrema voglia di parlar co'l Mondo*» of Bianca de' Medici exalting her «divine» virtues and origins. Other arguments that make the basis for the whole poem, although being of an elevated character and displaying a «divine» nature, are to be viewed as a pretext for celebrating Metello's benefactors, the poet stating explicitly his aim of gratifying them:

E con persuasione, che Io tentassi la impresa: nella qual, come Io sia riuscito non so. Ma pur, che alla sua divina Altezza sia grato in qualche parte, questo officio, mi basta. Almeno ella potrà vedere, che **essendo essa cosa Divina, con soggetti divini ho parlato di lei.**<sup>264</sup>

A following question immediately arises: what are the «divine subjects» referred to by the poet? Does he make an allusion to the abundant presence of the marvellous in the poem, or, more specifically, to the event at the basis of *Il Marte*? If the first presumption requires a detailed analysis of the *kind* of the marvellous adopted by the poet, as well as of the way it reveals its presence in the

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<sup>264</sup> V. Metello, preface to *Il Marte*. «And it was with conviction that I tried the endeavour, yet I ignore whether I have succeeded in it or not. But if it even to some extent pleases your divine Highness, it will suffice me. At least she will be able to see, being herself a Divine thing, that it was in terms of divine subjects that I spoke of her».



poem, the second one can be confirmed immediately. Lepanto, as well as other events of the Oriental war, was indeed perfectly adapted for the solemnity of the epic genre – the idea is confirmed by the lines of the sonnet dedicated «to the author» written by the «*Reverendo padre Fra Remigio Fiorentino*». The author of the sonnet praises the poet's capacity of merging the «*favola*», or the miraculous, with historical truth:

Questa grand'opra fa, ch'ogn'un v'ammira,  
Poi ch'è tempo già molto, che non s'ode,  
**Chi favola co'l ver si ben annode**  
**Chi l'un congiunto all'altro ogn'un rimira.**<sup>265</sup>

The whole program of Metello's poetic work is announced in this sonnet: on the one hand, the poet is presented as a successor of the «*antiqua lira*», and thus, of the classical tradition; from the other hand, his task is, in line with the Baroque literary tendencies, the one of *delighting* the reader of the «*presente Secol*», by the extravagant combination of the themes, crucial with Ariosto, i.e. «*l'armi e gli amori*», or, as the author of the sonnet paraphrases, «*gli amori, e l'ira*»:

Metello voi, che de l'**antiqua lira**  
Ritornate nel Mondo l'altra lode,  
**E fate, che il presente Secol gode**  
**Di favoloso dir *gli amori, e l'ira*.**<sup>266</sup>

The above-mentioned syntagma «*gli amori, e l'ira*» reveals essential, as far as the poem is concerned. The whole conflict between Western and Eastern civilisations, as shall be proven later in this chapter, is determined by the Ariostesque dichotomy of «*l'armi e gli amori*» and can be viewed, in this allegorical perspective, as an actual «*movente*» of the poetic action.

The poem dates back to 1582 and, although it cannot be considered an immediate response to the naval triumph of 1571, it still presents a dilemma, similar to the one Bolognetti and other Metello contemporaries were faced with: on the one hand, the novelty of the *recent* historical motives and the well-known fixed canons and *topoi* of the classical tradition of the epic genre, on the other hand. Moreover, as has already been mentioned, in the case of *Il Marte*, the increasing influence of the Baroque was added to the original dilemma of innovation and tradition, as well as the one of history and fiction.

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<sup>265</sup> V. Metello, *Il Marte*, p. 2.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

*Il Marte* offers the reader the poet's individual solution to the above-mentioned problems: in his *poemetto*, Metello attempts at combining the elements that at first glance might seem incompatible, the very first example of the poetic proceeding being the specificity of the **multilayered poem's structure**. The poem comprises, thus, several levels of narration that one has to take into consideration, for a comprehensive understanding of the *fabula*, as well as the connotations of the poetic text. This complexity is reflected at the level of the formal organization of the narration in *Il Marte*: each of its six cantos is introduced by a detailed «*argomento*» pertaining to the *marvellous* dimension bearing an exclusively Pagan character. Thus, the argument to Canto I announces the main narrative line in light of the Roman mythology, or **the mythological level**:

Disia la moglie del gran Re d'Averno,  
D'haver l'amor di **Marte**, e ha sospetto  
Di **Vener** che la sturbi, per l'interno  
Ardor, che à Marte sta per lei nel petto.  
E va e dimanda aiuto al Dio d'inferno,  
**Il qual à ciò l'ottoman sommo ha eletto (...)**

(Canto I, p. 3)

The allusion to Selim II («*l'ottoman sommo*») is the only historical reference in the whole «*argument*», the rest of it bearing a purely mythological character. The poet announces the above-stated leitmotiv of «*l'armi e gli amori*» by the very fact of mentioning the Roman gods – Mars and Venus – the protagonists of the mythological dimension of *Il Marte*. All of the events that pretended, in the historical reality, to incarnate the spirit of the new Crusade, will unfold in the perspective of the ancient Roman mythology, no references being made, at this narrative level, to the Christian ideology, fundamental for understanding the nature and origins of the Oriental war events.

The next narrative level is illustrated by «*allegories*» following the «*arguments*», i.e. succinct prosaic passages informing the reader of the historical meaning of the events to be described in each specific canto. Metello's allegories do not contain any *marvellous* characteristics and bear a strictly historical character, as, for instance, the allegory preceding Canto I:

In questo primo Canto per la **impresa, che si prepara di far il Re de Turchi per occupar l'Isola di Cipro** *si vede* quanto possa ne' Prencipi il desiderio di regnare. Per la **preparatione dell'Armata Venetiana** *si comprende*, che i Prencipi debbono esser vigilanti alla difesa de gli stati loro.

(Canto I, p. 3)

«Allegories», therefore, contain detailed explanation as to the way of interpreting the events pertaining to the precedent – the explicit – narrative level. Already in the first «allegory», the author shows his historical consciousness of the Ottoman menace, reassuming in the short fragment the real course of the historical events. These brief narrative elements illustrate the role the allegorical dimension occupies in the poem. A comprehensive reading and understanding of the poem becomes possible only if **the allegorical level** is taken into consideration.

After the main subject of each canto is thus announced at different narrative levels, as a rule, the Narrator intervenes directly with a view of presenting the actual events of the respective canto. To quote an example, let us now turn to the essential element of each epic, i.e. the poem's protasis:

**Canto opre eccelse, in due potentie unite,  
Di gran virtù, d'altissimo valore;  
Opre forse non più dal mondo udite,  
Che porran l'honor lor sopra ogni honore.**

(Canto I, p.4)

Already the first verses show that Metello's artistic intention went far beyond composing a *favoletta* of mythological inspiration. Firstly, we deal with a topical beginning of epic poem that briefly synthesizes the core of the poetic narration, i.e. the obvious allusion to the historical facts of the war with the Ottoman Turks. Secondly, the abundance of such lexemes, as «*virtù*», «*valore*» and, most importantly, the repetition of the lexeme «*honor*» («*honore*») clearly indicate the chivalric dimension into which Metello eventually inscribes his seemingly mythological text. The following lines, containing explicit references to the historical reality, reveal the poet's actual intention to a larger extent:

Opre dal senno, e da la forza uscite,  
**Concesse e mosse dal Divin favore,**  
Opre di pace, **opre di horrenda guerra,**

**Opre disposte in ciel successe in terra.**

(Canto I, p. 4)

Facts of the «horrible war» will, therefore, form the nucleus of *Il Marte*, all of them being inscribed by the poet into the Christian – more, specifically, Counter-Reformation program – implying that the course of the historical events is determined by the divine forces («*Divin favore*»). Up to the present moment, the narration is perfectly in line with the conventional heroic canons, as well as with the generally accepted Counter-Reformation values, and contains no additional layers, nor overtones demanding from the well-versed reader a more subtle interpretation. Yet, this simplicity is illusory, since it will be namely the mythological level that will prevail in the further course of the poetic events in Canto I.

Immediately after the solemn praise in the Baroque style where the poet exalts Bianca de' Medici, using a number of hyperboles, metaphors and similes, all of them serving to stress the «divine» origins and essence of Grand Duchess<sup>267</sup>, the mythological level is introduced, along with the crucial leitmotiv of «*l'armi e gli amori*». The latter one accounts for explaining the reasons behind the main historical conflict that, at this level, belong to the dimension of **the re-invented Roman myth of Mars and Venus**. Pluto's wife, the diabolic **Hecate** is plotting against Venus, being motivated by anger and jealousy: the affect that will, further on, prove to be one of the poem's moving forces. Out of jealousy and love for the god of war, «*Marte horrendo, e fiero*», the goddess elaborates the plan of demolishing Venus's reigns of Cyprus and, last but not least, Venice: in her mind, that will be the unique way of depriving the goddess of love of her divine authority, and thus, of her attraction:

Risoluta, concludere al fin, che quando  
Il Regno, ch'havea in terra le togliesse,  
**Sarebbe ottimo mezo, onde dal core**  
**A quel Dio trar potesse quell'amore.**

Perche s'a lei levo l'honor dicea,  
Che la in Papho le rendon quelle genti,  
**Si che non sia tenuta più per Dea,**

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<sup>267</sup> See *Il Marte*, p. 4, where Bianca Cappello (de' Medici) is referred to as «*Gran Dea*», «*somma DEITA*», «*l'Etra d'un Atlante novo al Mondo*», etc.

Ne più le porgan voti humane menti (...)

(Canto I, p. 4)

Burning with jealousy, Hecate descends to Pluto's reign («*la pallude Averna*»), willing to beg him for help and support. It is interesting to mention that, similarly to the characters of the *Gerusalemme liberata*, who frequently dissimulate<sup>268</sup>, or disguise their authentic *affetti*, Metello's Pagan deities tend to conceal the real motives and states of mind accounting for their actions. Thus, the «*Tartarea Dea*» is determined to deceive Pluto, asking him for help under a «false pretext», i.e. disguising her jealousy as a «*doloroso affetto*»:

E qui **mostrando un doloroso affetto,**  
**Celando il ver de la mia voglia interna;**  
Pregherol, che mi porga aiuto honesto,  
**Preponendo però finto pretesto.**

(Canto I, p. 4)

Thus, Hecate presents to her spouse, «*l'horrido Regnator de i centri oscuri*», her «disguised thought», presenting her motive for destroying Venus's reign as dictated by the ambition of power and glory, rather than by the mixed affect of love and jealousy:

Dirò, se data **potestà** mi viene  
Là nel Ciel, ne la terra, e nel suo Regno;  
**Ond'è, ch'altri mi toglie, altri mi tiene**  
**Quel seggio, che di me reputo degno?**

(Canto I, p. 4)

According to this diabolic plan, Pluto is to reduce the power of the «*sommi, e importanti*»<sup>269</sup> Venetian Senators so that they cannot not defend their patroness, as well as possibly deprive the Most Serene Republic of its present fame and prosperity. The «*gran Signor de i giri tenebrosi*» consents to satisfy his spouse's wish (dictated, as he believes, by her yearning for the absolute power), and sends his Furies to sow discord and inflame the Ottoman Sultan's military ambitions:

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<sup>268</sup> See S. Zatti, *L'ombra del Tasso*, 1996, especially pp. 111-142.

<sup>269</sup> V. Metello, *op. cit.*, *ibid.*

Et ove **il Re de l'Othomana gente**  
 Siede superbo andate tutte insieme:  
**Et accendete, in vivo foco ardente,**  
**Quel magnanimo Cor, che nulla teme.**  
 Onde rivolga la sua altera mente,  
 Avampi, e arda di desir, e speme,  
**Che tosto sia nel suo poter ridotto;**  
**Per viva forza d'armi il Mondo tutto.**

(Canto I, p. 4)

Thus, the conflict between the Christian and the Islamic civilisations that in actual historical reality resulted in the events of the Oriental war, receives a wilful and bizarre interpretation in the optic of the Roman mythology: Selim II is far by incarnating absolute evil by nature, but is a mere instrument in the intrigues of Pagan deities, Hecate and Pluto<sup>270</sup>.

Nonetheless, the motive of the Ottoman sultan perceived as an incarnation of «infinite» evil comes into play immediately after the Furies contaminate his mind with «*reo velen, che i pensieri fa bramosi / Di strage, di flagelli, e di ruine, / E di mal, che non habbia più fine*»<sup>271</sup>. The infernal poison affects Selim II, so that he is full of military fervour and pretends expanding the Islamic faith over the whole world: as can be seen, the mythological and historical levels instantly overlap, as the Ottoman Empire's ruler calls his warriors to «*cose nove*», sharing the anti-Christian motive of the coming war: «*E sopra ogn'altra por vuol la sua fede, / Riducendo l'estremo suo potere, / Per voler terra, e mar tutto ottenere*»<sup>272</sup>. One of the first and most devastating Ottoman military expeditions will namely concern itself with Cyprus, i.e. the reign of Venus, where «*la mente d'ogn'un Venere osserva, ama, e comenda*»: by supporting the Turks, Pluto intends to facilitate the beginning of the Oriental war, providing for a «*degno principio al gran negotio*»<sup>273</sup> of subordinating the Mediterranean Europe.

Due to the topical figure of the winged Fame, the news is simultaneously revealed both in the mythological and the historical worlds: at the same moment («*Ciò inteso / in quel'istante, in*

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<sup>270</sup> The rivalry between Venus and Hecate, however, perfectly inscribes itself into the context of the allegorical struggle between Heaven and Hell, expressed in terms of the Roman mythology, considering the further scale gained by the rivalry: later on, it will transform itself into the war between Jove, the Roman incarnation of the divine forces (Heaven) and Pluto who naturally incarnates the infernal forces.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

*quel momento*)), Pietro Loredan, the Doge of Venice and the «*gran Dea d'Adria*»<sup>274</sup> learn about the Ottoman military preparations. If at the historical level, the Doge summons «*l'Eccelso suo Senate*», at the mythological one, Venus turns to Mars, begging him for support. The Roman goddess's monologue is extremely pathetic and reveals to be an example of the popularity of Tasso's «*parlar disgiunto*»<sup>275</sup> in which abounded the monologues of the *Jerusalem delivered*. This aspect of Venus's discourse is explicitly emphasized by the author: the monologue's structure is a chaotic one, being determined by affects rather than by the logic, whose course is, moreover, constantly interrupted by sighs («*sospiri ardenti*») and tears («*lacrime dirotte*»):

Poi, quando prima, à i dolorosi accenti  
Dier pur loco le lacrime dirotte:  
**Più d'una volta da i sospiri ardenti,  
Essendo le parole oppresse, e rotte.**

(Canto I, p. 5)

The belligerent Mars promises his beloved to impede the Ottoman plans of conquering her «*tempio terreno*», the dialogue between the two deities following a brief reference to the historical scene of the events. The historical reality is introduced into the narrative texture of the poem and given special consideration by way of narrating the episode of the convocation of Venetian Senators under the aegis of Pietro Loredan. Thus, the historical dimension that had only been mentioned *en passant* previously, finally unfolds, the poet switching to the concerns of the «*mondo di laggiù*»:

**Mentre la sù in tal modo si disegna,  
Qui giù al novo bisogno si procede,**  
E sotto la Marchesca altera insegna  
**Il fior del Mondo già tutto si vede (...)**

(Canto I, p. 5)

The Venetian Senators, now conscious of the impending menace, start preparations for the 'Crusade' against the Ottoman enemy. It is essential that in this episode the poet mentions only **the**

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<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>275</sup> For the notion of Tasso's «*parlar disgiunto*», see A. Emiliani, G. Venturi (a c. di), *Tasso, Tiziano e i pittori del parlar disgiunto: un laboratorio tra le arti sorelle*, 1997.

**real historical figures:** Doge of Venice Alvise Mocenigo<sup>276</sup> and Admiral Hieronimo Zanne, «*capo eletto / Supremo, al naval Marte*», to whom the Senate entrusts the command of the Venetian fleet and who gives the Doge a solemn promise to ensure victory in the upcoming war. It is worth noting that Zanne's discourse, rather than being a canonical speech full of military enthusiasm and confidence proper to an eminent warrior, displays clear Baroque motives of the instability of Fortune choosing her favourites at random, rather than by merit:

**E se non mi fa torto la fortuna,  
Ch'a ragion, e virtù contraria è spesso,  
Spero, che tosto venerà più d'una  
Nova di felicissimo successo.**

(Canto I, p. 5)

Interestingly enough, Zanne declares himself acting not out of the 'Crusade spirit', common to the Christian Europe of the time, but explains his military enthusiasm by the ardent desire to defend Venus, «*la gran Dea di Papho*»:

Non harrà il mio pensier mai cosa alcuna  
Più che l'honor più che'l ben vostro appresso,  
**E d'oprar sì, che d'ogni ingiusta offesa  
Rimanga la gran Dea di Papho illesa.**

(Canto I, p. 5)

In this way, the mythological and the Christian, as well as the historical dimensions are explicitly superimposed: the boundary dividing them disappears completely, as «*il gran Principe*»<sup>277</sup>, repeats after Hieronimo Zanne, that his primary concern consists in not allowing that «*L'infedele / Facesse oltraggio a l'amorosa Diva*». Heaven is frequently mentioned in the given episode, but before Zanne's reference to the mythological figure of Venus, it remains unclear whether we deal with allusions to Christian values, or with references to the world of Pagan mythology. Thus, for instance, nothing in the episode of Doge Pietro Loredan's sudden ascension to

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<sup>276</sup> Alvise Mocenigo (1507-1577) succeeded Pietro Loredan as Doge of Venice in 1570.

<sup>277</sup> Doge Pietro Loredan who, in Metello's version, ascends to Heaven immediately after the departure of the Venetian fleet, leaving his eminent position to Alvise Mocenigo (*Ibid.*, p. 5).



Heaven makes the reader suppose that the poet is referring to the Pagan, and not the Christian Heaven:

Chiamò fra tanto, **il Re de' Sommi Chori**  
Quel Duce Eccelso, **al suo felice Regno**  
**Salì in Ciel quel gran Spirto del Ciel degno,**  
E qui lasciò col suo saper profondo,  
Eterna gloria a tutto quanto il Mondo.

(Canto I, p. 5)

The reader, however, remains on guard, bearing in mind previous Zanne's and Loredan's explicit references to the goddess of Cyprus, and is not mistaken, for the lexeme «*Ciel*» is repeated in the next verses, this time, with an explicit mention of Pagan deities: «*La sù nel Ciel Giove opera fra tanto, / ché citherea sia libera dal pianto*»<sup>278</sup>.

The classical epic *topos* of the divine *nuntio*, favoured by the poets of the late Cinquecento-Seicento period, is introduced in *Il Marte* in line with the tradition of the ancient myth: as in the previous episode, no allusions are made to the Christian dimension implicitly present in the poetic text. If, for instance, in Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima*, as well as in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* and a number of other poems of the epoch, the divine messenger is sent either to a monarch, or to the most eminent military commander, in *Il Marte*, Jove, referred to as «*l'alto motore*», sends Mercury to Mars, ordering the god of war to descend to the Earth and defend the inhabitants of Venus's reign. However, it is not the supreme divine will that will determine the course of the Oriental war: the main *movente* at play remains the affect of love, or, more specifically, a complex affect – «*affetto misto*», the «*doppia passion*» of «*love*» and «*fury*». Thus, Mars accepts committing the «*degnà impresa*»<sup>279</sup> out of love for Venus, but, unable to control his affects, indulges to the complex impulse of jealousy when he discovers the bravery of the «*gran stuolo fedel*»<sup>280</sup> that seems not to need his aid. All of a sudden, his affect transmutes into «*fury*» («*furore*», «*rabbia*», «*empito sfrenato*»):

D'ogni'altra forza ha forza assai maggiore  
**Quella rabbia, quell'empito sfrenato,**  
**Quel'affetto, ch'l Mondo chiama amore,**

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<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

**Dal van disio del senso sol guidato,**

E ch'in voce miglior detto è **furore** (...)

(Canto II, p.7)

Thus, in these verses, Metello aptly inweaves the essential Ariostesque motive of «love» and «fury» into the classical Baroque theme of instability of all human – as well as divine – affects and the one of the vanity of all desires. It is in this spirit characteristic of the Baroque that the poet resolves the dichotomy of «*amore*» - «*furore*»: both affects are shown as two complementary sides of one complex «*affetto misto*». In Bolognetti's poetic vision, love is an affect that deceives and mocks humans and deities, «transmuting» their will («*inganna, e turba il Mondo*»), an «*empio, e fier Tiran*», instable and subject to transformation into such passions, as jealousy, rage and fury. This Baroque motive of transformations, illusions, deceptions and errors appears to be directly linked to the poet's mythological interpretation of the actual historical events: the complex combination of affects makes Mars break the promise given to Jove and intervene into the Cyprus war, impeding the victory of Christian army: « (...) *fa che Marte disturbi quella Guerra, / Con ingiuria del Cielo, e de la terra*»<sup>281</sup>.

The tragic episode of the siege of Nicosia<sup>282</sup> forms the heart of Canto II. However, at the mythological level of the poem, its reason lies in the conflict driven by the complex affects of Pagan deities, in Canto II, the historical level comes, once again, to the fore. As in the episode of the Venetian Senate's convocation, Metello mentions the real historical characters, including some of the commanders of the Ottoman fleet, i.e. the generals Mustafa<sup>283</sup> and Piali<sup>284</sup>, as well as a number of eminent Christian militaries, notably «*Estor Baglion*» – Astorre Baglioni<sup>285</sup>, the governor of Nicosia. The latter one is presented as a brave ruler and *condottiero* who by his enthusiastic discourse encourages his warriors to a spirited resistance. During the episode of the siege, Christian army shows valour and skill, almost making the enemy retreat, but for the intervention of Mars, instigated by his affect of love and rage. Jealous of the Italian commanders' valiance, he is taken with fury («*s'accende di furore*») and brings to ruin their defence. It is in the scene of the Cyprus

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<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> For the description of the Siege of Nicosia and its tragic consequences see A. Barbero, *Lepanto. La battaglia dei tre imperi*, 2010, pp. 251-275. According to the historian, «*Nicosia ebbe la sorte spaventosa di tutte le città assediate che cadevano senza aver patteggiato la capitolazione, aggravata dal fatto che nelle guerre fra cristiani e musulmani i civili catturati erano ridotti in schiavitù.* (A. Barbero, *op.cit.*, p. 265).

<sup>283</sup> Lala Kara Mustafa Pasha (1500-1580), Ottoman general known for extreme violence committed during the Turkish siege and attacks in Cyprus.

<sup>284</sup> Piali Pasha (1515-1578), Admiral-in-chief of the Ottoman fleet who took part in a number of naval expeditions in Italy, including sieges of Nicosia and Famagusta.

<sup>285</sup> Astorre Baglioni (1526-1571), Italian military commander and statesman, governor of Nicosia in Cyprus (1569-1571) tragically perished during the siege of Nicosia in 1571.

inhabitants' lamentations, that the narrator enters the scene. It is worth noting in this connection that **the figure of the narrator** in *Il Marte* combines some of the fundamental characteristics of both the narrator of *Orlando furioso* and the one of the *Gerusalemme liberata*. Thus, the narrator in Metello's poem, similarly to Ariosto, frequently interrupts the course of the events, announcing the insertion of other narrative lines, as for instance, in Canto III, where the author addresses the reader in an informal, almost intimate manner:

**Ma tempo è, ch'io ritorni ove lasciai**  
**L'armata**, dal Cretense lito tolta  
**De laqual, se ben sò, già vi contai,**  
Ch'al Regno Cithereo la vela ha sciolta.

(Canto III, p. 13)

This Ariostesque trait of establishing a close contact with the reader merges with the empathy, as well as pathos proper to the comments of the narrator in the *Gerusalemme liberata*. The narrator of *Il Marte* demonstrates indeed a complete emotional involvement as far as the incidents of the siege of Nicosia are concerned:

**Ma prima, ch'l mio cor senta, e sopporti**  
**Di tanti mali estremi l'arezza,**  
**Prima**, ch'entriamo in un gran mar di pianto  
**D'altra materia vò trattarvi alquanto.**

(Canto II, p.8)

«Meanwhile», another historical event of primary importance is introduced into the poem, i.e. the one of the formation of the Holy League<sup>286</sup>. Similarly to the episode of Nicosia, the scene abounds in references to the historical reality: the poet mentions the complex circumstances in which Philip II of Spain accepted to take part in the 'Crusade' against the Ottoman Turks. Allusions are being made, as well, to historical protagonists of the upcoming naval expeditions, such as Marcantonio Colonna and Giovanni Andrea Doria. It should be noted that the motive behind the whole process of the creation of the Holy League is, once again, a Pagan mythological one: the

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<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

participants unite their efforts and sail off «*ove Ciprigna aiuto aspetta*»<sup>287</sup>, while no explicit references are made to the Crusade myth, or other elements concerning Christian ideology. Their departure enables the narrator to make another explicit appearance in the text, while announcing the «painful» essence of the further events of the canto, adopting the topical epic lexeme «*intanto*»: «*Stia intorno à Nicosia assedio **intanto**, / E qui ripiglio il doloroso canto*»<sup>288</sup>. The whole scene of the siege of Nicosia is described with extremely empathetic intonation, the narrator not merely sharing his own emotive reactions, but also involving the reader into the pathetic episode. Nicosia is lost to the Ottoman army: the city «*mal si difende*», as «*il fiero Marte / Adopra qui tutta la forza, e l'arte*»<sup>289</sup> at defeating the last bastion of Cyprus. Having destroyed the last fortress of Nicosia, the Turks enter the city to commit brutal violence, the author lamenting the Christian defeat by sharing the *pathos* of the scene with the reader: «*E tremo anch'io qual'hor me ne rimembro*»<sup>290</sup>. The narrator alludes to the outrageous actions of the Ottoman Turks by adopting the Baroque image of an atrocious «*spettacol*»: «*E qui si fa spettacol di quel male, / Ch'altro il Mondo anchor mai non vide tale*»<sup>291</sup>. The canto finishes with the narrator resuming the already introduced theme of the «*fato avverso*», i.e. the adversity of Fortune who, according to this Baroque philosophy, was entirely to blame for the defeat of Nicosia:

Quando **la forza di contraria sorte**  
**O fato avverso, over destino, o caso**  
 Avvien ch'altrui danno e ingiuria apporta,  
 E ch'apra ai mali **empia fortuna** il vaso.  
**Non è perfetta mente, o cor si forte,**  
 Ne d'altro ardir sospinto e persuaso,  
**Ch'oppor si possa à reo segno di stella,**  
**Che si dimostri offenditrice e fella.**

(Canto II, p.12)

«Fate», «destiny», «chance», «cruel Fortune», «unlucky star» – no matter what the forces guiding the course of the historical event are called, no human being, however intrepid, is capable of winning against them. This fatalistic conception of history repeats itself through the whole poem,

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<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

witnessing the increasing influence the Baroque ideas exerted upon the epic genre, contaminating its heroism, military enthusiasm and religious zeal with the pessimistic fatalism, the outcome of every battle being conditioned, in this vision, by fate rather than by the actual bravery of the combatants, or other objective aspects. It is not for nothing that the poet resorts to the metaphor of natural disasters in order to render the scale and the accidental, as well as irreversible character of the disastrous experience of the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus:

**Onda di mar spinta d'atroce vento**

Non sì fiera percuote scoglio, o terra.

**Né foco in monte** di tanto tormento

A selva, che tutta arde, strugge atterra.

**Né gran furor de l'aria** tal spavento

Quando ad antica quercia aperta guerra,

**Quanto qui al'hor, che la nimica forza**

**Quel passo aperto occupa tutto e sforza.**

(Canto II, p. 12)

A similar Baroque spirit can be perceived as far as Metello's interpretation of other historical facts is concerned. Thus, narrating the failed naval expedition of the Holy League fleet towards Cyprus, the poet describes the topical sea storm as a «*fiero accidente*», hindering further navigation of the Christian warriors. The author proposes a personified image of the «enraged» sea, whose «*rabbia*» clearly resumes the main leitmotiv of the poem: the one of the mixed affect of love and fury. Similarly to human beings and deities, unpredictable in their alternating affects, the storm calms down all of a sudden, the sea being ascribed humanly instable traits and affects: «*E muta volontà, muta costume, / Cessa l'acqua superba e inhumana, / E l'orgoglio crudele adegua e spiana*»<sup>292</sup>.

The following cantos are dedicated to another tragic episode of the Oriental war, the siege of Famagusta, the poet, however, adopting the same Ariostesque technique as in the previous canto, when the narrator, before relating the details of the Ottoman violence committed during the siege of Famagusta, addresses the reader, promising to «partly alleviate» his «pain» by delaying the tragic historical discourse and transferring him into another episode – the one of the formation of the Holy League:

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<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

**Ma pria, che in questo caso io vi racconti**  
**Nova ingiuria ch'al'altre aggiunge Marte**  
E vi cavi da gli occhi novi fonti,  
**L'infelice tenor de le mie Carte**  
**Altri successi è meglio farvi conti,**  
**Ch'alleggerir possano il duolo in parte (...)**

(Canto III, p. 14)

The 'historicity' of Metello's poem is once again reinforced by the abundant historical details mentioned to relate the historical fact of primary importance – the rapid agreement between the three powers:

**Fra il PIO PASTOR, fra il Re, che'l *Mondo***  
***Catholico*, e la Veneta possanza honora,**  
**Vien fermata la lega allhora, allhora,**  
Con forza, che qualunque forza avanza.  
Non volendo all'andar più far dimora,  
**Perché in guerra nociva è la tardanza**  
E pria disposti i giusti patti insieme,  
**S'aggiongon quelle tre potentie estreme.**

(Canto III, p. 14)

An explicit reference to the «*Mondo Catholico*» demonstrates that the Christian element has not been fully neglected in Metello's complex interpretation of the historical fact: this time, unlike the scene of the Venetian Senate's convocation, mythological dimension does not reveal its presence, no allusions being made to Pagan deities. On the contrary, in addition to the reference to Saint Pius, the protagonist of the Holy League's formation, other primary historical figures – «*i valorosi Cavalieri*», such as Don John of Austria, Philip II of Spain, Marcantonio Colonna, Sebastian Venier and Girolamo Zane are mentioned:

**A GIOVAN d'Austria di feroce core,**  
Che porta in bellicoso aspetto il foco,  
E l'animo ha **del Padre Imperatore,**  
**Di General vien dato il primo loco.**

**Marcantonio Colonna tien l'honore**  
**Di Roma**, e forse quel honor l'è poco.  
E **Sebastian Veniero in loco posto**,  
**Del Zanne**, illustre all'hor molto indisposto.

(Canto III, p. 14)

Special attention is given to the figure of Sebastian Venier, the Venetian admiral in the upcoming Battle of Lepanto. Venier is presented to the reader with the topical description of the eminent Hero: a modern «*Cavaliero*», worth of being celebrated in the epic poem:

**O invito, o valoroso, o gran Veniero,**  
**Degno d'eterna e di immortal memoria.**  
Perche non posso del tuo nome altiero,  
Come ben bramo farne illustre istoria.  
Qual fu chiaro nel **Mondo Cavaliero**,  
Così mai **meritevole di gloria**,  
Quando **fu cor di tanta virtù ardente**,  
Quando **più accorta, e più saputa mente**.

(Canto III, p. 15)

The figure of the Venetian admiral performs the classical function of the epic military commander: he possesses all of the qualities necessary for a distinguished military commander and characteristic of an epic poem's Hero: valiant and intrepid, his heart is full of «ardent virtue», and, moreover, he is equally in possession of the main qualities of the Baroque hero: an acute and ingenious mind. With his accurate actions and wise words, he encourages the warriors, maintaining their morale and concealing his own pain and doubts:

**Sollecita, provvede attende, e pensa**  
**Ad ogni necessaria, e util cosa:**  
E il tempo tutto in questo sol dispensa,  
E mai **quella invitta alma** non si posa.  
Affretta quel negotio con immensa  
Cura, **e tien nel suo cor la doglia ascosa**.

**Vede egli il gran periglio, ma procura  
Di far la gente sua lieta, et sicura.**

(Canto III, p. 15)

The poet describes the solemn scene of the Holy League fleet departure under the aegis of the «*sommo, e memorando*» Don John of Austria sailing off to defy the «*barbari furori*» of the Ottoman enemy, accompanied by the illustrious commanders, the already-mentioned Sebastian Venier and Marcantonio Colonna. In a prophetic manner, similar to the Ariostesque one, the narrator finishes Canto III by making a prophetic allusion to the military events of the following canto:

Fan pensier d'abbassar quella alterezza,  
E trarsi dal periglio longe, e fuori.  
**Facendo al mar di sangue un ricco manto,**  
**Come darà notitia l'altro canto.**

(Canto III, p. 15)

The episode of Famagusta's fall deserves a special mention, for it is in this episode that historical, extremely realistic details come to the fore. Metello does not hesitate to give a detailed account of the atrocities committed by the Ottoman Turks to the population that, dying of hunger, was no longer capable of resisting the enemy:

**Date oltraggio ogni sesso, e ogni etade,**  
Fu occisa, o posto in servitute ogn'uno,  
**Fu horribile la strage, e crudeltade,**  
Ch'indiferente usata fu à ciascuno.

(Canto III, p. 14)

Once again, the author is appealing to the reader's senses, trying to affect them, so that he feels emotionally involved with the Famagusta tragedy:

Se il tutto si dicesse, **per pietade**  
**Le lacrime tenir non potria alcuno:**



E sentirian le pietre anco **passione**,  
Di quelle miserissime persone.

(Canto III, p. 14)

The historical fact of the Nicosian governor, Marcantonio Bragadin's tragic death<sup>293</sup> («*il crudel commesso errore*») is another central element of the episode bound to provoke the affects of «*pietà*» e «*dolore*» with the reader, the realistic details of Bragadin's tortures and atrocious death, being followed by a scene of the martyr's spirit ascending to Heaven. Once again, the scene belongs clearly to the Christian dimension of the poem, since no references to the mythological level<sup>294</sup> of the poem intervene into the narration of this «*caso scelerato*»<sup>295</sup> – the real nucleus of the canto, abounds that in detailed historical descriptions.

It is in line with the spirit of the Baroque that Metello starts Canto IV of his poem, thus defining his vision of the Lepanto event in the «*allegory*» preceding the canto:

In questo Quarto Canto per la Rotta dell'Armata potentissima del Turco si comprende, che **non debba l'huomo fidarsi del felice corso della Fortuna, la quale spesso volte invidiosa de' beni medesimi, che si presta, procura di farci perdere quanto dianzi ne donò**<sup>296</sup>.

Fortune, rather than bravery, valour, ingenious mind and other heroic qualities, determines, in this fatalistic interpretation, the outcome of decisive military combats – the motive of the 'capricious Fortune' is resumed with regard to the final of the glorious naval combat, traditionally ascribed to the valour and the technical advantages of the Holy League fleet.

Let us now have closer look at the crucial canto of the poem – the one narrating the Battle of Lepanto taking place on October 7, 1571. In line with the epic tradition, Lepanto episode is preceded by the poet's prayer for inspiration and the invocation to the Muse who is implored to inspire the poet so that he can celebrate «*grandi accidenti, e gran furori accesi*» of the Lepanto triumph<sup>297</sup>. Yet, it is Bianca de' Medici, the authentic historical character who assumes the role of

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<sup>293</sup> For the detailed account of the tragic episode, see A. Barbero, *op. cit.*, p. 468 and A. Petacco, *La croce e la mezzaluna*, 2005, pp. 143-144.

<sup>294</sup> With the exception to the topical figure of Phoebe (*ibid.*), whose function seems to be more the one of a formal presence, inserted for the sake of rhetoric, i.e. with the aim of reinforcing the general pathos of the scene.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

both the poet's Muse and the 'divine' source of inspiration, referred to as «*alta, e eccelsa BIANCA*» and «*Deità felice*»<sup>298</sup> and thus substitutes the topical Muses of the epic tradition.

The narrator is indeed in search of poetic inspiration, since, he seems to have lost his voice, due to the unprecedented atrocities of this canto's «*fiero soggetto*»:

**Fiero soggetto** è di cantar venuto,  
**Grandi accidenti e gran furori accesi.**  
E le **furie** han da uscir fuor d'atre foci,  
**E i miei Canti non han più quasi voci.**

(Canto IV, p. 17)

The last lines of this annunciation appear to be inspired by the literary tendencies of the Baroque, the poet inflecting in his description the whole lexical-semantic paradigm characteristic of the Baroque notions of horror and astonishment:

**E trattarò l'horribile, e tremendo**  
Sanguigno martial vicino **horrore.**  
Del qual mai **non fu al mondo più stupendo**  
Il più **pien di spavento, e di terrore.**

(Canto IV, p. 17)

Canto IV, although being centred upon the historically crucial episode of Lepanto, does not neglect the mythological dimension. Thus, the historical events are preceded by a pathetic scene unfolding in the «*mondo di laggiù*». Venus, suffering the loss of her «*tempio disfatto*» – «*dolente, lagrimosa, e mesta*»<sup>299</sup> – suspects her lover of having deceived her, and goes to see him, in order to learn the truth. Once again, in the pathetic monologue of Venus, the poet develops a particular vision of love that, even in the divine world, is far from being the «*amor cortese*» of the classical chivalric poems, but reveals to be a complex affect, a source of disenchantment, torments and «*gran dolore*»<sup>300</sup> in the world where both Pagan gods and human beings are bound to face the unpredictable Fortune – where everyone inevitably «*vede il volto cangiar la sua fortuna*»<sup>301</sup>.

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

As to the «*forte, e valoroso*»<sup>302</sup> god of war, his feelings are as well ambiguous and far from being reduced to a single emotion. Extremely content of having «*tratto / Al disiato fin' il suo disegno*», he is already planning to reconquer her reign in order to please his beloved Venus, impressing her with his noble and valiant action. Yet, Mars changes his previous plan to act alone («*sol di tentar l'horrenda impresa, / Senza ch'havesse d'alcun altro aiuto*»<sup>303</sup>) and favours the formation of the Holy League expressly to act supported by «*altri potenti*» allies. Historical and mythological dimensions interact once again in the given episode: Mars explicitly states his need for allies, seeking them not in other Pagan deities, but in the actual historical participants of the Holy League: the distinguished commanders of the Roman, the Venetian and the Spanish naval forces. The following dialogue of Venus and Mars seems to evoke a theatrical performance: none of the two lovers is acting sincerely, both of them concealing their authentic intentions and feelings. Venus is actually giving a dramatic performance: «*con arte*» she disguises her doubts and anger, transforming herself into a «humble» and «afflicted and miserable woman» so that Mars has difficulties in recognising the magnificent, haughty goddess:

E per farlo **con arte**, va e gli cade  
 Dinanzi a i piedi, **humile**, in ginocchioni.  
 E dice Marte **questa afflitta, e mesta,**  
**Donna, e Venere sua, Venere è questa.**

(Canto IV, p. 18)

Incapable of resisting the sight of his miserable beloved, Mars solemnly promises to reconquer her reign: this promise of the Roman god of war will, according to Metello's poetic intention, result in the glorious Battle of Lepanto.

Thus, Mars, substituting the topical Christian messengers, encourages by his divine presence the Holy League members:

Bacia il fronte a l'**Hispano eccelso, e chiaro,**  
 Fraternalmente indi il **Colonna** abbraccia.  
 Col **Veniero Illustrissimo, e preclaro,**  
 Più d'ogni volta aggiunge faccia, à faccia.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.* Moreover, Mars admits that his first intention of reconquering Cyprus alone was due to the blinding impact the affect of love had had upon him: «**Fu perche amor gli havea la mente offesa, / Non lasciando ch'allhor ben conosciuto / Havesse il meglio l'empia fiamma accesa**» (*Ibid.*).

**Col Principe di Parma invitto, e raro,**  
Non è ufficio amorevol, che non faccia,  
**Al Principe d'Urbino memorando,**  
**Cortesemente allhor donò il suo brando.**

(Canto IV, p. 18)

It is in this episode that Metello offers the catalogue of the major military commanders – the description of «*il corpo dell'Armata*» that includes Don John of Austria («*l'Hispano eccelso, e chiaro*»), Marcantonio Colonna, Sebastian Venier, Alessandro Farnese (Duke of Parma), Francesco Maria II della Rovere (Duke of Urbino), Giovanni Andrea Doria, the Marquis of the Holy Cross, Paolo Giordano I Orsini (Duke of Bracciano), Ascanio della Corgna and the already mentioned above Agostino Barbarigo. In this episode, two essential *topoi* of the epic genre, i.e. the catalogue of warriors, as well as the divine sword offered to a distinguished warrior are linked exclusively to the mythological figure of the god of war. The classical epic *topoi*, thus, maintain their role, but are transformed and, in a sense, inverted: direct references, or implicit allusions are made as far as the Christian background of the scene of the Holy League military preparations is concerned, the mythological-Pagan element being organically inwoven into the poetic narration, to merge with its historical core.

Such introduction to the military episode seems to predict that further events will unfold conditioned by the same Pagan myth – an impression that, interestingly enough, reveals to be an illusive one. With the except of very few interventions of Mars, the poet will remain faithful to the historical facts: thus, for instance, already in the description of the extremely powerful and technically innovated Holy League fleet's warships<sup>304</sup>, he shows concern for historic details,

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<sup>304</sup> See F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen*, vol. II, 1966, p. 395 : «*Face à face, Chrétiens et Musulmans purent alors, à leur surprise réciproque, dénombrer leur forces : 230 bateaux de guerre de côté turc, 208 di côté chrétien. 6 galéasses bien munies d'artillerie renforçaient les galères de Don Juan, lesquelles dans l'ensemble, étaient mieux pourvues de canons et d'arquebuses que les galères turques, où les soldats combattaient souvent encore avec des arcs*». «Finally met face to face, the Christians and the Muslims, could, to their mutual surprise, evaluate their forces: 230 Ottoman warships and 208 Christian ones. Six galleasses carrying powerful artillery reinforced Don John's galleys that were, on the whole, better equipped with cannons and arquebuses than the galleys of the Ottoman Turks who still frequently fought with the bows». See also A. Barbero, *op.cit.*, especially p. 536; pp. 545-548. «*Superiore, ma non di molto, per il numero delle galere, la flotta cristiana era enormemente più forte per quanto a potenza di fuoco*». (*Ibid.*, p.p. 545). «The Christian fleet, being superior, yet not by far, to the Ottoman one as to the amount of the galleys, was considerably more potent as far as their powerful firearms were concerned».

mentioning the famous galleasses of the Venetian fleet<sup>305</sup>, carrying fundamental artillery, and the eight galleys<sup>306</sup> making part of the advance guard, guided by Juan de Cardona:

Havean con lor **sei gran Triremi**, à queste  
Voglion dar **ne la prima fronte** il loco;  
Perche san ben **quanto saran funeste**  
**A l'avversario, col terror del foco.**  
**Otto galee, nel corso agili, e preste,**  
**Per antiguardia, vinti miglia, o poco.**  
Più innanzi, **van sotto Giovan Cardona,**  
Del cui valor la fama assai ragiona.

(Canto IV, p. 19)

Other historical details follow as the poet advances with his epic narration of the «*gran fatti, e importanti*»<sup>307</sup> of the naval combat, notably the ones related to the deployment of the naval forces both of the Christian and the Ottoman fleets. Thus, the reader of the poem learns that the Ottoman naval forces, as well of the ones of the Holy League, were organized in a similar way, i. e. in

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<sup>305</sup> «*La flotta turca, insomma, si sarebbe trovata molto inferiore a quella cristiana, anche se a sparare fossero state soltanto le artiglierie imbarcate sulle galere sottili; ma a questo totale bisognava aggiungere l'artiglieria delle galeazze. (...) A Lepanto le sei galere grosse (...) portavano in tutto 12 fra colubrine e cannoni da 50 o da 60 libbre, e ben 89 altri pezzi grossi, da 14 fino a 30 libbre, oltre a 58 pezzi minori. Con quest'aggiunta, il divario della potenza di fuoco diviene addirittura schiacciante: la flotta cristiana schierava circa 350 cannoni e colubrine di grosso e medio calibro, mentre il nemico non ne aveva più di 180*». (A. Barbero, *op.cit.*, p. 547). «The Ottoman fleet would, all in all, have found itself much inferior to the Christian one, even if the latter one would have used only the artillery of the subtle galleys, not to mention the power of the Holy League's galleasses. (...). At Lepanto, there were **six major galleasses** (...) carrying in total 12 culverins and cannons weighing from 50 to 60 pounds, as well as 89 other heavy firearms weighing from 14 to 30 pounds, to say nothing of more than 58 minor weapons. With the addition of these, the difference became dramatic: the Christian fleet numbered about 350 medium and large-calibre cannons and culverins, whereas the enemy was in possession of no more than 180 firearms of the kind».

<sup>306</sup> See A. Petacco, *op.cit.*, p. 163. «(...) *le otto galee di avanguardia di don Juan de Cardona* (...)». «(...) the eight galleys of the advance guard under the command of Juan de Cardona».

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

«*quattro quartieri*»<sup>308</sup>, each one being under the guidance of an eminent military commander: «*Servan ne l'ordinarsi il modo istesso / De' nostri questi, e fan quattro quartieri*»<sup>309</sup>. Moreover, the description contains references to the Ottoman protagonists of Lepanto – the Commander-in-chief, Ali Pascia, the commander of the right wing, Mahomet Sirocco and the son of the Governor of Algiers, Murat Dragut:

**Ali** con **Partaù** vicin s'è messo,  
In battaglia **ne gli ordini primieri**.  
**Il corno destro** à **Siroco** è commesso,  
**Il sinistro** vien dato **al Re d'Algieri**<sup>310</sup>,  
**Murat Dragut** il soccorso ha condotto,  
E son **quasi trecento vele** in tutto.

(Canto IV, p. 19)

One of the current *topoi* of the epic poems is the commander's discourse he delivers twice in order to encourage the combatants before the beginning of the battle, as well as in the course of it. In *Il Marte*, the reader encounters the essential *topos* several instants before the Lepanto combat: Sebastian Venier, the commander of the central forces of the Venetian fleet, delivers a speech addressing the valorous warriors of the Holy League:

**L'impresa nostra havrà dal cielo aita,**  
Che ci darà vigor, forza, e virtute:  
**A la pugna cagion giusta c'invita,**  
Né forze son d'esser da noi temute.

(Canto IV, p. 19)

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<sup>308</sup> The above-quoted description corresponds to the historical reality: thus, the central part of the fleet was guided by the admiral Ali Pasha, while Mahomet Sirocco (Shuluk Mehmet) and Uluç Ali (Occhiali) were the commanders of the right and the left wing respectively. (See R. Crowley, *op.cit.*, pp. 261-262). As to the disposition of the Holy League's fleet, the central sector was under the guidance of the Commander-in-chief, Don John of Austria, while the left wing was entrusted to Agostino Barbarigo and the right wing was under the command of Gianandrea Doria; lastly, the fourth squadron under the guidance of Álvaro Bazán, was according to R. Crowley, «backing the fleet» (see, for instance, the detailed account see R. Crowley, *op.cit.*, p. 261 and A. Petacco, *op.cit.*, p. 163).

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> Reference to Uluç Ali (Occhiali), a well-known corsair and Ottoman admiral of Calabrian origin, converted to Islamic faith; the commander of the left wing of the Ottoman fleet. (See A. Barbero, *op. cit.*, p. 544: «(...) *al comando dell'ala sinistra turca schierata di fronte a Gian Andrea Doria c'era un uomo di mare che ne sapeva anche più di lui, il vecchio calabrese Uluç Ali*». «(...) the left wing deployed in front of Gian Andrea Doria was commanded by Uluç Ali, the old seaman of Calabrian origin whose naval experience exceeded even the one of the well-versed Christian commander of the wing».

Thus, «*l'alto Venier*» ensures the European fleet of the victory to be gained without fail, since, struggling for the «*cagion giusta*», they are bound to be helped by the divine forces. It is important to mention that in this topical scene, the historical elements definitely prevail over the mythological-fictitious one, since no allusions to Mars, Venus, or other Pagan deities are being made, the intonation of the Venetian commander's discourse being solemn and evoking the actual Christian ideological background of the battle. Moreover, Venier alludes to the global significance of the combat whose outcome will play a crucial role for further course of the Oriental war, and thus will exert a direct influence upon further destiny of Western Europe:

E quì da espor habbiam la nostra vita,  
**Per l'altrui pace, e per altrui salute,**  
E se per sì bel fin morir per sorte  
Si doverà, sarà felice morte.

(Canto IV, p. 19)

The description of the course of the battle seems to have absorbed the main traits of the poetics of the Baroque: a spectacular performance full of infinite horrors, where «*il ferro e il foco*»<sup>311</sup> generate an overall confusion, as well as «*gran spavento*», leaving the enemy «*attonito, e smarrito*» by the attack of the Christian fleet<sup>312</sup>. The mythological level intrudes, interestingly, not due to the intervention of Mars, but to the one of Neptune, who, enraged by the violence and horrors of the atrocious spectacle, intervenes in order to defend his own reign. The general atmosphere of horror and confusion reaches its crescendo namely with the insertion of the marvellous element: the powerful god of the sea, similarly to Mars, «*si colma allhor tutto di furia e sdegno*», as he summons all of the Sea Monsters so that they unleash their rage and «*l'empio furor*»<sup>313</sup> upon the combatants, provoking total horror and confusion: «*Già ogni cosa dà forma di spavento, / E par che sia confuso ogni elemento*»<sup>314</sup>.

If already before Neptune's intervention, the sea waters become red with blood («*si tinse il mar di rosso smalto*»<sup>315</sup>), after the apparition of his horrid servants, the battle acquires apocalyptic character:

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<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

Già non s'ode, se non gridi, e lamenti,  
Già non si vede se non sangue, e morte,  
**Già piene son di giusti, e ingiusti spenti,**  
**E le Celesti, e le tartaree porte.**  
**Par, che tremin già tutti gli elementi,**  
Per sì gran caso, e per sì horrenda sorte.  
**S'oscura il Ciel, s'intenebra la terra,**  
**A la vista di questa horrenda guerra.**

(Canto IV, p. 20)

It is in midst of this «horrible» scene that the poet puts the historical level forward and, at the same time, focuses his attention upon the historical detail of primary importance – the extremely powerful artillery system of the Christian fleet:

Più d'ogni cosa, che distrugga, e arda  
**Più d'ogni furia, che fracassi, e uccida;**  
**E la tremenda horribile bombarda,**  
Che tutto empie di strepito homicida.  
Riparo alcun questa non ferma, o tarda,  
E per lei s'alzan fino al Ciel le strida.  
**Rompe in pezi cent'huomini a la volta,**  
**E dà estrema ruina, ove ella è volta.**

(Canto IV, p. 20)

The specific historical detail is thus inscribed into the general epic context inspired by the poetics of the Baroque and, according to Metello's hyperbolic description proper to the epic poem genre, appears to be equal to the divine weapons, due to its unprecedented destructive power<sup>316</sup>:

**Vien per l'aria la palla di gran pondo,**  
**Col romor, che fa il folgore di Giove:**  
Laqual sentendo ogn'animo del Mondo,  
Si risente, si turba, e si commove:  
Ove percuote, e d'aria tutto al fondo,

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<sup>316</sup> Thus, the heavy artillery of the warships of the Christian fleet, compared to the technologically less advanced armament of the Ottoman Turks, was a crucial factor that contributed to the victory of the Holy League.



**Tutto fa, che si strugga, e tutto move.  
Disfà, consuma, incende, abbatte, atterra,  
E lo spavento estremo è de la guerra.**

(Canto IV, p. 20)

As can be seen, it is not the weapons of pagan deities, nor, in particular, the sword, offered by Mars to Sebastian Venier, but the heavy artillery of the Holy Leagues' warships that makes a true centre of the poetic narration. *Il Marte*, thus, despite the notable influence of mythology, demonstrates to be, in this sense, a *historical* heroic poem: the one-to-one chivalric combats, usually depicted in the epic poems in the scenes that did not have a lack in marvellous element, such as various kinds of magic (most frequently, divine) weapons – these combats become now difficult to imagine and represent in epic poetry, as far as contemporary wars are concerned. Yet, Metello does not completely neglect the epic tradition, showing in the end of the canto the single combats between 1) Sebastian Venier and Ali Pasha and 2) Mahomet Sirocco and Agostino Barbarigo, but the difference with the classical epic tradition remains drastic: the two combats occupy relatively little space in the text and pale in comparison with the above-cited effect of the «*bombarde*» caused by the famous six galleasses. Let us see the laconic, although solemn relation of the second of the mentioned one-to-one combats – the one that pays tribute to Agostino Barbarigo, a distinguished Venetian commander, heroically perished at Lepanto:

Agostin Barbarigo à lui<sup>317</sup> s'opponne,  
Con forze memorande, e sopra humane,  
E fa strage di legni, e di persone,  
Tanta, che vincitor tosto rimane:  
Et al fin come il Re del Ciel dispone,  
Lasciando il Mondo, e le sue cose vane,  
**Morto essendo da un colpo di saetta,  
Manda in grembo di Dio l'anima eletta.**

(Canto IV, p. 21)

The description of the combat lacks in details, sudden turning points, as well as divine or infernal interventions, the poet putting special emphasis namely on Barbarigo's spirit ascension to

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<sup>317</sup> In Metello's interpretation, Agostino Barbarigo's rival in this mortal combat was the commander of the right wing of the Turkish fleet, Mahomet Sirocco.

Heaven and his deeds' celebration by the Christian Church, as well as by the generations to come. As to the previous episode of Sebastian Venier's single combat with Ali Pasha, it is depicted in a similarly succinct way:

Ma il Venier, per finir quella contesa  
Ne la galea d'Ali subito monta (...)  
E havendola in un tratto quasi presa,  
**Con la guardia c'ha intorno Ali s'affronta,**  
**E quei suoi difensori uccisi pria,**  
**Tosto à lui poi leva la testa via.**

(Canto IV, p. 21)

Scenes relating military deeds of John of Austria contain more details, confronted with the above-cited single combat episodes, yet, Metello once again plays with the epic tradition, transforming it at will: in *Il Marte* there are no topical episodes of single combats of the military protagonists of the two opposing camps. John of Austria, being the Admiral of the Holy Alliance fleet, can be considered a full-fledged protagonist of the Battle of Lepanto – the poet indeed pays homage to his status, by depicting him as a classical epic hero, but in his intrepid deeds, Don John is not shown as combating Ali Pasha, nor other specific Ottoman adversaries. In the scene representing the historical event of the Ottoman enemy entering the galley of Don John of Austria, the Spanish hero is engaged in a fierce combat against the Ottoman militaries, but no descriptions of single combats can be encountered in the episode:

Barbaro, guarda che ti vien adosso,  
**Quella man, che non sa far colpo infallo,**  
Ecco, che già ti rompe, e frange l'osso,  
Apre ogni petto, fora ogni metallo.  
**Non così prestamente si fu mosso,**  
**Che con breve, e pochissimo intervallo,**  
**Non voglio dir, che tutti gli rispense,**  
**Ma in dieci colpi sì, ch'ogn'uno estinse.**

(Canto IV, p. 20)

The narration, although solemn and preceded by a celebration of the Spanish prince's virtues, still happens to be a brief and a generic one, confronted with the respective combat scenes characteristic of the epic poetry.

Another 'deviation' of the epic tradition refers to the final of the 'Lepanto canto'. For a number of poets, following the model of the *Gerusalemme liberata*, the scene of the final grateful prayer of the army commander presented an element of vital importance. Yet, already in Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima*, we have seen a contrary tendency: the topical scene was present, but it was not the final one. Neither it happens to be the final one for *Il Marte*: the solemn commander's prayer, becomes the more generic and vague words of «*ogni voce*», praising the «*valor sommo, e profondo*»<sup>318</sup> of the Lepanto triumph. As to the Commander-in-Chief, Don John of Austria, he is mentioned in the narrator's solemn praise in the end of the canto, along with – literally, after – Marcantonio Colonna e Sebastian Venier, the exploits of the three military chiefs being celebrated in an equally elevated manner. In the last verses of the canto, Metello addresses all of the Lepanto combatants – those «*animi invitti, e chiari*»<sup>319</sup> who contributed to the victory of the Christian fleet:

Chi non hebbe quel dì di fiamma il core,  
Quai vide il Mondo effetti mai più rari?  
La fama, **per cantar del vostro honore**,  
Nova armonia, non più sentita impari,  
**E a pien poi lodarvi, ancor non spero,**  
**Forti, e animosissimi guerrieri.**

(Canto IV, p. 21)

It is namely the final episode that proves Metello's authentic poetic intention, making *Il Marte* more than an encomiastic gift to the poets' benefactors, more than a fancy experiment of bringing together Pagan mythology and history under the sign of the Baroque, but, importantly enough, a poem intending to celebrate the crucial historical moment of European victory against the Turks. The pathos perceived in the poet's celebration of the simple warriors who took part in the tragic combat at Lepanto, his glorification of *all* of those perished in the battle<sup>320</sup>, shows the actual role the Lepanto episode plays in the context of the whole poem.

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<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> «*Quando fia mai, che del valor stupendo / Vostro, cessi nel Mondo la memoria, / O Sangue sacro, e santo, poi che spero, / Fu per haver l'honor del Ciel difeso*» (*Ibid.*).

Yet, *Il Marte* does not end with the triumph of the Holy League fleet. In the last two cantos, the mythological events appear to be the centre of Metello's poetic discourse, the Baroque theme of deceit and illusion coming to the fore. Historical events, in this perspective, not only interact, but are completely dependent on the mythological ones: thus, the infinite plotting of Hecate, «*la moglie del Signor de l'ombre eterne*»<sup>321</sup> against Venus, results in Jove's sending upon Venice a «horrible» plague demolishing and oppressing the whole «terrestrial temple» of Cytherea. However, eager to remedy the evil inflicted upon Venus and Most Serene Republic's inhabitants, Jove performs a miracle – «*un miracol più, ch'altro mai stupendo*», creating «*l'eccelsa*» Bianca Cappello<sup>322</sup> and offering her as a spouse to Grand Duke of Tuscany. Canto VI is entirely dedicated to the celebration of the Bianca Cappello and Francesco de' Medici, the poet giving full play to his imagination, as he aptly merges the implicit Christian and the explicitly predominating Pagan elements.

The final episodes of *Il Marte* comprise a number of miracles, disguisements and transformations, all of them subordinated to the encomiastic atmosphere pervading the poem's last canto. Metello's fancy makes Jove descend to the earthly world, where he, accompanied by the divine spirits, participates in the wedding of Bianca and Francesco under a 'false' appearance, i.e. disguised as Don John of Austria. The Lepanto hero appears to have a greater authority with the Venetians than the powerful Pagan god who namely in order to regain sympathy of Venice's inhabitants, elaborates the plan of sending Bianca to the Earth. The wife of Grand Duke is not only solemnly praised and celebrated in Metello's verses, but is actually deified: in a divine way, Bianca emanates light and splendour that are to shelter Italy, as well as the whole world, from war and adversity. The last word of the poem is the favoured Baroque lexeme «*stupore*»: «*E il mondo à sì gran fatto, à tal splendore / Rimane, e rimarrà sempre in stupore*»<sup>323</sup>. This semantic choice literally resends the reader to the first sentence in the poem's prologue: «*In tanto moto del Mondo; che non s'è finir di stupirsi di così gran fattura di Dio, qual sete voi Sereniss. Gran Duchessa (...)*». The poetic circle is now complete: in the final episodes, we find no references to the actual historical circumstances preoccupying Christian Europe of the time. Quite on the contrary, Metello offers his readers an idyllic final where the divine figure of Bianca de' Medici is to guarantee eternal peace and harmony to the world. The extremely complicated historical problem of the civilization clash, thus, receives a miraculous, purely mythological solution. A more drastic contrast with the final of *La christiana vittoria maritima* would be difficult to imagine: if Bolognetti shares with his readers his extremely realistic vision of history, presenting and announcing a pressing necessity of further defence of Christian Europe and its values, Metello does not go beyond celebrating the Lepanto

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<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

heroes, pretending, with his mythological final, not being conscious of the actually impending Oriental threat. The last canto of *Il Marte* seems to display carnivalesque traits, the wedding episode reminding of an extravagant theatrical performance: a joyous feast under the aegis of the disguised Jove, fearing the recognition of his real divine identity; the benediction de' Medici spouses received from Jove, who is referred to as the «*gran fattore*» and accompanied by the «*chori celesti*» – in other words, a total fusion of the mythological and Christian dimensions always serving the same encomiastic objective of glorifying the deified poet's benefactress, Bianca de' Medici. Yet, there is more to the final episode of *Il Marte*, than a purely encomiastic, fanciful poetic intention. If we turn to the «*allegoria*» preceding Canto VI, we shall encounter the following definition of the last poetic episode:

In questo sesto, e ultimo Canto, ove si descrivono varii accidenti sopra la Città di Venetia, e l'essaltatione della Eccellentiss. Signora Bianca Cappello à gran Duchessa di Toscana, **si vede quanto Dio favorisca un'animo nobile e generoso, e habbia special cura della sua salute, e grandezza.**

(Canto VI, p. 26)

In these lines preceding the celebrative final of the poem, Metello explicitly points out its allegorical value: Bianca is sent to Venice, due to the divine intention of compensating the «noble» deeds and virtues of its inhabitants. The moral connotations carried by this «allegory» are, in our opinion, perfectly compatible with the ideological propagandistic doctrine of the Counter-Reformation, and thus reveal the poet's sensibility to its values, as well as his will to contribute to the cause by sharing them under the allegorical, deliberately obscure appearance of the Pagan myth. The continuously repeated implicit references to the Christian tradition prove the above-stated poetic intention, as they indicate the readers that the mythological element should not be taken too seriously, but rather has an ornamental role to play in the context of the whole poetic contents – an impression that is reinforced by the general carnivalesque atmosphere of the wedding scene, as well as the hyperbolically idyllic final that can as well be justly supposed to perform a decorative, encomiastic function.

Thus, all of the three analyzed dimensions making the basis for *Il Marte* – historical, Christian and Pagan elements – prove to be essential for an overall comprehension of Metello's poem. The military episodes, referring to the 'war' dimension («*l'armi*») and pertaining to the historical level of narration are alternated with the events making part of the mythological dimension and describing the vicissitudes belonging to the dimension of «*gli amori*». It is important that Metello does not draw a clear line to distinguish between the two dimensions: both of them, as

well as the two narrative levels of the poem, are in a relationship of constant interaction and interdependence. The dimension of war is determined by the figure of the belligerent Mars who, following the rapid change of his affects, influences the outcome of all military events, whereas the image of Venus can be viewed as a key figure, sparking off the main conflicts of the poem. The mythological level, in this interpretation, affects the historical one in a direct way: Mars and Venus, being figures who belong to the dimension of the re-invented Roman myth, provoke complex affects and conflicts crossing the border that separates the mythological and the historical dimensions. Although the border is not a rigid one, the existence of the two different levels is continuously emphasized by the voice of the narrator and his brief digressions, announcing the upcoming passage.

Realistic historical details and refined allegories; reinvention of the ancient myth and the abundance of implicit Christian allusions, to say nothing of the considerable impact the Baroque literary tendencies exert on the artistic whole of *Il Marte* – such is the complicated literary background animating the coexistence of the worlds of «*l'armi e gli amori*» in this controversial *poemetto* whose essence is defined by a fanciful Baroque fusion of history, allegory and myth.

## Chapter V

### Daring beyond the Pillars of Hercules: tradition and novelty in Girolamo Graziani's

#### *Conquisto di Granata*

Poetic choices of Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata* can hardly be viewed as fortuitous ones: as indicated in his publisher's preface, the poem «uscì finalmente in luce (...) dopo il giro di tre lustre che fu dall'autore intrapreso e già promesso»<sup>324</sup>. The figure of the Modenese poet, as well as his long-nurtured poem, presents a considerable interest for literary research. Graziani was not a usual court poet whose pragmatic relationship with his Maecenas determined his choices and life in the court in general: similarly to Francesco Bolognetti, the author of *Il Conquisto di Granata*, after a series of various incidents, succeeded in getting a position of «altissimo livello»<sup>325</sup> in the court of Duke d'Este. Secretary and State Councillor, he was granted a title of nobility and thus already enjoyed the benevolence of Francesco I d'Este to whom he, in line with the epic tradition, dedicated his «poema heroico». The relative independence of the poet renders the poetic text even more interesting for the analysis, the first question that arises in this connection being the following one: «Why choose the 'foreign' theme marking the turning point of the Reconquista process?» The answer, partly, is provided by Graziani himself in his brief dedication to Duke of Modena where he emphasizes the lineage of Francesco d'Este to the Catholic Monarchs, Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragona, and thus accentuates the important aspect in common between Italy and Spain: «È dovuto a V. A. S. il poema del conquisto di Granata, contenendo l'attione di un gran re, a cui V. A. è non meno simigliante per merito, che pronipote per sangue (...)»<sup>326</sup>. Graziani develops the announced theme in the verses of Canto I of the poem:

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<sup>324</sup> See G. Graziani, *Il Conquisto di Granata*, 1650: «(...) was finally published (...) fifteen years after the author began working upon the text, that according to him, was to be published».

<sup>325</sup> As precised by M. García Aguilar in her detailed comments to the recent edition of *Il Conquisto di Granata*. For further information on Girolamo Graziani's biography, see, among other sources, C. Marchesini, *Vita del Conte Girolamo Gratiani* in Bertoni G., *Vita del Conte Girolamo Graziani scritta da Camillo Marchesini, "Studi e documenti"*, vol. I, fasc. II, 1937.

<sup>326</sup> G. Graziani, *op. cit.*, p. 3. «It is to your Serene Highness that I dedicated the poem upon the conquest of Granada that treats the deeds of the magnificent king to whom Your Highness not only resembles by merit, but is as well related by blood».

**E tu, di tanto Re chiaro nipote,  
De l'Attia stripe generoso figlio,  
Cui le genti vicine e le remote  
Danno il pregio ne l'Armi e nel Consiglio,  
Tu gran Francesco a le mie sacre note  
Volgi tranquillo il cor, sereno il ciglio;  
Sai, che cinse il tuo Lauro, ornò il tuo nome  
Le mie carte altra volta e le mie chiome.**

(Canto I, p.1)

The reader's attention is thus drawn to the essential link between the events of the war with the Moors of 1492 and the contemporary historical facts regarding the Ottoman Empire menacing Christian Europe – the connection that finds its incarnation namely in the figure of Duke of Modena. The poet addresses «*gran Francesco*» who, in his view, is to continue the deeds of his ancestors, the Catholic Monarchs, the enemy being another *different* civilisation – the one represented by the Ottoman Turks:

**E s'or, che move il perfid'Ottomano  
D'Asia e di Libia i numerosi regni,  
del popol Fedel tu Capitano  
n'andrai de l'empio a rintuzzar gli sdegni.  
O come allor de la tua invitta mano  
Lieto celebrerò lauri più degni,  
Tu mentre a l'alta impresa il core accendi,  
Con la Sposa Real miei versi attendi.**

(Canto I, p.1)

These lines, being an explicit continuation of Tasso's motive of the upcoming Crusade<sup>327</sup>, prove the essential connection of *Il Conquistato di Granata* with a) the epic legacy of the literary past and b) with the facts of relatively recent historical past, present, as well as future. The prophecy perceived in these verses, does not refer to the literary, nor the already accomplished historical facts, and thus is far from performing a merely ornamental function in the epic texture of the poem.

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<sup>327</sup> The syntagm «*l'alta impresa*», the reference to the reigns of Asia and Libia, as well as the general spirit of the Crusade permeating the above-cited verses clearly demonstrate a direct link of Graziani's poem to the poetic tradition of the *Gerusalemme liberata*.



Actual historical preoccupations regarding the Oriental menace merge in the octet with the literary *topos*, found already in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, to say nothing of the *Gerusalemme liberata*, i.e. the one of the poet's encouraging his glorious benefactor, to urgent and drastic military action against a hostile civilisation. In this light, Graziani's extravagant fantasy, possessing a whole range of traits proper to the literary current of the Baroque, such as the passion for «the capricious, the various (...), the miraculous»<sup>328</sup> displays an explicit historical concern, bringing together the two seemingly different historical military events: the complex Reconquista war with its culminating episode of the Conquest of Granada in 1492 and the modern historical facts of the Oriental war with the Ottoman Empire, the most essential victories being yet to come, as far as the latter one is concerned. Defending the Christian Mediterranean against the Ottoman Turks is therefore viewed in the perspective of the direct continuity with the «*alta impresa*» of the Catholic Monarch, Ferdinand II, the two chronologically different historical objectives being brought together under the ideologically charged concept of the spirit of the Crusade – or, to put it more precisely – the *modern Crusade*:

**Son questi degli Heroi donde trahete**

**il sublime natal, gli Avoli egregi,**

E cantati da me qui sentirete

Di lor pietà, di lor valore i fregi:

**Voi gli osservate, e rinovar potrete**

**Con lode equal, ma con diversi pregi,**

L'un forte, e giusto, e l'altra saggia, e bella,

**Di Ferrando le glorie, e d'Isabella.**

(Canto I, p. 9)

*Il Conquisto di Granata*, having absorbed in its narrative texture the historical consciousness and actual 'oriental' concerns of its author, is, however, first and foremost, a literary work that has been produced in the period when the genre of heroic epic poem experienced a marked revival, as well as was subject to considerable transformations. The sudden historical actuality it gained in the context of the epoch permeated by the idea of new crusades only contributed to its being in a state of constant flux – yet, despite the essential changes in its nature, the legacy of the classical epic tradition maintained its prestige and influence with the major part of the epic poets. From this point

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<sup>328</sup> For the crucial traits, arguments and motives of the Baroque literature with its «*attrazione (...) per il trasgressivo, il capriccioso, il diverso, lo strano, l'alternativo*»; its «*mobilità che stordisce*» and «*le metamorfosi più imprevedibili*», see A. Battistini, *Il barocco. Cultura, miti, immagini*, 2002; especially pp. 7-16 and pp. 51-130.

of view, the preface of the publisher to Graziani's poem proves substantial impact of the classical tradition and, in particular, the Aristotelic principle of unity continued to exert upon the poet, although being considerably tempered by the literary tendencies of the Baroque. Thus, the Modenese publisher emphasizes the meticulous attention the poet paid to the poem's *fabula*, or to put it with the terms of Aristotelian *Poetics*, the *structure of incidents* animating the action:

Intanto, per quel, che può toccare in questa parte a giustificare innanzi a sì gran Tribunale l'intentione dell'Autore, è bene, che si sappia, che **nella Favola, la quale è l'anima dell'Epopeia, è stato particolare il suo studio**<sup>329</sup>.

Yet, an important specification follows this allusion to the influence of the classical tradition: the poem presented to the reader is by all means a fruit of true Baroque inspiration; a literary work, rather than a historical chronicle whose aim remains as Tasso put it in his *Discorsi*, to move («*movere*») the reader by affecting his senses and soul:

In questa compiacendo al proprio Genio, e all'amenità dell'Historia, **ha procurato di allontanarsi da certo superstizioso rigore, e formarla in guisa, che apporti maggior diletto tenendo sospeso l'animo di chi legge colla novità, e varietà d'intralcianti avvenimenti**<sup>330</sup>.

Filling the reader's mind with «pleasure», «novelty», «variety», along with the obviously Baroque objective to stupefy the recipient<sup>331</sup> implying the poet's rejection of a «certain superstitious rigour» imposed by the classical tradition – all of the above-stated traits clearly prove the poet's sensibility to the poetics of the Baroque and the role it occupies in the framework of the given text. The publisher, however, makes another reservation as to the character of *Il Conquisto di Granata*: according to his apt observation, Graziani not only does not limit himself to the aesthetics of the

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<sup>329</sup> G. Graziani, *op. cit.*, *Lo Stampatore a chi lo legge* (the publisher's preface to the poem in question). «As to the justification one has to find being in front of such a magnificent tribunal as far as the Author's intention is concerned, everybody should know that in was namely to the elaboration of the Fabula constituting the soul of the epic that the Author devoted his most meticulous effort».

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.* «Indulging his own Genius, as well as the amenity of History, he sought to avoid any superstitious rigour, transforming it [the Fabula] so that it could bring more delight and keep in suspense the soul of the reader due to the novelty and the variety of the tangled events».

<sup>331</sup> Upon the notions of novelty («*novità*») and astonishment («*meraviglia*») that in the Seicento became literally the poet's «duty» see A. Battistini, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-57: «Al dovere della novità cui è tenuto il poeta corrisponde, sul versante della fruizione, l'effetto della meraviglia, nata dall'eccesso e dall'estremismo delle proposte che interrompono il corso normale degli eventi». «To the duty of novelty imposed on the poet corresponds, in terms of usage, the effect of astonishment which is the fruit of the excessive and extreme motives that interrupt the normal course of events» (*Ibid.*, p. 53).

Baroque, but the whole of his poetic intention appears to be dominated by the traditional principle of the unity of action («*unità dell'Attione*»)<sup>332</sup>:

(...) questa **libertà dell'Autore regolata** da un'avvertenza, che non lasciando alcuno de' successi otioso, fa, che servano tutti d'istrumento a chi opera, sicché **dalla frequenza degli Episodi non restò punto discomposta l'unità dell'Attione**<sup>333</sup>.

Thus, the seemingly infinite chain of the events and characters<sup>334</sup> in this voluminous epic text is only one of the *trompe-l'oeil* proper to the art of the Baroque, every element being organically inscribed into the mosaics of the poem's «*picciol mondo*».

The poem reveals to be an elaborate combination of the traditional and innovative elements; a concoction of historical and fictional elements, as well as a testimonial of the author's devotion to the ideological values of Christian Europe. Once again, the situation might seem ambiguous, since *Il Conquisto di Granata* abounds in various references to «Destiny», «Fate», as well as to other by definition mythological lexemes, all of them, nonetheless, being conditioned by the author's objective to gratify his reader, whereas the actual foundation, or the spirit of his poem is, in line with the ideology of the Counter-Reformation, «always a **Catholic one**»:

Resta, che tu avverta, che **le parole Dea, Fato, Destino, Idolo, Paradiso, Adorare, e simili, sono usate per vezzo di Poesia, non per errore di credenza. La vaghezza delle forme** non deve pregiudicare alla **purità della Fede**. Quelle si osservano per **delitie della penna**, questa si riverisce per **oggetto di cuore. Lo stile tutto poetico, e l'animo sempre Cattolico**<sup>335</sup>.

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<sup>332</sup> The essential role the tradition has to play with Graziani's poetic work, encompasses as well the dimensions of the elocution, as his publisher points out, making an explicit reference to the impact of Ariosto and Tasso's poetic legacy: «*Nell'Elocuzione egli ha seguitato il parere di chi ne ha prescritte le regole, e l'uso de' due maggiori Epici della nostra Lingua, la cui autorità è dal pubblico applauso autenticata per legge (Ibid.)*» «As to the Elocution, he followed the opinion of the one who had prescribed its tenets, as well as the usage of the two greatest epic Poets of our language whose authority has been by rights proved by general applause».

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.* «(...) this license taken by the Author with the reservation that neither of the taken subjects should remain otiose but all of them serve as instruments to their master so that the unity of action would not be destroyed by the abundance of the episodes».

<sup>334</sup> In this sense, Graziani obviously follows the model of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*: on the one hand, the strong presence of the *romanzesco* implying the context in which «*alla varietà dei personaggi corrisponde (...) un'altrettanto ricca pluralità di motivi*» (as L. Caretti wrote upon *Orlando furioso*), and the preserved unity of the poetic action, on the other hand. Similarly to the Ariostesque poem, the unity of *Il Conquisto di Granata* reveals to be «*unità dinamica*» «*solo apparentemente dominata dal caso*», while the real centre of the narration always remains the Christian army's war with the Moors and the culminating episode of the conquest of Granada. (L. Caretti, *Ariosto e Tasso*, 1970, pp. 32-33). («The rich variety of the characters matched by (...) the equally rich plurality of motives»; «dynamic unity»; «only seemingly dominated by chance»).

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.* «Lastly, you should know that words such as Goddess, Fate, Destiny, Idol, Paradise, Worship and the like have been used here not by the error of faith but for the sake of the poetic custom. The fineness of the forms should not be seen to the prejudice of the purity of Faith: the first one is only for the sake of the delights of the pen whereas the

When embarking upon the analysis of Girolamo Graziani's epic poem, it is, thus, important to keep in mind the above-stated crucial elements of the text:

- The Catholic spirit characteristic of the Counter-Reformation epoch making an important ideological background of the poem;
- Adherence to the classical tradition at the level of *fabula*, as well as style, comprising Aristotelian, and, obviously enough, Tassian and Ariostesque poetic influence;
- The announced enthusiasm for the innovative trends of the Baroque, such as the poet's propensity for variety, novelty, marvels, stupefaction, as well as the general objective consisting in provoking various emotional reactions with the reader.

It is important to note that Graziani's poetic text presents a compromise between the innovative tendencies and classical poetic heritage, being, importantly enough, a fruit of the poet's historical concerns and premonitions. Rather than making an attempt of reducing the poetic whole of *Il Conquisto di Granata* to a single, simplified interpretation, we should better concentrate upon various aspects belonging to the poles of either **tradition**, or **innovation**, in order to achieve a better comprehension of the author's artistic intention, as well as the final poetic result. We shall try to answer the following fundamental questions: in what way is the conquest of Granada by the army of the Catholic Monarchs approached? Do we actually deal with a 'labyrinth' of the Baroque literary thought, or is the text generally determined by the linear logic of the historical events? In other words, to what extent does Modern history reveal its presence and which aspects clearly witness the presence of the fictitious element? Which one in the end prevails and how, more specifically, do history and invention interact, as far as the narration of the crucial Reconquista event of 1492 is concerned?

### **Representation of military combats: the use of the *topoi* of celestial sword and one-to-on combats**

Before undertaking the analysis of **literary reality** presented by Graziani's poem, a few words should be said about the nature of **the actual historical fact**. It is thus essential to take into account the changes experienced by the *ars belli* already in the end of the Quattrocento which most

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other one is the object of reverence cherished in the heart. The style is entirely poetic but the spirit is entirely Catholic».

importantly implied **the decline of cavalry, as well as the rapid development of firearms**. As Tancredi Artico observes in his preface to the recent edition of *Il Conquisto di Granata*, the above-mentioned technical military progress had actually conditioned the rapid victory of the Catholic Spain:

**Già all'altezza della primavera del 1491**, quando Ferdinando d'Aragona alla testa di un esercito di circa 60.000 uomini d'arme cinse d'assedio la città di Granada, **era chiaro che i modi di guerreggiare fossero irreversibilmente cambiati**, sia nello scontro in campo aperto sia nelle poliorcetica, verso un impiego massiccio dell'artiglieria. **La conquista dell'ultima roccaforte islamica sul continente, così, fu condotta secondo i dettami della nuova *ars belli*: la città fu presto messa sotto scacco dalle duecento bocche da fuoco spagnole, e si arrese dopo pochi mesi (...)**<sup>336</sup>.

The new war techniques meant unprecedented possibilities opening up for the European powers, in possession of the most advanced ammunition, and meant as well an «irreversible» decline of the art of cavalry, traditionally celebrated in the classical epic tradition. The above-mentioned changes in the art of war could not but have a substantial effect upon the «modalities»<sup>337</sup> of the military context **literary representations**, thus conditioning the existence of the two essentially different trends in epic poetry of the Seicento. It is that «oscillation between the adhesion to novelty», on the one hand, and the «fidelity to the classical legacy» of offered by the tradition, on the other, that Tancredi Artico emphasizes when introducing to the modern reader Graziani's poem:

**Nella poesia eroica del Seicento** succede altrettanto, con **un'oscillazione addirittura maggiore tra l'adesione alla novità e il mantenimento di un retaggio classico**, nella fattispecie omerico e tassiano: **a fronte di poemi** come la *Vittoria navale* di Guid'Ubaldo Benamati e il vituperato *Mondo Nuovo* di Tommaso Stigliani, **che raccontano di realtà quattro-cinquecentesche vicine a quelle del lettore coevo** quali la battaglia do Lepanto e la conquista dell'America, **ne esistono altri che cercano invece di sublimare il dato oggettivo della moderna guerra di armi da fuoco e fanterie tramite il filtro di**

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<sup>336</sup> G. Graziani, *Il Conquisto di Granata*, T. Artico (a c. di), p. V. «Already in the spring of 1492, when Ferdinand of Aragona was guiding his army that comprised about 60.000 people to the siege of Granada, it was clear that the ways of waging war had experienced irreversible changes towards the extensive use of the artillery – changes that concerned military operations in the open field, as well as those the besiegement techniques. The conquest of the last Islamic stronghold on the continent was, therefore, conducted in line with the rules of the new *ars belli*: the city was soon 'put in check' by the two hundred pieces of ordnance and surrendered only a few months later».

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, p. VI.

*ineclissari modelli letterari, il Furioso e la Liberata, mascherando i fatti recenti con i panni della cavalleria di Ariosto e Tasso.*<sup>338</sup>

*Il Conquisto di Granata*, although displaying **essential innovative tendencies** to be paid special attention in the given chapter, can be undoubtedly inscribed into the second category as far as **the literary representation of the historical facts** is concerned.

We have already commented upon the role the unprecedentedly powerful ballistic weapons<sup>339</sup> played in the conquest of Granada: similarly to the naval triumph of Lepanto taking place in the end of the Cinquecento, technical military progress had in many aspects defined the victory of the Christian Europe over the Islamic civilisations: the poet's rejection of this fundamental element meant, in such cases, a refusal of an exact *historical* perspective in favour of the literary myth that the glorious cavalry of the past was now destined to incarnate. We have seen how the authors of the previously analyzed poems – *La vittoria christiana maritima* and *Il Marte*<sup>340</sup> – insisted upon the unprecedented technical superiority of the Holy League fleet, who, despite its being less numerous, succeeded in ensuring an outstanding victory namely due to their unique warships equipped with the most advanced heavy artillery. A contrast with the chronologically more recent text<sup>341</sup> by Girolamo Graziani brought into comparison with attitude of the authors of the above-mentioned poems seems indeed drastic.

In the previous chapters, references were made to Bolognetti and Metello's enthusiastic descriptions of modern warships and firearms that had largely favoured the Lepanto naval victory. No passages celebrating technological military progress can be encountered in Graziani's epic, primary *historical* details having been substituted by the elements of the *marvellous*, always bearing a Christian character in *Il Conquisto di Granata*. To provide an example, the classical epic *topos* of the **fatal sword** has a major impact not only on the outcome of the crucial battle with the Moors, but as well on the course of the events in general. The poet introduces the device of the divine weapon already in Canto II of the poem: the first day Ferdinand II, full of «heavenly zeal» decides

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<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.* «The same happens in the heroic epic poetry of the Seicento that has seen a substantial oscillation between the adhesion to novelty and the fidelity to the classical legacy, especially the one of Homer and Tasso: such poems as *La vittoria navale* by Guid'Ubaldo Benamati, or the fiercely criticized *Mondo nuovo* by Tommaso Stigliani, both of them narrating the Quattrocento-Cinquecento historical reality close to the modern reader, are counterbalanced by poems trying to sublimate the actual facts of contemporary wars conducted with firearms and infantry by adopting the 'filter' of the sacred literary models, the *Furioso* and the *Liberata*, thus masking recent facts under the appearance of Ariostesque and Tassian cavalry».

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, p. V.

<sup>340</sup> It is important to stress that *Il Marte* abounding in mythological elements, demonstrates an extremely exact attitude to the given aspect, the scenes of one-to-one combats being reduced to the most basic descriptions, whereas entire passages are dedicated to the celebration of the Holy League's modern warships and ammunition.

<sup>341</sup> *Il Conquisto di Granata* was published in 1650, whereas Bolognetti's *Cristiana vittoria maritima* in 1572 and Metello's *Marte* in 1582, respectively.

to wage the Reconquista war, «moving» his «*arme pietose*»<sup>342</sup> against the Moors, he has the topical vision of the saint, descending on the Earth with a divine gift for the Catholic Monarch:

**Quel dì primier, che da celeste zelo**  
**Acceso il gran Ferrando incontro a i Mori,**  
**Mosse l'armi pietose,** apparse in Cielo  
Nube sparsa d'insoliti splendori (...)

**S'apre la nube, e in mezo a lei si vede**  
**Un Cavalier d'armi bianche adorno,**  
Che di puro candor la neve eccede,  
E mille rai sparge da gli occhi intorno.

(Canto II, p. 15)

The «Celestial Cavalier» reveals his identity and intention: Saint James, the Apostle protecting Spain, he came to offer the Monarch the sword God had given him in order to ensure the victory over the Oriental enemy. The divine weapon has its own history that manages to inscribe the whole episode **in the context of the allegorical war between the divine good and the infernal evil**, since it is with this fatal sword that the Apostle had himself won a victory against Pagan enemy:

Pugnai con questa, e **fui con questa io visto**  
**Tra le schiere Pagane aprir la via**  
**De la vittoria al popolo di Cristo,**  
Dissipando la turba iniqua, e ria.  
**Et hor, che movi al glorioso acquisto,**  
**A te con questa il Re del Ciel m'invia,**  
**Perche facei con lei su l'empia setta**  
**De l'ingiurie del Ciel alta vendetta.**

(Canto II, p. 15)

The historical and the providential motives are merged together in the divine *nuntio's* discourse: military operations Ferdinand will undertake in the near future cannot be considered the *beginning*, but are to be viewed as a direct continuation of the 'military' actions already undertaken by the of the divine forces – an allegorical motive strengthened by the history of the miraculous weapon. In

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<sup>342</sup> The explicit reference to *La Gerusalemme liberata*, is of course not a random choice in the framework of the *flash-back* episode narrating the beginning of the war against the Moors. Another Tassian syntagm, «*glorioso acquisto*» will be introduced in the course of the same scene of the 'divine gift'.

this perspective, the Catholic Monarch is given a more complicated task than defeating the reign of Al-Andalus: winning against the Muslim inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula will by definition imply the defeat of the «various weapons» of the Infernal world, i.e. the triumph of Heaven over Hell, as well as the victory of the Christian civilisation over the Islamic one. It is with a view of enjoying a complete victory of Heaven and Christianity that God offers the divine sword to Ferdinand: «*E perch'ei sa, ch'a i pensier giusti, e santi / Fia, che opponga l'Inferno armi diverse, / Vuol, che solo in toccare opre d'incanti / Vinca il brando fatal l'arti perverse*»<sup>343</sup>.

Yet, a number of various accidents are to take place before the divine mission is carried out and the fatal sword might perform its primary function. Due to a series of sudden theatrical turning points, the sword, stolen from Ferdinand, gets in possession of the «learned magician» Alchindo, the *savant* allied to the demonic forces. After one of the poem's Christian protagonists, Hernando, finally comes into possession of the «fatal sword», a chain of miracles starts to unfold: thus, in Canto XX, the Spanish hero breaks the magic spell cast upon his beloved Elvira, as well as fights the warriors and monsters sent by the magician in order to impede the Christians reach the Iberian coast. It is due to the power of the divine sword that the «valiant Hernando» kills the «horrible»<sup>344</sup> dragon that appears to be a mere illusion, subject to all kinds of magic transformations: «*Sparve del Mostro fier l'horrida forma, / Perch'era opre d'incanto, il qual'è vinto / Da la spade celeste, e si trasforma / In vera nave il falso Drago estinto*»<sup>345</sup>.

Thus, an important function of the miraculous element of the celestial sword comprises breaking spells cast by the infernal forces<sup>346</sup>: in one of the poem's central episodes, Hernando finds his way into the secret cave of Garnata, the sorceress who put a curse upon Granada and demolishes all the illusory monsters hindering him to perform his mission. Interestingly, Hernando wins the horrible illusions without being helped directly by the divine forces, nonetheless the decisive role of the magic sword is emphasized by the poet: Ferdinand immediately recognizes his divine weapon and

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.* It is worth noting in this connection that such illusory obstacles raised by the hostile forces are topical with the epic poets of the period in question. Thus, among the most crucial examples, one might mention the two phantom castles of Atlante appearing in Cantos IV and XII of *Orlando Furioso*. «*Un nuovo e disusato incanto*» (*Orlando furioso*, XII, 21, 1), the castles are a mere fruit of the sorcerer's magic aimed at hindering Ruggiero to find Bradamante and join the Christian camp. As can be seen in Canto IV, after the spell is broken, the steel castle «suddenly» disappears «as if it had never existed»: «*(...) e a un tratto il colle / riman deserto, inospite et inculto; / né muro appar né torre in alcun lato, / come se mai castel non vi sia stato*». (*Orlando Furioso*, IV, 38, 5-8). The other enchanted castle literally dissolves into thin air after Astolfo breaks the spell: «*(...) e si sciolse il palazzo in fumo e in nebbia*». (*Orlando Furioso*, XXII, 23, 8). A similar example is encountered in Tasso's *Jerusalem delivered*, as Armida out of vengeance and desperation makes disappear the magic palace, instantly transforming the *locus amoenus* into *locus horridus*: «*(...) né più il palagio appar, né pur le sue / vestigia, né dir puossi: «Egli qui fue» (...) / (...) come sogno se 'n va ch'egro figura, / così sparver gli alberghi, e restà sole / l'alpe e l'orror che fece ivi natura*». (*Gerusalemme liberata*, XVI, 69, 7-8; 70, 4-6).

<sup>346</sup> Alchindo is not an incarnation of the Infernal world as such, nor does he belong to it, leading his independent existence in his reign situated beyond *the Pillars of Hercules*, but due to the infernal intervention of Hidragorre, he turns into a powerful ally of the Moors and, first and foremost, of the demonic world.



lends it to the intrepid hero so that by breaking the sorceress's spell he, in his turn, contribute to the defeat of the infernal evil: «*Ma vo', che ne fia l'uso a te concesso / Sinché vinto de l'urna havrai l'incanto, / E ben giunge opportune, poich'è promesso / Sovra l'Inferno a la sua tempra il vanto*»<sup>347</sup>. The magic device having performed its allegorical function – to break all of the spells of the infernal forces – in the final episode of the poem fulfils as well its main historical function prophetically expressed by Saint James in the beginning of the epic: defeat a specific historical enemy of the Christian Spain – the Islamic reign of Al-Andalus. Thus, in the crucial episode the two monarchs representing two mutually hostile civilisations are having a one-to-one combat that by definition is bound to decide the outcome of the whole siege, as well as the final of the whole Reconquista process:

**Fanno intorno corona a i duo Guerrieri**

**I popoli ansiosi, e palpitanti,**

**E pendono di tutti a i colpi fieri**

**Le menti dubbie, e gli animi tremanti.**

Giran le **spade**, e girano i **destrieri**

Come in torbido Ciel lampi rotanti<sup>348</sup>.

(Canto XXIV, p. 243)

Already the first verses of the given scene justly render the poet's literary approach to the historical truth: no collective combats, no atmosphere of panic and confusion created by the use of the substantial heavy artillery and firearms, but a classical chivalric one-to-one combat («*tenzone*»), in which horses and swords are the main military elements that will decide the outcome of the conflict; everybody, in line with the literary epic tradition, having abandoned military actions, in order to anxiously wait for the two monarchs' combat's outcome. The impact of the divine sword on the victory of Fernand II is stated explicitly, although the poet makes a special reservation, indicating the actual military «superiority» of the Spanish monarch: «*Ma la spada fatal del Re Cristiano / Troppo di fina tempra ogni altra avanza, / Et egli stesso il giovane Africano / Troppo supera d'arte, e di possanza*»<sup>349</sup>. The scene is related in a classical detailed way, the poet narrating the course and the turning points of the battle, as well as introducing conventional animalistic metaphors and describing the furious affects of the combatants. If brought into comparison with the

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>348</sup> It is worth noting that the notions of rotating «*girare*», as well as the concepts of labyrinth and circularity, are among the essential semantic elements with the author of *Il Conquisto di Granata*, since all of the poem's characters constantly wander in the enormous labyrinthic forest, serving as a perfect background for accidental encounters, duels and all kinds of «*errori*».

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

respective episodes in Vincenzo Metello's *Marte*, the reader is, once again, stricken by the contrast in the military scenes' representation: if in the first part, the details are scarcely present, the emphasis being put on the events taking place *after* the combat, in *Il Conquistato di Granata* the situation is quite the opposite. Graziani remains faithful to Ariostesque and Tassian tradition, demanding a solemn and detailed narration of the final duel that by definition took place between the two protagonists of the battle. It is interesting to note in this occasion the once again adopted the device of generalization, directly linked to the poet's classical allegorical approach to the complex military conflict between the Catholic Spain and the Muslim Moors: it is not with Baudele, the Moorish monarch that Ferdinand II combats, but with Alimoro who, being the Moorish ally, is the son of the «*re de i Tingitani*», the most intrepid among the African warriors. It is namely after the African prince's death that the morale of the Moors is irreversibly lost: no further one-to-one combats with Baudele are needed to reaffirm the Christian victory. The enemy, from this point of view, is not a specific, but rather an allegorical one: the absolute evil incarnated by *all* of the Oriental civilisations, be it an African, an Algerian, or a Moorish one. Once again, what we deal with is a clearly literary, allegorical perspective, to a considerable effect defined, on the one hand, by the Counter-Reformation process, and by the prestigious authority of fixed canons of the literary tradition, on the other hand.

It is important to stress that all of the combats unfolding in *Il Conquistato di Granata* are permeated with **the chivalric code** – the one proper to the epic genre and fixed in European epic poetry due to Ariostesque and Tassian poetic works. The characters constantly challenge each other to duels, the poem abounding in the detailed descriptions of the classical one-to-one combats. The topical situation of a duel is always subordinated to the above mentioned chivalric code: thus, for instance, Ferdinand II offers to his army a «generous example» by engaging himself in fierce combat with the Moors, however, fighting only with the representatives of the military nobility, since combating with the *vulgo* would mean a serious breach of the chivalric hierarchy:

**Non degna di girar l'invitta spada**  
**Ne la timida plebe il Re possente,**  
**Ma sol con nobil strage** apre la strada  
A sanguigni trofei d'illustre gente.  
**Tal su l'eccelse torri avvien, che cada,**  
**Non sovra il basso pian folgore ardente,**  
**E tal suole l'Aquilone i gravi insulti**  
**A le Quercie portar, non a i virgulti.**

(Canto XI, p. 101)

To reiterate, swords and horses, the crucial attributes of the classical cavaliers belonging to the epic tradition are elements that frequently determine the sudden turning points, as well as the outcome of the duel episodes: when in Canto XI, Altabrun – the Christian warrior, incited by his jealousy for Silvera, fights with the brave Saracen commander, Osmino in a one-to combat, Fortune seems to favour his victory, but as he prepares to strike his Moorish rival a mortal blow, the latter one loses his consciousness and gets ridden away by his steed:

Stordito Osmino in su l'arcion s'inchina,  
E sì privo riman d'ogni vigore,  
**Ch'apre le mani a la mortale ambascia,**  
**E la briglia abbandona, e'l brando lascia.**

**Fugge il destrier, che sente il fren disciolto,**  
**E porta Osmin, che non ha senso alcuno (...)**

(Canto XI, p. 103)

Clearly, the episode of the steed's escape is reminiscent of Ariosto and other poems featuring similar episodes and proves as well the obvious predominance of invention over history in Graziani's poem: the situation seems not a historically plausible one, but it is a perfect continuation of the topical descriptions of military combats in the canonical epic texts.

The above-cited episode is not the only one in the poem that sees Osmino remaining without a horse. Thus, when in Canto VII, the Moorish commander, remains without his steed in the midst of the battle, the daughter of the Christian commander Armonte d'Aghilar, Silvera, saves him from captivity, by offering her own steed and under the pretext of «chivalric honour»<sup>350</sup> demands that the Christian army set him free: «*Fermate, o Cavalieri; alcun non ose / Di molestare il Cavalier caduto, / Sua gentilezza obbligo m'impose / Quando in rischio simil porsemi aiuto*»<sup>351</sup>.

Despite the carefully dissimulated affect of love underlying Silvera's words, it is essential that in her desire to save the beloved Saracen warrior, she appeals namely to the chivalric dignity and nobility, i.e. the fundamental traits of the topical cavalier – the classical protagonist of the epic poems.

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<sup>350</sup> «Con l'insegne d'onor» (*Ibid.*, p. 69).

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*

In Canto XVI, the chivalric code comes, once again, to the fore when the Moorish warrior Osmino and the Christian commander Armonte d'Aguilar unite themselves to combat against Altabrun and Orgonte. Osmino, thus, persuades Armonte to accept his «company» in the battle, despite their being enemies in the actual historical context of the Reconquista:

**Virtù, che tra i nemici anco si ammira,**  
Tuo compagno mi guida a la battaglia,  
**Son'io Pagan,** ma la ragione a l'ira,  
**E l'honore a la fè vo', che prevaglia.**  
Tu l'offerta, e'l desio gradisci, e mira,  
E fa, ch'a merto il mio pensier mi vaglia;  
**Sì, ch'io possa a tuo prò teco adoprarmi**  
**De la gloria partecipe, e de l'armi.**

(Canto XVI, p. 150)

Such key chivalric notions as «virtue» and, most importantly, «honour» reveal to prevail even over the diversity of faith. Thus, Armonte does not hesitate to immediately accept the «Pagan» commander's «opportune» proposal to «share weapons», expressing gratitude, as well as admiration of the «rare value»<sup>352</sup> of his new ally's personality:

**Virtù non sta co i vili,** e non si annida  
Magnanimo desire in humil petto,  
Andianne hormai, che compagnia più fida  
Ne la pugna futura io non aspetto.  
**Virtù ci unisca, e la ragion ci guida.**  
**Sia diversa la fè, ma non l'affetto;**  
**Quel modo d'amistà, che honor congiunga,**  
**Se la morte non è, nulla disgiunga.**

(Canto XVI, p. 150)

Armonte's discourse is pervaded by the same chivalric notions the reader had already encountered in Osmino's monologue, as well as the essential idea underlying the chivalric code: there is no obstacle that could impede the deeds dictated by «**honour**» and «**virtue**». Even the divergence in faith seems insignificant if faced with the special kind of friendship bringing people together under the motto of «honour», and even death cannot defeat warriors united by the link of

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<sup>352</sup> «Non cerco altra notitia; è segno vero / Del tuo raro valore il tuo pensiero» (Ibid., p. 150).

«virtue» and bravery. Historical motive of the war between the two hostile civilisations becomes secondary in this perspective – a conclusion that is only reinforced by the *personal* motivations of the characters, driven not only by the affects of love and the need for revenge, but as well by honour and virtue.<sup>353</sup>

The scenes of combats in *Il Conquisto di Granata* often demonstrate other epic *topoi*, such as, for instance, a constant presence of the figure of the *virgo bellatrix*: the beautiful Amazons participating in military actions on equal ground with the male warriors. Both Christian and Moorish camps offer the examples of belligerent feminine figures<sup>354</sup>: on the one hand, Silvera, the daughter of the Spanish commander Armonte d’Aguilar, and Darassa, the daughter of the African monarch. The two figures seem indeed to resemble each other, despite the fact they belong to the different poles, both of them being perfectly in line with the traditional image of the female warriors: beautiful, intrepid and invincible, as well as susceptible to the affect of love that in the case of both reveals impossible. Disguised as a male warrior, in the final episodes of the poem, Darassa takes the decision to convert to Christianity, whereas Silvera dies during the duel with her beloved Osmino, the valiant Saracen commander<sup>355 356</sup>.

Another striking example of the *virgo bellatrix* is the figure of Isabella I of Castile, the wife of Ferdinand II. It should be noted that the image of Isabella differs from the topical figures of female

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<sup>353</sup> As we know from the previous cantos, Osmino and Altabrun are rivals for Silvera’s love, Altabrun more than once trying to kill Osmino out of furious jealousy. Armonte is, in his turn, moved by a personal desire to defend his family’s honour, as well as take revenge on the «ferocious» warrior for his «harsh insults» («*oltraggi amari*») and slander regarding his daughter Silvera (see Canto XV, p. 141).

<sup>354</sup> The images of female warriors in Graziani’s poem reveal continuity with the Western epic tradition. Thus, G. Bettin in his research dedicated to the epic *topoi* remarks upon the persistent presence of the topical figure of the *virgo bellatrix* in the epic poetry and the evolution it undergoes: «*La leggenda delle barbare (...) Amazoni (...) ha interessato persino Omero e ha poi creato in altri luoghi numerose guerriere e cacciatrici rimaste nella storia letteraria dell’Occidente (...), influenzando in seguito gli scrittori della letteratura rinascimentale: Marfisa e Bradamante sono degne sorelle di Ruggiero e Rinaldo, godono di fama propria e non riflessa dalle gesta di avi e fratelli, e sono ancor più nobilitate rispetto alle antiche guerriere, perché, pur combattendo alla pari con i cavalieri, restano portatrici della loro femminilità, fatta di bellezza, cortesia e gentilezza ispiratrice di amore (...)*». (G. Bettin, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 585). «Already Homer was attracted by the legend of the barbarous (...) Amazons (...) that afterwards generated a number of female warriors and huntresses that remained in the literary history of the West (...) and influenced later on the poets of the Renaissance period: thus Marfisa and Bradamante match Ruggiero and Rinaldo, enjoying their own glory that is not a mere reflection of the deeds of their ancestors and brothers; they are even more ennobled compared to the ancient female knights, since they not only fight on a par with the male knights, but also manage to preserve their femininity, revealing their beauty, courtesy and gentleness that inspire love». Among the most crucial examples of a female knight in the epic tradition of the period is the image of Clorinda in *Jerusalem delivered*: a female warrior fighting on an equal footing with the knights. Tasso thus describes his belligerent heroine, insisting upon her masculine character traits contrasted with her beauty: «*Costei gl’ingegni femminili e gli usi / tutti sprezzò sin da l’età più acerba: / a i lavori d’Aracne, a l’ago, a i fusi / inchinar non degnò la man superba. / Fuggì gli abiti molli e i lochi chiusi, / ché ne i campi onestate anco si serba; / armò d’orgoglio il volto, e si compiacque / rigido farlo, e pur rigido piacque*». (Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*, II, 39).

<sup>355</sup> In these scenes, Graziani obviously takes up the famous scene of the baptism of Clorinda in Canto XII of *Jerusalem delivered* (*Gerusalemme liberata*, XII, 65-68).

<sup>356</sup> We shall have an occasion to dwell upon the topical episode of the duel between the two lovers belonging to the hostile camps further on in the framework of the given chapter.

warriors described above to a considerable extent: an incarnation of femininity and devotion, throughout the whole poem she performs the function of providing a crucial link between the celestial and the terrestrial worlds. The Queen is the first person to receive an astonishing revelation as to the secret of conquering Granada, due to her prayers, the Spanish army enjoys the support of the divine forces in the decisive moments of the battle, and, finally, her soul ascends to heaven where she encounters God and his angels and learns the prophetic news of the upcoming triumph over the Moors, as well as the one of the glorious deeds of the Catholic Monarch's posterity<sup>357</sup>. Yet, along with devotion, Isabella demonstrates her intrepidity on the battlefield by encouraging the Spanish warriors in the midst of the combat. Thus, in Canto XVIII, Christian army loses its morale, due to the sudden attack of the Algerian King and, in the absence of Ferdinand engaged in other combats, finds itself on the verge of escaping the danger. It is in this decisive moment that Isabella, «*la magnanima Donna, in cui nudriva / Intrepida virtù spirto divino*», arrives on the battlefield on her steed and addresses heaven with an ardent prayer full of contempt towards the Christian warriors: «*Tu con pari valor scorgi Isabella, / Onde possa frenar l'armi d'Averno; / E da man femminile il fedel Campo / Riconosca duo volte il proprio scampo*»<sup>358</sup>.

Thus, Isabella differs drastically from Darassa, or Silvera, the female warriors disguising their identity and assimilating masculine behaviour: unlike these Amazons, the Queen accentuates her femininity in order to discredit the cowardice of the Spanish commanders in front of the Moorish enemy:

**Tal discorre, e di zelo arde nel petto,  
E'l suo popol, che fugge, altiera sgrida;  
Voi temete de i Mori il solo aspetto,  
E Ferrando il suo Regno a voi confida?  
Su meco a la battaglia, io vi prometto  
Esser vostra compagna, e vostra guida;**

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<sup>357</sup> For the episode of the divine revelation, see Canto XIX, pp. 170-176. A prophecy upon Isabella and Ferdinand's posterity is equally important as far as the historical context of the poem is concerned, since by alluding to the future glorious dynasty of d'Este, the poet insists on the fundamental link of Spain with Italy to be established by these future «magnanimous Heroes»: «*Il ceppo tuo, sotto a i cui degni auspice / Havrà l'antico Impero i nuovi pregi, / Pianterà ne l'Italia alte radici; / E frutti produrrà d'huomini egregi. / Fra i secondi rami, e più felici / Di magnanimi Heroi, donde si pregi / Il tuo lignaggio, è quello eccelso e grande, / Che in riva del Panaro i germi spande*» (*Ibid.*, Canto XIX, p. 174).

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

*Cederete d'ardir forse a una Donna?*

**Se questo è ver, cangiate l'armi in gonna.**

(Canto XVIII, p. 168)

Isabella's ardent appeal has a profound impact on the warriors, helping them to regain their bravery. The Queen does not have to disguise her real identity: on the contrary, her royal status, as well as femininity contributes to the warriors' immediate return on the battlefield: «**Potè de i gravi detti il suono amaro / Ne i timidi svegliar l'ardire antico, / Onde a la pugna intrepidi tornaro / Sfidando a prova il vincitor nemico**»<sup>359</sup>.

Isabella's contribution to the victory of the Spanish army is not limited by her encouraging words: in the last cantos of *Il Conquisto di Granata*, she will keep the promise given to her warriors and guide them in one of the decisive battles. Before leaving to meet the enemy with his army, Ferdinand calls his «intrepid» wife, trusting her a true military assignement of defending the besieged city's walls: «*Tu, che di mente saggia, e di cor forte / Sai le guerre trattare accorta, e ardita, / Devi a guardia restar de gli steccati / Per vietar le sortite a gli assediati*»<sup>360</sup>. Isabella agrees to perform her mission with confidence and «serenity», hoping to succeed in «imitating»<sup>361</sup> her consort's actions. In the final Canto, the Queen demonstrates her military skills, combating against the Moors alongside the Christian army, so that «*a l'hasta acuta, al maestoso aspetto, / A la voce Real cedono i Mori*»:

**Essa con lieto, e generoso aspetto**

Vibra **con man virile** hasta pungente,

E di limpido acciaio adorna il petto,

Sprona sotto un destrier, ch'è sauro ardente.

**Infiamma ogni suo sguardo; ogni suo detto**

**E' stimolo di gloria a la sua gente;**

Risplendente altrui ne la purpurea vesta

**Con dolce maestà bellezza honesta.**

(Canto XXVI, p. 247)

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<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>361</sup> «*Intanto io qui spero imitar tua sorte, / So, che del gran Ferrando io son consorte*» (*Ibid.*).

Inspired by the divine forces, Isabella transfers her vigour and audacity to her people, literally inflaming them to the battle resulting in a «*piena ammirabile vittoria*», along with Ferdinand's «*nuovo trionfo*».

Isabella's image thus presents as an innovated, refined version of the classical *topos* of female warriors (as tradition would have it, women disguised as male warriors, assimilating their appearance and attitudes). Maintaining her feminine identity, the Queen of Castile nonetheless matches her spouse, as far as military zeal is concerned, sharing, rather than «imitating» his triumph. The aspect of 'equality' is explicitly emphasized by the poet, as Ferdinand's messenger thus synthesizes the royal couple's common victory: «*Signor; pari è la gloria, e la fatica, / Tu vincesti nel Campo, e vinse ancora / Isabella Real l'ira nemica (...)*»<sup>362</sup>. It is yet essential to stress that the Queen's military success is conditioned not only by her personal bravery but first and foremost is a result of her devotional attitude: her triumph is a providential one, the poet constantly emphasizing the presence of the divine spirit in her «magnanimous»<sup>363</sup> heart.

A few words should be said on the topical epic one-to-one combats, as far as the mode of military scenes representation is concerned. It has already been said that *Il Conquisto di Granata* comprises numerous episodes describing scenes of chivalric duels and combats, but it would be interesting to have a closer look at one of them: a scene of the fight between the four warriors, combating in couples against their respective adversaries in Canto XVII. Perfectly in line with the canons of the epic genre, the scene is extremely rich in the descriptions of the warriors' armament, as well as their personal qualities and appearance. Constant evocations of such details as the combatants' steeds, helms, shields, swords and spears are of course not fortuitous, but perform a specific function: the one of transforming the poem's general historical content dictated by the actual Reconquista process into the events that could as well take place in any other chivalric poem – an impression of atemporality strengthened by the personal motives guiding the four warriors<sup>364</sup>. Thus, the historical reasons are not even mentioned in the episode that is permeated by the chivalric spirit. In line with the epic *topos* of duels, the combat unfolds in the presence of the warriors' squires, the poet insisting on the «Cavaliers'» careful adhering to all of the chivalric rites, traditionally described in epic poems<sup>365</sup>:

Spuntava l'Alba (...)

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<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>364</sup> See note 27 of the present chapter. It is important to note that Altabrun and Osmino, besides being rivals in love, are as well representatives of the two hostile camps, the historical connotation appears to be completely absent in the fighting couple of Armonte d'Aguilar and Odonte, both warriors belonging to the Christian camp.

<sup>365</sup> For the detailed characteristics of the *topos* of duels and the elements it includes, see G. Bettin, *Per un repertorio dei temi e delle convenzioni del poema epico e cavalleresco: 1520-1580*, vol. I, 2006, p. 171.



Quando lasciar de gli otiosi letti  
L'odiato riposo **i Cavalieri,**  
**E vestir l'armi fine, e l'elmi eletti,**  
**Preser le lance, e ascesero i destrieri.**  
De la pugna vicina a i vari effetti  
**Testimoni restaro i duo Scudieri;**  
**Essi poscia divisi a duo per lato**  
Quinci, e quindi fermarsi in cima al prato.

(Canto XVII, p. 151)

Following the rules of the age-long epic tradition, Graziani dwells upon the above-mentioned details related to the combatants' personality, weapons and looks<sup>366</sup>. The combat is depicted with the same solemn intonations<sup>367</sup>, the poet recurring to the topical epic similes and hyperboles, comparing the heroes to the powerful winds whose confrontation is bound to cause the confusion of the four elements:

**Come allhor, che da l'horrida prigione**  
**Fuggono scatenati i quattro venti,**  
Là cozzano **sdegnosi, Austro, Aquilone,**  
Qua pugnano **Euro, e Zefiro frementi.**  
Cede a l'impeto lor ciò, che si oppone;  
**Gemono la Natura, e gli Elementi;**  
**Tremano i Poli istessi, e salir pare**  
**Il mar nel Cielo, o il Ciel nel mare**<sup>368</sup>.

(Canto XVII, p. 152)

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<sup>366</sup> For the above-mentioned detailed descriptions, see Canto XVII, pp. 151-152.

<sup>367</sup> See, for instance the Ariostesque comment of the narrator, promising to celebrate the duel with «noble and belligerent» poetic lines: «(...) *Siché con degni, e bellicose carmi, / Il mio canto sostenga il suon de l'armi*». (*Ibid.*, p. 152).

<sup>368</sup> Cf. sonnet 43 from Marino's *Rime marittime* for a similar image of the «fusion of two opposed spaces, the sea and the sky, that are perceived as one common surface, under which fish transform themselves into the stars and the stars transform themselves into fish» see G. Güntert, *Sete di simmetria: i poeti del primo Seicento di fronte alla varietà del mondo*, 2009, p. 103. («(...) *una fusione dei due spazi opposti, cielo e mare, che sono percepiti su una sola superficie, sotto la quale i pesci si trasmutano in stelle, e le stelle in pesci*»: «*Ve' come van per queste piagge e quelle / con scintille scherzando ardenti e chiare / volte in pesci le stelle, i pesci in stelle. / Si puro il vago fondo a noi traspare / che fra tanti dirai lampi e facelle: / - Ecco in ciel cristallin cangiato il mare. -*». (Marino, *Rime marittime*, 1602, 43).

The leitmotiv of the «blind fury» guiding and «inflaming» the «ruthless weapons» is repeated during the whole scene of the «horrible war», constituting the essential motivation of the «combatants»: «*Così crescono gli odi, e la contesa, / E l'ira occupa il loco a la ragione; / Son di cauto valor l'arti sprezzate, / Move **il cieco furor** l'armi spietate*»<sup>369</sup>. The theme will appear as well in the episode of the duel between Osmino and Silvera, immediately following the combat between the four warriors:

Non reggono **il furor** de i combattenti  
 I duri scudi, o i ben temprati arnesi,  
 Ma di tiepido humor stille cadenti  
 Mostran in quante parti ei siano offesi.  
**Ar dono l'armature, ar don le menti**  
**Degli sdegni**, e de i colpi a i lampi accesi;  
 E gareggia tra lor con fero gioco  
**De le spade, e de l'ire il doppio foco**<sup>370</sup>.

(Canto XVII, p. 155)

The «flame» of the warriors' rage is thus reflected by one of the swords, merging with it to create a «double flame». In this canto, Graziani shows himself a zealous, as well as a meticulous follower of the epic tradition, regaining, first and foremost, the *topoi* of the *Gerusalemme liberata*. Nothing escapes the attention of the epic narrator – an acute observer, focusing on every detail concerning either the infinite sudden turning points of the battle, or the affects guiding and invigorating the warriors throughout the combat: «*Il tremante vigor **l'odio** sostiene / Con l'appoggio de l'onte, e de i **rancori**; / Lo stimolo **d'honor**, lo sprona de **l'ira** / **Forze a la mano, e rabbia al seno inspira***»<sup>371</sup>.

«Blind rage» keeps animating the combat between Osmino and Altabrun: rivals in love, rather than enemies by faith, they finally abandon their swords, passing to the culminating hand-to-hand fighting:

**L'ira, che sferza i cori, havea sospinti**

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.* Note the use of the syntagm «*l'armi spietate*», creating a contrast with the *Liberata's* «*arme pietose*». The spirit of Tassian *Gerusalemme liberata*, as well as the impact of Virgilian *Aeneid*, is perceived throughout the whole episode.

<sup>370</sup> The description refers to Osmino's combat with Silvera, who presents herself on the battlefield as an «unknown Cavalier» and challenges Osmino to duel immediately after the fight of the four warriors. The episode can thus be viewed as a direct continuation of the previous military event.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

Entrambi sì vicini a nuove offese,  
Che **lasciate le spade, e insieme avvinti,**  
**Con le braccia tentaro altre contese.**  
Da stretti nodi avviticchiati, e cinti  
Procuraro i vantaggi a varie prese;  
Segue Osmin **l'arte**, e Altabrun **lo sdegno**,  
Questi adopra **la forza**, e quei **l'ingegno**.

(Canto XVII, p. 153)

Once again, Graziani offers his readers not a succinct narration of the various turning points of the combat, but provides a careful psychological portrait of its participants. The above-described scene ends with Armonte d'Aguilar's killing his adversary Odonte – as to Osmino and Altabrun, their duel does not get a definitive outcome, since the latter one, although being defeated by his Moorish rival, only feigns death. The rivalry between the two warriors thus remains open-ended and will be continued in a chain of other episodes, notably in the scene representing the immediately following duel between Osmino and his beloved Silvera to be discussed later in the framework of the given chapter.

Up to the present moment little has been said upon the place and role of **divine interventions** in *Il Conquistato di Granata*. It is important to stress that in Graziani's epic, the divine, as well as the infernal forces, as a rule, determine and guide the course of the events, however mostly in an indirect way. Indeed, direct supernatural interventions of the Ancient epic poets, with deities intervening in the unfolding combats in person are difficult to encounter in the present poem – nonetheless, the whole Reconquista process is, in this poetic interpretation, sparked off by the infernal secret plots. Throughout the whole action of the poem, the divine and the infernal forces prefer to act indirectly: thus, heaven supports Christians by sending them inspiration and courage, as well as by offering Ferdinand the fatal sword and making prophetic revelations upon the outcome of the war to Isabella. Infernal forces incarnated by the figure of the Demon Hidragorre, are extremely inventive in their continuous plotting against the Spanish army: constant incitement of the Moors and complots with the magician Alchindo; horrible tempests and illusory monsters sent to undermine the progress of the Christian adversary – such are the main magic devices adopted by Hidragorre. Yet, despite the generally indirect character of these interventions, there is one crucial episode where the conflict between Heaven and Hell assumes an explicitly direct form. Thus, in Canto XXII, Hidragorre sends a topical sea storm, with a view to impeding the much feared successful return of the Heroes to Granada. As the Hermit who accompanies the Heroes in their

voyage, addresses Heaven, ardently praying the divine forces for help, he witnesses an overwhelming scene, revealing the actual enemy of the Christians – an army of the infernal warriors guided by Hidragorre:

Mentre così pregava, **il Ciel si aperse,**  
E'l Vecchio rimirò per l'aria erranti  
**D'esercito Infernal turbe diverse,**  
**Che sossopra volgean l'onde spumanti.**  
Quivi l'empio **Hidragorre** primo scoperse  
Movere i nemi, e i turbini sonanti;  
E udì stimolar con queste voci  
A l'opre inique i **Demoni feroci.**

(Canto XXII, p. 106)

Heaven answers the fervent prayers of the Hermit by sending Saint James with a mission of defeating the infernal army. The appearance of the «celestial Cavalier» brandishing his divine sword marks the first crucial direct confrontation of the actual allegorical forces behind the Reconquista conflict. Saint James thus menaces the enemy alluding to the ancient war of Heaven with its infernal adversary:

Questi, ch'è di Galitia Apostol Santo,  
La turba Acherontea minaccia, e grida;  
**Ancora al Ciel con temerario vanto**  
**Vostro furor di contrastar confida?**  
Tornate, iniqui, a la Città del pianto  
Nel foco eterno, e ne l'eterne strida;  
**Non mostra il vostro caso, e non v'insegna**  
**Come fulmina Dio quando si sdegna?**

(Canto XXII, p. 106)

Words seem not to be sufficient in this age-long struggle: without waiting for the Demons's answer, Saint James passes to action, destroying the infernal army with his «fatal sword»<sup>372</sup> and

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<sup>372</sup> «Così dicendo il Cavalier percote / Con la spada fatal gli empi Demoni, / Che abbandonando le celesti rote / Piomban d'Abisso a l'horride prigioni». (*Ibid.*, p. 106).

making the sea calm down. The outcome of the confrontation is glorious, since, as the Hermit summarizes, the Avernus is «defeated»:

Fuggono i nemi, e Zeffiro rimane,  
L'onda tranquilla, e l'aria lieta appare,  
**Accompagna il gran Dio l'armi Christiane,**  
E grida il Vecchio a vision sì rare.  
**Ecco da rive incognite, e lontane**  
**Vinto l'Inferno, e soggiogato il mare**<sup>373</sup> (...)

(Canto XXII, p. 207)

The actual motive of the sudden demonic attack is more complicated than a mere desire of getting rid of Hernando and Consalvo, the liberated heroes sailing to liberate Granada: the true reason behind the demonic intervention lies in Hidragorre's fear of **Columbus, the Ligurian hero** – a character who is destined to play a crucial role in the further course of the military events, as shall be shown below.

**A thirst for knowledge and new way of thinking the world:  
Representation of the «fragments of modernity»<sup>374</sup> in the poem**

To reiterate, «*il gran Colombo*» indeed fills the «ferocious Demons»<sup>375</sup> with deep fear for upsetting their plots against the Christian army:

Mirate là; **vittorioso ei riede**  
**Scorso il barbaro Clima**, a'l mar profondo,  
**Portato il culto, e la Christiana Fede**  
**Con leggi peregrine al nuovo mondo.**  
Gode il Ciel di sue glorie, e di sue prede,

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<sup>373</sup> It is interesting to note the circularity of Graziani's poetic discourse, the poet resuming in this passage the crucial syntagms of the first verses of *Il Conquisto di Granata*: «*lo, che spiegai con amorosi carmi / su l'Italica Cetra Egitii errori, / Vo' cantar con la tromba al suon de l'armi / Granata vinta, e soggiogati i Mori*». (*Ibid.*, p. 1). Such lexical choice can hardly be viewed as a fortuitous one in this context, Graziani emphasizing the main themes of his poem.

<sup>374</sup> *Il Conquisto di Granata*, T. Artico (a c. di), 2017, p. IX.

<sup>375</sup> *Il Conquisto di Granata*, 1650, p. 206.

E noi dannati al tenebroso fondo  
Otiosi miriam l' **autor primiero**  
**Di tante alme rapite al nostro Impero?**

(Canto XXII, p. 206)

The historical figure of the famous navigator appears thus organically inscribed into the allegorical context of the war between the divine good and the infernal evil. Columbus is introduced as a hero of the Christian faith; a true modern crusader who had performed the glorious «*alta impresa*» of converting «many a soul» of the New World to Christianity and thus had already succeeded in hindering infernal plans and actions. An epic 'hero' in the proper sense of the word: the arrival of the great Ligurian to Granada will have a decisive impact on the outcome of the crucial Reconquista event. The very fact of Columbus's influencing military events to such a considerable extent deserves special comments and reflection. If we turn to the canonical *Gerusalemme liberata*, we shall encounter an octet dedicated to the illustrious navigator – an octet that, to quote David Quint<sup>376</sup>, with Girolamo Graziani evolves into a whole canto<sup>377</sup>, preserving the same function of «foreshadowing future voyages of discovery to ensure the accomplishment of the divine plot of History»<sup>378</sup>. This prophetic function accounts for Columbus's appearance in Graziani's poem permeated by the spirit of the crusade, as well as the one of the traditional epic legacy, revealing one of the essential Baroque tendencies, consisting in bringing together the incompatible. Fatal swords, Cavaliers, one-to-one combats – all of these classical epic features coexist in *Il Conquisto di Granata* with the symbolically modern figure of the Ligurian explorer. It should be noted that is not the mere presence of Columbus that makes the poem an extraordinary fusion of tradition and novelty, but, once again, the role that the navigator has to play in the final episodes of the text. Already Canto XIX contains references to Columbus's discovery voyages, but he is directly introduced only in Canto XXII. A hero that instils terror even with the inhabitants of Avernus: the reader cannot but immediately grasp the scale his figure assumes even before his actual appearances in the text. In the episode following the defeat of the demonic army, Columbus joins the Spanish heroes and narrates them «his long voyage and the glorious deed»<sup>379</sup> in the New World, concluding his story with a highly significant 'hypothesis':

Forse al mondo Lunar tanto disgiunto

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<sup>376</sup> See D. Quint, *La barca dell'avventura nell'epica rinascimentale*, in «Intersezioni», V (1985), 3, pp. 467-488, quoted by T. Artico in his Preface to *Il Conquisto di Granata*, 2017 (ed.cit.).

<sup>377</sup> Actually, Colombo is mentioned in several cantos, but it is in the final one that he performs the crucial operation of assuring the eventual Conquest of Granada.

<sup>378</sup> «(...) prefigurare i futuri viaggi di scoperta che compiranno la trama divina della storia».

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207. See pp. 207-214 for Columbus's relation of his voyages.

Fia, che l'huomo il commercio un di ritrove;  
**Vuol Dio, ch'ogni secreto, ogni arte, ogni opra**  
**In secoli diversi à l'huom si scopra.**

(Canto XXII, p. 208)

The thirst of knowledge and scientific discoveries characteristic of the historical period in question, thus, finds its perfect formula, as well as justification in *Il Conquistato di Granata*. **To go beyond the «mental Pillars of Hercules»** – to gain new scientific, as well as geographic knowledge to the extent of inverting completely the old modality of thinking the world, – such was «perhaps» the original intention of God who can therefore contribute to human beings in making their discoveries that, according to Columbus's words, appear to be in line with the divine will<sup>380</sup>.

The revolution of the way of thinking the world brought by the discovery of the «immense»<sup>381</sup> new territories thus finds a detailed literary reflexion in Graziani's poem: the poet, of course, insists on interpreting the events in the light of the Christian values, as he first and foremost emphasizes Columbus's role as the bearer of Christianity to unknown civilizations – yet, the attention Columbus's *discoveries* are given in the poem can hardly be overestimated. As Tancredi Artico puts it in his preface to the recent edition of *Il Conquistato di Granata*, Columbus incarnates the crucial passage to the Modern history period, whereas his appearance as a glorious epic hero in the poem reflects the epic poets' historical consciousness of the fact:

Oltre che come personaggio agente, **Colombo ha anche una spiccata funzione simbolica, perché veicolo per l'immissione nel poema di frammenti di modernità (...).** In seconda battuta, **una modernità tecnico-scientifica, leva per un confronto con il mondo classico che il Seicento eroico non era riuscito a elevare a materia di canto, se non per vie trasversali**, come dimostrano le molte schegge di rimosso disseminante, in maniera spesso contraddittoria, nella tradizione: **le scoperte geografiche, quelle scientifiche di Galilei, e le stesse armi da fuoco sono tutti argomenti che non hanno diritto di cittadinanza in un racconto di storia medievale (...) ma che d'altra parte non hanno una solida base di modelli che permetta lo sfruttamento intensivo a sé stante**<sup>382</sup>.

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<sup>380</sup> Thus, Columbus addresses God in the initial moments of his expedition and receives prophetic signs from Heaven as response to his prayers (see Canto XXII, p. 211): «Signor, questi a la patria io prima tolsi, / Et immense ricchezze a lor proposi. / **Io spirato da te primo rivolsi** / Queste lacere vele a i regni ascosi; / O tu, Signor, mi scopri il nuovo polo, / O salva gli altri, e fa, che mora io solo» (*Ibid.*).

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>382</sup> Preface to *Il Conquistato di Granata*, 2017 (ed.cit.), pp. IX-X. «Apart from being an important character of the poem, Columbus performs as well a highly symbolic function that consists in his introducing into the poem the fragments of modernity (...) Secondly, it is a technical-scientific modernity that inevitably leads to a comparison with the classical world that the heroic Seicento was not capable of elevating to the level of the subject adapted to poetic celebration, if not in an indirect way – an assumption proved by the numerous, frequently contradictory fragments of the

The epic tradition indeed did not possess «solid models» to rely upon in the representation of the «modernity fragments» of the kind – in the given literary context, Graziani’s way of inweaving Columbus’s image into the narrative texture of his poem proved the increasing tendencies towards innovation of the genre. Not all epic poets surrendered themselves to the new *ars belli*, with the advanced military techniques it brought about, the author of *Il Conquisto di Granata* being no exception; yet, even the poems that abounded in miracles and divine interventions demonstrated crucial tendencies towards innovation of the genre to be increasingly contaminated with recent history. The above-mentioned ‘historical’ trend is even more reinforced by the role another essential character, Hernando – according to the prophetic Hermit’s revelation<sup>383</sup>, the future Spanish *Conquistador* of Mexico – performs in the framework of the given text. Thus, Hernando, along with the Catholic Monarch and Columbus, will become the distinguished hero of the combat resulting in the final Conquest of Granada and in this way, the two *modern* conquerors will provide for the fundamental link between tradition and novelty, as well as ensure the remarkable «opening up» of the epic genre to the modern themes:

**La comparsa dell’ammiraglio nell’epica (...) nel caso del *Conquisto*, la cui capacità nel tenere in piedi entrambe le prospettive classica e moderna è unica nel panorama seicentesco, andrà letta – assieme alla presenza sotto le mura di Granada di Hernando, cioè Hernan Cortés, futuro conquistatore dell’Impero Mexico – nel ruolo di motore di un radicale aggiornamento della tradizione letteraria in direzione di un’apertura ad argomenti moderni<sup>384</sup>.**

In the poetic reality of *Il Conquisto di Granata*, Columbus’s historical role of the illustrious explorer is complicated with the essential epic halo of the military hero publicly celebrated, as well as exalted by the Catholic Monarch in person for his deeds: «Tace; e segue al suo dir publica lode / Premio de l’opre illustri a nobil core, / Ma più d’ogni altro il gran Ferrando gode, / E d’applausi accompagna il suo valore»<sup>385</sup>. It was of course not for nothing that the infernal army feared the Ligurian hero, since his joining the Spanish army, with Graziani, *a priori* meant the inevitable defeat for the Moors. Thus, in Canto XXVI, we hear the story of Columbus’s rapid conquest of

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widespread repression found in the literary tradition: geographical discoveries, as well as those scientific made by Galileo, without mentioning the very invention of firearms – these are all arguments that do not exist in a historical treaty of the Medieval times (...) and that at the same time do not possess a solid basis of previous models that would enable the poets to make an extensive current use of them».

<sup>383</sup> For the Hermit’s prophecies on Hernando’s conquests in the New World, see Canto XXI of the poem in question.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, p. X.

<sup>385</sup> *Il Conquisto di Granata*, 1630, p. 246.



Malaga<sup>386</sup> preceding the triumph of Granada – the New World’s hero’s first victory over the Moors whose primary function, in this poetic interpretation of the historical events, consisted in depriving the enemy of the last potential support:

**Così afflitta Granata, e priva alfine**

**Del soccorso African** sarà costretta

Di rimirar sopra le sue ruine

Dal Campo vincitor la Croce eretta.

**E così havrà quel glorioso fine,**

**Che il suo zel sospirò, l’impresa eletta;**

Ne rimarrà, per rinovar la guerra.

Altro esercito a i Mori, e altra Terra.

(Canto XXVI, p. 246)

In these military scenes, the celebrated navigator presents himself, as a humble «soldier of such a glorious King»<sup>387</sup>: the poet emphasizes that his valiant deeds, similarly to the ones of the crusaders, are determined by the Christian cause<sup>388</sup>, as well as are entirely dictated by the Catholic Monarchs.

It is in Canto XXV, however, that Columbus’s core victory reaffirms his already presumed status of the epic hero. During the final combats for Granada’s eventual destiny, the Christian army, although determinate and intrepid, happens to be on the verge of losing the battle to the Moors. It is in this moment of grave danger for the Christians, that the sudden arrival of Columbus and his warriors in the midst of «*vario spettacolo d’orrore*»<sup>389</sup> is announced:

Mentre l’aspra tenzone arde più fiera,

S’ode al romor di bellici metalli

Risonar la foresta, e la riviera,

Tremare il monte, e rimbombar le valli.

Sorge la polve, indi di schiera in schiera

**Si veggono apparir Fanti, e Cavalli;**

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<sup>386</sup> See Canto XXVI for the *flash back* relation of Columbus’s Malaga triumph.

<sup>387</sup> «*Basti a me di goder, ch’hoggi io sia stato / In Campo tal di sì gran Rè Soldato*» . (*Ibid.*, p. 246).

<sup>388</sup> The poem, however, contains passages merging the spirit of the *Conquistador* with the general Christian background: «*E che terra? ivi l’ostro, ivi gl’incensi, / Ivi nascon gli amomi, gli odori, / E difendono sol quei Regni immensi / Pochi, timidi, e inermi habitatori. / Vedete come largo il Ciel dispense / Al felice paese ampi tesori; / Il mar di perle, i rivi, e le maremme / Risplendono colà d’oro, e di gemme*» (*Ibid.*, p. 206).

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

**De l'armi luminose, a i ferrei lampi  
Ride il Sol, splende il Cielo, ardono i campi.**

(Canto XXV, p. 241)

The poet adopts classical solemn intonations, as well as hyperbolic descriptions proper to the epic genre, as well as perfectly tailored for rendering the theatrical effect of the marvellous news expressly communicated in the end of the octet: it is indeed not for nothing that the Baroque key concept of «*vario stupore*» (various astonishment) appears in the following verses describing the reaction of the 'spectators' of the battle:

**Pien di vario stupor mira ciascuno**  
Tanto apparecchio, **e curioso aspetta,**  
In soccorso di cui giunga opportuno  
Si fiorito squadron di gente eletta.  
Si avvicinano intanto, **e vede ognuno**  
**Ne l'insegna maggior la Croce eretta;**  
**Sbigottisce a tal vista il vulgo infido,**  
Ma inalzano i Christiani un lieto grido.

(Canto XXV, p. 241)

Thus, previous allusions result in an explicit demonstration of Columbus's acting as a commander of a modern crusade, guiding his army under the banner of the «Cross». In line with the duty of the epic military commander, Columbus starts with the topical discourse aimed at restoring the Spanish army's morale:

Strinse la lancia, e disse a i suoi rivolto;  
**Questo è Campo di guerra, e di virtute,**  
L'honor di mille imprese è qui raccolto,  
**Che fia, che tante glorie hoggi rifiute?**  
**Immenso è il guiderdon, né rischio è molto (...)**

(Canto XXV, p. 241)

Similarly to «*tempesta, e folgore, e tremoto*»<sup>390</sup>, Columbus engages in the battle: encouraging the warriors with his own valour, he contributes in a considerable way to inverting the situation on the battlefield: due to his military actions, compared only to the ones of Ferdinand II killing the Algerian prince Alimoro, the Moorish army is in a state of an extreme confusion, as well as on the verge on surrendering to the Christians.

The last and the most significant of Columbus's deeds are reserved for the final XXVI canto where the «intrepid» Ligurian hero has to invigorate his own army, persuading the warriors to pursue the fierce combat, acting in line with the «ancient valour» prescribing to «liberate the friendly reign», as well as accomplish the duty to which they had been «selected» by their monarch<sup>391</sup>. The culmination of the final episode of the battle is the one-to-one combat between Columbus and one of the most ferocious 'Pagan' warriors, Agramasso resulting into a fatal blow for the further destiny of the Moorish army<sup>392</sup>. Interestingly, the «magnanimous» hero's being first and foremost a navigator and an explorer is not entirely denied in the poem: thus, Agramasso at first does not even deign to fight with Columbus, questioning his military talents: «*Vere guerre havrai qui; ben ti era meglio / Goder l'oro de l'India, e morir veglio*»<sup>393</sup>. Columbus responds to the Pagan's insults by reaffirming his status of a military hero and proves his words by giving his rival an immediate mortal blow with his sword. He thus formulates his 'literary' identity of an excellent military commander, capable of combating by land and sea: «*Vedrai, che so pugnare in mare, e in terra / Nel domestico clima, e nel deserto; / Non guerreggiano sol le tue contrade, / Ma sanno anco ferir le nostre spade*»<sup>394</sup>. It is upon this 'military' identity, as well as upon the triumph over the Moors in Malaga and Granada, rather than on the actual historical merits, that the poet insists when

<sup>390</sup> «Tempest, lightning, earthquake» – classical naturalistic metaphors assimilating heroes to the severe manifestations of the elements. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>391</sup> «Questo è l'onore, questo è il valore antico / Onde a vincere su Mondo il Re vi elesse? / Così voi liberate il Regno amico / Dal giogo rio, che lui tanti anni oppresse?» (*Ibid.*, p. 252).

<sup>392</sup> Graziani's poem thus reveals important continuity with the epic tradition, the final duel between the two heroes being a topical element of the epic genre. Traditionally, the decisive one-to-one combat performs the core function as it marks the final outcome of the narration. For the *topos* of the «decisive duel», see G. Baldassarri, *Il sonno di Zeus. Sperimentazione narrative del poema rinascimentale e tradizione omerica*, 1982, pp. 78-97. Thus, according to G. Baldassarri, «il duello finale fra i due maggiori campioni delle due parti in guerra costituisce un luogo privilegiato all'interno delle strutture epiche (...). Nei confronti della narratio che lo precede, il duello finale si caratterizza infatti come l'evento che, venute meno le cause della più o meno lunga sospensione del corso prevedibile degli avvenimenti (la funzione «ritardante» generativa di tutto il poema), segna il definitivo sciogliersi del «nodo» dell'azione proprio perché comporta un altrettanto definitivo prevalere, sul piano militare, di uno degli eserciti contrapposti». (*Ibid.*, pp. 78-79). «(...) the final duel between the two major heroes belonging to the two opposed camps constitutes an essential element in the framework of the epic poem's structure (...). As far as the whole preceding *narratio* is concerned, the final duel is considered as an event that, following the chain of episodes that to a greater or lesser extent suspend the foreseeable course of events (the function of «delay» pervading the whole poem), marks the definitive resolution of the story's conflict, since it implicates an equally definitive military victory of one of the two belligerent parties».

<sup>393</sup> G. Graziani, *op.cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*

modelling the image of his character, transforming him into a modern epic hero and thus inscribing «fragments» of the modern historical reality into the poetic whole of *Il Conquistato di Granata*.

Another modality of establishing a direct link between modernity and the classical epic tradition finds its expression in the complex figure of the magician Alchindo. The sorcerer, who quite in line with the Baroque tradition, reveals to be in possession of an «acute mind», as well as ultimate ambitions, keeps changing identities throughout the whole poem. Apart from his transforming himself into various horrible monsters impeding the progress of the Christian heroes, he had actually always been tormented by not possessing an integral identity:

Colui **d'animo fier, d'ingegno acuto,**  
Nacque di **padre Moro, e madre Hebrea,**  
**Ond'era tra duo leggi irresoluto,**  
**E d'ambe professor d'ambe ridea.**  
Fu Sacerdote, e al paragon veduto,  
Che il grado più sublime invan chiedea;  
Sdegnossi, e lasciò il Tempio, e d'altro vago  
Seguace diventò d'Arabo Mago.

(Canto XIV, p.125)

Importantly enough, he is presented as a «*dotto Mago*»<sup>395</sup>, the learned enchanter who leads a solitary existence on the summit of a mountain that is situated literally '**beyond the Pillars of Hercules**' – the legendary *topos* indicating the limit of knowledge available to man, in a figurative sense, as well as the limits of the knowable world in the proper, geographic sense of the word. To cross the «unknown» sea and discover new worlds – such was the radical challenge faced by Columbus in history, as well as in Graziani's poem, whereas crossing the long-established boundaries of human knowledge presented a task accomplished by the magician. Unlike Columbus, Alchindo can be viewed as a controversial hero: he easily lets himself tempted by Hidragorre's instigations and agrees to use his magic art in favour of the infernal plots.

If viewed in the literary perspective, the two heroes refer to the two opposite allegorical poles of absolute divine good and absolute demonic evil, from the other side, both of them are certain to belong to the symbolic dimension of the 'unknowable' world to be found beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Once again, these two figures incarnate the intrusion of the 'unknown' into the fixed canons of the epic genre, abounding in classical *topoi* and situations permeated with the chivalric

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<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

spirit. These innovating, unprecedented elements, however, inscribed into the narrative logic of a classical epic poem and thus being yet far from dominating over the force of the tradition, already by their mere insertion into the *moule épique*, could not but spark off a continuous process of radical transformations the epic genre had to undergo. It is not only with regard to the legendary geographic discoveries, but as well in light of the new horizons opening up in front of the new generation of the epic poets influenced by the new vision of the world that Graziani's prophecy upon the world behind the Pillars of Hercules should be understood: «*Di rado allhor da l'Europee contrade / Navigando cola giunse alcun legno, / Ma ne i tempi futuri aprì le strade / De l'incognito mar l'humano ingegno*»<sup>396</sup>. No previously existing models could provide precise indications for this risky voyage the poetic minds of the second half of the Seicento had to undertake in search of new modalities of literary representation of the culminating recent events that had made such a profound impact upon their imagination.

### **Baroque theatricality and classical epic *topoi*: a subtle interplay of modern and classical traditions**

As it has already been noted above, the text of *Il Conquisto di Granata* can be considered a complex poetic whole in which elements of novelty continuously interact and merge with the traditional ones. Moreover, the poem had absorbed a number of the traits proper to the Baroque literary tendency that can be first and foremost perceived in the accentuated **theatricality** of the given text. It is essential that even the background of the poetic action – mostly concentrated either in the «intricated» forest, in the territory situated 'beyond the Pillars of Hercules', or on the battlefield in Granada – displays to be first and foremost a theatrical space, while the reader becomes a «spectator»: «*Qual al mutar de la volubil Scena / Lo spettator confuso immobil resta / Vedendo spumeggiar l'onda, e l'arena / Dove sorger mirò torre, o foresta*»<sup>397</sup>. Everything reveals to be frail and illusory in this Baroque world, where the topical places are futile decorations of the characters' actions whose primary function is to impress the «spectator» by way of «confounding» and deceiving him.

Graziani, in line with the spirit of the Baroque tradition, aims at affecting the reader's senses, by provoking with him such emotions as horror, surprise, curiosity, or, most importantly, marvel or astonishment. In order to influence the reader's susceptibilities, the poet makes full use of the literary devices that traditionally belonged to the dimension of the dramatic art, notably

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<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

constant changes of his character's identity, as well as the final agnition. Most of the characters of *Il Conquistato di Granata* are known to have changed their identities – a change that is frequently accompanied by carnivalesque disguisements. Many a character either chose, or were bound to wear masks most of which are finally removed due to the poet's adopting the device of agnition in Canto XXI. Thus, all the characters, who find themselves on the board ship sailing to Granada with the exception of Consalvo, have their masks removed: to mention a few examples, Rosalba and Darassa, disguised as male warriors, reassume their feminine identity, the latter one wishing to change as well her religious identity, by converting to Christianity. The example of the Pagan *virgo bellatrix* is followed by Arezia, the younger daughter of the magician Alchindo. As the travellers proceed in their voyage towards Granada, new traits are added to the identity of Rosalba's character, since Armonte recognises the girl, revealing her noble origins. These initial agnitions only mark the beginning of the whole chain of dramatic revelations as to the characters' identity: the humble shepherd accompanying Armonte and Altabruno, displays to be Sireno, Hernando's friend who had left Granada and due to a combination of circumstances, or 'accidents' found himself on board with the Spanish heroes. The chain of the unforeseen revelations continues to evolve: the 'false' shepherd suddenly recognizes Rosalba who, according to his story, is Hernando's twin sister, whom everybody believed to be dead as a child. Finally, the pious Hermit makes a startling revelation as to his authentic identity: it comes out that in the past he was a courtier who eventually fell into his sovereign's disgrace and following a chain of unfavourable circumstances decided to abandon the court life<sup>398</sup> for a solitary existence of a hermit. Revelations are not ended yet: Hernando – the hero who appear to be in the centre of the episode, being to a different extent linked to most of the characters – unveils his beloved Elvira, his story and identity: only out of love for the Moorish princess, he had taken the decision to abandon his military deeds, as well as his Christian homeland and come to the reign of Al-Andalus, disguised as a court servant Zoraida. His words are followed by those of Ordauro who in his turn tells his own complicated story, as well as discloses the most important fact: Elvira reveals to be the daughter of the distinguished Christian military commander, Armonte d'Aguilar, her real identity thus being Christian, and not a Moorish one.

This final revelation of the canto happens to be crucial, since it exerts a dramatic impact not only on the further course of the events, but, most importantly, influences the outcome of the Christian war with the Moors: in order to redeem her past, Elvira who has now regained her real, Christian identity, unveils the Spanish warriors the mystery essential for their triumph: a part from defeating the Moorish army, another demand should be fulfilled, to come into full possession of

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<sup>398</sup> The hero being disillusioned by the court life opting to retire to a solitary place, refusing his existence as a courtier is another crucial Baroque theme present in *Il Conquistato di Granata*.

Granada. The mystery belongs, of course, to the dimension of the marvellous: the heroes have to dispose of the urn containing the ashes of the legendary Garnata, a sorceress who had found the city and had handed it down to the dynasty of the Moorish kings. It is thus that such theatrical devices as sudden dramatic revelations and agnitions leading to complete transformations of the characters, as well as the changes of their identities that prove to have an impact not only upon the alternations and twists of their personal existence, but as well upon the outcome of the core historical event making the basis for Graziani's inventive poetic narration. Undoubtedly, all of these metamorphoses cannot but reflect the extremely dynamic atmosphere of the world of the Baroque, where everything finds itself in a state of flux, identities and circumstances undergo continuous transformations, and characters populating it tend to constantly wear, as well as change their masks. This carnivalesque spirit accompanies the whole action of *Il Conquistato di Granata*, serving as a fluctuating literary background for the characters' adventures, as well as for the seemingly infinite chain of 'historical' events. Even the figures of such glorious epic heroes as Hernando, the future *conquistador* of Mexico, and Columbus do not escape the common fate of Graziani's characters. We have already cast light upon the nature of Hernando's complex transformations; as to the Ligurian navigator, he presents himself to Malaga disguised as a Pagan warrior, in order to deceive the Moors:

**Risolvo di vestir l'armi Pagane,  
E le bandiere, e gli abiti nemici,  
E fingendo, che fian genti Africane,  
In Malaga introdurre i finti amici.**

Eseguisco il pensier, nulla rimane  
O d'ardire, o di forze, o d'**artifici**,  
Che non si tenti allhora, e non si adopre  
Per render più spedito il corso d'opre.

(Canto XXVI, p. 246)

Although Columbus's transformation is more a temporary carnivalesque disguise dictated by the circumstances not a change of identity in the proper sense of the word, still it seems important to note that with the author of *Il Conquistato di Granata*, the given theatrical device does not refer exclusively to the dimension of «*gli amori*», but appears to be omnipresent, as it extends itself as well to the world of «*l'arme*». Another comment to make in this connection concerns, once again, the figure of the illustrious Columbus: if in the decisive combat, he shows himself as a

classical military commander who wins first and foremost due to such primary chivalric notions as honour, virtue, force and intrepidity, in the Malaga episode, the poet accentuates such essential Baroque qualities as an ingenuous, as well as a shrewd mind that does not hesitate to resort to such «artifices» as disguise and, in the last analysis, deception that reminds the reader of *The Odyssey*, rather than of the *Iliad*, as well enable him to draw a parallel with a number of the dramatic works.

Although the whole text of *Il Conquistato di Granata* displays important sensibility to the influence of the Baroque, the role of the *topoi* making part and parcel of the classical epic tradition is not to be underestimated. First and foremost, Graziani's poem undergoes a considerable impact of the two classical Italian epic poets that are known to have generated a number of the successors, as well as imitators, i.e. Tasso and, to a lesser extent, Ariosto. We shall dwell on some of the topical situations Graziani lends from *La Gerusalemme liberata*, inserting them into the Baroque canvas of *Il Conquistato di Granata*.

One of the most celebrated episodes of *La Gerusalemme liberata* is the scene of the fierce duel between Tancred, the illustrious Christian crusader, and Clorinda, the Pagan female warrior ending with the heroine's death, as well as the famous scene of her baptism. In Canto XVII of his poem, Graziani represents an episode that similarly to the Tassian one, represents **the one-to-one combat between Silvera and Osmino**, lovers belonging to hostile camps and who, similarly to Clorinda and Tancred fully ignore the authentic identity of each other, until one of them gets a mortal blow. Graziani does not simply calque one of the central episodes of Tasso's epic, but transforms it, or, to put it more precisely, inverts the roles of the characters: in *Il Conquistato di Granata*, it is Silvera who makes part of the Christian camp, while Osmino represents the Moorish reign. If in *La Gerusalemme liberata*, Tancred inflicts on Clorinda the mortal wound and, after the lovers recognize each other, realizing their tragedy, accepts to baptize his beloved, in *Il Conquistato di Granata*, the roles are, once again, partly<sup>399</sup> inverted. In Graziani's poem, it is Silvera who kills Osmino, recognizes him afterwards, and accepts to baptize her lover before his death. As with Tasso, the scene of the «double error»<sup>400</sup> is extremely pathetic, as for instance, Silvera's lamentation after she discovers the identity of her Pagan rival:

**Infauste gioie, e miseri contenti!**

**Già non credei la sorte mia sì dura,**

Che mitigar dovesse i miei tormenti

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<sup>399</sup> «Partly», since it is always the character of the Christian origin to give a mortal blow to his rival, so that the scene of the duel could result in the act of baptizing the lover of the Pagan faith.

<sup>400</sup> The lexeme «errore» is one of the most current one in the text of *Il Conquistato di Granata*.



**Cangiata in guiderdon la sepoltura.**

Ma voi restate inutili lamenti,  
Non si appaga di voi la mia sciagura;  
Se vo' morir, co' che il passato errore  
Emendando la man mi passi il core.

(Canto XVII, p. 157)

As can be seen, Silvera's pathetic lamentation is centred upon the crucial themes of the Baroque: the constantly changing circumstances of the «harsh destiny» that will never allow the possibility of pure joy and happiness not contaminated with misery. In Graziani's poem, complex emotions, as well as drastic changes of the characters' state of mind that can be perceived through their passionate monologues, are described in a most detailed way, the poet clearly appealing to the sensibility of the poem's reader. It is worth noting in this connection that in the episode of the duel, as well as in a number of other scenes, the theme of the «**mixed affects**» («*affetti misti*») is a crucial one, since it becomes a leitmotiv of the whole poem. Various characters are described by the poet with the special emphasis on their complex emotions and states of mind that cannot be reduced to a single monolithic affect<sup>401</sup>. Thus, for instance, Graziani tries to render Silvera's alternating emotions in the episode of Osmino's baptism:

**Par, che Silvera allhor si riconforte,**  
**Se di conforto è il mesto sen capace;**  
Applauda a i detti, e **sorger vuol, ma sente,**  
Che non regge le membra il piè languente.

**Se ne duol, se ne sdegna entro se stessa,**  
**E di nuovo si affide,** e gli occhi gira (...)

(Canto XVII, p. 158)

If already in the text of *Gerusalemme liberata*, Tasso paid special attention to the representation of human affects, for Graziani, the interiority of the poem's characters comes to the fore. The author of *Il Conquisto di Granata* tends to demonstrate the minimal fluctuations of the

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<sup>401</sup> Most frequently, the characters of *Il Conquisto di Granata* are motivated by «*di mille affetti un misto affetto*» (*Ibid.*, p. 59), independently of their being of Christian or Pagan origins. Moreover, even the infernal forces, in line with this Baroque complexity of affects, are guided by the same «*affetti misti*», as, in case with Hidragorre, who is simultaneously torn by «*Rabbia, Invidia, e Furor*» when complotting against the Spanish army. (*Ibid.*, p. 89).

characters' affects, frequently perceived through minuscule, almost imperceptible gestures and corporal impulses.

Another important scene inspired by the **Tassian episode of Rinaldo and Armida** is the one found in Cantos XIV and XX of *Il Conquistato di Granata*. When due to the conjuration of the Alchindo, the Christian heroes find themselves captives in the magician's castle, Belsirena, the daughter of Alchindo, falls in love with Hernando, determined to do everything to keep him from turning back to war. Similarly to Armida, Belsirena is a magician, as well as the incarnation of feminine charms: «*Tutta amor, tutta vezzi è Belsirena, / E col guardo soave i cori impiaga, / E col dolce parlar l'alme incatena, / Ma grata è la prigion, cara è la piaga*»<sup>402</sup>. The secret affect that Belsirena proves for the Christian hero is a complex pathos – a «double», as well as «instable» affect tormenting her «doubtful heart»: «*Il voler non ripugna, e non consente, / La ragion non conforta, e non raffrena; / Belsirena vagheggia, e pur non brama, / Si compiace d'Hernando, e pur non ama*»<sup>403</sup>. Following these contradictory feelings, the sorceress nonetheless tries to convince Hernando to stay and, similarly to the Tassian Armida, demonstrates him her *loci amoeni*: the castle and the topical enchanted garden<sup>404</sup>. In the magnificent castle everything is a feast for the eye, inspiring happiness and serenity – the main themes of the minstrel's songs that immediately remind the reader of the songs of the sirens and the parrot from Armida's idyllic reign. Why choose the path of war and instability, when one may opt for the «happy wars», as well as the «placid fury» of love?<sup>405</sup> Belsirena does her best to persuade the warrior, the poet alluding to the artificiality of her charms, as well as the insincerity of her attitude of an astute «huntress». It is in this scene that Graziani radically transforms the classical *topos*: unlike Rinaldo, Hernando, after a brief moment of hesitation, firmly rejects Belsirena's offer, having no doubt in his passion for military deeds and despising the temptations of the world of «arts, solitude and feasts»<sup>406</sup>. As they stroll in the enchanted garden, they notice a distant ship that, as Belsirena immediately perceives, presents itself as a perfect incarnation of the world of «*l'arme*» that she scorns:

Mira, dicea, **quel legno; egli trascorse**  
**Popoli immensi, e pelago infinito,**  
E senz'haver lume, o favor da l'Orse  
**Girò d'Africa, e d'India il curvo lito.**  
Desio di poche merci ali gli porse,

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<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>404</sup> For the description of the *locus amoenus*, see *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*

E stese a **vil guadagno** il volo ardito,  
**Tanto può l'or, che l'huom pe'l mar contento**  
**Corre dietro a la morte al par del vento.**

(Canto XX, p. 181)

Thus, a ship that could as well belong to Columbus, symbolises the desire to go beyond the established norms, guided by an insatiable thirst for knowledge, military glory and adventure as opposed to the lethargy of the lavish but spiritually plain existence. Belsirena and Hernando thus represent two different worlds, despising the core values of each others. The sorceress remarks upon the «folly» of the human beings who opt for the world of war: «*Saggio chi solca il mar, cui non offende / Il superbo furor d'Austro, o di Coro, / Quel mar, che fra le pompe, e fra **gli amori** / Sommerge nel **piacer naufraghi i cori***»<sup>407</sup>. To this, Hernando, literally acting as the representative of the New World, retorts, insisting on his identity of a zealous warrior:

Vari istinti del Ciel piovono in terra,  
**Altri segua gli amori, io vo' la guerra.**

**Si appaghi altri ne l'otio, e adori un viso,**  
**Cui diano i pregi lor natura, e arte;**  
Serva a due parolette, osservi un riso,  
Che in duo labbri soavi amor comparte.  
**Il mio cor** non ritrova il Paradiso  
A' i nobili destri in fragil parte,  
**Ma s'innalza colà dove lo chiama**  
**A'i trionfi guerrieri aura di fama.**

(Canto XX, p. 181)

The episode performing the function of making the Christian hero deviate from his military duties thus gets a totally different interpretation with Graziani: there is no need of lending from Tasso figures similar to the ones of Carlo and Ubaldo, since the very attempt of deviation is failed with Hernando's determined rejection to reject his identity of a brave warrior aspiring to a glory that

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<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

will make an «elevated subject» of a historical poem in the centuries to come<sup>408</sup>. No other image could therefore be as far from the Tassian Rinaldo, as the one of the future conqueror of Mexico: in the above-cited monologue, Hernando draws a clear boundary separating the two drastically opposite worlds – the one of love and the one of war – whose inhabitants shall never be able to comprehend, nor share each other’s philosophy. It is interesting to bring into comparison the poem *Il Marte* analyzed in the previous chapter: if in Metello’s *poemetto* inspired by modern history, as well as by Ancient mythology, the reader witnesses an almost complete fusion of the dimensions of «*l’arme e gli amori*», the dimension of love incarnated by the world of Pagan deities determining further course of the military events, in Graziani’s epic poem the two dimensions, although tending to cross, still remain separated, the «folly» and lethargic world of «*gli amori*», as in Tasso, being clearly inferior to the virtuous and ambitious world of «*l’arme*». Graziani thus justifies the interruption of the military events narration by introducing the episode of Belsirena and Hernando’s ardent confrontation, insisting on the ‘intrusive’ character of the scene inserted with the aim of distracting the reader:

Musa; tu non sdegnar, **che in mezzo a l’armi**  
**Spiegghi del vano albergo i folli amori,**  
 E che procuri con soavi carmi  
**Di Marte raddolcir gli alti furori.**  
 Tu sola puoi ridire, e sai mostrarmi  
**Del cieco labirinto i vari errori (...)**

(Canto XX, p. 178)

It is worth noting that the last words of the above-cited verse perfectly reassume **the Ariostesque presence** perceived in *Il Conquistato di Granata*. As Italo Calvino put it with regard to the romantic universe of *Orlando Furioso*, «*Il poema che stiamo percorrendo è un labirinto nel quale si aprono altri labirinti*»<sup>409</sup> – a phrase that could be perfectly applied to Graziani’s epic poem. Despite the author’s firm intention to follow the Aristotelic principle of unity of action, the poem abounds in various accidents involving a whole chain of characters and unexpected turning points alluding to the novelistic genre. In this sense, *Il Conquistato di Granata* had absorbed the Baroque tendency of theatricality along with the principle of variety to be adopted as an essential basis for

<sup>408</sup> As guessed by Belsirena, who ironically questions the warrior upon the reasons of his passion for the world of war: «*(...) a la tua gloria / Qual guiderdon ti fingi, e qual diletto? / Forse tu di Poema, over d’Historia / Il tuo nome figurei alto soggetto?*» (*Ibid.*).

<sup>409</sup> I. Calvino, *Orlando furioso di Ludovico Ariosto*, Preface, 2016, p. 153.

the poetic action, in order to delight the reader, arouse and satisfy his curiosity, as well as affect his senses with the continuous metamorphoses and the alternating characters' affects. Graziani's poem inherits as well the Ariostesque constant of the «*errant movement*»<sup>410</sup> of the Cavaliers wandering in the enormous forest serving as a theatrical stage for the major part of the events. Thus, it is in «*mezzo al bosco antico*»<sup>411</sup> of *Il Conquisto di Granata*, that most of the duels takes place, the characters frequently chancing upon each other, ignoring the authentic identity of their rivals. Similarly to *Orlando Furioso*, the world of *Il Conquisto di Granata* is «*un universo a sé in cui si può viaggiare in lungo e in largo, entrare, uscire, perdersi*»<sup>412</sup>, a labyrinthical universe that keeps overwhelming the reader's imagination. Nevertheless, this bewildering variety of a chain of 'errors' and unpredicted accidents reveals to be an illusion: the poem is indeed a «*complicated mechanism*»<sup>413</sup>, aptly merging the Ariostesque and the Tassian legacy: on the one hand, a strong inclination towards variety and 'error', on the other hand – a marked presence of the principle of unity, enabling no fortuitous element. Tancredi Artico in his introduction to the most recent edition of *Il Conquisto di Granata* thus comments upon Graziani's «*compromise solution*» as to the poem's organization:

Il modo in cui esso [l'argomento] viene organizzato, cioè la *dispositio*, ne è indice. **L'unità della favola (...) è classicamente tassiana**, l'edificio del testo è fondato su **una geometria così calibrata che nessun mattoncino diegetico si può «mutare di sito» senza che «il tutto ruini»**, ma all'interno di tale sistema agiscono delle contropunte interne, delle oscillazioni più profonde di quelle della *Liberata*<sup>414</sup>.

As can be seen from various aspects we dwelled upon in this chapter, *Il Conquisto di Granata* presents itself as a complex poetic whole that had naturally absorbed a number of *various* tendencies: essential traits of the Baroque and impact of the relatively modern historical events coexist with the clearly perceived presence of the already existing epic tradition. The *topoi* belonging to the latter one are, however, never merely transposed to the context of the poem, but tend to be re-elaborated in the light of the new perspectives, values, as well as scientific and geographical discoveries of the given epoch. In this optic, *Il Conquisto di Granata* perfectly

<sup>410</sup> «*Movimento errante*» (*Ibid.*, p. 23).

<sup>411</sup> *Il Conquisto di Granata*, 1630, p. 64. The forest is a permanent background of the poetic action that is also referred to with the Tassian syntagm «*piante ombrose*» (*Ibid.*, p. 54), «*de la selva l'intricate strade*» (p. 57), where Graziani's characters «*vagano*» «*con vari errori*» (*Ibid.*, p. 70).

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16. «A universe in which one can travel far and wide, entering, exiting and getting lost».

<sup>413</sup> *Il Conquisto di Granata*, T. Artico (a c. di), 2017, p. XV.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. XI-XII. The quotations made by T. Artico are taken from Tasso's *Discorsi dell'arte poetica*, II, p. 388. «That is proved by the very way in which it [the subject] is organized, i.e. the *dispositio*. The unity of *fabula* belongs clearly to the Tassian tradition, the text being based upon a geometry calibrated to the extent that no diegetic brick can be «displaced» without «ruining the whole construction». Yet, there are internal counterthrusts acting in the narrative system, fluctuations that are more profound compared to those operating in the *Liberata*».

renders the spirit of its times that were to a considerable extent defined, on the one hand, by the human insatiable thirst of knowledge, i.e. the irrepressible desire to ‘go beyond the Pillars of Hercules’ and, on the other hand, by the general European ambition of undertaking a modern Crusade, first and foremost justified by the increasing necessity to defend their values and faith against the Oriental World. The coexistence of these two tendencies had largely defined **the modalities of innovation** of the epic genre adopted by Girolamo Graziani. Hence *new poetic content* (facts taken from the relatively recent historical past of the last Reconquista events), as well as *new heroes* (Columbus and Hernando, future Hernan Cortés) – these crucial innovations are transferred to the text still rooted in the long-established, now re-elaborated epic tradition with its obligatory chivalric code, as well as conventional topical situations, resulting in the creation of the spectacular «multicoloured and multiform»<sup>415</sup> ‘small’ universe – the «unstable scene» upon which act the characters of *Il Conquisto di Granata*.

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<sup>415</sup> I. Calvino, *op.cit.*, p.12.

## Chapter VI

### **Christian marvellous and modern military techniques: the event of Lepanto interpreted by Pierre de Deimier in *L'Austriade***

*L'Austriade* – the epic poem composed by the French poet Pierre de Deimier presents itself as an essential proof of the wide resonance the Lepanto event had enjoyed in the context of the European history. Already the contemporaries of the naval triumph of October 7, 1571 perfectly perceived the scale it assumed in the perspective of the future of the Mediterranean Europe: not only Italy and France, the direct participants to the combat, but as well other European countries provided an important literary reaction to the core historical event. It is important to underline that France in the given epoch had its own priority to entirely focus its attention upon, i.e. the primary religious military conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. As far as the French religious epic of the period of the end of the Cinquecento - the beginning of the Seicento is concerned, these 'internal' religious conflicts came to the fore – yet, it still gave its literary response to the crucial battle with the Ottoman empire with the two poems written by Pierre de Deimier in 1601 and in 1605, respectively. As it has already been mentioned in Chapter II, it was the first poem, *L'Austriade*, that we have chosen for our textual analysis, since it reflects the author's original literary reaction, the whole action of the poem being completely devoted to the historical fact of 1571, whereas *La Néréide* can rather be considered a Baroque romantic fantasy, where little space is given to the historical part, as the major part of the poetic action is concentrated upon the adventures of fictional characters<sup>416</sup>.

We shall thus start the analysis of *L'Austriade* trying to focus on the most salient aspects as to the literary perspective the poet adopted with regard to the glorious naval triumph. As in the previous chapters, primary attention shall be given to the ratio between tradition and novelty;

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<sup>416</sup> Thus, as has already been mentioned above, even the subtitle of *La Néréide* – «*Ensemble des Destins héroïques de Cléophile et de Néréclie*» (*La Néréide*, 1605) – demonstrates the poetic intention to use the historical fact as a pretext for the further fictional narration in this drastically re-elaborated version of the poem composed in 1601.

faithfulness to the tradition and the choice of inserting innovative traits into the heroic epic poem in question.

In Chapter V, we have already mentioned the existence of two possible literary approaches to the contemporary historical events in the period between the end of the Cinquecento-the beginning of the Seicento. The tendencies in questions, being historically conditioned on the one hand, by the marked decline of the chivalric combats, and by the significant increase in the use of heavy artillery, as well as firearms on the other hand, brought about two different types of epic poems: the one that firmly rejected the technological progress, as well as the new *ars belli*, and the one that, however being far from totally dismissing the epic canons, was eager to accept the ‘new rules’. Pierre de Deimier’s *L’Austriade* belongs to the second group, the poet merging in his poem the fixed tradition of the past with the phenomena of the modern historical reality, the novelty of the art of waging war finding an essential reflection in his ‘contemporary’ epic.

A tendency towards ‘historicity’ can thus be perceived already in the «argument» preceding the poetic text dedicated to the «*tres-haut, tres puissant et tres magnanime Prince, Charles Emanuel Duc de Savoye*»<sup>417</sup>. The historical theme is introduced in an extremely detailed way, Deimier insisting on showing the actual prerequisites – events preceding the Battle of Lepanto: the Ottoman Empire’s breaking of the peace treaty with Venice and the Turkish conquest of the isle of Cyprus. Considerable space of the poem’s introduction is dedicated to the thorough historical summary of the situation – an attention that speaks for itself, especially if we recall the several lines devoted to the introduction of the historical element in Vincenzo Metello’s *Marte* and the total absence of the introductory element in Francesco Bolognetti’s *Christiana vittoria maritima*. Gradually, contemporary history starts paving its way in the epic poems – a presence that despite being an unusual one and therefore requesting new means of expression, is firmly gaining ground, influencing the poets as far as their poetic choices are concerned. Hence, the conscious attempt to bring historical reasons into the centre of the narration, the poet deliberately focusing the reader’s attention upon the details that are far from belonging to the dimension of the marvellous. Thus, the very reason underlying the war of the two civilisations is presented in the poetic «argument» from a mere historical point of view, the author ascribing it not to the infernal plots, nor to a celestial will of a Crusade, but to the ultimate ambition of the young Ottoman Sultan to conquer the world, in order to «surpass, or at least achieve equal glory to the one of his Ancestors» – a desire that was in line with the ancient Ottoman tradition and was only reinforced by the naturally «impetuous disposition» of Selim II:

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<sup>417</sup> P. de Deimier, *L’Austriade*, 1601, p. 2.



Ayant Selim Othoman succédé à Solyman son père en l'Empire des Turcs, entreprit aussi tost de faire la guerre, et à cela autant **poussé de son naturel bouillonnant d'une jeunesse ambitieuse, que conduit et attiré de la coustume des Princes de la race Othomane**, qui est que celui qui succede à l'estat d'un Prince decedé, faut qu'il commence son regne par quelque haute entreprise, **à fin que de ses grands faicts d'armes il puisse surpasser, ou du moins esgaler de sa gloire la grandeur de ses Ancestres**<sup>418</sup>.

It is thus due to the «storm of his ambition»<sup>419</sup> that Selim after breaking the treaty of peace with the Republic of Venice sends his army to various Cyprus regions, including the tragically known Siege of Famagusta in August 1571:

**Et pour cest effaict il despescha une armée vers Cypre** d'environ deux cents mille hommes, sous la charge de Mustapha Capitaine fort estimé, et des Bassas de Galli-poli et de Natolie, **dont cette Isle fut entierement prise apres quelques longs sieges de villes qui furent tres-valeureusement deffendues, et mesmes Famagoste, contre laquelle fut la baterie de cent quarante mille coups de canons**<sup>420</sup>.

The modality of representing the historical events in the introductory part, i.e. the 'argument', as shall be seen later, sets the tone for further poetic narration: attention to details, as well as the general 'historical' intonation, tending to an overall description of the actual military facts. The poet passes to the creation of the Holy League, referring to it as to a crucial reaction of the Christian Europe to the increasing aggression from the East and mentions the election of Don John of Austria, the son of Charles V, to the position of the Commander-in-chief of the League's fleet. Deimier continues providing a detailed account of the Lepanto event – a «marvellous and terrible combat», underlining the universal scale of the battle «animated by the flower of all Princes and noblemen of Italy, Spain, as well of other nations»<sup>421</sup>. Importantly, the poet pays specific attention to the famous six Venetian galleasses – the historical proof of the true technological revolution as far as the new armament was concerned. The extremely efficient firepower of the above-mentioned warships is described as a decisive factor of the Christian victory – an aspect that will develop into a *Leitmotiv* in the whole poetic narration of *L'Austriade*: «**Les six Galeasses des Venitiens furent en ce combat tant redoutables que les Turcs ne les oserent jamais ataquier**»<sup>422</sup>. Attempting at adopting a 'neutral' position of an observer capable of rendering homage to the valiance of the hostile camp, Deimier several times explicitly praises the «renowned Corsairs, Captains and soldiers» of the Ottoman army under the guidance of the famous Turkish General Ali

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<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*

Pasha, who were «as ardent to combat»<sup>423</sup> as the Christian army – a theme that will be as well developed in the poem<sup>424</sup>. It is in the end of the ‘argument’ preceding the poetic text that the reader perceives the allusions to the metaphor of the modern Crusade, as well as the motive of the religious war resulting in a triumph for European Christianity: « (...) *mais en fin la grace du grand Dieu des armées donna la victoire aux Chrestiens, tout de mesme qu’il les avait favoris du commencement en faisant tourner le vent à leur faveur*»<sup>425</sup>. This conclusion brings about another crucial motive of the poem: the triumph of the Holy League fleet that is undoubtedly viewed as a providential one; a fruit of the divine will that from the very beginning of the military operation assisted the Christians, providing for the favourable outcome of this defensive ‘Crusade’.

The above-mentioned points – the role of the new war techniques, especially the heavy artillery and the firearms, as well as the providential factor, or the presence of the marvellous of the Christian kind – are, in our opinion, key aspects deserving a special analysis to which we shall now pass.

#### **New *ars belli* and modern weapons: innovative elements in the poetic text of *L’Austriade***

The most recent technical military achievements of the epoch – the extremely powerful heavy artillery and firearms were, as it has already been noted, among the crucial factors contributing to the naval victory of the Christian fleet. Undoubtedly, modern firearms along with the new (collective rather than individual) type of combat they implicated, presented a challenge for the authors of the epic poems celebrating recent historical events. It is a well-known fact that the chivalric tradition of the past was indissolubly linked to the notions of duels, or one-to-one combats, the main weapons of the combatants being swords, spear and other classical weapons. The progress regarding the modern way of waging war, being first and foremost based on the employment of the heavy artillery and minor firearms, was an unprecedented case as far as the whole previous epic tradition was concerned. New technical achievements put the poets in front of the demanding task of transposing the above-mentioned drastic changes onto the poetic texture of their epics that thus revealed to be a true poetic experiment. As to Pierre de Deimier, the French poet chose not to evade the unprecedented challenge and thus emphasize the importance of this military innovation,

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<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>424</sup> For the issue of the representation of the adversary, see Chapter VIII of the present work.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*

preserving the ‘historicity’ of the poetic text. As a consequence of this modernized approach, the «furious Cannons» become the real protagonist of the Lepanto combat, being celebrated along with the traditional chivalric weapons. The theme of the compatibility of the modern weapons with the conventional ones, as well as with the «royal, magnificent and glorious» subject of the given epic can be perceived already in the poet’s sonnet dedicated «*To his Book*»<sup>426</sup> preceding the poetic text:

**Le suiet de tes vers royal, grand, glorieux,**

Te fera, triomphant, faveurs, heurs, gloire acquerre (...)

**Tes Canons foudroyans craincts en terre, airs et onde,**

**Les fers de tes Guerriers** fleurs, feux, braves du Monde,

Asseurent ton audace au front de l’univers.

The impressive power of the cannons of the Holy League fleet will be celebrated throughout the poem<sup>427</sup>, being the nucleus of the military events in the first canto. Already a brief ‘argument’ to the canto announces the profound, almost «marvellous» impact the cannons exerted upon the evolution, as well as the outcome of the naval combat «*si grand de coeur, de fer, de feu*»: «*L’Auteur ayant propose son sujet: discourt la cause de la guerre de Selim Prince des Turcs contre les Venitiens, l’armée des Chrestiens assemblée à Messine, don’t est General le Prince Don Jean d’Austtiche. Les preparatifs des deux armées pour la bataille (...) Merveilleuses descriptions des bruits, esclairs, fureurs et ravages des coups de canons.*»<sup>428</sup>

The «fury of the weapons» or, to put it more precisely, the rage of the *firearms* appear to be in the centre of the author’s attention already from the beginning of the poetic narration, the description of the first military scenes starting with the poet’s mentioning the first shot of the Holy League’s cannons, according to the order of Don John, the Commander-in-chief, aimed at encouraging the Christian fleet to the upcoming battle: «*Le Prince fait trembler le rempart ondoyant / Par le coup d’un canon fumeusement bruyant, / Pour faire tenir prest à la guerre cruelle / Tous les grands Chevaliers de la troupe fidelle*»<sup>429</sup>. The Ottoman Turks, however possessing less abundant, as well as less modernised heavy artillery, respond to this provocative fire with activating their own cannons whose shots are in their turn echoed by a response that provoke

<sup>426</sup> *L’auteur à son Livre, ibid.*

<sup>427</sup> According to the original poetic intention, the structure of *L’Austriade* was to comprise three cantos (see p. 4 of the *Argument* preceding the poem), yet, the poem remained uncompleted, Deimier having included only a fragment of Canto III in the final version of his epic.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

horror not only with the Ottoman adversary, but also, in line with *topos* recurrent already in Homer, terrify the reign of the sea:

Mais Aly cependant **du coup d'un gros canon**  
**Apelle au duel sanglant l'Heros au grand renom,**  
Don Iean, qui tout soudain à si fiere semonce  
Du canon de coursier fit faire la responce,  
**Avec un bruit si grand que les flots de la mer**  
**S'entrechoquant de peur en vindrent escumer.**  
A ce son allarmeux le Turc blesmit sa face  
Et le soldat Romain en doubla son audace,  
Tandis qu'il apprestait ses canons Milanais (...)

(Chant I, p. 9)

Thus, modern weapons are inscribed into the framework of the canons of the epic genre, the first *coups* of the «raging» cannons turning in this perspective a situation that assumes a status of a new, 'modern' *topos*: a call to a «duel» between the «renowned Heroes». It is clear that such topical lexeme as «duel» is introduced namely for the sake of the 'epic' appearances: the sounds of cannons could first and foremost announce collective military combats – yet, the new military *realia* still needed the solid basis of the tradition to be introduced to the reader, the most convenient way of making them compatible with the old *topoi* being the one of adapting them to the already existing norms of the epic genre. That is as well one of the reasons that account for the frequent use of mythological metaphors, as, for instance, the one in the first canto, evoking Jove's eagle incarnated by the magnificent army of the Holy League:

**Deux Galeasses** guidaient leurs afreux esperons,  
Et **semblait iustement cette superbe armée**  
**L'oiseau de Iupiter, la foudrière emplumée.**

(Chant I, p.10)

In this double metaphor of the Christian fleet, the poet merges the element of modern reality, such latest achievement of in war technique as the famous Venetian galleasses, with the image of the «superb» mythological eagle, both of them being assimilated to a «feathered lightning» by virtue of their being extremely powerful and prompt in action.

The innovating element of the modern weapons displays its natural presence in the topical inspiring discourse of the Commander-in-chief in front of the Christian fleet: «*Faites, que le Soldat tousiours batte ou canonne, / Et que le Cannonier brusle, foudroye et tonne, / Que le Comite ay l'oeil tousiours prompt et vaillant / Pour render le forçat en ses charges vaillant*»<sup>430</sup>. In the first military scenes, cannons indeed perform a crucial role, Deimier celebrating the destructive power of the «loud cannons» with an authentic epic zeal:

**Le bruit haut resonnant fait effrayer la Mer,**

On la voit frissonner, palir, et escumer,

Et **cest horrible son** en passant ces campagnes

Va gronder sur les flancs des prochaines montaignes,

Et là les fermes rocs apres le vont poussant

D'un bruit qui peu à peu regronde en décroissant,

**La fumée soulfhreuse, espaisse et tenebreuse,**

**Rase de son manteau la vague genereuse,**

Et poussée des mains d'un vent doux respirant

**Sur la face des Turcs noire va demeurant.**

(Chant I, pp. 21-22)

Despite the usual solemn epic narration with the hyperbolic references to human military actions as to the ones exceeding and «terrifying» the elements, the description is at the same time abundant with realistic details, such as, for instance, «the obscure, dense sulphurous smoke» leaving its appalling «black» marks on the adversary's face. The poet continues narrating the devastating effect of the Christian fleet's cannons, adopting the palette of black and red (vermillion) colours, as well as trying to render the deafening sound of the powerful firearms in action: «*Cependant le Chrestien tousiours foudroye et tonne, / Ce sont dix mille morts autant de coups qu'il donne, / Les flamboyants esclairs que le Canon despart / Un iour rouge et fumant peignent en ceste part, / Icy lon voit flotter en desbris une antenne, / Icy le ferme nerf de la basse carene / S'esleve sur les flots en cent sortes d'esclas (...)*»<sup>431</sup>. The use of the latest war technique seems to accelerate the rhythm of the combat in an incredible, unprecedented way, creating a thousand-fold difference between the victims of classical chivalric medieval duels, or even the more recent cavalry combats: «*Le foudroyant canon desploye incessamment / Les traicts et les fureurs du plus fier Element: / Chaque coup à la Mort espargne mille fleches, / La Mort branle sa voile en cent sortes de breches*

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<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

(...) »<sup>432</sup>. The cannons become the incarnation of the «most arrogant» and furious element of war, their flame literally equalling the infernal one: «*Les canons (...) de leur gosier affreux / Vomissent de nuaux et de balons soulfreux, / L'air semble estre tout flame, et la fumée oblique / L'esgale avec les feux au manoir plutonique (...)*»<sup>433</sup>. As can be seen, Deimier recurs to the explicit mythological terminology, while describing the effect of the modern weapons, once again merging modern reality with the mythological dimension.

In this combat, «horror is combating with valour»<sup>434</sup>, cannons exerting as well a profound effect upon the morale of the adversary: «*De mille noires peurs les Musulmans estonnent, / Desia la perse mer en vermeille son flanc / De tant de corps sanglants qui vomissent le sang*»<sup>435</sup>. Soldiers, being no longer capable of a moral resistance to the horrid sight are losing their reason from terror and throwing themselves into the waters of the «vermillion» sea: «*Chacun se diligente et se sauve à qui mieux, / Sentant dessous les pieds ce desastre odieux (...)* Ces autres en nageant, autres fuyant la parque / Coupent l'antenne à bas et s'agressent dessus, / Et vont ainsi nageant sur les guerrets bossus (...)»<sup>436</sup>. Moreover, the apocalyptic scene of the confusion of elements abounds in realistic details picturing thousands of crippled bodies:

Icy reste une iambe, icy un corps sans chef,  
 Icy des mains sans bras, et par double meschef,  
 L'esclat d'un corps froissé de ces grondantes bales  
 Au soldat son voisin donne les nuicts fatales (...)  
**Ainsi les membres morts font glisser dans les eaux**  
**Leur vie rougissante en ondes larmoyables (...)**

(Chant I, p. 28)

To affect the sensibility of the reader, rendering in his epic narration the consequences of the fire of the «homicide cannon»<sup>437</sup>, the poet recurs to a sudden change of perspective, inserting in this disastrous scene the idyllic figure of a young Shepherd contemplating the military accidents from the top of the mountain:

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25. Deimier makes an allusion to the mythological dimension, in order to describe the devastating effect of modern historical weapons.

<sup>434</sup> «(...) *l'horreur combat icy avecque la valeur*» (*Ibid.*, p. 30).

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*

**Lors un Pasteur planté sur la cime d'un Mont,**  
**La fumée à longs plis voit s'envoler à mont,**  
 Et puis il voit en bas ces escadres diverses,  
 Presser si grand païs sur les campagnes perses,  
**Et tant de vistes feux sur les bronses fumans,**  
**Il oit les ton-tonnans des boulets escumans,**  
**Et voit les flots salez blanchir en etincelles (...)**  
 Puis il voit ia desia quelque gaillard vaisseau  
 S'acrocher e se batre en un combat nouveau,  
**Tandis qu'en autre part le canon qui poudroye**  
**Encore d'un peu loing les tempestes foudroye.**

(Chant I, p. 27)

In this fragment, the topical figure of a shepherd leading a peaceful existence meets modern military reality<sup>438</sup>: the ruinous, extremely powerful effect of the foudroyant cannons being a *realia* belonging to the actual historical dimension of the new war techniques. Thus, for instance, if we turn to Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata*, we shall as well find the scene of a combat built on the contrast between the active military and the contemplative rural lives. In Canto XVII, the old Hermit together with the «young shepherd» discovers the combat between Silvera and Osmino taking place shortly after the duels between the four warriors:

**Et un Vecchio Heremita, il qual si appressa,**  
**Con rozo pastorello** à destra mira.  
 Questi al romor de la battaglia espressa  
**Al suon de l'armi, à i fremiti de l'ira,**  
 Corse dal vicin bosco ove il Romito  
 Tragge vita solinga in aspro sito.

(*Il Conquisto di Granata*, Canto XVII, p. 158)

In both poems the opposition between the two drastically different worlds is a conventional element – yet, the background, as well as particularities undergo an essential transformation: the Hermit and the shepherd witness the classical chivalric duel, the «sounds of weapons» (the clinking

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<sup>438</sup> In the episode the poet uses the Lucretian *topical* situation of the observer contemplating the raging tempest from his safe position on the firm land.

of the swords) being far from the sounds of the «foaming thunderous cannonballs» from the scene described by Deimier. The latter one, thus, reflects the changes in the historical military reality: the enormous distance between the two dimensions increasing so to become insuperable. In the quoted episode of Graziani's poem, the distance separating the Hermit and the shepherd from the warriors is still a relative one: the characters are not only watching the battle from a *close* distance, having come from the «*nearby forest*», but they are also able to participate in the events directly. Thus, the Hermit eagerly baptizes the dying Osmino, as well as takes care of the heroes wounded in the previous duel, sheltering them in his «humble hut»<sup>439</sup>. Moreover, the two representatives of the idyllic rural world bury the bodies of the perished warriors and lament them in a pathetic way: «*Mosso quinci à pieta di lor sciagura / Col giovane pastor pianse il Romito, / E à la coppia gentil la sepoltura / Destina qual poteano in miglior sito*»<sup>440</sup>.

The Shepherd from the above-mentioned episode of Deimier's poem develops as well a deep empathy towards the scene of combat he observes, but contemplating it from the summit of the mountain, is not able, nor is willing to approach the naval battlefield:

**Lors d'un tel spectacle esmeu dedans son cœur,**  
 L'effray luy peinct le front d'une blesme langueur,  
 Le poil luy dresse au chef, il demeure immobile,  
 Comme les membres froids du rocher de Sipyle,  
 De mesme peur atteint ses chiens et ses toreaux,  
 Sans courir, sans manger tiennent bas les naseaux,  
**Et cent fois ce Pasteur louë son sort rustique,**  
**Sis la guerre qu'il voit en si rude pratique.**

(*L'Austriade*, Chant I, p. 27)

The scale of the combat thus differs drastically from the one of the episode from *Il Conquisto di Granata*: a collective combat whose protagonists – the modern heavy weapons – reveal their capacity of killing «thousands» of warriors in one cannon-shot<sup>441</sup>. The horrible «performance» indeed deeply «moves» the Shepherd, who is extremely grateful for his «rustic» lot, as well as for his position of a distant observer – the one that he would never agree to abandon.

<sup>439</sup> G. Graziani, *Il Conquisto di Granata*, 1650, p. 158.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>441</sup> «*Les pierres, les boulets et les chaines de fer, / Vont despeçant d'un coup une suite de rames, / Et pousser d'autre coup mille diverses ames, / Dans le sombre manoir, et au chemin de Cieux (...)*» (*L'Austriade*, pp. 27-28).



Despite the essential transformations of the military combats perfectly rendered by the French poet, the chivalric code, as well as the concept of a modern Crusade, remains a permanent presence in the given poetic text. The fundamental notion of the chivalric combat traditionally emphasized by the epic genre, i.e. the one of *honour*, is a key concept in *L'Austriade* making its appearance throughout the whole poetic narration. Thus, in the numerous episodes of combats, the poet accentuates the bravery of both Christian and Ottoman adversaries: «*Le sang, et le trepas ça et là nage et vole, / L'honneur aux deux partis esgalement carrole (...)*»<sup>442</sup>.

New types of weapons influence not only the epic description of military combats but as well the portrait of classical epic heroes. Valour and honour remain the essential characteristics of the hero, who, in addition to his perfect skill in fighting with swords and spears now was expected to be well-versed in using the modern weapons, in particular, cannons and harquebusiers. In the second canto of *L'Austriade*, the author describes the valiant Provençal warrior, René, who being eager to avenge the death of the glorious Venetian commander, Agostino Barbarigo, deprives of life a number of Ottoman warriors, resorting to the power of the furious cannons, as well as the one of his sword:

**Mais s'il estait si brave à manier le fer,  
 Il n'estait moins adestre et fort à triompher,  
 A tirer du canon,** la bonté de sa veuë  
 D'un rayon si subtil et prompte estait pourveuë,  
 Et de si ferme nerfs bandaient **sa forte main,**  
**Qu'à descharger la bale il n'estait iamais vain :**  
 Tousiours d'un grave coup il honorait sa bale,  
**Ses boulets s'esgalaient au beau dard de Cephale (...)**

(Chant II, p. 93)

This 'new' skill of making perfect use of the modern war technique is referred to as a characteristic of an epic hero whose behaviour is defined by the primary chivalric notion of honour: «*Car l'honneur du canon à ce fort Provençal, / Comme un Prince en sa terre au monde est sans esgal*»<sup>443</sup>. The new military *realia* becomes part of the 'contemporary' epic adding new elements to the already existing literary tradition, as well as producing new topical syntagms, such as «the honour of the cannon». Moreover, honour encourages René to avenge the Turkish warrior who gave

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<sup>442</sup> *L'Austriade*, p. 66.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

death to his commander: «*Il veit à son costé ce preux Venitien, / Blessé cruellement du traict bisantien, / Et il veit d'autre part sus la poupe ennemie, / L'Archer qui le tira, lors tout bouillant d'envie d'envie / De le venger bien tost, il remit au fourreau / Son glaive qui luisait comme un astré flambeau (...)*»<sup>444</sup>.

It is nonetheless not with the help of the heavy artillery, nor resorting to the «*fauchant lame*» of his sword that the Provençal hero takes his revenge: in this crucial episode a modern fireweapon, i.e. the *harquebusier* comes to the fore:

Et d'un soldat prochain **saisissant l'arquebuse,**  
Avec sa dextre artiste, et prompte et vigoureuse  
Il l'eniouë, et de l'autre **il la tient un peu haut,**  
**Et pliant les genoux l'un plus que l'autre en haut,**  
**Tenant devers le dos d'espaule un peu panchante,**  
**Il cligne un peu l'œil gauche, et de la meche ardante,**  
Par le fer recourbé que la main serre un peu,  
**Lors d'un éclair fumant l'amorce est consommée,**  
**Et la poudre au-dedans aussi tost enflammée,**  
Les feux impatients de se voir enfermez,  
Vont poussant furieux de leurs bras allumez (...)

(Chant II, p. 93)

As can be seen, firearms are steadily making their way into the dimension of epic poetry: the poet, although inscribing new aspects into the traditional context of the heroic fight, is paying a particularly meticulous attention to render the modern way of fighting. Thus, the Christian warrior's pose, his most minuscule gestures are depicted in an extremely detailed way, the modern elements being not merely introduced, but as well emphasized by Deimier. Neither the ruinous effect of another contemporary weapon, the musket, is neglected, the poet thus describing its devastating effect in the episode of the young Christian warrior's death: «*(...) une bale inhumaine / Poussée d'un mosquet fumeusement bruyant, / Luy rompit vers le front le clair timbre ondoyant, / Et allant plus avant porter un coup si grave, / Cruelle elle perça son front si clair et brave, / Et en tyrant le sang d'un si tendre seiour, / L'ame reprint son vol vers l'éternel Amour*»<sup>445</sup>.

As has already been noted, the abundant use of the innovating elements conditioned by the technological progress, as well as by the new military techniques, unfolds against a traditional epic

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<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

background, the poet explicitly referring to the modern Lepanto combatants as to the «brave» and «valiant» «Cavaliers», evoking the medieval French roots of the epic genre when seizing the occasion of describing the French warriors participating in the battle:

**Maintes braves Chevaliers de la vaillante France,**  
Armez en son vaisseau de force et d'assurance,  
**Et combatans hardis en vaillans Paladins,**  
Semaient les bleus sillons de soldats Bisantins.  
***C'étaient tous des Renauds et des Rolands encore,***  
Pour estoiler leur glaive au berceau de l'Aurore,  
Et au lit de Nerée et aux nides d'Aquilon,  
Et aux champs où Phebus cuit le flotant sablon.

(Chant II, p. 104)

Although *L'Austriade* abounds in the episodes representing collective combats with the obviously prevailing heavy artillery and firearms, the text contains as well a number of combats featuring the «Cavaliers» fighting with the classical weapons. Already in the beginning of the first canto, shortly after the initial collective fire attack, the adversaries pass on to the 'hand-to-hand' fight: «*La guerre ainsi dura le temps d'un peu d'espace, / Jusque à ce qu'il fallut s'ataquer face à face, / Se battre main à main, se parler, s'agrafer, / Et donner de la pique et du flamboyant fer*»<sup>446</sup>». The poet provides a description of the first «ferocious combat»<sup>447</sup> of the kind that is no less impressive and spectacular than the already mentioned scenes, displaying the power of the cannon artillery, being almost equally «inhuman»:

Desia, par tous les camps **les guerriers sont aux mains**  
Les allarmes tousiours se font plus **inhumains**,  
Par **la fer qui de pres mené de grand courage**,  
Fait la proie et les bancs le siege d'un carnage.

(Chant I, p. 35)

Despite modern progress in the military technique, the classical hand-to-hand combats are still part and parcel of the historical reality: Deimier eagerly seizes the occasion to lean against the

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<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

epic tradition demanding from an epic poet a solemn representation of the «clanking» iron blades and «glistening harness»:

**Les espées sonnans sur le le harnois qui luit,**  
D'un tintant chamaillis retentissant le bruit,  
Et le bravagement de tant de Capitaines ;  
**Et la voix qui commande aux martiales peine (...)**  
**Un bruit si copieux tonnent en toutes pars,**  
**Si dru, et si epais et de telle furie,**  
Qu'il semble que ce soit l'horrible batterie  
**De cent mille Vulcans et Cyclopes fumeux**<sup>448</sup>,  
Forgeant au Roy tonnant les vistes dards flameux (...)

(Chant I, pp. 35-36)

Depicting the general confusion, as well as the clangorous sounds of the weapons, the poet shifts the overall perspective, passing to the 'close-up' scenes of the one-to-one combats *«pointe contre pointe»*<sup>449</sup>, notably to the ones taking place between the «superb squadron» of Occhiali (Uluç Ali Pasha), the famous Ottoman privateer and the warriors of the left wing of the Christian army under the guidance of Gianandrea Doria. The descriptions of the fighting scenes are rather detailed, display the traditional epic tonality and contain a number of realistic details. Thus, for instance, one of the central episodes of the first canto is the combat between Gianandrea Doria and the Ottoman warrior Deli-Eboubequir. In line with the tradition of the genre, Deimier recurs to the animalistic metaphors, assimilating the «valiant Genoese» to a «proud Eagle»<sup>450</sup>, whereas his adversary is compared to a furious «rapacious Wolf» in search for his prey. The scene of the furious long fight focusing entirely upon the 'duel' between the two warriors results in Doria's ultimate triumph over his Ottoman adversary, the death of the latter one being described in a particularly detailed way:

Or l'honneur Genevois redouble un autre coup,  
**Et de son poignant fer il va guidant le bout**  
**Au dessous du nombril dedans le petit ventre :**  
La Mort par ce chemin soudainement y entre,  
Tandis qu'elle **en sortait les boyaux et le sang,**

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<sup>448</sup> Once again, mythological references are used to describe the destructive action of horrible modern firearms.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

**Qui de sombre rougeur teignait le large banc (...)**

(Chant I, p. 40)

Doria and his squadron continue their fight, the episodes of single combats (such as, for instance, the one between the Genoese commander and the «furious» Dragan bey) alternating with the scenes of the use of firearms, as the one depicting the Christians' pursuit of the Ottoman Turks who are on the verge of obtaining military reinforcement but have to surrender to Doria's warriors:

Les assurez nageurs arment soudain leur bande,  
De l'haleine puissante, et de pieds et de main :  
**Mais tandis diligent l'arquebusier Romain,**  
**Leur descharge ses plombs,** si bien que l'onde fiere  
Au lieu de leur garant est leur perte derniere.

(Chant I, p. 43)

As has already been mentioned, in his descriptions of the military episodes – in particular, the ones featuring singular combats – Deimier insists on providing details not only referring to the course of the combat, but as well the ones concerning its mortal outcome, as, to quote an example, in the scene of the death of the «valiant» Giasser Aga Bey killed by Doria:

Dorie luy fendit la teste et le visage,  
Iusque au pres de la bouche on veit deçà, delà  
Le mol cerveau gluant, qui tremblant s'escoula,  
Meslé parmy le sang dont la playe si grande  
Allait escarlattant la rivagere bande,  
Et puis fluant à plomb sur les flots diaprez  
Les allait colorant de ses crayons pourprez.

(Chant I, p. 45)

Such realistic descriptions frequently referring to the heroes from both camps repeat throughout the whole poem, the poet's objective obviously being the Baroque aspiration to affect the reader's senses, stimulating his imagination to the maximum extent and provoking with him –

as in the reported above scene of the horrified Shepherd contemplating fierce cannon attacks – such intense emotions as terror, disgust and perhaps empathy with the perished warriors.

Similarly, the poem contains a number of macabre descriptions of the combats' outcome, explicitly focusing on the dimension of the horrible, Deimier pursuing the same aim of engaging the reader by way of exerting a considerable impact upon his sensibility. Thus, the image of the blood is a recurrent one in *L'Austriade*: flowing as spilt «honey» it fills and colours the sea waters, transforming them into the «insanguinated field»<sup>451</sup>: «**Le sang d'une liqueur noire, glissante, espaisse, / Coulait à gros filets dans les creux de la casisse, / Et au flanc du vaisseau glissant de toutes pars, / Allait peignant la mer du cinabre de Mars. / Le miel distile ainsi de la Couffe au flanc large, / Lors que le mesnager trop pressement le charge (...)**»<sup>452</sup>.

Another important *Leitmotiv* as far as the descriptions of the combats are concerned, is the constantly evoked image of fire. It should be noted that the role of the latter one in the poem perfectly corresponds to the historical reality of the 'enflamed' sea – an image frequently encountered in the historical descriptions of Lepanto combat: «The calamitous tempest of arquebuses and arrows: it seemed that the sea was in flames, set on fire by the flashes and the fires continuously inflamed by the flamethrowers and other firearms»<sup>453</sup>. The presence of *fire* in *L'Austriade* is an overall one, to be encountered not only in the episodes of the fleets combating with cannons, or muskets but as well in the scenes of single combats. The motive of fire thus appears to be associated not only with the destructive power of the firearms but as well with other types of weapons, as, for instance, the classical «flamboyant»<sup>454</sup> epic swords:

**L'espée est si souvent rallumée** en ce lieu,  
**Qu'en fin elle s'y change en nature de feu,**  
On la voit ore **luire en clairté rougissante,**  
Et en claire rougeur **fierement reluisante,**  
**Ainsi la font paroir le sang et les fureurs,**  
Et à la voir reluire avec telles horreurs.

(Chant II, p. 117)

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<sup>451</sup> «*Champ ensanglanté*», p. 116.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>453</sup> N. Capponi, *Victory of the West: The Story of the Battle of Lepanto*, 2006, p. 263.

<sup>454</sup> P. de Deimier, *L'Austriade*, p. 117.

The motive of fire shows indeed to be a common one for the descriptions of both fire and iron weapon: the warrior's iron shields «glisten as fire»<sup>455</sup> and the heroes «ignite flames»<sup>456</sup> on the battlefield, similarly to Alessandro Negroni, the Italian warrior whose heroic portrait is offered in the second canto: «*Le Prince des combas orné de lauriers d'or, / Qui tournat en ses mains son glaive et son tonnerre, / Rallumait par les camps les ardeurs de la guerre, / Don't les soldats Croisez par mille faicts divins / Aplanoient les honneurs des Vaisseaux bisantins*»<sup>457</sup>. The motive of the commanders «enflaming» their warriors by their own example, echoed by the literal image of the cannons' fire finds its reflection in the image of the flame sparking in the soldiers' souls, incarnating their ardent desire to combat:

Ce bruict, ce son hautain, ce siflet, cest air ague,  
Tant de desirs d'honneur pousse, tourmente et vague,  
**Dans l'ame des soldats d'un feu si grand et fort,**  
**Qu'ils en eussent fait peur mesme à l'horrible mort.**

(Chant I, p. 25)

Deimier adopts as well images pertaining to the semantic field of *fire*, the swords of the Christian warriors being described as lightning capable of striking mortal blows – an allusion to the mythological image of Jove's lightning denoting, in the case of *L'Austriade*, the deeds of *human* bravery:

Ces Chevaliers amez d'ardeur et de prouesse,  
Ne donnaient plus de coups que de sanglantes morts,  
Ny moins de noires peurs que de luyans efforts :  
**Leurs glaives sont un foudre, et ce foudre une parque,**  
Qui les soldats rasez à grandes troupes embarque.

(Chant I, p. 59)

Iron and fire merge in this representation of the military combat, the fleets recurring to all of the above mentioned types of weapons, «ardently employing fire, iron and wood»<sup>458</sup>: «*Les*

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<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

*vaisseaux accrochez, les audaces nouvelles, / Y font courir de rang mille fureurs mortelles, / Par les traicts, les canons, les espés, les espieux, / Qui meslent dans le sang les trespas odieux (...)*<sup>459</sup>.

As K.M. Setton remarked in his *Papacy and the Levant*, « (...) it was indeed incredible that six Galleasses alone might have produced so much destruction»<sup>460</sup> – an essential observation that puts special emphasis on the real protagonist of the Battle of Lepanto. «Iron and fire», traditional combat based upon the strong code of honour and the latest technical military achievements – the epic of the Seicento from now on freely merges these elements, inscribing them into the context of the modern Crusade. Yet, the recent technological progress offering new typology of warships and weapons accounts for the privileged status enjoyed by these military inventions. Increasingly more powerful and thus more devastating war techniques implicate a totally new scale of military operations creating conditions when merely a couple of cannon-shots could deprive of their lives hundreds of soldiers. This new historical reality finds its perfect reflection in *L'Austriade*, the poem containing numerous descriptions of the cannons «whitening the waters with the flowing vapour of the sulphurous powder»<sup>461</sup>, as well as making the waters vermilion with the blood of the incalculable number of victims. Moreover, the extremely potent weapons contribute to the existence of the essential current in the epic poetry that without denying the providential character of historical military triumphs tends to emphasize their 'human' aspect, most of the victories in *L'Austriade* being brought namely by the efforts of illustrious military figures, rather than being a direct result of divine, or infernal interventions. It is to the role that the marvellous element has to play in the general historical background of Deimier's epic that we shall now turn to.

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<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>460</sup> K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, vol. III, p. 499.

<sup>461</sup> «A pres que les canons eurent blanchi les eaux / De l'ondante vapeur de la soulfreuse poudre(...)» (P. de Deimier, *L'Austriade*, p. 145).



## **Christian ideology and manifestations of the marvellous in Deimier's representation of the Battle of Lepanto**

Already in the general «argument» preceding *L'Austriade*, the poet mentions the upcoming «marvellous and terrible»<sup>462</sup> combat – an announcement that makes one question oneself upon the modality of the representation of the battle to be depicted in the following cantos. What kind of marvellous will manifest its presence in the poem and what shall be the role performed by the marvellous element – these are the immediately arising questions to which we shall now seek to provide an answer.

An important comment to be made concerning the presence of the marvellous in the poem is its essentially Christian nature. References to Ancient history and mythology perform indeed the function of the decorative elements: thus, for instance, René, a French hero, is referred to as «a new Mars»<sup>463</sup>, whereas the Italian warrior, Alessandro Negroni is called «a new Alexander»<sup>464</sup>; Christian militaries are constantly named the «Roman heroes» and the Ottoman ones being made reference to as «Byzantine soldiers». A typical example is the fragment praising the virtues of the Perugian warrior, marquis Ascanio della Corgna and his squadron – a portrait that combines references to Homeric heroes and the Roman god of war with the allusions to the Roman and the Byzantine Empire:

**Le grand Maistre de Camp Ascaigne de la Corne,**  
Dans un leger Vaisseau du saint Père Romain (...)  
Sa **guerriere valeur** estait brave suivi,  
De **genereux Romains** à qui ardante envie  
D'aquerir de l'honneur au durs travaux de **Mars**,  
Leur faisait adorer les plus cruels hasars,  
Hassan-raix commandant un vaisseau de **Bisance**,  
Epreuva en sa fin l'heur et la suffisance,  
De ce **prudent Seigneur en guerre et en conseil**  
**Au glorieux Pelide et à Nestor pareil.**

(Chant II, p. 119)

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<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

«His hand was guided by Mars and his steps by Minerve»<sup>465</sup> – Deimier adds further details to the already outlined portrait of the «brave Roman»<sup>466</sup> warrior, underlining his principal virtues: military valiance and sagacity. Descriptions of this type are frequently encountered in *L'Austriade*, the role of the mythological element adopted, as can be seen, being an ornamental one<sup>467</sup> serving to underline the bravery, as well as other classical virtues of the epic heroes.

As to the main poetic corpus of *L'Austriade*, the presence of the marvellous is mainly defined by the general Christian concept underlying the poem, as well as the historical fact in question: the Battle of Lepanto perceived as a Modern Crusade. The Christian perspective permeates Deimier's epic from the very beginning of the poem, the author referring to the «faithful Christians that by deed and by heart shall give their life»<sup>468</sup>, in order to defend the Christian values, as well as abolish the Ottoman menace. Thus, a topical prayer to the divine forces precedes the Battle of Lepanto, a «devout Capuchin» performing the rite of addressing Heaven and blessing the «sacred army»:

Le Pere ayant fini **la mystique parole**  
Fit apres sa priere au Monarque du pole,  
**Puis avec la main dextre au nom du trois fois saint,**  
**Du signe de la croix il sanctifie et ceinct**  
L'exercite sacré, tandis qu'en la Royale  
**La troupe des soldats tres devote** et loyale,  
Ayant bas le genoux et le chef decouvert,  
**Ont l'œil, l'ame et la voix devottement ouvert**  
**Vers l'estendart divin, et vers le mont celeste,**  
**Où le regne de Christ ses gloires manifeste.**

(Chant I, p. 9)

Deimier explicitly focuses the reader's attention upon the divine spirit reigning among the «extremely devout and loyal» Christian warriors following the «mystical» divine word with their «eye, soul and voice». The upcoming battle receives thus a primary signification of not a mere,

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<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>467</sup> Another example of the mythological element bearing the conventional value of a classical *topos* is the presence of the allegorical figure of Fame breaking to the Ottoman Turks the news of the Holy League creation: «(...) Tandis la Renommée hautaine messagere, / Courant sur le Zephir de sa plante legere, / Va denonçant partout d'yeux, de bouche et de mains, / Le dessein et l'apprest des Monarques Romains, / Dont le Prince Selim esmeu de ces nouvelles, / Fit renforcer soudain ses pouples infidelles (...)» (*Ibid.*, p. 4).

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*: «Aux fidentes Chrestiens qui de fait et de cœur / Employeroient leur vie à guerroyer le Turc».

however important, military operation, but the one of the combat undertaken in the name of the divine will, the participants to the Holy League being viewed as modern ‘Crusaders’ «agitated» by the ardent desire to triumph over the Oriental adversary:

**Le zele de la foy, l’honneur du Roy des cieux,**  
**Les agite si fort,** que leur ame et leurs yeux  
Souspirant et pleurant, tesmoignent que **leur vie**  
**N’a point autre repos, autres feux, autre envie,**  
Que desia se mesler dans l’horreur des combas,  
En triomphant des Turcs s’exposer au trespas.

(Chant I, p. 9)

In the verses announcing the combat the poet indeed tends to accentuate the religious motivation of the Christian fleet: as can be clearly seen from the above-cited fragment, the affect prevailing in the minds of the Holy League warriors is their determined desire to serve the divine will. Don John of Austria, addressing his fleet, formulates the main objective of the military expedition, emphasizing its global scale, as far as its divine mission is concerned: «**La sainte Eglise attend le fruict de vos valeurs, / C’est vous qui changerez en triomphe ses pleurs, / Si vous faites la guerre en grand et vaillant home / C’est la gloire du Ciel comme celle de Rome (...)**»<sup>469</sup>.

A crucial symbolic image is introduced immediately after the scene of the common prayer symbolizes the actual historical meaning of this ‘new’ Crusade:

(...) Et Louïs de Cardonne et un Religieux,  
Qui portait en ses mains **l’image precieux**  
**D’un humble Crucifix, à fin que ceste image**  
**Leur renforça le zelle avecque le courage.**

(Chant I, p. 15)

The «precious image» of the «humble Crucifix» serves to «reinforce zeal and courage» of the «sacred army», the nationality of each warrior being no longer important, since all of them – Italians, French, Spanish, etc, are viewed in the Commander-in-chief’s discourse as the «valiant Cavaliers» united under the standard of the Christian faith:

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<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Mais, **braves Chevaliers, quel'honneur du grand Dieu,**  
**Et l'amour des vertus commande vostre vœu,**  
Non point l'ambition et l'honneur de la terre,  
Qui faict estre plus vain que fidelle à la guerre.  
**O Germains courageux, o braves Castellans,**  
**O genereux François si prompts et si vaillans,**  
**O Romains glorieux,** voicy ceste iournée,  
A vos faicts, à vos heurs **par le Ciel destinée.**

(Chant I, p. 18)

Don John of Austria's magnificent appearance and fervent discourse are inspired by the divine spirit, as well as pervaded by the essential desire of the Crusaders – the one of «defending the laws of God»:

Luy d'autre part en haut tenait hors du fourreau  
Son glaive qui luisoit **comme un divin flambeau,**  
Voulant signifier par cette blanche espée  
**Que l'ame et que la main devoit estre occupée**  
**Et d'amour et de force, à deffendre les loix**  
**De Dieu qui pour nos heurs voulut mourir en croix (...)**

(Chant I, p. 15)

The sword in the hand of the «magnificent Austrian Hero»<sup>470</sup> is compared to a «divine torch» that transforms itself into another crucial symbol of the Crusade spirit: «force» and valour it shall demonstrate on the battlefield should be corresponded by the divine «love» reigning in the warriors' «souls» – the one that renders the Princes «flowing» words similar to the «sweet Attic honey»<sup>471</sup>, thus tempering the genuine military attitude<sup>472</sup> with the divine intention. In his discourse, Don John encourages the warriors to perform «elevated» glorious deeds without fear or doubt, firmly believing in their mission:

**Le Ciel combat pour nous, nous ne manquerons pas.**

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<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>472</sup> «*En coeur tout militaire*» (*Ibid.*).

D'acquérir de la gloire en ces iustes combas,  
**Nous portons sur le flanc la guerrière alumelle**  
**Pour défendre de Christ la très-sainte querelle,**  
Dieu nous vise desir de ses regards plus doux,  
**Hé si Dieux est pour nous ! qui pourra contre nous?**

(Chant I, p. 15)

The glorious Commander-in-chief is ensuring his fleet to take Heaven's support for granted, since no one shall be able to resist an army combating for the divine cause and being guided by the divine spirit. Potent weapons are as well evoked in Prince's discourse, who asks his warriors to rely as well upon their own bravery and the potent modern weapons at their disposal:

(...) **Les excédons nous pas en force et en courage?**  
Quand vous serez mêlés aux horribles combas,  
Que ce soit **vos amours et vos plus doux esbas.**  
La tonnerre et l'effort, **des canons et des armes,**  
Vous soit un clair triomphe au plus noir des vacarmes.

(Chant I, p. 17)

This discourse is echoed by Ali Pasha's speech delivered in front of the Ottoman army: the Turkish commander adopting a universal perspective of the struggle between the two mutually hostile civilisations seen as representatives of the two religions, one of which is to be subjugated by another:

O valereux Bassas, Sangeacs et Janissaires,  
Mesnage vivement les belliqueux affaires,  
Voicy, voicy le point, qu'il faut jusques aux Cieux  
Eslever nos honneurs par le fer glorieux :  
**L'honneur des Othomans et de Mahon encore,**  
**Auiourd'huy par vos mains s'esleve et se redore,**  
Portez avec la force un courage indomté,  
**Voilà sous nostre ioug toute la Chrestienté**  
Si vous avez au cœur un assuré courage (...)

(Chant I, p. 20)

To bring «under the yolk» the Christian civilisations – such is primary objective of the Ottoman army’s military attacks against the Christian fleet. Deimier, similarly to the already analyzed Italian authors of *La christiana vittoria maritima*, *Il Marte* and *Il Conquisto di Granata*, insists on the importance of the religious basis underlying the military conflict between the powers of the Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire – the conflict rooted in the age-long desire of the Mediterranean civilisations in question to expand themselves at the expense of *the other*, conquering not only the other civilisation’s territories, but as well their faith and indomitable spirit.

After having established the religious perspective in common for Deimier, Bolognetti, Metello and Graziani, it would be interesting to see whether the French poet makes a similar use of the general concept of the conflict between two religions in a similar way. In the previous chapters we have already considered the abundant use the poets made of the dimension of Christian good and infernal evil, Heaven and Hell intervening directly into the course of the military events<sup>473</sup> in order to guide and support the heroes in their combats, similarly to the Pagan deities in the classical epic poems. Let us now see how the Christian marvellous manifests its presence in *L’Austriade*.

The first allusion to the divine intervention appears already in the general argument preceding the two cantos: in the detailed relation of the historical reasons behind the European conflict with the Ottoman Empire, as well as the authentic details regarding military preparations and the course of the battle, the poet in one sentence formulates his providential vision of the Lepanto triumph: «*La bataille dura 5 heures avec maintes signalées prouesses des deux partis: mais en fin la grace du grand Dieu des armées donna la victoire aux Chrestiens, tout de mesme qu’il les avait favoris du commencement en faisant tourner le vent en leur faveur*»<sup>474</sup>. The argument ends with the narrator anticipating the topical epic situation – the prayer of gratitude to the divine forces performed by the Commander-in-chief<sup>475</sup>: «*Le Prince d’Autriche (...) s’en retourna au lieu de la bataille, où il rendit graces à Dieu de la victoire*»<sup>476</sup>. There is no doubt that in the above cited verses Deimier alludes namely to the Christian God, the whole poem being permeated by the spirit of the Crusade, as well as abounding in references to the Christian

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<sup>473</sup> As has been shown above, to a lesser degree in Bolognetti’s *Christiana vittoria maritima*, the poet tending to render the historical facts in a rather meticulous way, and to a greater degree in Metello’s *Marte*, a poem that, however being undoubtedly inspired by the historical facts, still remains a *favoletta* where the marvellous mythological element constantly accompanies the historical narration, frequently prevailing upon the latter one. As to Graziani’s *Conquisto di Granata*, the poem dedicated to the events of the Reconquista period, one observes the same perspective of the clash between the two civilisations, represented in the poetic text as a crucial struggle between the divine and the infernal forces incarnated by the Christian Spain and the Islamic Ottoman Empire respectively.

<sup>474</sup> *L’Austriade*, 1601, p. 3.

<sup>475</sup> The final episode of prayer did not enter the published version of *L’Austriade*, since the text that according to the author’s intention was to comprise three cantos, remained uncompleted, having included the first two cantos and a brief fragment from the third one (*Rodomontades de Deli-Soliman*).

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*

ideological values. The more succinct argument to the first canto mentions, more specifically, «the arrival of Archangel Michael who makes the wind change in the favour of the Christian army»<sup>477</sup>, thus announcing the crucial intervention of the «divine grace» into the course of the battle. The episode of God's ordering Saint Michael to intervene in the course of historical events by sending the Christians favourable wind is thus introduced in the poetic text:

Et ie diray bien plus : **mais mon esprit, il faut,**  
**Faire iusques au Ciel un angelique saut,**  
Il faut que maintenant **de moy ne se voisine**  
**Que cette celeste fureur, que pensée divine,**  
Ou bien que **tous mes sens soient un divin penser,**  
A fin de saintement en ces gloires penser (...)

(Chant I, p. 10)

As can be seen, the introduction of the divine dimension coincides with the appearance of *the narrator's voice* making an explicit intervention in the episode dedicated to the description and celebration of the Holy League fleet. This is more than a mere coincidence, for the whole *topos* of God entrusting his *nuntio* with a mission is shown from a new perspective – the one of an acute observer, i.e. the narrator whose presence, however invisible, becomes an obligatory one. Moreover, the whole episode taking place in the heavenly reign becomes possible namely due to the narrator, as it takes place – as underlined by Deimier – in his own mind («*esprit*»). The narrator's figure has to undergo a complex transformation: all of his «senses» are to turn into a pure «divine thought» so that the passage to the «angelic» world might be committed. The topical situation becomes even more complicated, since the narrator's mind is not immediately transposed into the divine realm: on the contrary, the latter one appears to be transferred into the narrator's «*esprit*» that being purified from all the manifestations of the *ego* transforms itself into the «celestial pathos»<sup>478</sup>, becoming thus a perfect background for the representation of the heavenly dimension and the «mysterious word» of God:

**Il me semble de voir** sur la sainte Montaigne  
**Par moyen de la foy ma fidelle compaigne,**  
Le Roy de l'univers au throsne glorieux,

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<sup>477</sup> «*La venuë de saint Michel l'Archange, qui fait changer le vent en faveur des Chrestiens*» (*Ibid.*, p. 1).

<sup>478</sup> According to the Larousse Dictionary, one of the significations carried by the French lexeme «*fureur*» is «*passion*» – the meaning that appears to be adapted to render the lexeme into English.

Qui s'esleve tout grand, haut sur les Cieux des Cieux,  
 Dire ainsi à Michel le Prince des fidelles,  
 Bel Ange, mon amour aux lumieres si belles,  
 Va t'en mon cher soucy, mon doux penser la bas,  
 Oû mes aimez enfans vont tenter les combas  
 Contre les Bisantins, et fay que la victoire  
 Au party des Chrestiens soit tres-belle et notoire.

(Chant I, pp. 10-11)

Already the first verses of the episode of the divine mission prove the above stated hypothesis: the scene unfolds through the prism of the narrator's mind, the latter one acting as an explicit mediator between the celestial and the human worlds. «*It seems*» to the narrator that he assists the divine discourse, the scene assuming the character of a prophetic vision, or a dream that are brought to life due to the two factors: the force of the vivid poetic imagination and, first and foremost, his «faithful companion» – genuine «faith».

A similar transformation of the classical *topos* can be observed in the episode of Don John of Austria's encouraging discourse in front of the Holy League fleet. In the given scene no direct divine interventions, such as, for instance, the topical apparitions of the divine messenger to a monarch or a Commander-in-chief selected for the sacred mission, are to be encountered, the Spanish hero merely «sensing» the divine presence and support: «*O Romains glorieux, voicy ceste journée, / A vos faicts, à vos heurs par le Ciel destine, / Sans doute le Chrestien restera le vainqueur, / Un Ange, ie le sens, me le dit dans le coeur*»<sup>479</sup>. Once again, the reader assists to a highly subjective sensation this time experienced by the Commander-in-chief of the Christian army whose fervent speech is centred upon the idea of the warriors' being inspired by the divine spirit.

This concept of the divine inspiration as a source of support and a guarantee of the future triumph is extremely important in *L'Austriade*. In this optic, God, as well as his messengers, does not make his appearance in a direct way, the essential prerequisite to accessing the divine aid being, once again, the warriors' unquestionable faith enabling them to imagine – «sense» – in their minds the presence of the divine spirit.

Imagination becomes thus an essential device of the narrator to be adopted in order to offer the reader a meticulous description of not only the events taking place in the divine world, but also the historical facts. The reader is directly involved in the poetic process, since the poet explicitly appeals to his imaginative capacity enabling him to grasp the scale of the ferocious naval combat:

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<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.



**Imagine a part toy**, quels bruits, quels sons, quels chocs  
Peuvent froisser, frapper, gronder, l'air, l'eau, les rocs,  
Douze cent gros canons que ces grandes armées  
Des fruits de la victoire asprement affamées.  
Font lascher en un coup avec autant d'esclairs,  
Et de volans nuaux rouges, noir, gris et clairs.

(Chant I, p. 16)

The description of the tremendous cannons undoubtedly aims at affecting senses of the poetic recipient, yet the reader is as well asked to make an effort and try to conceive the overwhelming spectacle with his mind's eye, the narrator's words acting as a spur to the recipient's imagination. In this perspective, the whole episode receives a double dimension: the battle scene, without doubt, is referred to as an authentic historical fact but at the same time, as emphasized by the poet, it takes place in the sphere of the reader's – as well as the narrator's – mind, or imagination.

Such poetic attitude proves the important transformation the epic thought undergoes in the Seicento, marking a growing tendency towards a more subtle, as well more subjective perspective poetry adopts as far as the representation of the historical events is concerned. In Deimier's poem, divine providence is still considered to determine the historical facts, but at the same time, the poet does not hesitate to accentuate the role of human bravery, courage and determination, clearly diminishing the direct manifestations of the divine will. The latter one indeed, however being the fundamental source of inspiration for the Holy League fleet, is present exclusively in the narrators' imagination: the characters are encouraged by the divine spirit but have to combat literally on their own. The poem thus contains only two cases of direct manifestations of the divine will: the first one relates to God's sending Archangel Michael to assist the progress of the Christian fleet and the second one takes place in the episode of the one-to-one combat between the Venetian admiral Sebastian Venier and the Ottoman warrior Gider-bey. The scene of the duel is another important case of an explicit divine intervention: an Angel saving the warrior by diverting the enemy's hand:

Et par la mort d'un grand se rendre renommé,  
Il recherche Venier, et d'une iaveline,  
Qu'il osta violent du **gregeois Carabine**,  
Qui s'en estait saisi d'un soldat baptisé,

Tout porté de fureur et d'audace embrasé,  
**Il luy guide la poincte au milieu du visage,**  
**Mais l'Ange son support destourna cest orage,**  
Et fait glisser le fer au flanc du morrion (...)

(Chant II, p. 113)

This conventional epic situation interestingly includes a new element: the mention of the modern weapon, the «Carabine» «seized» by the «furious» Ottoman warrior that the divine messenger easily defeats. In this episode, tradition overcomes modernity, but the topical intervention of the marvellous directly on the battlefield remains unique, the rest of the victories being won by the deeds of the heroes inspired by the divine spirit.

It is worth noting in this connection that magic to which the Ottoman warriors try to resort is definitely defeated so that the adversaries have to admit its illusory and «deceiving» character. Thus, an «experienced magician» who had «predicted» the defeat of the Christian fleet sees his illusions shattered and dies, cursing «Pluto and his empire»:

Ioussouf, et Albon **dont la magie experte,**  
**A predire les faicts du recellé futur,**  
Le decoroit par fois d'un propos non mentuer,  
Fol, il avait predit que sa dextre guerriere,  
Serait de maints Chrestiens à ce iour la meurtriere,  
Et qu'il verrait vainqueur le camp des Musulmans (...)  
**Mais il fut bien trompé, car l'esprit deceuveur**  
**Soy-mesme en l'abusant redoubla son erreur (...)**  
**En mourant il maudit Pluton et son empire,**  
**De ce que son malheur n'avait sceu predire (...)**

(Chant II, p.110)

All of these prayers are destined to fail: thus, another Ottoman warrior vainly invokes his sister, hoping that she would pray to Muhammad to save him from death «inspiring into his heart the immortal vigour and force» but shortly understands the vanity of his expectations: *«Il discourroit*

*ainsi de coeur et de bravade: / Mais sa priere en l'air pris en vain sa tirade, / Sa soeur pour ester loing ne le peut pas ouïr, / Ny Mahon d'autre part en rien le secourir*<sup>480</sup>.

As can be seen from the above cited examples, if the role of the direct divine manifestations supporting the Christian army is limited to the two cases, the 'marvellous' interventions favouring the Ottoman Turks lose their significance: neither Muhammed, nor the demons<sup>481</sup> traditionally associated with the «sacred army's» adversary can overcome the bravery of the Holy Leagues' heroes, not being even «capable of predicting» the Ottoman army's «adversity», to say nothing of assisting them.

Human valiance indeed comes to the fore in Deimier's poetic narration of the Battle of Lepanto, the splendid shining sword of Don John of Austria<sup>482</sup> being only figuratively reminiscent of the enchanted weapon playing crucial role in the decisive battle in Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata*. In *L'Austriade*, the «brave Cavaliers» turn into the «new Parcae» cutting the thread of the Ottoman lives due to their courageous spirit: «(...) *Ces braves Chevaliers, / Qui de fers retrempez au sang des infidelles, / Semblaient en cest endroit mille parques nouvelles, / Tant ils roulaient de Turcs sous leurs glaives trenchans* (...)»<sup>483</sup>.

However cardinal, the celebrated military virtues of the warriors still are not viewed as unlimited, the poet underlining the providential conception of the combat. The divine will grants the combatants «a divine heart, as well as a divine force»<sup>484</sup> – qualities that essentially account for the successful outcome of their deeds. As far as the Christian ideology underlying Deimier's narration of the Lepanto event is concerned, it would have been certainly useful to analyze the presence of the Christian marvellous in the third canto of the poem. Unfortunately, the text remained uncompleted, Deimier having concluded the version in question with the two «hymns» pervaded with the Christian spirit. The first of the two hymns, «*Himne de la paix*» is of particular interest for our analysis: inserted by way of the poem's final part, the text is devoted to the latest events of Franco-Savoyard War of 1600-1601 and contains an urgent appeal for putting an end to the discords between Christian powers. The poet thus introduces the preceding epic content into the highly actual historical context, the narration of the Lepanto combat revealing to be a 'warning' against the «raging» «Erinys» of the internal European wars threatening to ruin the unity of the Christian

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<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>481</sup> See the above cited fragment (p. 110) relating the episode of the Ottoman magician's death resulting in the appearance of the «scornful» Demon indifferent to the 'Pagan's' lot, adding to the latter's «torments»: «*Mais le fumeux Demon qui se monstre à ses yeux, / A croit de son obiect son tourment odieux, / Et mesprisant sa voix maudisante et plaintive, / S'entumbe avec son sang vers l'infemale rive*» (*Ibid.*, p. 110).

<sup>482</sup> «(...) *son fer roide, luisant et fier*» (*Ibid.*, p. 60).

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Europe and, as a tragic consequence, irreversibly weaken the ability to resist possible aggression of the Islamic civilisation:

On voyait ia la rage et l'escumante Erynne,  
Trainans le desespoir, le dueil et la ruine,  
Les blasphemes, les pleurs, les cris, les volemens,  
Les feux, les cruautez et les violemens,  
**Marquer les coups plus fiers de leur sanglant tonnerre,**  
**Sus les flancs agitez de la Chrestienne terre**<sup>485</sup>.

The Oriental threaten appears still actual as far as the integrity of the Christian Mediterranean is concerned: «*Une autre troupe ailleurs dans un carré s'esgayé, / Une autre en demy Lune, et l'autre comme un rond / Monstre de tous costez l'œil, le flanc et le front (...)*»<sup>486</sup>. It is important to add that «peace» advocated by the poet refers namely to the increasing need to pacify the internal discords, so that the Mediterranean European states could join their military efforts in case of another defensive 'crusade'. As can be seen, the final hymn is far from performing a merely decorative function but on the contrary serves to link the events of the relatively recent past with the latest actual issues, the poetic content of *L'Austriade* transforming itself into a perfect model of Christian unity capable of resisting the potential external danger.

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<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

## Chapter VII

### Providential conception in the representation of modern religious wars in Juan Rufo's *Austríada*

The Cordovan poet Juan Rufo (Juan Gutierrez)<sup>487</sup> composed his *Austríada* in 1584: a heroic epic poem that, along with Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima* and Metello's *Marte* constituted a crucial, relatively immediate reaction to the Holy League's triumph of 1571. As pointed out by Ester Cicchetti, the author of the meticulous comment to the recent edition of the poem, «*L'Austríada di Juan Rufo si colloca nel clima di fervore epico che caratterizzò la Penisola Iberica tra XVI e XVII secolo: un'epoca che vede il fiorire di una quantità ingente di poemi, grazie alla fortunata espansione politica della Spagna e al fondamentale influsso della cultura italiana*»<sup>488</sup>.

The fact of the epic poets' focusing their attention upon contemporary historical events was therefore not a strikingly surprising one<sup>489</sup> as far as the «feverish» epic climate proper to *el Siglo de oro* is concerned<sup>490</sup> if one takes into consideration the increasingly prosperous state of the Spanish monarchy of the time – yet, there are several crucial factors accounting for a particular interest the Cordovan's epic presents for the given research. We refer first and foremost to the Rufo's unique condition of having been personally engaged into the Battle of Lepanto<sup>491</sup>: the poet had indeed not

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<sup>487</sup> For Juan Rufo's biography, see R. Ramírez de Arellano, *Juan Rufo: jurado de Córdoba. Estudio biográfico y crítico*, 1912 (ed. facsimile: Valladolid, 2002) and J. Rufo, *La Austríada*, E. Cicchetti (a c. di), 2011.

<sup>488</sup> J. Rufo, *La Austríada*, E. Cicchetti (a c. di), 2011, p. 10. «*La Austríada* is situated in the climate of epic fervour characterizing the Iberian Peninsula in the period between the XVI<sup>th</sup> and the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries: an epoch that witnesses an increasing prosperity of the epic genre resulting in a remarkable quantity of the poems due to the successful political expansion of Spain, as well as the fundamental influence exerted by the Italian culture».

<sup>489</sup> However Rufo was not the unique poet to organize his poetic narration around facts of modern historical reality, he undoubtedly had to face the same literary challenge as his European contemporaries, the genre of the epic poetry offering no models and fixed rules as far as the representation of contemporary historical events was concerned. The poet was extremely conscious of this literary challenge and thus reassumed the issue in common for all authors of 'modern' heroic epic: «*Yo que sujeto nuevo y peregrino, / con menos suficiencia que osadía / escribir en mis versos determino, / ¿como podré llegar donde devría? / ¿A qué poeta griego ni latino, / con apta imitación, seguir podría, / si cada cual en arte me precede, / y el sujeto que trato al suyo ecede?*» (*La Austríada*, op. cit., Canto XXIII, 3, p. 797).

<sup>490</sup> For the essential themes inspiring the epic poets of *el Siglo de oro*, see F. Pierce, op. cit., 1968.

<sup>491</sup> It is worth noting that in the course of the Lepanto military events, Rufo met Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote* having later on mentioned *La Austríada* among the books making part of the *Ingenioso Hidalgo's* library. (J. Rufo, *La Austríada*, E. Cicchetti (a c. di), op. cit.

only found his source of inspiration in historical chronicles and recent fictional works<sup>492</sup>, but could as well rely upon his own war experience. Another fundamental aspect to dwell upon in this connection is the extremely interesting structural organization of the poetic work: *La Austriada* has a **bipartite structure**, being dedicated to the two historical events, i.e. the Rebellion of the Alpujarras (1568-1571) and the Battle of Lepanto (1571)<sup>493</sup>. **This double historical focus** reveals its primary importance as it perfectly reflects Rufo's artistic intention consisting in bringing together the two historically different military conflicts under the unique poetic standard of the new Crusades of the European civilisation. Moreover, these historical themes are united by a *Leitmotif* that repeats itself throughout the whole poetic narration, being a constant presence in both parts of Rufo's epic: the one of the celebration of the Spain, as well as its monarchs. The organic coexistence of these motives in the poetic whole of *La Austriada* is rendered possible by the figure of Don John of Austria, son of Charles V: represented as an authentic epic hero<sup>494</sup>, the Spanish prince acts as a protagonist of the first as well as of the second parts of the poem.

The poet's offering a poem uniting the two seemingly different historical facts, his focalization upon the allegorical conception of the war with the Islamic world justifying his choice of bipartite structure, as well as his personal engagement with the 'modern Crusade' against the Ottoman Turks – all of the above-mentioned aspects deserve closer consideration in the context of the given work.

The spirit of the Counter-Reformation, as well as the concept of the holy war perceived as a 'clash' between Christian and Islamic civilisations permeates the poetics of Juan Rufo's *Austriada*. Religious wars – the actual *historical* incarnation of the increasingly popular idea of the modern Crusades – were immediately taken up by epic poetry, Rufo's poetic text being of no exception to the consistent trend. As has already been mentioned above, the poetic narration is centred upon the

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<sup>492</sup> For the sources probably used by J. Rufo for *La Austriada*, see J. Rufo, *La Austriada*, E. Cicchetti (a c. di), *op. cit.*, especially pp. 32-39.

<sup>493</sup> Thus, cantos I-XVIII are dedicated to the events regarding the rebellion of the *Moriscos*, whereas cantos XIX-XXIV concern themselves with the representation of the naval triumph of Lepanto. As can be seen, such rigorous division corresponds to the actual historical chronology of the events, the poet making, however, references to the aggressive intentions of the Ottoman empire, the events in Cyprus, as well as the European alliance against the Turks in cantos XI-XIII.

<sup>494</sup> The figure of the Spanish prince acting as a Commander-in-chief of the Holy League's fleet seems indeed a perfect choice of the protagonist of an epic poem. Thus, the Italian *letterato*, P. Beni remarked upon the ideal of an epic hero who would unite in his character the virtues of «*Principe e Heroe*» («Prince and Hero»), being endowed with such supreme qualities as «*rara pietà e religione*» («rare piety and faith») and who thus could serve as a model for general imitation. (P. Beni, *Comparatione di Homero, Virgilio e Torquato*, 1607, p. 3). According to P. Beni, the hero of an epic poem should, similarly to Tasso's Godfrey, «*esprimer' Idea di perfettissimo Capitano e Heroe, overo formar' Heroe in cui sia il colmo di tutte le virtù, massime militari e civili (...) in pace e in guerra*», the central virtue of such a hero being «*soprattutto Christiana fede e humiltà*». (P. Beni, *op.cit.*, pp. 215-216; p. 7). «(...) express the idea of a most perfect Captain and Hero, i.e. create a Hero which would fully possess all of the **military and civil** virtues (...) in times of peace and war»; «most importantly, **Christian faith and humility**».

two nuclei, the first one being the struggle with the *Moriscos* and the second one featuring the war with the Ottoman Turks. Both of the historical events are introduced in the first canto of the poem, Rufo thus from the very beginning collocating them in the perspective of holy wars. The narrator already in the first verses puts a special emphasis on his rejecting the «Barbarian doctrine», alluding obviously to the dimension of Pagan mythology:

**No invocaré las musas**, ni son parte  
para darme socorro en tal historia,  
**ni llegaré a pedir favor a Marte,**  
**ni a Apolo** que enderece mi memoria.  
**No escribo de sujeto a quien el arte**  
**pueda industriosamente añadir gloria,**  
ni me hará gastar tiempo perdido  
la vana pompa del hablar fingido.

(Canto, I, 3, p. 108)

The difference with the previously considered poems, as well as with the whole epic tradition is striking: Rufo does not care to include a topical invocation to the poetic Muse even for the sake of *decorum*, nor is he addressing an influential benefactor. Rufo who similarly to Francesco Bolognetti and Girolamo Graziani occupied a position enabling relative independence, does not need protection and support traditionally enjoyed by the poets of the epoch and thus underlines the fact of not being conditioned by an indirect obligation towards a Maecenas. The poet defines the most essential values of the poem, in line with the Counter-Reformation ideology evoking his unique source of inspiration, i.e. the divine spirit:

Dexando, pues, la bárbara doctrina,  
**invoco de las causas la primera:**  
**eterna Majestad que es una y trina,**  
en quien la vida bive que se espera;  
**porque infunda en mi voz gracia divina,**  
**son bivo y eficacia verdadera,**  
que no hay subir tan alto humano aliento  
sin quedar engañado y ser violento.

(Canto I, 4, p. 108)

In this indirect invocation, the narrator, begging that his poetic «voice» be filled with «the divine grace», mentions another significant aspect: the «veracious efficiency» of the future narration. This tendency to «veracity», without extending itself to abolish the traditional inclusion of the marvellous, nonetheless reveals its presence through an abundance of historical details and, first and foremost, in the numerous attempts of the narrator to introduce the reader to the historical context of the highly actual issue of the epoch – the menace incarnated by the Islamic civilisations. It is due to the author's inclination towards historicity<sup>495</sup> that the narration of the historical events in question is anticipated by 1) the relation of the European Mediterranean crucial problem – the one of the 'internal' («civil») religious wars and 2) the detailed historical explanation of the conflict with the Moors, Rufo summarizing the events of the Reconquista, with a special emphasis upon its culmination – the Conquest of Granada<sup>496</sup>.

Showing his historical consciousness, the poet dwells first upon the 'external' danger presenting a considerable threaten for the Western civilisation:

**(...) las dificultades y fatigas,  
que a nuestra edad opone y acarrea  
la multitud de gentes enemigas:  
en cuanto baña el mar y el sol rodea,  
se aperciben espadas y lorigas  
contra la religión, y a Dios pluguiera  
que solo en esto el daño consistiera.**

(Canto I, 11, p. 109)

After having expressed his concerns regarding the Eastern menace – and having thus introduced a general European perspective in the context of the national epic, Rufo passes to the panoramic historical review of the spiritual damage the Reformation has recently caused in Europe:

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<sup>495</sup> According to J. Lara Garrido, Rufo's poem can be justly inscribed into the category of 'modern' historical epic that despite its dealing with contemporary historical events «still» manifests a strong presence of fictional element: the «*epos*» *histórico del presente (en sentido lato)*» that, importantly enough, reveals «*la dialéctica entre la material (el núcleo histórico) y la forma del género (el exigido modo de ficcionalización)*». (J. Lara Garrido, *Los mejores plectros. Teoría y práctica de la épica del Siglo de Oro*, Málaga, 1999, p. 46. «This historical *epic* of the present (in a broad sense); «the dialectic between the subject (the historical nucleus) and the very genre (the necessity of 'fictionalization')».

<sup>496</sup> E. Cicchetti in her thorough comments to the recent edition of *La Austríada*, underlines a particular «amplification» the decisive Reconquista event receives in the poem (*La Austríada, op. cit.*, p.105).



**Las llagas penetrantes y mortales,  
y el destemplado humor contagioso  
amanzillan los miembros principales**  
para hazer estrago más dañoso.  
Luxuria y gula dan los temporales  
que alimentan el cáncer venenoso,  
**produziendo su fruto lastimero**  
**lo que sembró el maldito y vil Lutero.**

(Canto I, 13, p. 109)

France, England, Germany and Flanders as the main ‘centres of contagion’ are referred to as «*maleficiently perversed reigns*», drastically different from Spain who due to its «virtue and superhuman effort»<sup>497</sup> was not affected by the «poisonous» disease of the Reformation. This ‘privileged’ position of «mother Spain» was, however, counterbalanced by another, no less «painful» ‘internal’ disaggregation, i.e. the Moorish conflict upon which the poet is namely going to centre the narration of the first part of his epic:

Dolerme devo yo, quexarme quiero  
de un **hado acerbo**, de **un sucesso duro**,  
y **dar al mundo indicio verdadero**  
porque sienta el dolor en que me apuro:  
**dentro de España, ¡oh caso lastimero!**,  
piedra de Pedro y de la iglesia muro,  
**alteración diabólica y sangrienta**,  
**al cielo haze ultraje, al orbe afrenta.**

(Canto I, 22, p. 110)

Counter-Reformistic intonations literally pervade the narrator’s lamentation – as can be seen, the Spanish ‘clash’ with the Moorish civilisation is immediately collocated into the allegorical rather than a more neutral historical context, the Moors being unquestionably viewed as an incarnation of «diabolical» forces whose violence is an «offend to Heaven». The narrator passes further on to the relation of the Reconquista events follows, with a focus on the Catholic Monarchs’

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<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

deeds, Ferdinand and Isabella being celebrated as bearers of the «veracious doctrine»<sup>498</sup>. Despite the Catholic Monarchs' successful attempts the Christian reconquest of the Spanish territories, the treaties with the Moors who agreed to accept the Christian faith and were now referred to as the *Moriscos*, their original religion, as well as deep-rooted national traditions, were not easy to abolish:

**Mas como lengua ni hábito mudaron,  
y es mala de olvidar vieja costumbre,  
morabitos después les offuscaron  
sin gran dificultad la nueva lumbre,  
de África y de Asia en la Alpuxarra entraron  
moros y turcos bien sin pesadumbre,  
cubiertos como Ulixes el artero  
dentro en la piel bellosa del carnero.**

(Canto I, 63, p. 116)

The Moors and the Turks are equalled in this passage, both being considered from the more general Counter-Reformation point of view: both nations clearly incarnating the notion of the 'otherness', i.e. the representatives of a different – and therefore hostile – religion intruding into the Catholic tradition of the Iberian peninsula. Belligerence and Odyssean shrewdness ascribed to the 'enemy' only contributed to their preparing rebellions to come: in this interpretation of the historical facts, the Reconquista war was to be continued despite its allegedly being brought to an end in 1492 due to the Conquest of Granada: «*Y así anduvieron con secreta maña, / insidias de hora en hora maquinando, / con el veneno de infernal zizaña / que las almas les iba inficionando*»<sup>499</sup>. In this optic, the real nucleus of the introductory canto is formed not by the celebration of the victories of the relatively recent past, but more specifically, by the references to the actual aggravated state of the conflict with the *Moriscos*, the latter ones hatching a «secret» plot of reconquering their kingdom in an astute, as well as a violent way:

**Y en fin por general voto se ordena,  
que con assalto crudo y mano armada,  
entren la noche para el mundo buena  
los de las Alpuxarras en Granada;  
y tomada la Alhambra, horrible pena,**

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<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

**a fuego y sangre sea executada,**  
con tal rigor que en todo el ancho suelo  
se borre el cuento del troyano duelo.

(Canto I, 111, p. 122)

The «venerable» Spain<sup>500</sup> thus, as the narrator observes, has got «an enemy at home», this ‘internal’ threaten being the most urgent Iberian issue comprising a danger of a scale that cannot be compared neither to the «arrogant» Protestant evil, nor to the «barbarous» African menace and nor even to «the terrible Ottoman armies»<sup>501</sup>:

**No las terrible huestes otomanas,**  
**ni los sobervios pueblos alemanes,**  
**ni bárbaras vanderas africanas**  
son las que te darán estos afanes;  
**mas gente tumultuosas y villanas,**  
y apóstatas esclavos con desmanes,  
**pero ne los desprecies, que te digo**  
**que es malo dentro en casa el enemigo.**

(Canto I, 114, p. 122)

The potential threat of the *Moriscos*’ rebellions being the primary concern of Spain, Rufo does not hesitate to warn his compatriots as well of the major risk of the aggression coming from the East alluding first and foremost to the military ambitions of the Ottoman Empire. Although the Battle of Lepanto is represented only in the second part of the poem (cantos XIX-XXIV), the very argument of the Ottoman menace is introduced much earlier: if in the beginning of *La Austriada*, the poet limits himself to briefly alluding to the poem’s historical problematic, it is in the eleventh canto that the theme of the ‘external’ enemy is given special consideration. The argument of the «belligerent rage of the East»<sup>502</sup> appears in the first verses of the canto that will further on continue developing the events in the Alpujarra:

**Que no es salir del orden començado**

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<sup>500</sup> It should be noted that the narrator of *La Austriada* tends to personify Spain, directly addressing the personified European countries in his frequent digressions.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 397.

**tratar de las turquescas ocurrencias,**  
ni es, cual dizen, meterse en lo excusado  
escribir sus assaltos y violencias;  
**pues quanto he de tratar, y ya he tratado,**  
**tiene de aquí travadas dependencias,**  
dexando, pues, el reino granadino,  
hablaré del imperio visantino.

(Canto XI, 5, p. 397)

The author thus insists on correlating the Turkish and the *Morisco* threats: both in his opinion represent a considerable danger for the European Mediterranean. In the episode dedicated to the Ottoman theme, the narrator takes up historical arguments, similarly to Deimier, providing detailed information upon Selim's II cruelty as well as «force of ambition»<sup>503</sup> that Rufo, differently from Metello and Bolognetti explicitly describes as fruit of the «ancient custom» rather than an affect inspired by the infernal forces: «*Costumbre antigua es ya a los sucessores / de este imperio emprender nuevas jornadas, / de las cuales han buuelto vencedores / con triunfos claros, pressas señaladas (...)*»<sup>504</sup>. Historical reasons apart, the new sultan, being certain of the Fortune's support, states to be spurred as well by other motives, notably the already-mentioned main «ambition» to subjugate the whole world:

Tengo gente dispuesta para guerra  
de sobervias e indómitas naciones,  
que **pondrán freno al mar, yugo a la tierra,**  
**con huestes invencibles y escuadrones;**  
y assí el sueño a mis ojos ya no cierra,  
porque oigo noche y día los pregones,  
de donde infiero que **sin duda alguna**  
**me llama a grandes voces la Fortuna.**

(Canto XI, 30, p. 400)

Overcome by this overwhelming ambition Selim eagerly accepts the Grand Vizier Mehmed's advice to attempt at conquering Venice and Rhodes, such choice permitting the sultan to

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<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 398.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 400.

finish the deeds of his ancestors as well as destroy the important strongholds of the Christian Europe traditionally associated with the Holy City:

Antes que el gran soldán vencido fuera  
de tu abuelo Selín en lid furiosa,  
siempre esta isla conquistar quisiera,  
y la de Rodas no menos famosa,  
**diziendo que cabeça de ambas era**  
**la gran Hierusalem, ciudad gloriosa;**  
y assí por fuerça de armas pretendía  
adquirir el derecho que tenía.

(Canto XI, 38, p. 401)

The holy war thematic comes up once again in canto XII, the narrator making a digression in narrating the historical facts in order to address the main Catholic «Christian powers» with the appeal to put an end to the internal discords and to engage themselves into «just and legitimate battles» with the authentic enemies – the hostile civilisations:

**Oh católicos reyes y potencias**  
**crístianas**, baste ya la exorbitancia,  
fenezscan las odiosas diferencias,  
mueran la emulación y la arrogancia;  
que si queréis reñidas competencias,  
**sujetos se os ofrecen de importancia**  
**en que podáis tenellas y mostrallas**  
**en justas y legítimas batallas.**

(Canto XII, 6, p. 429)

It is worth noting that *La Austriada* abounds in similar digressions including a number of references to the Counter-Reformation values: allusions to Heaven, the Saints<sup>505</sup> and «the Divine Verb»<sup>506</sup>, as well as the ones to the «infernal, furious, insane» forces are, as a rule, encountered namely in the fragments dedicated to the prerequisites of the religious wars, being thus inwoven

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<sup>505</sup> See, for instance, p. 429, *op.cit.* for Rufo's mentioning Saint Peter.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 430.

into the detailed relation of the historical reasons behind the wars in question. If Selim II shows no restraint about his military ambitions, the narrator of *La Austríada* reveals to be no less intransigent in his discourse upon the ultimate objectives of the ‘new’ European Crusades:

**Y las naciones bárbaras vencidas  
sentirán de su error la justa pena,**  
o con el santo exemplo convertidas  
el mal conocerán que las condena;  
y con cervizes blandas y rendidas  
humildes se vendrán a la melena,  
y al fuego de la fe en que Dios se mira  
verán que lo demás todo es mentira.

(Canto XII, 8, p. 430)

The upcoming war with the East is importantly enough viewed not only as a defensive reaction: in this clearly Counter-Reformist perspective, the hostile civilisations are to be subjugated and inflicted upon a severe «just» punishment in case they refuse to reject their own faith accepting the Christian one instead. Rufo’s epic version of the events at Lepanto and in the Alpujarra thus has a crucial notion in common serving as a starting point for both religious wars – the one of a modern Crusade. All other religions than the Christian one are viewed as «barbarous» and, in line with the age-long conception of the Crusade, to be abolished, their representatives being converted to Christendom. This general perspective prevails in parts dedicated to the Eastern question in cantos XII and XIII, as the narrator of *La Austríada* provides a succinct relation of the military events preceding the Battle of Lepanto: the Ottoman empire breaking the peaceful treaty with Venice, the convocation of the Venetian Senate, the Turkish sudden devastating attacks on Cyprus: Siege of Nicosia and the tragically known Siege of Famagusta. It should be noted as far as the narration of the historical facts is concerned, that even if they are not given as much space as the Alpujarra events, Rufo, in accordance with the historical and literary sources he had recurred to<sup>507</sup> provides

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<sup>507</sup> According to Esther Cicchetti, Rufo made considerable use of various historical sources, such as *La Relación de la Guerra de Cipre y suceso de la batalla naval de Lepanto* by Fernando de Herrera (1572), *I Commentarii delle guerre fatte co’ turchi da D. Giovanni d’Austria, dopo che venne in Italia* (1581) by Ferrante Caracciolo, as well as of the chronicle composed by the Barcelonian author Jerónimo de Costiol, *La primera parte de la Chronica del muy alto y poderoso Principe Don Juan de Austria hijo de del Emperador Carlo quinto, de las jornadas contra el... Turco Selimo II, comenzada en la perdida del reyno de Cipro, tratando primero la genealogia de la casa Ottomana*. (*La Austríada*, 2011, pp. 32-33).

precise details, such as, for instance, the insertion of the names of the authentic historical protagonists: the Ottoman generals Mustafa Pasha and Piyale Pasha, on the one hand, and Captain General of the Venetian fleet Girolamo Zane<sup>508</sup> and the commanders Marcantonio Colonna and Gianandrea Doria, on the other. It would be interesting to note that Rufo's mentions the Italian military commanders not in a merely celebrative aim but referring to a specific historical circumstance, i.e. the «unfortunate» weather conditions<sup>509</sup> conditioning the commanders' decision to defer the military expedition to support Cyprus:

Tan a tiempo que fueran ya surgidos  
 en Chipre de galeras onze pares,  
 al **Colona** y al **Oria** cometidos  
**varones en milicia singulares,**  
 y con ellos soldados escogidos,  
**si la inclemencia de los altos mares**  
**forçosa no hiziera la tardança,**  
 anegando el trabajo y la esperança.

(Canto XIII, 44, p. 462)

The author of *La Austriada* accentuates the reader's attention upon another crucial historical element that we have already encountered in the epic of Pierre de Deimier: the one of the role modern technological progress had to play in the 'Crusades' of the end of the Cinquecento, in the epoch when even the «barbarous» nations could access to new weapon technologies<sup>510</sup>: «**No vinieron las bárbaras naciones / con las rústicas armas que ya usaron, / ni aplicando la brasa a los carbones / en el tostar las astas se ocuparon; / ni del curado lino los cordones / para formar las hondas religaron (...)**<sup>511</sup>. «Violent ministers of the violent war», the Ottoman generals presented themselves in Cyprus equipped with heavy artillery:

<sup>508</sup> *La Austriada*, Canto XIII, pp. 462-470.

<sup>509</sup> As pointed out by Esther Cicchetti in her comment to Rufo's poetic text, «*Il poeta, però, attinge in questo caso sicuramente al testo del barcellonese, l'unico a citare il cattivo tempo che trattiene gli aiuti cristiani (...)*», *Ibid.*, p. 454. «The poet, however, is certain to make use of the Barcelonian historian – the only one who mentions the bad weather impeding to proceed with the Christian support».

<sup>510</sup> It is important to mention in this connection that Rufo, however admitting the new scale modern combats assume due to the diffusion of the latest technical innovations, explicitly declares to condemn the modern *ars belli*, declaring the new type of weapons an «offence to nature» as well as to human dignity: «*Tal modo de lidiar no tiene duda, / sino que es el crisol de valentía, / porque lo que pervierte, turba y muda / la atroz y detestable artillería, / no da lugar, con su violencia cruda, / a veces al esfuerzo y gallardía; / ni devieran los hombres racionales / con armas ofenderse tan bestiales*». (*Ibid.*, Canto XXIV, 16, p. 840).

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XII, 20, p. 431.

**Embarcan munición y artillería,  
fuegos para arrojar artificiales,**  
y cuanto en fin la sed de tiranía  
ha sabido forjar de los metales;  
las ondas del Egeo ya hendía  
la armada con dos turcos generales:  
Pialí de mar y Mustafá de tierra,  
crudos ministros de la cruda guerra.

(Canto XII, 21, p. 431)

Heavy artillery is given special attention in Canto XIII dedicated to the Battle of Lepanto, Rufo depicting the furious cannons, similarly to Deimier refusing to sacrifice modern historical elements for the sake of the clichéd scenes of fighting offered by the epic tradition:

**La fiera tempestad y el son horrendo  
de las espesas balas y cañones  
comiençan a tronar y van creciendo  
apriessa los nocivos turbiones;**  
**a todos ensordece** un bravo estruendo,  
los hechos valen ya, no las razones,  
el hondo mar gimiéndose estremece,  
**el aire se condensa y escurece.**

(Canto XXIII, 23, p. 800)

In his representation of the Lepanto Battle, Rufo not only offers the reader the descriptions of the devastating effect of the deafening cannon-shots but as well insists upon the more technologically advanced weapons being an essential factor in the victory of the Holy League fleet: *«Del juego de la brava artillería / a los turcos la pérdida tocava, / porque en las galeaças tanta havia / que bien claro su efecto se mostrava (...)*<sup>512</sup>.

Innovative elements being an important presence in *La Austriada*, the general religious context collocating into the optic of the ‘modern’ Crusade reveals to be the nucleus of the poem. Thus, the motive that repeats itself throughout the whole poem is the one of **the divine will**: God in Rufo’s epic shows to be the actual protagonist of the religious wars, despite the absence of

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<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XIII, 29, p. 800.



Heaven's direct interventions in the course of the events on the battlefield in both the Alpujarra and the Lepanto parts. The Cordovan poet's conception appears to be defined by the ideology of the Counter-Reformation, developing a particular image of the divine forces: a God that not only rewards but – most importantly – sends punishment. Thus, introducing the historical fact of Selim's breaking the treaty with the Most Serene Republic, the narrator immediately places it into the providential context:

(...) si **contra la fe y el juramento**,  
contra la antigua paz y santo fuero,  
Selín venir quisiere en rompimiento  
con quien amor le tiene verdadero,  
**hazello puede, no de pena exempto,**  
**pues Dios es poderoso y justiciero,**  
**de los humildes padre y tan amigo**  
**cuanto de los sobervios enemigo (...)**

(Canto XII, 16, p. 431)

The figure of the «powerful and righteous» God reveals to be the one that to a major extent determinates **the poet's historical conception**, as well as **the nature of the marvellous** present in the poem. In this way, the *Leitmotiv* of justice reveals its presence already in the beginning of the poem, as Rufo introduces the story and the motives of the *Moriscos'* rebellion in Alpujarra. Thus, it was the act of man's «first disobedience» to have caused the «just eternal sentence» as well as the punishment equal to the «grave error»<sup>513</sup> generating all of the possible human vices, misery, dangers and the lack of stability, the worst of these consequences being «treachery»<sup>514</sup>. Biblical and historical motives are merged in Rufo's poetic vision, as he alludes to the Moorish conflict having prehistoric roots:

Este es **aquel infame atroz delito**  
**que se llama traición o alevosía,**  
en quien se incluye un número infinito  
de torpes vicios que el profundo cría;  
**y en éste confiava aquel maldito**  
**vulgo,** que de su Dios escarnecía,

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<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto II, 1, p. 149.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*

quierendo **violar la fe y tesoro**  
**de la preciosa Iglesia** y su decoro.

(Canto II, 5, p. 149)

The *Moriscos* are seen as a historical<sup>515</sup> incarnation of the worst vice making part of the original divine punishment<sup>516</sup>: «the cursed *vulgo*» that violated the terms of the treaty with the Catholic Spain prescribing them to reject their national and religious identity, the fear of the potential punishment only spurring their «boldness» as well as the desire for revenge: «(...) *después que fue el edicto establecido, / so pena de castigos capitals, / cuyo desdén parece que hazía / crecer en los moriscos la osadía*»<sup>517</sup>.

According to Rufo's poetic narration, the Alpujarras Rebellion not only finds its roots into the legend of the original sin, but – as shown explicitly in the text – is brought to life by the divine will:

(...) **el padre celestial** de esta manera  
se hubo con su España tan querida,  
**y por desarraigar la secta fiera,**  
**que estaba en la Alpuxarra endurecida,**  
**permitió que la guerra procediera,**  
sangrienta de ambas partes y reñida:  
**a los suyos dexando amenazados**  
**y a los rebeldes impios castigados.**

(Canto III, 43, p. 187)

The above-cited octet is of primary importance for a thorough comprehension of Rufo's poetic intention: if in all of the previously analyzed poems, the origin of the religious wars was clearly the consequence of the plots of the infernal forces motivated by the will to triumph over the divine world, in *La Austriada* we assist to a different explanation. The divine will as the supreme incarnation of justice has the firm intention of «eradicating the arrogant sect», i.e. the *Moriscos* and

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<sup>515</sup> It is important to stress the link with the latest historical events Rufo seeks to establish, since he does not refer to the Moorish conflict in general, but to his own epoch witnessing the *Moriscos* rebellion against Spain already after the events of the Reconquista.

<sup>516</sup> The same perspective merging biblical and historical facts might be as well applied to the conflict with the Ottoman Empire, Rufo demonstrating that Selim II also broke the peaceful treaty with Venice, the Turkish attacks against the Most Serene Republic thus having the same common ground of 'unjustice'.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto II, 6, p. 149.

it is with this view that God «permits» the cruel war that is bound to inflict severe punishment for the «disobedient and obstinate» enemy. The divine attitude, once again, reflects the demand for rigidity characteristic of the Counter-Reformation: if the «bloody» war will represent an occasion to «punish» the «impious rebels», it will as well function as a lesson for the Spanish population who had allowed a similar «fatal» and «painful» schism in its religious unity. God shows no anger towards his «beloved Spain» but has to simulate severity out of the sense of justice:

**Como padre que al hijo llorar siente,**  
**y movido a piedad** del blando ruego  
le mira atento **con severa frente,**  
**dissimulando el amoroso fuego;**  
y aunque ha condecendido interiormente  
con lo que el niño pide, **no assí luego**  
**manda que se le dé lo que dessea**  
**para que humilde y moderado sea (...)**

(Canto III, 42, p. 186)

**Rigidity**, on the one hand, and **piety**, on the other – these are two essential characteristics of the Christian God in Rufo’s poem, the first one being explicitly shown through his actions, notably the religious military conflicts, and the second one being «dissimulated» under the mask of «severity».

The above-mentioned aspects appear to be of primary importance as far as the presence of the element of the marvellous is concerned, Rufo making use uniquely of the marvellous of the Christian origin<sup>518</sup>. Thus, in canto XIII, the plan of the Ottoman general Mustafa to bring the sultan a precious gift from the successful Cyprus expedition – a ship with Christian captives on board – fails, the narrator offers a «Catholic reading» of the episode. The ship carrying the «innocent souls» all of a sudden explodes before the departure, the reader assisting to a realistic description of the «incredible»<sup>519</sup> explosion’s consequences similar to the numerous macabre scenes depicted by Pierre de Deimier in his *Austriade*:

Cesò, aunque tarde, **aquel subir violento**

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<sup>518</sup> All cases of the insertion of elements bearing mythological, i.e. Pagan character are limited to a merely decorative function. Thus, for instance, the poet assimilates the Alpujarras rebellion to a furious Hydra: «*El Alpujarra se me representa / Hidra con mil cabeças ponçoñosas, / y cada cual de sangre se alimenta / de temerarias armas y enojosas (...)*».ò (*Ibid.*, Canto IV, 25, p. 212).

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XIII, 95, p. 469.

**de las corporeas cosas inflamadas,**  
y el natural y propio movimiento  
las començó a baxar precipitadas;  
**llovía, horrible monstruo, humor sangriento,**  
**braços, piernas, cabeças destroncadas,**  
**cuerpos sin formas, espadas, coseletes,**  
**hierro, plomo, arcabuzes, bronce, almetes.**

(Canto XIII, 94, p. 468)

The narrator of the poem does not provide a definitive response as to the authentic reason of the violent explosion: the affect of jealousy and ‘internal’ treachery might be among its possible causes, if it were not for the allusion to a divine plan made by the poet:

Y si la juventud y hermosura,  
que allí iba al peligroso captiverio,  
**nos muestra por católica lectura**  
**que no carece el punto de misterio,**  
crea quien la verdad saber procura  
que **el alto criador del sumo imperio**  
**quiso librar assí el vando cristiano,**  
**y castigar los citas de su mano.**

(Canto XIII, 101, p. 469)

Thus alluding to the role of the divine Providence, the poet prefers to leave the reader uncertain<sup>520</sup> – yet, the very uncertainty functions as a confirmation of the given interpretation, the concept of mystery being part and parcel of the providential conception. Man is not capable of penetrating the mysterious divine will, but, as the narrator observes in a rhetorical question, «(...) *quién duda que en son triste y lloroso / no llamasen a Dios, padre y abrigo, / y que él, como tan*

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<sup>520</sup> «*Resta inquirir agora sagazmente / qué causa tuvo aquel terrible efeto, / qué descuido, cautela, o qué accidente / puso los turcos en tan grande aprieto; / pues hasta agora el tiempo no consiente / saberse la verdad de este secreto (...)*». (*Ibid.*, Canto XIII, 95, p. 469). Such approach performs as well an important function in the context of the whole poetic narration, being completely in line with Rufo’s declared inclination towards plausibility. According to the general tendency reigning in *La Austríada*, the «extraordinary» phenomena tend not to receive direct explanation, the author limiting himself to the references to the divine will bearing an allusive character.

*justo y piadoso, / socorro diesse al bien y al mal castigo?*<sup>521</sup>» Once again, the reader assists at the repetition of the already introduced image of a «just and merciful» God, the «celestial father»<sup>522</sup> eager to save the innocent and the «righteous» judge determined to punish the crimes of the unfaithful. The severity of the divine forces is thus tempered by their indisputable readiness to yield to the entreaties of those displaying authentic faith: «*Que lágrimas con fe y amor vertidas / pueden hazer que el mismo mar se encienda, / y quejas justas son de Dios oídas, / y hallan hasta el cielo abierta senda*»<sup>523</sup>. It is worth noting that in *La Austriada*, the concept of faith is constantly emphasized, being asserted as force that is superior to «Heaven, hell and death». Thus when in the tragic episode of canto IV, the *Moriscos* of Alpujarra put the Christians to «abhorrent» torture, the narrator once again insists on the providential perspective, demonstrating spiritual invincibility of the perished heroes:

**Ma pudo nuestra Iglesia y madre buena  
de estos males sacar glorioso aumento,  
pues ni el temor, la muerte ni la pena,  
amenazas ni blando ofrecimiento,  
hambre ni sed, engaño ni cadena,  
ni el Angel malo, que era el instrumento,  
contra la fe pudieron, que el infierno y que la muerte.**

(Canto IV, 20, p. 211)

To quote Esther Cicchetti, «even the enemy admits (...) the existence of the providential will»<sup>524</sup>: thus, Aben Humeya, the leader of the Alpujarras rebellion, converts to Christendom before death, ascribing his defeat to the righteous «anger» of the Christian God: « (...) *yo entiendo cierto, y no me engaño en ello (...) / ira es de Dios, assí devo creello, / la que se venga de mi ardid nocivo, / que a la soberbia y altiveza mia / tal genero de muerte se devía*»<sup>525</sup>. One is immediately struck by the drastic difference with the previously analyzed poems: thus, in Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata*, Osmino converts to Christianity before death out of love for Silvera; in Pierre de Deimier's *Austriade*, the Ottoman warriors dye cursing Muhammed for not being capable of saving them – in Juan Rufo's epic, the conversion of the enemy is a more complicated process implicating

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XIII, 103, p. 470.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto III, 43, p. 186.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XIII, 102, p. 469.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XIV, 20, p. 493.

a totally different degree of spiritual consciousness. The Alpujarra leader is not moved by the affect of love, as Tasso's Clorinda, or Graziani's Osmino, nor is he obliged to convert out of the fear of death<sup>526</sup>, being already on the verge of dying – the decision of the *Morisco* hero is entirely conditioned by his sudden awareness of the existence of the «divine providence». In the passionate monologue of the converted warrior, God maintains his fundamental quality of a judge inflicting severe punishment upon «arrogance and haughtiness» – traits that Humeya admits to possess and ardently repents, wishing that they might «die with him»:

**Disignios, ambición, vana esperançã,**  
**que bivistes en mi, morid connigo,**  
y quede al mundo de esta rememebança  
en mil siglos la fama por testigo (...)  
**porque el cielo es mi enemigo,**  
**y sé bien, por mi mal, que de él proviene**  
**la grave indignación que assí me tiene.**

(Canto XIV, 19, p. 493)

Thus, according to the general conception of *La Austriada*, the struggle between good and evil cannot be viewed as the war of equal forces, the initial potential of the infernal violence being incomparable with the infinitely powerful divine will:

**No puede ser durable lo violento**  
por más que se desvele el artificio,  
**ni puede, si no es bueno el fundamento,**  
**ser firme ni seguro el edificio;**  
quien torpemente sube en años ciento,  
**en sola una hora cae, porque es oficio**  
**del cielo justo dar castigo digno**  
**al que se olvida del mejor camino.**

(Canto XIX, 1, p. 640)

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<sup>526</sup> «Por tanto mi intención descubrir quiero / en esta hora terrible, postrimera, / y es que en la fe de los cristianos muero, / en la cual hasta aquí bivido hubiera (...)». (*Ibid.*, Canto XIV, 21, p. 493).

Once again, the same motive of supreme justice returns, the poet insisting on inevitable «divine punishment» to be first and foremost inflicted upon those who commit violence «against Holy Church» – an appeal that considering the extreme tensions of the Counter-Reformation epoch referred not only to the Ottoman Turks, or the Alpujarra’s *Moriscos*, but could undoubtedly be perceived as an implicit warning against the ‘internal’ religious conflicts, i.e. various manifestations of heresy.

In Rufo’s epic the divine will incarnates severity but as well mercy and indulgence towards repenting enemy: thus, the performer of the divine mission, the magnificent Don John of Austria, is eager to grant his pardon to Habaquí, another experienced *Morisco* warrior who, similarly to Aben Humeya, converts to Christendom before death. Habaquí’s conversion is not a simple acceptance to change his faith, but a highly conscious act, the warrior not only deeply repenting the «insolent errors»<sup>527</sup> of his past, but demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the transformation he undergoes, as well as acquaintance with the primary concepts and terminology of Catholicism:

Todo lo cual mirado y su desseo,  
y el general de toda aquella gente,  
**deves, alto señor, sin más rodeo**  
**sernos amparo y defensor clemente;**  
**y donde no, la Cruz es mi trofeo,**  
**y el uno y trino Dios omnipotente,**  
por el cual **más me vale ser tu esclavo**  
que no lugarteniente de Aben Abo»

(Canto XVIII, 80, p. 617)

Don John’s reaction to this pathetic monologue reveals to be combination of two different affects: on the one hand, the Spanish prince is, as has already been mentioned, demonstrated benevolence towards the enemy, the act of conversion having cancelled all traces of hostility. Thus, Don John of Austria is deeply moved by Habaquí’s confession, listening to him «not without admiration, being attracted by his subtle, elevated and profound mind and dignity (...)»<sup>528</sup>. The military commander’s attitude, however, cannot be viewed as a personal one, being first and foremost conditioned by his crucial mission – the one of being a historical incarnation of the divine justice whose «law» the protagonist of *La Austriada* considers inviolable:

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<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XVIII, 77, p. 616.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XVIII, 81, p. 617.

**Y así, a ley de quien soy, os juro y digo**  
que, en cuanto desde hoy más se os ofreciere,  
tendréis en mi seguro un buen amigo,  
como vuestra constancia lo requiere;  
**mas las treguas y pazes contradigo**  
**a vos, y a otro cualquier que las pidiere,**  
**por no ser esos términos decentes**  
**entre rey y vassallos delinquentes.**

(Canto XVIII, 83, p. 617)

Thus, Habaquí shall remain the only warrior to enjoy the benevolence of the glorious prince exclusively due to the fact of his ultimate conversion, this unique «truce» in no way implicating the conclusion of peace and pardon of other rebels seen as «vassals» committing violent crimes against the Spanish monarchy, and thus against the celestial reign<sup>529</sup>.

The divine will thus incarnates supreme justice, Heaven performing the function of the intransigent judge, yet capable of showing mercy exclusively towards the repentant enemy. The motive of righteousness reveals as well to be essential as far as the element of the marvellous is concerned: all of the supernatural interventions encountered in the poem are invariably conditioned by the principle of justice. Thus, in canto II of *La Austriada*, the first and unique direct celestial intervention is literally provoked by the *Moriscos*' perfidy, the rebellions choosing the Christmas night for attempting a sudden attack of Granada:

Querían, como tengo referido,  
que **noche fuese, y la del Nacimiento,**  
**para hallar el pueblo más unido,**  
seguro en ejercicios de contento,  
y con devoción embevecido,  
suspenso, tibio, atado y soñoliento,  
**las casas solas y los templos llenos,**

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<sup>529</sup>Thus Rufo gives special emphasis to the Catholic monarchs «imitating» the essential qualities of the divine will, i.e. justice and piety: on the one hand, severity towards the enemy and merciful attitude towards the converted: «De suerte que **el rey nuestro, justo y pío,** / al que crió **los cielos imitando** / no mostró de su ceptro el poderío / contra los yerros del morisco vando, / sin antes ofrecer al desvarío / **amoroso perdón** con pecho blando, / hasta que **la justicia, de irritada,** / alzó con ira su luziente espada» (*Ibid.*, Canto XVIII, 4, p. 4).



**sin armas y las manos en los senos.**

(Canto II, 34, p. 153)

The *Morisco*'s choice of the moment for waging war is extremely important: Rufo shows the cowardice of the enemy aiming at an easy and dishonourable triumph accentuating at the same the religious connotations of the conflict, the rebellion of the Alpujarra being first and foremost a violent protest against the hostile religion. The «arrogant and haughty squadron» is ready to break the peaceful atmosphere of the holy night when all of a sudden Christians receive support from Heaven: the righteous God cannot permit such a dishonest act and intervenes directly in the course of the events: «(...) *más quiso el cielo justo en la jornada / obstáculo poner firme y entero, / con que se refrenarse aquel malino / furor que iba ya al fin de su camino*»<sup>530</sup>. The «malicious fury» is a crime against the law of justice: to stop and punish the 'delinquents', God sends a «horrible» snowstorm impeding them to proceed in the right direction and bringing confusion into the rebellious army:

La furia horrible de los torbellinos  
cada momento más se ve ir creciendo;  
cubre la blanca nieve los caminos,  
también los hombres luego va cubriendo,  
que van desalumbrados y mezquinos,  
desatinando aquí y allí cayendo,  
sin orde, sin aviso, sin consuelo,  
sin otra cosa ver que nieve y cielo.

(Canto II, 46, p. 154)

If the narrator's remarks regarding the already mentioned scene of the ship's explosion in canto XIII, leave doubt as to the real reason behind the tragedy, his comments upon the snowstorm episode explicitly refer to it as to a divine miracle: «*Obras son de tus manos, Padre eterno, / y mercedes que hazes conocidas, / que este oficio, Señor, no te es moderno (...)*»<sup>531</sup>.

To reiterate, this direct miraculous intervention of the divine will remain unique in the context of the whole poem, the narrator, once again, similarly to Deimier's *Austriade*, showing the Christian warriors fighting on their own, yet being inspired by the Crusade's spirit. In Rufo's

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<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto II, 43, p. 154.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto II, 47, p. 155.

*Austríada*, the same tendency towards the diminishment of the presence of the marvellous can be observed: as we have seen, the author pays homage to the topical miraculous situations, but the role of the latter ones is significantly decreased. Thus, for instance, in canto VIII, the reader assists to a «partial» miracle: when Luis de Requesens, following the order of Don John of Austria, navigates towards Andalusia, to bring military support to the Christian army, he sends his prayers to Heaven, imploring for the end of the terrible tempest, as well as for the safe trip of the Christian fleet. God's response to the ardent prayers of the commander is not immediate, nor an absolute one:

**Oyole Dios, y concediole parte**  
de aquello que humilmente le pedía,  
**y parte no: la causa ignora el arte**  
**humana**, que juzgando desvaría.  
**Llegar con el católico estandarte**  
**al noble reino del Andalucía,**  
**esto le concedió, mas la bonança**  
**tardó**, y hubo peligro en la tardança.

(Canto VIII, 31, p. 320)

There might be more than one reason accounting for Heaven helping the Christian cause «partly»: first and foremost, similarly to the episode of the ship's explosion, Rufo prefers to leave the veil of mystery in line with the Christian conception, according to which human mind is not capable of comprehending the reasoning of the divine will and has to resign to its remaining mystery. Moreover, this approach does not contradict the realization of another principle dear to Rufo – the one of plausibility of his poetic narration. The general Counter-Reformation spirit permeating the poem should be as well taken into consideration: in his prayers, de Requesens asks Heaven namely for «an *easy* navigation»<sup>532</sup> for the Christian *armata*, whereas, according to the Counter-Reformist principles, human beings are destined to endure and resist various trials thus tempering their virtues. God will see to the Christians' safe arrival to Andalusia but during their trip nobody will escape difficulties and considerable – although temporary – «danger».

The same tendency to plausibility and the author's refusal to attempt at penetrating the mystery of the divine will can be observed in the episode of the final Lepanto combat in canto XIV.

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<sup>532</sup> «(...) *templa los elementos y el camino / da fácil a la armata (...)*» (*Ibid.*, Canto VIII, 30, p. 319).

Despite the military actions being at their height, the victory seems far from being certain – and it is in this moment that Don John resorts to fervent prayer, asking Heaven for support<sup>533</sup>:

Y si para el servicio y gloria tuya  
mi gente y yo **permities que vençamos**,  
ten por bien que esta guerra se concluya,  
pues eres la verdad que sustentamos;  
**y no consientas** que el pagano arguya  
contra la religión que professamos,  
diziendo ¿dónde estava el Dios de aquellos  
que no quiso venir a socorrellos?

(Canto XXIV, 7, p. 839)

Unlike Luis de Requesens in the episode of the tempest in canto VIII, Don John's prayer is perfectly in line with the Counter-Reformation doctrine. The prince is not asking for an «easy victory», nor is he demanding that God commit a miracle in order to assist the Christians, the essence of the ardent discourse lying in his asking Heaven to *permit* the Holy League to triumph over the unfaithful. The structure of the Spanish hero's monologue is as well impeccable from the rhetorical point of view, since it contains a perfect argumentation tailored at his divine addressee – a divine will incarnating justice:

«Padre del cielo, que eres buen testigo  
del zelo y prosupuesto de mi vida,  
si quisieres en mí hazer castigo  
**tu voluntad eterna sea cumplida**;  
mas no des el cuchillo a tu enemigo,  
que está en su obstinación endurecida (...)

(Canto XXIV, 6, p. 838)

Thus, Don John is first and foremost appealing to the celestial sense of justice, alluding to his virtuous life, as well as explicitly resigning to the final divine decision: only God can decide

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<sup>533</sup> A situation topical for the epic poem: cf., for instance, the crucial episode of Godfrey of Bouillon's fervent prayer in canto XIII of *Jerusalem delivered* followed by an immediate divine intervention marking an important turning point and inspiring the Christian warriors to continue the Crusade (Canto XIII, 70-72).

whether his «zeal» deserves punishment or recompense, the only certain fact being that the enemy without doubt should be no longer «consented» to commit crimes against the Christian faith.

The poem does not contain an explicit reference to a direct reaction of Heaven to this fervent words, nor does he make hypothesis as in canto XVIII, but continues with the description of the combat, demonstrating the result of the prayer in an indirect way. Shortly after, the Spanish squadron succeeds in entering the Ottoman flagship and «accomplishes brave deeds worthy of being remembered»<sup>534</sup> «with the mere force of their hands»<sup>535</sup> and not due to a direct divine intervention. Rufo's crucial concern is to leave space for mystery that part and parcel of the providential action, the divine support being still supposed to be the primary source of the Holy League's victory. The divine providence inspires a pious and merciful attitude towards the defeated: thus, when Don John sends a prayer of gratitude immediately after the successful combat, his words displaying as well a dissimulated noble «pious zeal» towards the dead enemy, as well as deep regret of not being able to treat him with due respect and «honour», sparing the life of the distinguished Ottoman commander:

El nieto de **Filipe alaba el cielo**  
**por el notable y próspero sucesso,**  
**aunque en el alma siente desconsuelo**  
**de no haver al baxá en su poder preso,**  
**para mostralle su piadoso zelo (...)**

Fue tanto de este caso el sentimiento  
que dixo: «**No hay plazer, al fin, cumplido,**  
**pues falts Alí Baxá, porque mi intento**  
**usar más bien no pueda del vencido**».

(Canto XXIV, 28-29, p. 841)

As has already been noted, in *La Austriada*, the divine forces do not intervene directly in the Christian combats with the Unfaithful, the episode of the snowstorm impeding the *Moriscos'* aggression being a unique exception to the rule. As far as fighting scenes are concerned, either in the case of collective combats, or in the one of classical one-to-one duels, the heroes have to rely

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<sup>534</sup> «(...) y ya del exercicio vioplento / andavan todos casi sin aliento, / cuando **la flor de España** pregonando / a voces **Santiago, fe y victoria, / en la real turquesca entró mostrando / azeros bravos, dignos de memoria**». (*Ibid.*, Canto XXIV, 10-11, pp. 838-839). It is important to mention the nationalistic element accentuated by the narrator who explicitly refers to Don John's squadron as the «flower of Spain» and not merely as Christian warriors.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*

upon their own military art and valiance. If in Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata*, the outcome of the scenes depicting crucial combats to a major extent depended upon the presence of such topical elements as fatal weapons received by the glorious hero as a sign of the celestial benevolence, in *La Austriada*, one observes a totally different approach. To quote one of the numerous examples found in Rufo's epic, in the episode of the duel in canto X, Diego de Leiva and Ismenio Escandería are fighting with «such an inhuman fury»<sup>536</sup>, both warriors showing «miracles» of courage that are exclusively due to their *human* «effort» rather than have a properly miraculous origin:

(...) lançadas se tiraron,  
firmes y recogidos en las sillas,  
las astas en los petos se quebraron,  
saltaron por el aire las astillas;  
**al punto las espadas desnudaron,**  
**mostrando de su esfuerço maravillas (...)**

(Canto X, 42, p. 376)

Thus, the role of the divine Providence in Rufo's poem is mostly limited to giving the fundamental general allegorical framework into which the author inscribes the narration of the historical facts. The poet does not have to resort to numerous direct celestial interventions, in order to demonstrate the crucial significance of Heaven that, in this optic, *a priori* determines the basic course of historical events, providing inspiration for the Christian heroes on the condition of their unquestioning faith and courage so that their own military art might produce 'miracles' on the battlefield.

In all of the epic poems previously taken into consideration, the presence of Heaven was counterbalanced by antagonistic actions of the demonic forces, the whole poetic narration being organized around the dichotomy of good and evil. *La Austriada* makes no exception, however, the actual space given to the infernal characters and their interventions reveals to be minimized to a considerable extent. The first significant apparition of the demonic forces in the poem takes place only in canto XX<sup>537</sup>, i.e. in the second part of the poem dedicated to the Battle of Lepanto. Thus, the reader assists to the «malicious spirit»<sup>538</sup> «moaning», lamenting the «offence» to his infernal nature:

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<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto X, 51, p. 377.

<sup>537</sup> All previous references to the demonic forces concerned themselves with the general context of the war between good and evil forming a prehistory of the actual historical events.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XX, 63, p. 679.

the departure of the «brave and strong army»<sup>539</sup> of the Holy League. In his passionate inner monologue, the Demon expands upon his failed attempts at intervening in the course of the historical events, acting against «the king, the Pope and the Senate», as well as against «his enemy», the Catholic Church:

«Mi industria a todas horas ha velado,  
mi astucia sus poderes siempre ha hecho,  
**por impedir al rey, papa y senado**  
el orden y camino de este hecho;  
**mil vezes ya, el negocio començado**  
**turbé con dilación, y a mi despecho**  
**se concluyó el tratado de la Liga,**  
**en favor de la Iglesia, mi enemiga.**

(Canto XX, 58, p. 678)

It is significant that the infernal monologue is first and foremost a lamentation, the Demon himself admitting the defeat of his «astute» mind's efforts as far as the formation of the Holy League is concerned. In order to sustain the Ottoman Empire in the war against the «Christian power», the devil summons the «horrible» infernal forces – the Furies and, most importantly, the allegorical figure of Discord – that he entrusts with a mission to hinder further progress of the sailing Christian fleet. It is important to note that the figure of the Demon in Rufo's interpretation is a complicated one, the poet putting special emphasis on his origins of the «fallen angel» whose fury is to a great extent determined by his immense regret of his own irreversible condition:

(...) **yo, angel arrojado desde el cielo**  
en el profundo seno del abismo;  
**y el hombre, vil gusano, desde el suelo,**  
navegando en las aguas del bautismo,  
subido a tomar puerto al sumo imperio  
por mi desdicha grande y vituperio.

(Canto XXI, 12, p. 709)

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<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XX, 57, 678.

This opposition between the «angel thrown into a profound abyss» and the «vile» man willing to ascend to the celestial reign is obsessing the Demon's mind, endowing him with a complex affect of «raging envy» and «eternal sorrow»<sup>540</sup>. The impossibility to regain *paradise lost* provokes the impetuous desire of the revenge, the Christians being in this conception not a mere instrument in the war with the divine realm, but an equal, if not a primary object of the infernal hatred:

«De cuanto se me acuerda y cuanto veo  
**resulta en mi dolor pena crecida;**  
**lo imposible atormenta mi desseo,**  
de nada huelgo y nada se me olvida;  
**aborrezco mi ser mil vezes reo,**  
**maldígome con ansia encarecida:**  
**pues si contra mí estoy de enojo lleno,**  
**¿como podré sufrir el bien ajeno?»**

(Canto XXI, 13, p. 709)

The pathos of hatred towards the Christians thus appears to be directly conditioned by the demonic self-abhorrence and the impossibility to resign to his fate, nor to forget his divine past: perfectly in line with the severe Counter-Reformation tenets, the Demon himself admits his being «thousand times guilty», adopting the same terminology as the divine forces.

The demonic plots at first seem to bring successful results, breaking the «perfect union» of the «devoted»<sup>541</sup> Christian army: the warriors start arguing and fighting, the discord gaining considerable impetus, but for the auspicious intervention of the fleet's Commander-in-Chief, Don John of Austria who with his «essential words» manages to placate «the tempest»<sup>542</sup>:

**Dezilde que el trabajo que conmigo**  
**han padecido,** tanto mar passando,  
**no es bien dexallo al áspero enemigo**  
de valde, y que de nos quede burlando;  
**la empresa que prosiguen y prosigo**  
**de Dios es, y, con ella comparando**

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<sup>540</sup> «*Rabiosa invidia, eterno desconsuelo*», (*Ibid.*, Canto XXI, 12, p. 709).

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XXI, 6, p. 708.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XXI, pp. 712-713.

**cualquiera no pensado acaecimiento  
no me parece ser de algún momento.**

(Canto XXI, 36, p. 712)

This peremptory appeal of the Spanish prince reveals to be sufficient to put an end to all of the infernal intrigues: personal interests cannot be superior to the ones of the sacred general cause – the one of the new Crusade aimed at defending God and the whole Christian civilisation. To defeat the infernal forces, Don John does not even need to recur to the divine support, nor to the enchanted weapons, as was frequently the case with the heroes of Graziani's *Conquista di Granata*: with his ardent discourse and his own wise example, the Commander-in-Chief succeeds in endowing his warriors with the divine inspiration immediately dissipating their doubts, as well as putting to «desperate» flight the Infernal band:

Huye la infernal sombre al lago Averno,  
**desesperando ya de todo punto  
de pertubar el ínclito gobierno  
e aquel de Carlos plácido trasumpto;  
en esto bolvió Ulixes el moderno,**  
con nueva de que el turco estava a punto  
de salir a buscarnos al camino,  
desde el seguro puerto leantino.

(Canto XXI, 41, p. 713)

Significantly enough, the demonic forces are defeated even before the actual beginning of the battle that shall be fought by human efforts, being, as has already been noted, deprived of the direct supernatural interventions.

An episode that should be mentioned in connection with the element of the marvellous is the episode in canto XXII featuring the appearance of Xiloes, the famous Ottoman magician and astrologist. Ali Pasha, the Commander-in-Chief of the Ottoman fleet resorts to the help of magic on the eve of the Lepanto combat wishing to know the outcome of the battle. The necromancer relates that he had already provided to use his magic art in order to learn the future course of the events and had experienced various signs of ill fortune: from the point of view of magic, the adverse visions, such as a black raven, a «lugubrious» cypress and even the apparition of the mourning spirit of the sultan's father – and, from the astrological point of view, the clearly unfavourable planetary



positions<sup>543</sup>. Reassuring the results of his attempts at predicting the future, Xiloes concludes that everything seems contrary to the Turks' victory and only the miraculous intervention of Muhammad might save the Ottoman Empire:

**Assí que, por la mágica y figuras  
que tengo, como has visto, consultadas,  
los hados nos fabrican desventuras,**  
común peligro a gentes ensalçadas;  
**no trato de diversas conjeturas  
de cosas que me fueron revelados  
durmiendo,** cuando el sol los indios doma,  
pero más evitar puede Mahoma.

(Canto XXII, 84, p. 756)

This urgent need to learn the future characteristic of the Christian's rivals is counterbalanced by a totally different attitude of the Holy League fleet's Commander-in-Chief. Thus, Don John of Austria does not need any proofs of the favourable outcome of the battle other than his unconditional confidence in the Christian cause, as well as in the infinite divine support. Unlike his Ottoman rival, the valiant prince refuses to resort to the help of magic signs:

Y tu, hijo de Carlos, instrumento  
de esta jornada digna de ti solo,  
**no consultas *el mágico talento,*  
ni el oráculo délfico de Apolo (...)  
ni quieres revocar alma a la tierra  
que diga el fin incierto de esta guerra.**

(Canto XXII, 44, p. 751)

In line with the principles of the Counter-Reformation condemning the occult sciences, Don John does not care about astrological predictions, declaring them «delinquent if not superstitious» since they evidently run contrary not only to the authentic unquestioning Christian faith, but also to

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<sup>543</sup> For the whole episode of the «unfortunate prophecy» see J. Rufo, *op. cit.*, Canto XXII, pp.753-756. A tendency of increasing interest towards astrology should be noted, Xiloes being equally attentive to interpreting magical apparitions and astrological signs.

the basic human condition of not being capable of penetrating the divine intentions originally bearing mysterious nature:

**Ni inquietes judiciaria astrología,**  
lícita si hay alguna que lo sea:  
**toda curiosidad por esta vía,**  
**si no es superstición, parece fea;**  
quien busca la verdad con valentía  
en los efetos cumple que la vea (...)

(Canto XXII, 45, p. 751)

These contrasting approaches clearly illustrate the profound differences forming the vision of the representatives of the two mutually hostile civilisations: one of them accustomed to resort to the supernatural power and incapable of admitting the inferiority of the human mind as compared to the omnipotent divine one, and the other one, entirely trusting the celestial will and *a priori* accepting any of its manifestations<sup>544</sup>.

It should be noted that the providential interpretation of the historical events that, as we have seen, pervades Rufo's poem, appears to be closely linked with the conception of the nationalistic epic. To quote Esther Cicchetti, «*L'esaltazione di Filippo II pervade (...) il poema sin dall'inizio, e soprattutto non è separabile dall'aspetto religioso: il sovrano e la nazione, infatti, sono gli unici che possono affrontare la lotta contro l'infedele*»<sup>545</sup>. The poem thus contains numerous passages celebrating not only Philip II, but as well the main hero of the poem, Don John of Austria, as well as his father, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. This monarchical perspective is introduced already in the first verses of the epic text, the narrator taking up the *incipit*, topical for the epic genre<sup>546</sup>: «*Las armas de Filipe augusto canto, / y aquel su hermano heroico y no vencido, / que en guerras alcançó renombre tanto, / triunfando de la muerte y del olvido (...)*»<sup>547</sup>. Introducing the reader to the prehistory of the religious wars, Rufo provides a rigid hierarchy in line with the Counter-

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<sup>544</sup> Thus, in canto XX, the Holy League's fleet faces a «horrible» «furious» tempest that might have been interpreted as the ones predicting ill fortune, if it had not been for the valiance and, most importantly, the unconditional faith of the Christian warriors despising the mutable ways of «fortune»: «*Pero el exercitado navegante / resiste a los contrastes y fortuna, / no por contemplación de estrella errante, / ni de los fugitives sol y luna (...)*». (*Ibid.*, Canto XX, 20, p. 673).

<sup>545</sup> «Celebration of Philip II (...) permeates the poem from the very beginning and, most importantly, it cannot be separated from the religious aspect: the sovereign and the nation are indeed the only ones who are capable of facing the struggle against the unfaithful» (*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13).

<sup>546</sup> The Virgilian *incipit* «*arma virumque cano*» (*The Aeneid*, I, 1) taken up by Tasso in the first lines of *Jerusalem delivered* («*Canto l'arme pietose e 'l capitano / che 'l gran Sepolcro liberò di Cristo*» (*Jerusalem delivered*, I, 1) can be justly considered among the most frequently imitated elements of the classical epic tradition in the Seicento.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto I, 1, p. 108.

Reformation doctrine stating that a «good» monarch should first and foremost follow the manifestations of the divine will, contributing in this way to prosperity and invincibility of the Spanish reign, ideally corresponding to the given ideal<sup>548</sup>:

De suerte que **es el reino venturoso,**  
**y Dios inmenso de él no alça la mano**  
**si el príncipe prudente y religioso**  
obedece el decreto soberano.  
¡Oh tres y cuatro, y más vezes dichoso,  
**católico invencible reino hispano,**  
**pues dignamente puedes gloriarte**  
**de un rey cual tú pudieras dessearte!**

(Canto I, 4, p. 236)

It is essential to note that all the actions of Philip II are determined by the divine will, «faith and devotion» being the essential qualities of the Spanish monarch: thus, his decision to entrust his «heroic brother», Don John of Austria, with the mission of pacifying the Alpujarra rebellion, as well as the one of commanding the fleet of the Holy League. The hero is perfectly conscious of the divine mission, as he declares himself, as well as his army, the mediators of the «eternal» Providence:

(...) hoy **la divina eternal providencia**  
nos concede un inmenso beneficio:  
**suyo el es caso, suya es la pendencia,**  
**no es humana pasión, ni otro artificio,**  
**la Iglesia santa en fe representamos,**  
y por Dios uno y trino peleamos.

(Canto V, 16, p. 799)

These lines are crucial for a thorough comprehension of the religious basis of Rufo's historical poem: the objective of all of the military operations both in the Alpujarra and at Lepanto, is «not a human passion», nor can it be reduced to Spain's expansive political and military ambitions, but is first and foremost inscribed in the context of the modern 'Crusade' ideology. The

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<sup>548</sup> See also Canto I, 3, p. 108.

above-quoted passage namely reassumes the religious signification of the two military events constituting the bipartite structure of the epic: if from the historical point of view, the events are to be treated separately, the enemy and the general historical context of the two wars differing to a significant extent, the above-mentioned providential perspective justifies the representation of both military conflicts as two complementing parts of the primary ultimate objective – the one of installing an ideal of a perfect global hierarchy where the world is governed by a *unique* monarchy guided by the *unique* law of the divine Providence: «*Tiempo vendrá en que el mundo de aposento / a un pastor solo y a una monarquía, / por una sola ley será guiada / la tierra y de un gobierno sojuzgada*»<sup>549</sup>. Thus, in this essential fragment of the final canto of *La Austriada*, undoubtedly alluding to the passion of conquest characteristic of the Spanish monarchy, the poet **merges the providential and the nationalistic elements**: of all major European powers being actually torn by internal heretical discords, Spain, with her age-long triumphs during the Reconquista process, her successful pacification of the Alpujarra rebellion and her substantial contribution into the crucial battle with the Ottoman Empire could indeed be considered in Rufo's poetic vision as the projection of an ideal «unique monarchy» capable of uniting, dominating and «guiding» the rest of the Christian powers in the future.

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<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XXIV, 95, p. 850.

## Chapter VIII

### The figure of the ‘Other’ in the context of Italian, Spanish and French epic traditions

In his *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Fernand Braudel put special emphasis upon the complexity of finding a compromise for the two different civilisations as far as the religious issue was concerned: «Only the Utopists (...) are capable of dreaming to merge different religions; the religions, i.e. the most personal, as well as the most resistant element in this complex whole of properties, forces and systems making part of every civilisation»<sup>550</sup>. This «refusal to lend»<sup>551</sup> elements constituting the basis of another civilisation conditioned the extremely complicated and controversial process of the age-long religious wars between the Christian and the Islamic Mediterranean civilisations<sup>552</sup> – issues that continued to remain crucial in the context of the Reconquista consequences, the *Moriscos* being not capable of resigning to their inferior condition, on the one hand, and in the perspective of the attacks of the Ottoman Empire despite the signed peace treaty with Venice, on the other hand.

To quote Edmund Husserl, the «spiritual physiognomy of Europe» has always constituted «a cultural, spiritual and political space where the nations would exchange, not only through commerce or weapons, the values that they share»<sup>553</sup>. As far as the Mediterranean Europe of the Seicento is concerned, these «spiritual» values in common can be considered a factor of primary importance – the one that came to the fore accentuated by the rigid climate of the Counter-Reformation, as well as by the imperialist ambitions of the principal European powers naturally

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<sup>550</sup> «Il n’y a que les utopistes (...) pour rêver de fondre les religions entre elles : les religions, ce qu’il y a justement de plus personnel, de plus résistant dans ce complexe des biens, de forces, de systèmes qu’est toute civilisation». (F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*, t. II, 1966, p. 101).

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>552</sup> For the essential reflection upon the «*imagerie (...) fondée sur un système mental sous-jacent, avec ses mécanismes antagonistes entre Chrétienté et infidèles (...)*», see the work of A. Dupront already mentioned in Chapter I. (A. Dupront, *Du sacré : croisades et pèlerinages, images et langages*, 1987, p. 18). «Imagery that is based on the intrinsic mental system with its antagonistic mechanisms dividing the Christianity from the unfaithful».

<sup>553</sup> Quoted by J. Semprun in *Le langage est ma patrie. Entretiens avec Franck Appréderis*, 2013, p. 92. «Un espace culturel, spirituel et politique, où les nations échangent, pas seulement par la voie du commerce ou des armes, des valeurs qu’elles ont en commun», un espace qu’il {E.Husserl} appelle la «figure spirituelle de l’Europe».

excluding any possible way of a peaceful solution to the impending violent clashes between the hostile civilisations.

As it has already been noted in the previous chapters, epic poetry of the period between the end of the Cinquecento - the beginning of the Seicento provided a considerable literary response to the actual religious 'clashes' having produced a number of heroic epic poems clearly reflecting the opposition between the Eastern and the Western civilisations. The figure of the enemy incarnating the concept of 'otherness' that European literary tradition projected upon the Islamic adversaries assumed a role of primary importance since it found itself perfectly inscribed into the general dichotomy making the basis of the literary interpretation of contemporary religious military conflicts – the one of the antithesis between the East and the West. The dichotomy in question indeed appears essential as far as all of the previously analyzed poems are concerned, the narration of all of the poetic texts in question being based upon the mutually dependent oppositions of 1) *the Christian European – the Islamic civilisations* : a dichotomy naturally transforming itself into 2) an allegorical opposition between *absolute Good and absolute Evil* that in its turn finds its reflection at 3) the individual level of the opposition of the poem's characters that can be as well perceived on further specific levels: the one of the antagonism between *the Christian and the Islamic monarchs* and the one of the opposition *between the Commanders-in-Chief of the respective armies*, and the one *between individual heroes*. These are the crucial dichotomies that reveal to be interacting upon different levels of the text, constituting the two poles of the poetic narration. In this chapter, we shall focus our attention upon the image of 'Other' and shall try to trace the manifestations the image of the enemy receives in the epic poems belonging to various European epic traditions. We shall thus investigate the role and the status assumed by the 'Other' and shall be particularly interested to comprehend the similarities, as well as differences in the way Italian, Spanish and French epic poets represent the main European adversaries in their individual literary interpretations of the contemporary religious wars. Does the European historical epic attempt at a historically objective vision of the enemy, or does it tend to follow the classical tradition and recurs to the dimensions of the allegorical and the marvellous? Is it possible to speak of a general portrait shared by the different European epics and, if that may be the case, what are the primary tendencies in the European modality of representing the 'Other'? These will be the questions we shall try to answer by way of analyzing the specific examples of the hostile civilisation's presence in context of the already discussed epic poems.

It is essential to note, when one speaks of the classical epic tradition inherited by the poets of the Seicento, the existence of two drastically different models: the one, typical of the Homeric epics and the other one referring to Virgil's *Aeneid*. As Sergio Zatti pointed out in his *Modo epico*,

the two models clearly demonstrate the evolution the epic genre underwent already in the Ancient times, the first model having been essentially «revisited» by the second one: if in the Homeric poems «there was no actual opposition» between the adversaries, the poet «making his characters act in a universe that we could define as an integral one»<sup>554</sup>, everything changes with Virgil:

Il poeta latino ha fornito ai suoi successori, e in particolare agli epici del Cinquecento, un modello che corrispondeva alle loro esperienze di espansione coloniale, quando nazionalismo e imperialismo, termini oggi circondati dal più legittimo sospetto, erano reputati principi onorevoli. Era un diritto come un dovere dei Romani imporre il proprio dominio sugli altri popoli (...) assumersi il loro compito di portare ordine nella barbarie e nel caos del mondo (...) Quella che si afferma qui è un'ideologia di lunga durata che ha trovato nell'epica cinquecentesca la sua forma di espressione ideale<sup>555</sup>.

This new ideology thus conditioned the transformation of the original «integral» approach to the military conflicts having contributed to the appearance of the crucial epic principle of antagonism. The whole historical context of the Seicento, coinciding with the Counter-Reformation climate, as well as with the long-nurtured projects of the new Crusades, in its turn, represented a perfect background for such literary polarization. Thus, the epics of the Seicento demonstrated the tendency rooted in *The Aeneid* that consisted in «projecting a foreign *otherness*»<sup>556</sup> onto the Islamic enemy, be it the case of the Reconquista wars with the Moors, or the one of the military conflicts with the Ottoman Empire. It is important to stress that this notion of «otherness» implicated a perspective in which *other* civilisations not only presented a crucial political threat, as actual or potential aggressors of the Christian Mediterranean territories, but also generated the need for the Christian Europe to defend its fundamental spiritual values. Furthermore, in this optic, these hostile civilisations were viewed as «Barbarous», i.e. the ones possessing a culturally and socially inferior identity as compared to the Christian civilisation. It is thus not a fortuitous lexical choice when the authors of the 'contemporary' historical epics tend to frequently refer to the Moorish or the Ottoman adversary as to 'Pagan' enemies; barbarity, disorder and absence of unity being in this conception by definition the primary qualities of 'the Other'<sup>557</sup>. This is, however, a general trend

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<sup>554</sup> S. Zatti, *Il modo epico*, 2000, p. 87.

<sup>555</sup> S. Zatti, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86. «The Latin poet has offered his successors, and, in particular, the epic poets of the Cinquecento, a model that corresponded to experiences of colonial expansion in the epoch when nationalism and imperialism, terms that today are treated with more legitimate suspect, were reputed to be honourable principles. It was the Romans' right as well as duty to impose their dominance upon other peoples (...) assuming their task of bringing order into the barbarity and the chaos of the world (...). The described ideology is namely the long-term one that found its ideal mode of expression in the epic poetry of the Cinquecento».

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

that requires a more specific consideration and it is to the examples taken from the previously analyzed texts that we are now going to turn.

It is worth noting that all of the three poetic texts belonging to the Italian literary tradition show a most indissoluble link of the historical element with the allegorical dimension. The war with the Ottoman Turks in case of Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima* and *Il Marte* by Vincenzo Metello, as well as conflicts with the Moors in Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata*, is not only inscribed into the context of the struggle between the divine good and the infernal evil, but is directly provoked by the opposition of the forces representing the allegorical level of the poetic narration. Thus, Bolognetti's poem is based upon the principle of dichotomy, the opposition between Heaven and Hell being reflected by the one between the Christian West and the Infernal East. All of the events in Cyprus, as well as the Battle of Lepanto are presented as a fruit of the infernal plots – episodes of the continuous struggle dating back to times immemorial:

**L'empio Infernal Sathan perverso, e rio,**  
Che a i danni sempre de i mortali attende;  
**Triomphar visto il gran Figlioul di Dio,**  
Il cui poter nel centro anchor si estende;  
Et che dal sangue sparso, ond'ei morio,  
Vigore ogni nostr'opra, e merto prende;  
**Non resta mai di rabbia, e d'ira ardente**  
**D'assalir, d'ingannar l'humana gente.**

(*La christiana vittoria maritima*, Libro I, p. 3)

Similarly, the very existence of the Islamic civilisations receives an allegorical explanation, the African, Asian and the Turkish powers enjoying infinite support of the infernal forces, the expansive ambitions of the Ottoman Empire being especially encouraged by the «raging» Satan:

**Non ti bastò Sathan, rio mostro atroce**  
**Già chiusa haver fuor de le porte**  
**D'Aphrica, e d'Asia l'honorata Croce**  
**Di Christo (...)**  
**Ch'anco in Europa l'odiata Insegna**  
**Spiega il rio Turco, e in Occidente regna.**

(*La christiana vittoria maritima*, Libro I, p. 4)



Interestingly, the author of *La christiana vittoria maritima* shows the natural weakness of the Ottoman Sultan, as well as his inclination towards peace and mundane pleasures:

Con forma tal de l'Infernal Baldacco  
**Bezebù Rè si mostra al crudo Thrace;**  
**Che anchor non satio di piacer, ma stracco**  
**Di sua natura volto era a la pace;**  
**Devoto sol di Venere, e di Bacco,**  
**D'altra religion non si compiace;**  
Ma nel Serraglio i giorni suoi dispensa  
Trà meretrici e tra cinedi à mensa.

(*La christiana vittoria maritima*, Libro I, p. 9)

Only after the apparition of the Demon under the appearance of the Sultan's wise counsellor, Selim II demonstrates such qualities as «scorn, fury and rage», being affected by the «Infernal Serpent's» «venom»<sup>558</sup> poisoning his mind and communicating him the firm intention of extending his power upon «not only Europe but the whole world»<sup>559</sup>. Thus, Bolognetti structures his epic narration around the allegorical conflict, all of the interventions of the infernal forces being echoed by the respective interventions of God and his angels acting as divine messengers that in their turn are sent to the Earth in order to inspire Pope Pius V and Don John of Austria, the Commander-in-Chief of the Holy League's fleet, to mount ardent resistance to the Ottoman aggression. The poet appears to be less interested in providing complex psychological portraits of the individual Ottoman warriors, treating them, however, without excessive *vituperatio*: thus, Ali Pasha, the Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish fleet is referred to as «*di Thrace il Duce*», «*il gran Bascia*»<sup>560</sup>, «*Hali superbo*»<sup>561</sup> but also, perfectly in line with the Virgilian model, «*il Barbaro feroce*»<sup>562</sup>. The poet admits the military virtues of the «Ottoman heroes» but obviously insists upon the unquestionable inferiority of the Eastern enemy. Ali Pasha is thus characterized in the poem, the narrator showing the affects proved by the Turkish commander in the moment of his being «caught by surprise» by the audacity of the «faithful Army» under the guidance of Don John: «*Divenne rosso, e pallido nel*

<sup>558</sup> F. Bolognetti, *La Christiana vittoria maritima*, 1572, Libro I, p. 13.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, Libro III, p. 40: «*Ma se ben poca in ciò fatica havrete, / Però fia la mercede, e il premio grande; / Che vincitori subito potrete / Scorrer l'Europa da tutte le bande(...) Che l'Europa non sol, ma il mondo tutto / Sarà del nostro seme sparso il frutto*».

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

*volto, / Da l'ira, e da la colera conquiso / Gridando(...)*<sup>563</sup>. Arrogance, rage and ferocity become indeed the principal characteristics of the Ottoman Turks taken up by Bolognetti in the course of the whole poetic narration. As has already been mentioned, the figures of the Turkish warriors do not receive detailed psychological insight: their affects being not complex ones, all of them are shown to be constantly inspired to the combat either by the infernal spirits, or by their peremptory Commander-in-Chief. It is, however, essential that such allegorical vision of the conflict transforms itself into a clearly perceived historical message emphasized by the warning Bolognetti addresses his contemporaries in the extremely realistic final episode of the poem. Thus, after the glorious triumph over the Ottoman Turks, Don John of Austria liberates some of the youngest captives of noble origin, yet no scene of global conversion into Christianity takes place in *La christiana vittoria maritima* that in this aspect runs contrary to the idyllic finals of Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata* and Vincenzo Metello's *Marte*. Francesco Bolognetti thus shows himself entirely conscious of the Lepanto event marking the culminating but undoubtedly not final episode in the long-lasting war between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire. It is with the view of leaving a clear ideological message that the author introduces the figure of the messenger communicating the ominous news of the Cyprus defeat and imploring the Christian army to intervene: «*Difendi, o Signor mio, l'humil tuo gregge / Da questi Lupi, e il tuo popol Christiano; / Difendi la tua vera, e santa legge / Dal Turco, Infernal Mostro in corpo humano*»<sup>564</sup>. This desperate appeal is not fortuitously placed in the strategic position of the final episode: the poem thus receives an open final echoing the actual historical mood reigning in the Mediterranean Europe of the epoch.

Similarly to Bolognetti, the author of *Il Marte* collocates the events of the Oriental war in the framework of the allegorical context juxtaposing the latter one with the dimension of the Ancient myth. The conflict with the Ottoman Empire sparks off due to the affects of jealousy and fury of the demonic Hecate who wishes to deprive Venice of her reign. As in Bolognetti's interpretation, Selim's expansive ambitions are shown as entirely justified by the intervention of the furies accomplishing their infernal mission: «inflaming» the «magnificent heart» of the «superb» Ottoman Sultan with the fervent desire to put «the whole world» under his «power»<sup>565</sup> and control. Like in the case of the first Italian poem, Metello makes numerous references to the «Barbarous fury»<sup>566</sup> of the enemy, focusing his attention upon the Ottoman Turks' extreme violence and ferocity in the episodes devoted to the Siege of Famagusta and the Battle of Lepanto. Nevertheless,

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<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>565</sup> V. Metello, Canto I, p. 4.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto III, p. 14.

the poet does not aim at diminishing the enemy's qualities paying tribute to the «sagacity», «audacity» and «prudence» of the Ottoman illustrious commanders:

Compresa **il Re d'Alger cauto, e sagace**  
La perdita de' suoi tacito fugge,  
Combatte tuttavia **Siroco audace**,  
E con ferro, e con foco uccide, e strugge.  
E come suol **Leon fiero, e rapace**,  
Che mostra il dente insanguinato, e rugge  
Così alzando egli il brando la sua gente  
**A la battaglia chiama alteramente.**

(*Il Marte*, Canto V, p. 21)

Despite the absence of the complex psychological affects in the images of the prominent Turkish warriors, Metello offers differentiated portraits, demonstrating two different reactions to the impending military defeat of the two corsairs: the evasion of the «sagacious» Uluç Ali and the «audacious» resistance of Siroco who is compared to a «proud Lion»: wounded, he refuses to leave the battlefield and seeks to inspire the escaping army to further ferocious combat.

An interesting evolution of the figure of the enemy towards more complicated, as well as more ambiguous characters can be observed in Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata*. The poem is based upon the similar conflict between the divine and the infernal forces, both making numerous appearances throughout the poem – yet, initially the conflict is introduced from a historical point of view, the allegorical context being introduced later on. Thus, the narrator topically starts his poetic discourse *in medias res*:

Da che inondar con **barbari furori**  
L'armi Africane il bel paese Ibero,  
**Volgean mille anni, che soffria de i Mori**  
**L'usurpata Città giogo severo**,  
Dopo lunghe discordie, e vari errori  
Allhor de i Saracini havea l'impero  
**Il Tiranno Baudele huom, che feroce**  
**De i costumi è crudel, di volto atroce.**

(*Il Conquisto di Granata*, Canto I, p. 2)

The prevailing characteristics of the «Pagan king»<sup>567</sup> are, as in the case of the two previously mentioned Italian poems, «ferocity» and violence, the Moorish «Tyrant» being as well a wise and astute ruler capable of compromises. Baudele might be aided by the demon Hidragorre in his plans to defeat the Christians, but his military zeal definitely cannot be reduced to the mere merit of the demonic inspiration, since it is a natural consequence of his own «ferocious» nature. Importantly enough, Graziani shows Baudele as a character who, in line with the Baroque philosophy, knows to adapt himself to the adverse circumstances, demonstrating wisdom and flexibility:

Sta sù la vinta soglia **il Re Pagano,**  
**Che riverente al vincitor s'inchina;**  
Ei lo sostien con generosa mano,  
E quegli a lui favella, e a la Reina.  
**Questo Regno da me difeso in vano**  
**Alta legge del Fato a voi destina;**  
**Io godo almen, che se lasciar lo deggio,**  
**N'ottenga alfin sì degna coppia il seggio.**

(Canto XXVI, p. 254)

Thus, after the definitive defeat of the Moorish army, Baudele, after a moment of hesitation, accepts the advice of the wise Almiren, refusing to continue «struggling with fate»<sup>568</sup>. The king greets the Catholic Monarchs voluntarily accepting their superiority and praising their virtues. Moreover, Baudele expresses his desire to be baptized, Graziani showing the gradual transformation of the Moorish king. First, Baudele observes Ferdinand laying the first stone of the new – Christian – temple, the «sacred ceremonies» finding a sudden emotional response in his heart: «*Mentre a l'opra costoro operano intenti, / Mira tratto in disparte il Re Pagano / Le sacre cerimonie, ode gli accenti, / Et ammira in se stesso il rito strano (...)*»<sup>569</sup>. The impact the «strange rite» exerts upon Baudele brings about further profound transformations, the character asking for baptism without being forced to do so, the conversion having already taken place in his heart before the official ceremony:

**Et allhor del Re Moro illuminata**  
**Fu da i raggi di Dio la mente oscura (...)**

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<sup>567</sup> G. Graziani, *Il Conquisto di Granata*, 1650, Canto I, p. 2.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XXVI, p. 253.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

E senti liquefarsi **a poco a poco**  
Il giel del freddo core a un dolce foco.  
**Di cor mutato, e di voler diverso**  
**Veste nuovi pensieri, alma novella,**  
E con mente sincera a Dio converso  
Chiede battesimo, e la consorte appella.

(Canto XXVI, p. 255)

This episode, along with the «joyful» celebration of the Catholic Monarchs' «glorious deed»<sup>570</sup> runs contrast to the already mentioned realistic open final of Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima*, being an evident manifestation of the definitive triumph of the Catholic Spanish army. Yet, the Conquest of Granada being a crucial Reconquista event could not be considered the final 'clash': violent rebellions were to take place in the future, notably the Alpujarra Rebellion, taken up in Juan Rufo's *Austriada*. Graziani's final, and in particular, the emphasis put upon the unconstrained Moorish monarchs' conversion indeed seems idyllic compared to the historical reality, however, at the allegorical level the war between the divine and the infernal forces is not finished yet. Thus, the Demon Hidragorre refuses to admit numerous defeats of his plots unwilling to accept the Christian triumph:

Cada il Regno Pagan, cadano alfine  
Queste mura dilette invan difese;  
**Non vi temo io però leggi divine,**  
**Non tralascio io però l'usate offese.**  
Son cote al mio furor queste ruine,  
**Cerco a l'impero mio nuovo paese;**  
**Non è vinto Hidragor, ma vola altrove**  
**A sparger nuovi semi a guerre nuove.**

(Canto XXVI, p. 255)

Hidragorre's monologue clearly shows that the Demon does not consider the Conquest of Granata as the final event of the ancient war between the divine good and the infernal evil: he will himself provide to «sowing seeds» of new discords, instigating other powers to «new wars» against

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<sup>570</sup> In the original text, Graziani makes use of the Tassian syntagm «*glorioso acquisto*» that significantly enough constitutes the poem's last words.

the Christians and the divine will. Thus, through the prism of the allegorical narration, the poet warns the Mediterranean Europe against «new» plots of the infernal world menacing to spark off new conflicts at the historical level – the ones that might once again tear the Christian unity apart.

If the author of *Il Conquisto di Granata* shows the change of the religious and mental identity of the Moorish king, his «obscure» mind being «illuminated» by the «celestial truth»<sup>571</sup>, other ‘Pagan’ characters are as well presented in a more complex and detailed way compared to Bolognetti and Metello’s figures belonging to the hostile camp. Importantly enough, the reader assists to the differentiation of the Moorish enemies, the poet offering various *individual* psychological portraits of the warriors: the sagacious Almiren and the vigorous Agramasso, the eloquent Omar and the noble-hearted Osmino. The poet treats the Moorish characters with respect, focusing his attention upon their «ancient valience»<sup>572</sup>. When Baudele asks his most prominent warriors for advice, the «proud» Agramasso is thus introduced to the reader:

Siede **Agramasso** appresso a lor, che tiene  
Sovra l’armi del Rè libero impero,  
**Di lignaggio Real** la Madre Argene  
Lui con novo splendor rende più **altero**;  
**Placido nel sembiante egli ritiene**  
**Misto a dolci maniere il cor guerriero,**  
**E congiunge egualmente, e saggio, e forte**  
**L’arti de la Militia, e de la Corte.**

(Canto I, p. 3)

As can be seen from the detailed description of the Moorish warrior, Graziani definitely rejects the conception implicating the simplified representation of the enemy as the incarnation of extreme ferocity, chaos and disorder: Agramasso is presented as a hero in possession of all the respective virtues. The narrator gives special attention to the warrior’s noble appearance: «proud» and «placid», he possesses the «heart of a warrior» and is well-versed in either «military», or «court» «arts».

The figure of Agramasso is juxtaposed with the one of another distinguished warrior, Almiren whose wisdom is particularly emphasized by the poet:

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<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Segue **Almiren**, che de i Paterni tetti  
Da l'humil stato a i sommi affar del Regno  
Innalzar **pura fè, candidi affetti,**  
**Antica servitù, costante ingegno,**  
**Profondo è ne i pensier, grave ne i detti,**  
**Paciente al soffrir, tardo a lo sdegno,**  
Accrescono vigore al suo consiglio  
Libere le maniere, austero il ciglio.

(Canto I, p. 3)

Almiren thus can be considered an incarnation of wisdom, as well as of the Baroque idea of flexibility: it is not fortuitous that Baudele follows his advice twice i.e. in the first and in the last cantos of the poem. Thus, in the first episode, the Moorish monarch seeing his army, as well as the population of Granada exhausted by the long siege, convokes his counsellors in order to devise further military operations. Almiren, contradicted by Agramasso, suggests summoning back from exile the ferocious Almansor, «the strongest and the most feared»<sup>573</sup> among the Moorish warriors providing the following arguments in favour of his proposal:

**Che pro di ritener memorie ultrici,**  
**Se mancan poi de la vendetta i modi?**  
Sia virtù l'impotenza, e i cori amici,  
Riunite, e spegnete, e l'ire, e gli odi.  
**Viver d'un sempre amanti, over nemici**  
**Son di gente vulgar solite lodi,**  
**Ma deve alma Real solo nudrire**  
**Quanto giovano a lei l'amore, o l'ire.**

(Canto I, p. 4)

In this Baroque perspective claiming that «constancy is a trophy of the humble fortune»<sup>574</sup>, the supreme virtue frequently consists in «admiring but not adopting»<sup>575</sup> a fixed upright attitude towards the mutable reality. An efficient monarch differs from *vulgo* namely by his sagacious art of adapting his ways in line with the circumstances – in spite of Baudele's affects of jealousy and

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<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>574</sup> «(...) *La costanza è trofeo d'humil fortuna*», *Ibid.*

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*

hatred towards Almansor , Almiren insists upon the monarch's restraining his pride and granting his pardon to the exiled warrior since he is certain to largely contribute to the Moorish victory. This discourse is echoed by the words of another valiant hero, Alvante, who develops Almiren's thought evoking the primary Baroque virtue, i.e. the one of prudence:

**(...) Degno d'honore**

**Non sempre io stimerò quei, che non pave;**

***La prudenza diversa è dal timore.***

Chi biasmerà, che in agitata nave

De l'Ocean fra il tempestoso horrore

**Saggio Nocchier con providi argomenti**

**Cerchi dar loco a l'impeto de i venti?**

(Canto I, p. 5)

Thus, according to the Moorish counsellor, a wise monarch ought to distinguish between «fear» and «prudence», the latter one evidently prevailing over all other virtues, or affects in a situation of «tempestuous horror» and crucial danger. The last argument, along with the eloquence of the previous discourse, finally succeeds in persuading Baudele to act according to the circumstances: «*Siamo in stato, Signor, che questo Regno / Sembra in torbido mar nave agitata, / Dove manca il poter cresca l'ingegno; / Tutto è permesso a conservar Granata*»<sup>576</sup>.

As has already been noted above, Almiren is given a second occasion to demonstrate his Baroque philosophy – in the final canto of the poem, the sagacious warrior once again manages to influence «the ferocious Tyrant» convincing him to accept the defeat of the Moorish army with dignity, hoping for more favourable circumstances in the future:

**A che dunque pugnar contra il destino?**

**A che dunque morir senza profitto?**

Cedi, Signore, a quel voler divino,

Che il termine al tuo Regno hoggi ha prescritto.

Tu rendi la Città, lascia il domino,

Sol libero mantieni il core invitto;

**Puoi tu col variar de la Fortuna**

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<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.



**Sperare a miglior sorte hora opportuna.**

(Canto XXVI, p. 253)

As can be seen, the main point of Almiren's reasoning can be reduced to prudence rather than refer to the idea of mere resignation: one has to accept the unfavourable circumstances, since there is no point in mounting further resistance: in this optic, a more advantageous, as well as a more prudent option consists in adapting oneself to the caprices of the Fortune while waiting for a more «appropriate» moment.

Thus, the poet does not hesitate to endow the Moorish characters with such essential qualities of the epic heroes as wisdom, perspicacity and prudence, the characteristics in question being seen as properties of individual characters rather than intrinsic virtues of a nation, or an ethnical group. We have already mentioned the approach of differentiation Graziani adopts when depicting the Moorish warriors – an image drastically different from the ones analyzed above is the one of Almansor, «the arrogant» rebel evoked by Almiren in his discourse in front of the king and the counsellors. The poet offers a detailed description of the «atrocious» warrior, putting special emphasis upon his «Barbarian» appearance:

**La pelle d'un Leon** gli copre indosso  
Il fino usbergo, ha curva spada al fianco;  
Maneggia un Pin col destro braccio, e d'osso  
Grave scudo ferrato alza col manco,  
**Largo petto, ampie spalle, e labbro ha grosso,**  
**Crin folto, e negro, occhio sanguigno, e bianco,**  
**Spatiosa è la fronte, adunco il naso,**  
**Mostra barbuto il labbro, e'l mente raso.**

(Canto I, p. 7)

The general impression of savagery indeed stands in stark contrast to the previously considered refined images of Agramasso and especially Almiren – yet, the ferocious nature of the character apart, this «Barbarity» is first and foremost due to the adverse Fortune of the character in question: brother of the unjustly accused queen, the warrior becomes a brigand namely for the sake of revenge. Despite his «horrid» appearance, Almansor reveals to be capable of the affects other than cruelty and the desire of revenge: as the king's messenger communicates him the royal will, the Saracen warrior is overcome by «generous compassion» towards the destiny of his compatriots

and agrees immediately to provide help. Thus, Almansor's reaction to the king's appeal is violent but sincere, the brigand not hesitating for a moment in giving his consent:

(...) Letto, e pensato ch'ebbe il capo scosse;  
Indi crollato il noderoso pino  
**Con un grido tonando il Ciel percosse.**  
**Non più vendetta: al publico destino**  
**Le mie offese consacro, e le mie posse;**  
**Dono l'ire a la patria;** andiamo o miei,  
E' perdita l'indugio; armi, trofei.

(Canto I, p. 8)

In the poetic narration of *Il Conquistato di Granata*, even «the most feared» of the Moorish warriors is not approached as a mere incarnation of the ferocious 'Barbarous' enemy: firstly, the poet reveals the tragic story of the character who had suffered from treachery and court intrigue and secondly, he leaves no doubt as to the brigand's generosity showing Almansor's «personal rage» transform itself into a selfless impetus for «consecrating his offences and strength» to his «motherland», the reign of Baudele. The warrior will keep his promise, managing to massacre numerous Christian soldiers<sup>577</sup> before being finally killed by one of the Christian protagonists, Consalvo, towards the end of the poem<sup>578</sup>.

An interesting episode taking place shortly before Almansor's death adds more to the already outlined figure of the ferocious warrior. In Canto XXV, the Moorish commander falls prey to a profound «unknown affect» as he observes his young compatriot being mortally wounded by the belligerent Darassa:

Vide Almansorre, e sospirò lontano  
**Con incognito affetto il suo periglio,**  
**E lui volle aiutar,** ma corse invano  
Poiche il Fato prevenne il suo consiglio.  
Giunse alfine, e mirò languir su il piano  
Il bel garzon quasi reciso giglio;

<sup>577</sup> See, for instance, scenes of combat in Canto XVIII.

<sup>578</sup> For the episode of the duel between Almansor and Consalvo, see *Ibid.*, Canto XXV, p. 243. The death of the Moorish hero marks an important turning point in the war, since, as the narrator remarks, «*More il forte Almansorre, e seco more / La fortuna de I Barbari, e la speme, / E con forza, e con impeto maggiore / Il popolo Fedel gl'incalza, e preme.*» (*Ibid.*).

**N'hebbe pietà, ma la pietà nel core  
Non già dolor, ma seminò furore.**

(Canto XXV, p. 242)

The image of Almansor becomes more complicated, the poet once again accentuating his generous heart while showing the transformation of various affects aroused by the scene of the young warrior's death: «compassion» that gives place to «pain», the latter one immediately turning into «fury». Moved by the desire to avenge the death of the unknown warrior, Almansor attacks Darassa thus regaining his habitual state of the «poisonous rage» – the affect that will continue to prevail until the moment of his own death.

A totally different image is the one of Osmino: the Moorish warrior incarnating crucial chivalric values. Thus, in the episode of a military combat in Canto II, Osmino saves Silvera, the daughter of the Christian commander, Armonte d'Aguilar, letting her escape from the battlefield and offering her his own steed<sup>579</sup>. In a brief digression, the narrator relates the story of Osmino having fallen in love with Silvera years ago: «*E benché mai, da che tornò in Granata, / Riveder poi Silvera ei non potesse, / Pure adorò de la bellezza amata / L'immagin, che'l desio nel cor gl'imprese*»<sup>580</sup>. The Moorish hero thus proves to be capable of true chivalric love, showing nobility of spirit, loyalty and refined feelings. In Graziani's conception, love reveals to be a «ferocious Tyrant», as well as the source of noble affects that elevates the characters above their individual social and national condition, cancelling even the crucial difference of faith<sup>581</sup>. In the chapter devoted to the analysis of *Il Conquistato di Granata*, we have already dwelled upon further evolution of Osmino and Silvera's story resulting in a tragic duel, the eventual agnition and the death of the two mortally wounded heroes. As has already been mentioned above, the key element in this scene inspired by the analogous episode in Tasso's *Jerusalem delivered*, is the baptism of the Moorish hero, voluntarily refusing from his religious identity for the sake of love.

Thus, the dimension of «*gli amori*», along with the one of «*l'arme*» has a significant role to play in the poem, the Moorish characters enjoying a status that cannot be viewed as inferior to the Christian heroes: love abolishes all the differences, contributing to Osmino's final transformation, i.e. his voluntary conversion into Christianity.

Compared to Graziani's *Conquistato di Granata*, Pierre de Deimier's *Austriade* offers a more realistic perspective of the actual historical events: despite the fact that the poem remained

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<sup>579</sup> For the given episode, see Canto II, p. 19.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>581</sup> It is interesting to note in this connection that Osmino's case apart, love frequently makes the 'Pagan' characters of *Il Conquistato di Granata* reject their original religious identity, as well as convert to the religion of the beloved person.

uncompleted, no allusions to possible final conversion of the enemy are to be found in the poem. Unlike Girolamo Graziani, the author of *L'Austriade* concentrates his attention exclusively upon the details of the military combat: the dimension of «*gli amori*» is present in a fragmentary way, appearing only in brief passages of the second canto and is namely linked to the figure belonging to the hostile camp – the Moorish warrior Ataviar. The narrator treats the image of Ataviar with profound respect, emphasizing his qualities of a distinguished warrior as he relates the story of his chivalric love to Aisha:

**Le hardy Ataviar un More de Gomare,**  
Se faisait admirer en **guerrier grand et rare,**  
Sus les Venitiens employant **sa valeur,**  
**Il semait a grands flots la perte et la douleur,**  
Il se parait le sein *d'une escharpe orangée,*  
De bleu et vert de mer ainsi qu'entrecangée.  
**Son amoureuse Aicha une Dame d'Arger**  
**Au iour de son despart luy avait fait charger,**  
**Ainsi qu'un don d'amour de sa main favorable (...)**

(*L'Austriade*, Chant II, p. 88)

The Moorish warrior thus appears to belong to both the dimensions of «*weapons and loves*» that are merged together due to the crucial detail – the colourful scarf given to the hero by his beloved. With Deimier, love is not a source of deviation and oblivion, but the one of inspiration and encouragement ; the gift inflaming the warrior to the battle: «*Il se souvint tousiours voyant ceste faveur, / De paraistre au combat en homme de grand coeur, / C'est la loy de l'honneur, que tout ame blessée / Des traicts don't l'archerot nous gaigne la pensée, / Soit belle, et courageuse, et superbe aux hasars (...)*»<sup>582</sup>. «The law of honour» constituting the basis of the chivalric code presents itself as a key notion conjoining the universes of «*l'armi*» and «*gli amori*» rather than separating them. When the valiant warrior despite his courage and inspiration gets mortally wounded by the Venetian soldier, the narrator does not dwell upon the victory of the Christian character but, significantly enough, celebrates the triumph of love that is, once again, symbolized by the orange scarf that the hero's blood symbolically colours in «*bright crimson*»:

Ceste rouge liqueur que le destin escarpe,

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<sup>582</sup>*ibid.*, p. 89.

**D'un gay pourpre sanguin peinct l'amoureuse escharpe,  
E semble qu'il y forme aux traicts de sa liqueur,  
Le beau nom que l'Amour avait peinct en son cœur.  
Ataviar mourant encore se renflame,  
D'aller voir en esprit sa Dame ainçois son ame,  
Et d'amoureux souspirs disant adieu au iour,  
Fait sçavoir que **la mort ne tüe point l'amour.****

(Chant II, p. 89)

Love appears to be stronger than death and knows no prejudices regarding nationalities: similarly to the perspective adopted by Graziani in *Il Conquistato di Granata*, in *L'Austriade* Deimier recurs to the device of differentiation when showing the representatives of the hostile camp. Thus, one can inscribe the Islamic warriors into two main categories, both of them being equally present in the French poem: 1) «valiant warriors» whose virtues are equivalent to the ones of the Christian heroes, the chivalric notion of honour along with an excellent military bravery being their major characteristics (Ataviar being a perfect example of the given category); and 2) ferocious and furious «Barbarians» whose savagery, as well as arrogance and cruelty is especially emphasized by the narrator who nevertheless does not tend to diminish their military qualities, as well as refuses to recur to vituperation while offering the reader their portraits.

Despite this schematic division, it is important to note that the general tendency of the poem consists in treating the hostile warriors with respect: thus, Occhiali and Siroco, the two commanders of the Ottoman fleet are referred to as «excellent warriors»<sup>583</sup>, intrepidity most probably being the main virtue of the two famous corsairs who are difficult to inscribe in the first 'chivalric' category. The enemy's military virtue is thus celebrated by the poet who opts for a possibly neutral historical approach to the Lepanto combat, avoiding all direct marvellous interventions:

Tandis **en vaillant Chef le fort Sangeac Siroque,**  
A soustenir le choc ses gendarmes provoque,  
Et d'exemple et de voix : car de son coutelas  
Il tomba **vaillamment** des chrestiens à grand tas (...)

(Chant II, p. 74)

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<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

In this fragment, the poet achieves an impeccably neutral intonation of an independent epic narrator, explicitly showing the vigour and the «valiance» of the Ottoman commander without trying to diminish his military art. In a similar spirit, the narrator demonstrates his position of a neutral, as well as astute observer, as he depicts the course of the battle: «(...) *Les Chrestiens et les Turcs de valeur et d'ardeur, / Monstrent icy des faits d'admirable grandeur (...)*»<sup>584</sup>. In this description, both the Christian and the Ottoman fleets appear to be «admirable» examples of military «valiance» and «ardour», the poet referring to the two armies with equally celebrative intonation.

The attitude of rendering homage to the enemy's merits prevails in the episode of Ali Pasha's discourse in front of his army, the narrator demonstrating the «fury», but as well the «ardour» and the «art» of enflaming the warriors to the battle that equals Don John of Austria's eloquence and enthusiasm: «*Tandis le General de l'infidelle armée, / La visitant par tout, d'une haleine enflamée / D'artifice et d'ardeur, d'amour et de fureur, / Va desployant ces mots qui portent la terreur, / L'assurance et l'audace*»<sup>585</sup>. It is worth noting that the concept of «honour» reveals to be the nucleus of the Ottoman Commander's discourse: «*O valeureux Bassas, Sangeacs et Ianissaires, / Mesnagez vivement les belliques affaires, / Voicy, voicy le poinct, qu'il faut iusques aux Cieux / Eslever nos honneurs par le fer glorieux: / L'honneur des Othomans et de Mahon encore, / Auiourd'huy par vos mains s'esleve et se redore (...)*»<sup>586</sup>. These encouraging words are indeed centred upon the essential message – the one of «elevating» the prestige of the Ottoman Empire celebrating Muhammed's «honour». Moreover, the poet does justice to the distinguished commander's military virtues and, most importantly, his capacity to inspire the army even in the unfavourable circumstances.

A similar approach can be observed in the image of the Ottoman warrior Deli Eboubequir who is referred to as a «renowned» warrior in possession of «rare» bravery: «*Il y avait icy, un Turc don't la prouesse / Estait à ses soldats l'assurance et l'adresse, / Deli Eboubequir estait son brave nom, / Que ses rares valeurs ornaient d'un grand renom*»<sup>587</sup>. Yet, in this case the narrator does not limit himself to mere neutral celebration of the enemy's courage, depicting him as ferocious warrior whose vigour is «reinforced by fury»<sup>588</sup>:

**Il estait tout bruslant dans le sanglant orage,  
Ses yeux iettaient de feux, et son cruel visage**

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, Chant I, p. 37.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

**Horriblait ses regards de sueur et du sang,**  
Dont **son glaive cruel** en vermeillait ce rang,  
**Ses bras semblaient la mort, la mort estait sa vie,**  
**De meurtrir sans repos c'estait sa seule envie (...)**

(Chant I, p. 39)

The general impression of inhuman horror and fierceness is strengthened by such details as the «fiery glance», as well as «cruel face» to result in the final culminant lines presenting the Ottoman warrior as an incarnation of violence and death. Furthermore, the character is compared to a «carnivorous Wolf» devastating «everything», the narrator showing the warrior's insatiable desire to saw death:

**Comme un Loup carnacier** quand la faim le poursuict  
Sans un parc de brebris entre au cœur de la nuit,  
Et de rouses dens de la rage aiguisées,  
**Et sa mordante fain, il veut tout estrangler,**  
**Et tout vuidier de sang, et tout perdre et voler.**

(Chant I, p. 39)

The figure of Eboubequir thus may be inscribed into the second category – the one that namely comprises the poet's descriptions of the hostile warriors focusing upon the violent, as well as the Barbarian side of the Ottoman nature.

Another striking example illustrating Deimier's tendency to distinguish between various types of the Ottoman warriors is the image of «the arrogant Brahim»<sup>589</sup> encountered in the second canto of the poem. For the first time in the course of the poetic narration of *L'Austriade* the reader assists to such explicit denigration of the Holy League army by the Ottoman warrior:

(...) Puis **voulant bravader du glaive de la voix,**  
Il s'escarta un peu de la rude meslée,  
Et fait à ce discours empenner sa volée.  
Avez-vous tant osé, **coüiards peuples Chrestiens,**  
D'atendre au champ de Mars les braves Scithiens? (...)

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<sup>589</sup> *Ibid.*, Chant II, p. 148.

**Peu courageux soldats, qui tous couvers de fer,  
Ne vous pouvez encore assez bien eschauffer  
D'un assure courage et d'ardeur bien esprise,  
Contre nous qui n'ayant que la simple chemise,  
Et la seule casaque au teinct escarlatin,  
Pour garantir nos corps du funeste destin !**

(Chant II, p. 148)

In this presumptuous monologue that comprises as well allusions to the Ottoman army's being less well equipped compared to the Christian one, the 'Pagan' warrior apostrophizes the Christian soldiers in most injurious terms, showing total lack of respect towards the adversary. The combatants of the Holy League fleet are thus unjustly accused of «cowardice», as well as the absence of military enthusiasm, Brahim derisively offering the Christians to flee: «*Fuyez, fuyez vous-en, soldats lasches, peureux, / indignes de paraistre au rang des valeureux (...)*»<sup>590</sup>. Nothing could be as far from the chivalric notion of honour as the words of this insulting monologue that the narrator assimilates to a «fiery arrows» shot towards the Christian enemy. Similar to a raging «tempest», Brahim unleashes his «ardent fury» killing a number of the Holy League's soldiers as he continues his mocking monologue. The Turk's arrogance reaches its culmination as he starts insulting the «valiant» Christian warrior Dominique mortally wounded a short while ago:

L'ayant ainsi tué, Brahim audacieux,  
**Luy vint esclore ainsi ces mots inïurieux,  
Demeure icy chetif, mon fer icy t'assomme,  
Ton sepulchre est icy, ne l'attens point à Rome (...)  
Mais nous veux tu noyer? car le sang que tu verses  
Semble enonder ces bois et tant de vagues perses,  
Mais attends pour t-aider la fin de tes germains,  
Où ie vais apaiser la fureur de mes mains !**

(Chant II, p. 149)

In this «inhuman bravado»<sup>591</sup>, the Ottoman warrior demonstrates to have no respect not even for the dead – the attitude that he will have to pay by his own death, his victims being revenged by

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<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.



the valiant Alessandro Negroni. It should be noted that even being on the verge of death, the demonic Brahim continues his furious monologue, cursing the «glorious» Christian hero<sup>592</sup>. Thus, the character in question can undoubtedly be inscribed into the category comprising purely negative representations of the ‘Other’, the Ottoman warrior being a vivid incarnation of absolute evil.

A character that similarly to Brahim displays extreme ferocity and arrogance appears in the fragment from the third canto of the poem<sup>593</sup>. The portrait of the Turkish warrior Deli Soliman clearly echoes the image of the fierce Brahim, the poet accentuating the traits of the latter one to the greatest possible degree. As furious as a chased wild boar, Soliman challenges the Christian army in a monologue that appears to exceed Brahim’s discourse in arrogance and presumption:

Et **regardant le Ciel comme aveque menaces,**  
Il despleya ces mots, mais plustot ces audaces.  
**Quoy? qui resistera?** mais plustost qui sera  
Si haineux de ses iours qui fol s-avancera,  
Pour rabatre mes coups ? (...)  
**Mais quoy ? les seuls regards du brave Solyman,**  
**Peuvent ils pas changer en froid, en tremblement,**  
**Les plus ardans soldats (...)?**

(Chant III, p. 157)

In this conceited monologue, Soliman pretends to be invincible, the presumption of the Ottoman warrior becoming grotesque as he claims to be capable of defeating «all the Kings in the world», as well as of fighting alone against thousands of hostile camps : «*Que tout soit contre moy, que cent mille vaisseaux, / Tous chargez de soldats couvrent toutes eaux, / Que mille et mille camps s’herissent sus la terre, / Pour dresser contre moy, contre moy seul la guerre!*»<sup>594</sup>. The comical dimension prevails over the horrible one as the warrior continues his bravado, pretending to be willing to have a «supreme duel» with Muhammad himself:

Et si par le destin **Mahon ce vieux resveur,**  
Estait tant oublie de prudence et de cœur,  
De venir contre moy, **ie l’envoiroy tost boire**  
**Au lieu de ses banquets en la region noire.**

<sup>592</sup> «(...) Tandis qu’encor’ d’un oeil ouvert de la fureur, / Mourant il menaçait son glorieux vainqueur (...)». (*Ibid.*, p.151).

<sup>593</sup> As has already been mentioned in the chapter dedicated to the analysis of *L’Austriade*, the third canto of the poem remained uncompleted.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, Chant III, p. 157.

**Je passeroy cent fois en ce supreme duel,  
L'honneur audacieux du Tyran de Babel.**

(Chant III, p. 157)

As can be seen, Soliman despises even his own faith, entirely focusing on his own person, i.e. upon his «fortune», his «strength» and his «rage»<sup>595</sup>. Moreover, even the death of his compatriots defeated by the Spanish squadron does not provoke compassion nor terror with the presumptuous Turkish warrior who sees the unfavourable outcome of the battle as an opportunity to triumph over the Christian fleet on his own: «*Mais n'est-ce pas mon bien que tous, tous nos gendarmes / Passent sous la rigueur des Espagnoles armes? / A fin que moy tout seul unique et glorieux, / Je domte puis après le camp victorieux (...)*»<sup>596</sup>.

The figures of Soliman and Brahim thus present themselves as striking examples of the poet's hyperbolized «projection of otherness»<sup>597</sup> onto the image of the Islamic enemy, both characters incarnating the affects of fury and arrogance that in the case of the first one border with the dimension of the absurd. It is, however, essential to note that the images of the Turkish soldiers in question are counterbalanced by a number of «valiant» Ottoman, as well as other Islamic<sup>598</sup> warriors whose portraits are far from being incarnations of inhumanity and barbarity. Thus, in the second canto, «the brave Janissary», Mustafa, demonstrates profound respect towards the glorious Commander-in-Chief of the Holy League's fleet, complicating the military episode with the first internal monologue in the poem:

(...) Mais voyant les effaits de l'Alcide Austrien,  
Il dit en son esprit, ma vie soit un rien,  
**Mon honneur et ma loy ne soit qu'une ombre vaine,  
Si ie ne va combatre avec ce Capitaine.**  
Quoy ? pourray i'endurer qu'un si ieune guerrier  
**Parmy les plus vaillans soit tousiours le premier ?  
On ne scaurait iuger s'il a plus de prouesse,  
Ou de brave courage ou de gaye ieunesse (...)**

(Chant I, p. 60)

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<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>597</sup> S. Zatti, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>598</sup> For the Moorish warriors participating in the Battle of Lepanto, see, for instance, the already analyzed figure of Ataviar in *L'Austriade*, Chant II, pp. 88-89.

Triumphing over the distinguished Commander-in-Chief is viewed as a question of «honour» – thus, «the mortal enemy of the Christians»<sup>599</sup>, Mustafa shows to be capable of admiring the adversary's intrepidity remarkable in «such a young warrior». Even the character's dramatic internal conflict and his desire of revenge – Don John has just struck a mortal blow to his «beloved kinsman» – do not make him lose his dignity as he compares the Christian commander's military talent to the one of Caesar: «*Sa main Césarienne et son glaive inhumain, / A tué Giapar mon plus qu'aimé germain* (...)»<sup>600</sup>.

If in *L'Austriade*, the figures of individual warriors of the hostile army are given special attention, it should be observed that the poem comprises as well crucial collective portraits of the Ottoman army as a whole. As has already been stated above, in these cases, the narrator of the poem tends to emphasize the virtues of the adversary's fleet, treating it with respect that may be equalled to the one displayed towards the army of the Holy League. In these collective characteristics, the Turkish warriors are mostly referred to as «courageous», «valiant», «vigorous», «ardent» and even «admirable», the narrator thus echoing Mustafa's noble admiration in front of his sworn enemy:

(...) de maints **forts Ianissaires**,  
 Tous esleuz et triez pour les guerriers affaires,  
 Ils estaient **si hardis** à se fourrer aux coups,  
**Qu'il semblait que la mort fusse l'heur le plus doux,**  
**Ou bien que leur poitrine estait invulnerable,**  
**Tant estait leur courage ardent et admirable** (...)

(Chant I, p. 41)

The chivalric code being an intrinsic element of Deimier's epic, the poet frequently provides impartial descriptions of either the individual duels, or the collective combats, the following example perfectly illustrating the French poet's approach:

Maint Chrestien tresbuchait sous **leur glaive cruel**,  
 Ce semblait **leur nectar le hazard de ce duel** (...)  
 Et bien que leur espoir ce Deli renommé  
 Eut treuvé la carriere au royaume enfumé :  
**Neantmoins leur courage avec moins d'assurance**

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, Chant I, p. 60.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*

**N'abaissait pas leur front vers la desesperance,  
Ains tousiours vigoureux et hardis combattans,  
Ils allaient assaillans, ils etaient resistans.**

(Chant I, p. 41)

As can be seen from the above-quoted fragment, the Ottoman Turks are shown as «vigorous» as well as ferocious «combatants», the narrator focusing the reader's attention upon their brave and indomitable spirit that does not permit the army to surrender despite the extremely unfavourable circumstances: thus, even after the death of the distinguished commander, the warriors persist in their attacks and fierce resistance.

*L'Austriade* having remained uncompleted, we cannot consider the attitude to the enemy towards the final of the poem, yet some hypothetical observations can be made regarding the subject. One might first and foremost suppose that an idyllic ending featuring the enemy's conversion into Christianity could hardly be compatible with Deimier's marked tendency towards historicity. Thus, in the chapter dedicated to the analysis of *L'Austriade*, we have shown the diminished role of the element of the marvellous: no fatal weapons, numerous direct supernatural interventions, nor direct clashes between the divine and the infernal forces can be encountered in the poem, the unique episode of God's dialogue with Archangel Michael being introduced by the syntagm «*Il me semble de voir (...)*»<sup>601</sup> and thus presumably taking place in the narrator's imagination. In this optic, a miraculous conversion of the enemy seems more than improbable, the author indeed specifying possible further course of events in the general «argument» to the whole poetic text: «*Le butin fut grand: et des plus aparens des adversaries y furent prisoniers (...). Ochiali Vice-roy d'Alger se sauva avec trente-cinq Galeres*»<sup>602</sup>, *tout le reste fut bruslé et enfoncé par le canons. Le Prince d'Austriche avec le Prince Jean André Dorie les poursuivit : mais ne les ayant peut atteindre à cause de la nuict qui survint il s'en retourna au lieu de la bataille, où il rendit graces à Dieu de la victoire*»<sup>603</sup>. Taking into consideration the author's announcement, the poem's final scene would have most likely reflected the actual historical ending: numerous deaths and imprisonments of the defeated hostile army, an episode of the sudden conversion (or, the beginning of the epoch of eternal peace depicted in the final episode of Vincenzo Metello's *Marte*) being in all probability incompatible with the poem's general historical perspective.

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<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*, Chant I, p. 10. For a more detailed analysis of the given episode see Chapter VI of the present work.

<sup>602</sup> Although the poem remained uncompleted, one can suppose that by introducing this historical detail, Deimier alludes at the probable open final of *L'Austriade*, similar to the one of Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima*: as the Ottoman enemy is not yet totally defeated, part of the army having escaped, the war is yet not over, despite the glorious Lepanto victory.

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*, Argument de *L'Austriade*.

Episodes similar to the one showing the Islamic adversary's capacity to admire the enemy can be as well encountered in Juan Rufo's *Austriada*. In the last episode of the Cordovan poet's epic, the reader assists to a conversation between two Ottoman soldiers who after having escaped from the fierce battle, found themselves to observe the defeat of the Turkish fleet from the top of a rock. Witnessing the outcome of the «fatal war», one of the warriors does justice to Don John of Austria thus expressing his involuntary admiration in front of the Commander-in-Chief of the hostile fleet:

¡Oh don **Juan de Austria** para mal nacido,  
**del turquesco poder cuchillo fiero,**  
**más que todos los hombres atrevido,**  
principio en en nuestros daños verdadero!  
**Si agora tu fortuna tal ha sido,**  
**Se te has así mostrado en lo primero,**  
**¿cuáles serán los triunfos y despojos**  
**que en otro tiempo mirarán tus ojos?**

(Canto XXIV, 69, p. 846)

As can be seen from the above-quoted fragment, Rufo goes beyond Deimier: if in *L'Austriade*, the Ottoman character expressed his respect towards the young and valiant Christian hero, focusing yet on his desire to triumph over him in a one-to-one duel, Rufo's warriors demonstrate a totally different attitude. Thus, both Turks do not even consider the possibility of fighting with the Holy League fleet's commander as they admit his incontestable superiority, referring to him in most reverent terms. In his embittered discourse, the warrior shows no hostility, resigning himself to the tragic fate of his own nation, as well as he predicts the glorious future triumphs of the Spanish hero. This prophetic lamentation is echoed by the second warrior's monologue expressing similar complex feelings upon the Christian victory:

«**No sin admiración** estoy atento  
– respondiò el otro turco – a tus razones (...)  
valgámonos del buen conocimiento,  
huyendo el rostro en estas ocasiones,  
**y pues tenemos tales enemigos,**

**no pretendamos más que ser testigos.**

(Canto XXIV, 71, p. 847)

This attitude of «admiration» and humility in front of the «such enemies» finds its reflection in the poet's description of the Ottoman fleet: the narrator treats the hostile warriors with respect, emphasizing their topical characteristics of rage and ferocity, but rendering justice to their military art. It should be noted that the above-stated observation concerns either the individual figures of the most prominent warriors or the characteristics of the Turkish army in general. Thus, to quote an example, in Canto XIX, the narrator accentuates the magnificence of the Ottoman army referring to it as to *«la armata más pujante / que jamás ha salido de Levante»*<sup>604</sup>, while in Canto XX the Janissaries are characterized as *«gente par armas formidable»*<sup>605</sup>. As far as the portrait of the Commander-in-chief of the Turkish fleet – Ali Pasha<sup>606</sup> – is concerned, the poet merges in his description of various affects proved by the brave warrior observing the upcoming defeat of his army:

**Alí Baxá, que tal suceso mir,**  
**siente en el alma un áspero despecho,**  
brama como león, gime y suspira,  
**animando su gente sin provecho;**  
**un rabioso dolor, ardiendo en ira,**  
le rasge el corazón dentro del pecho,  
**color de sangre le salió a los ojos,**  
que testimonio fue de sus enojos.

(Canto XXIV, 24, p. 841)

The distinguished commander possesses typical characteristics of the Ottoman Turks, such as fierce anger bordering on rage, this prevailing affect being mixed with the «furious pain» as well as bitter certainty in the unfortunate outcome of the combat. Nonetheless, Ali Pasha displays his indomitable spirit as he perseveres in fighting against the enemy, encouraging his warriors not to surrender even under such unfavourable circumstances. It is worth noting that the Ottoman's

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<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XIX, 13, p. 641.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XX, 106, p. 684.

<sup>606</sup> See also Canto XIX, the illustrious Ottoman commander being characterized as «the most valiant» and «feared» warrior: *«(...) nombró por más soldado y más valiente / al bravo Alí Baxá, turco temido (...). (Ibid., Canto XIX, 14, p. 641).*

bravery is explicitly admired by the enemy, Don John showing his profound regret about Ali Pasha's death – the unfortunate circumstances having deprived him of the possibility to treat such an honourable enemy with mercy:

El nieto de Filipe alaba el cielo  
por el notable y próspero suceso,  
**aunque en el alma siente desconuselo**  
**de no haver al baxá en su poder preso (...)**  
**honrándole en extremo, pues en esso**  
**su condición heroica no forçara,**  
y su victoria ecelsa quilatara.

(Canto XXIV, 28, p. 841)

If the poet shows respect for the enemy's bravery and determined resistance demonstrated during the combat, a totally different approach can be observed as far as the figure of the Ottoman Sultan is concerned. If Ali Bassa reveals such qualities as violence and fury, but also considerable courage, enthusiasm and firmness, Selim II is shown as a «cruel» and deceitful «natural successor» to a dynasty of «tyrants»:

Imperava en la silla de otomanos  
**sultán Selín, segundo de este nombre,**  
**natural sucesor de los tiranos**  
que tanto han propagado su renombre;  
**sediento era de sangre de cristianos,**  
**poco de su palabra, y crüel hombre (...)**

(Canto XI, p. 397)

The poet expands upon the sultan's cruel and treacherous character, underlining in particular the Ottoman ruler's being «consumed» by the ambition to subjugate Christian world.<sup>607</sup> Similarly to

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<sup>607</sup> Thus, shortly after Selim II learns the news of the formation of the «Christian union», he devises the plan to attack Famagusta to weaken the Christian forces: «*Selín, que tiene ya noticia alguna / de la cristiana union (...) a Famagusta conquistar pretende, / con su poder midiendo su fortuna, / el orbe entero sujetar pretende (...)*». (*Ibid.*, Canto XIX, 13, p. 641).

Selim from *La christiana vittoria maritima*<sup>608</sup> who does not conceal his desire to conquer «the garden» of the Christian Mediterranean, Rufo's «insidious» Ottoman» is entirely driven by «the hunger» for power:

**La fuerça de ambición que lo impella  
a hambre de reinar lo trasportava,  
y assí ni a medios justos atendía,  
ni en principios honestos reparava;**  
sus largos reinos ensanchar quería  
con la oportunidad que se llamava,  
y lleno de *infernal* sobervia espera  
de mil traças formar una quimera.

(Canto XI, 7, p. 398)

The last verses of the octet enable the reader a more profound insight into the crucial conception of *La Austríada*: the Ottoman enemy frequently appears in the poem being associated with the infernal forces, the whole struggle between the Christian and the Islamic civilisations assuming thus an even more global – allegorical – scale. It is important to note the crucial difference between Rufo's and other poets' poetic conceptions: if for the poets making part of the Italian tradition (Francesco Bolognetti, Vincenzo Metello and Girolamo Graziani) the beginning of the war with the hostile civilisation is conditioned by direct interventions of demons eager to triumph over the divine forces, in Juan Rufo's, as well as in Pierre de Deimier's interpretation, the conflict between good and evil makes an *implicit* basis for the historical facts. It should be observed that both in the French and in the Spanish poems, Selim II takes the decision to attack Cyprus, as well as the Most Serene Republic on his own, having no need of being spurred by the direct demonic presence, yet, the whole historical fact of the war with the Unfaithful is inscribed into the context of the ancient allegorical war between Heaven and Hell. Thus, the Ottoman Turks are by metonymy presented as the incarnation of evil and infernal plots: it not for nothing that Selim, as well as some of his warriors<sup>609</sup>, is endowed with «infernal» traits and affects, such as perfidy, cruelty and insatiable desire for further violent conquests in the Christian Mediterranean.

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<sup>608</sup> See Ali Pasha's discourse in front of the Ottoman army in F. Bolognetti, *La Christiana vittoria maritima*, Libro III, p. 41: «(...) *Che vincitori subito potrete / Scorrer l'Europa da tutte le bande (...) / Scorrer tutta potrete l'Italia , es Spagna (...) / La Fiandra, e la Borgogna, e l'Alemagna (...)*».

<sup>609</sup> See, for instance the explicitly demonic appearance of Mustafa in Canto XXIV: «(...) *donde, a manera de león sangriento, estava **Mustafá luciferino** (...)*», *Ibid.*, Canto XIX, p. 642.



Rufo's poem, as has already been mentioned before, comprises more than one type of enemy, the second category being the Spanish *Moriscos*. To put it more precisely, in *La Austriada*, these two groups appear to be inscribed into one general category of the age-long enemy of the Christian Europe – the Islamic world incarnating the intrinsically different notion of the 'Other' – yet, the poet's representation of the two nations in question displays clear differences. Thus, in line with the Counter-Reformation perspective of the poem, the *Moriscos* are first and foremost viewed as «traitors» whose sin reveals to be even more cardinal than the one of the Ottoman Turks, the narrator explicitly condemning the «violent crime» committed by the Islamic population of the Catholic Spain:

**Este es aquel infame atroz delito  
que se llama *traición o alevosía*,  
en quien se incluye un número infinito  
de torpes vicios que el profundo cría;  
y en éste confiava *aquel maldito  
vulgo, que de su Dios encarnecía,*  
queriendo *violar la fe y tesoro  
de la preciosa Iglesia y su decoro.***

(*La Austriada*, Canto II, 5, p. 149)

No similar invective reference to the Ottoman enemy can be found in Rufo's poetic text: as has been shown above, the narrator, without diminishing violence and cruelty of the Turkish army, still does not hesitate to render justice to their military values, whereas the *Moriscos* are shown in a totally different way. A nation that had committed the sin of «violating» the Catholic faith by breaking the treaty can only be seen as «cursed» by the celestial law and does not deserve, in this optic, an attitude other than contempt and aversion. It is essential that the narrator makes an introductory digression in order to introduce the reader to the authentic nature of the Alpujarra conflict, the latter one being seen as a direct continuation of the Reconquista issues. Thus, in the first canto of *La Austriada*, the poet offers a succinct relation of the Conquest of Granada – the event that was supposed to mark the end of the age-long historical process of Spain's conquering the indomitable Moors:

(...) Y que, después de tantas novedades,  
suertes, peligros, trances y proezas,

ganadas villas, sitios y ciudades,  
altos castillos, bravas fortalezas (...)  
**el católico rey domó a Granada,**  
**victoria más que todo desseada.**

(Canto I, 36, p. 112)

The narrator puts special emphasis on the «divine favour» that had inspired all of the Catholic Monarchs' conquests, Ferdinand and Isabella being seen as mediators of the celestial will:

Hasta que de Aragón vino Fernando  
para ser de Isabel esposo digno,  
y tener como tuvo de su vando  
en sus acciones **el favor divino,**  
**tanto que a los antípodas domando**  
**hizo, a gloria y honor del uno y trino,**  
**estar suspenso el orbe de la tierra**  
**con pura religión, justicia y guerra.**

(Canto I, 33, p. 112)

Yet, the *Morisco* issue was far from being definitely settled, the hostile nation having not rejected the «blind error»<sup>610</sup> of their authentic religion. The Alpujarra event, importantly enough, presents itself as an immediate continuation of the «war» waged «in the name of Muhammad» and displaying a far more global scale than a mere local rebellion<sup>611</sup>.

It is essential to note that during the whole poetic narration, the *Moriscos* are shown as the warriors deprived of the basic values of the chivalric code, i.e. nobility of spirit and military valiance – virtues possessed, on the contrary, by the most distinguished Ottoman warriors. Thus, in Canto X, the poet apostrophizes the Alpujarra rebels as «*timid* Muhammad's vassals»<sup>612</sup> whose cowardice only emphasizes the bravery of the Spanish soldiers and their glorious commander Céspedes. In the episode dedicated to the unexpected combat, «the valiant and spirited captain» with his small squadron resists the «multitude»<sup>613</sup> of the «Barbarian»<sup>614</sup> rebels, the battle being

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<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto I, 41, p. 113.

<sup>611</sup> «Fue la **conjuración** puesta en efeto, / y assí los hombre moços como ancianos / juraron a su modo que en secreto serían **enemigos de cristianos**; / y que, llegado tiempo más perfeto, / con armas se alçarían en las manos, / **para hazer en nombre de Mahoma / la guerra desde España hasta Roma.** (*Ibid.*, Canto I, 68, p.116).

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto X, 77, p. 380.

<sup>613</sup> For the theme of multitude, variety, chaos and disorder as intrinsic characteristics of the Islamic adversary opposed to the unity of the Christian army, i.e. dichotomy of «unity / variety», see S. Zatti, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-88.

suddenly interrupted by the arrival of the «prudent Moor»<sup>615</sup>, Arrendate. The latter one, accompanied by the four «proud Turks» armed with modern weapons, intervenes violating the fundamental chivalric principle of the honest combat as he orders his warriors to fire in the midst of the combat. Thus, the «terrible» element of modern historical reality intrudes into Rufo's epic, the poet demonstrating his clearly negative attitude to the latest achievements of the military technique:

**«¡Tirad – les dize – todos juntamente!**  
¡Quitad del mundo monstruo tan horrible!»  
La cuadrilla obedece en continente,  
**disparando la máquina terrible:**  
**rompe el aire bolando el plomo ardiente,**  
y passa **un pecho (...)**  
**donde tal corazón tuvo posada**  
**que jamás el temor le halló entrada.**

(Canto X, 86, p. 381)

The enemy's perfidy and lack of respect towards the adversary are thus contrasted by the impeccable chivalric bravery of valiant Cespedes and his «firm» squadron. The poet shows that the Moorish cowardice knows no limits: thus, Arrendate, being challenged to a duel by the dying Christian commander, seemingly accepts to fight, but arrives on the battlefield with the deliberate delay finding the glorious Spanish warrior already dead:

**El cauto moro con ardid rehúsa**  
**de estar a parangón en el encuentro;**  
el jayán español su miedo acusa,  
y buelve a procurar nuevo rencuentro;  
**cuando llegado al fin que no se excusa,**  
**el cuerpo gigantesco batió el centro (...)**

(Canto X, 88, p. 382)

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<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*, 84, p. 381.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, 88, p. 382.

The poet introduces a range of similes with the view of stressing the striking contrast between the Moorish rebel and the Spanish captain: thus, the «Herculean Spanish»<sup>616</sup> is referred to as «a dead lion»<sup>617</sup>, his «colossal» and «marvellous» body evoking a «gigantesque» fallen tree<sup>618</sup>, whereas the *Morisco* is compared to a coward «hare», his squadron being similar to a «miserable handful of worms»<sup>619</sup>. Needless to say, such comparison of the «gigantesque» figure of Cespedes evidently associated with the glorious chivalric tradition now in decline with the petty Arrendate symbolizing the modern military reality reveals to be crucial for a better comprehension of the nature of the Moorish enemy in the poem, on the one hand, and the essential differences between the *Moriscos* and the fleet of the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand. The latter one may be represented as capable of extreme violence and cruelty, as can indeed be observed in the episodes of Cyprus sieges, but such perfidy and cowardice, as well as the narrator's explicit attitude of derision and condemnation can be encountered only in relation with the *Morisco* characters.

In the hierarchical system of *La Austríada*, the Ottoman Turks are perceived as a 'superior' enemy, the individual figures of some commanders displaying dignity and courage, whereas the *Morisco* rebels present themselves as incarnation of all of the «*torpes vicios*»<sup>620</sup>, notably the ones of cowardice, treachery and deceit. Thus, as Esther Cicchetti observes in her comments to the poem, the *Moriscos* exceed the Turks even in their violence<sup>621</sup>: if the commander of the Ottoman fleet, Ali Pasha wishes to spare his young sons from the dangerous battle<sup>622</sup>, a *Morisco* rebel, on the contrary, displays inhuman cruelty, killing his daughters out of fear of their being made «Christian slaves»<sup>623</sup> in case of the unfavourable outcome of the rebellion.

As to the final episodes of the poem<sup>624</sup>, one may observe that they display the attitude of the marked historical consciousness similar to the one shown by Francesco Bolognetti in the final scene

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, 85, p. 381.

<sup>617</sup> «(...) *pues la liebre sabemos por muy cierto / que osa pelar la barba al león muerto*». (*Ibid.*, 89, p. 382).

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-90, p. 382.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, 91, p. 382.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto II, 5, p. 149.

<sup>621</sup> *La Austríada*, p. 26. E. Cicchetti aptly observes that the author of *La Austríada* namely insists upon the 'inferiority' of the *Morisco* enemy compared to the Ottoman one, as he literally reverts the situation described in the historical source used by Rufo: «*Nei Commenti di Caracciolo, infatti, Ali prega i figli di dimostrare tutto il loro valore; Rufo riprende l'incontro familiare, ma lo ribalta completamente, proprio per opporlo all'episodio del canto III*». («In the *Comments* by Caracciolo, Ali, indeed, asks his sons to demonstrate all their valiance; Rufo takes up the family scene, reverting it completely namely in order to oppose it to the episode from canto III»).

<sup>622</sup> See Canto XXII, 36-41, pp. 750-751 for the episode in question.

<sup>623</sup> See Canto III, 15-19, p. 183. Briefly relating the cruel episode, the narrator refers to the *Moriscos* as to «the infernal executioners» who do not hesitate to «transgress the nature's law»: «(...) *que fueron los verdugos infernales / transgressors del orden de la natura*». The Moorish cruelty without limits is contrasted by the «*paternal amor estrecho y cierto*» the Ottoman commander proves towards his two sons. (*Ibid.*, Canto XXII, 36, p. 750).

<sup>624</sup> It should be noted that the poem, having a bipartite structure (the first part focusing upon the events of the Alpujarra and the second one being centred around the Battle of Lepanto) therefore has two final episodes showing the outcome of each of the two historical facts in question.

of his *Christiana vittoria maritima* merging with some elements of the marvellous inherited by Rufo from his predecessors. Thus, in the episode of Canto XVIII, one of the *Morisco* leaders, Habaquí, undergoes a crucial spiritual transformation similar to the one of the Moorish kings in Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata*: yet, the character of *La Austríada*, abandoned and despised by his compatriots, converts to Christianity shortly before death, his example remaining unique<sup>625</sup> in the context of Rufo's poem. If in his poetic text, Graziani insisted on the definitive character of the peaceful treaty that was only reinforced by Baudele and Maurinda's voluntary baptism resulting from a sudden divine revelation, the final situation of *La Austríada* displays totally different connotations. Habaquí's drastic transformation is far from being followed by other rebels most of them being arrested and expelled, while a few warriors succeed in evading the arrest leaving the territory of Spain<sup>626</sup>. It should be noted in this connection that the part devoted to the *Morisco* rebellion receives an ending that reflects the historical reality as it shows the *Moriscos* expelled and reveals thus an essential difference from the idyllic final of *Il Conquisto di Granata*. Yet, similar idea of having finally put an end to the age-long struggle can be observed as the narrator's comments the outcome of the rebellion that will «nevermore» take place in the future:

**El católico sigue el vencimiento,  
huye el bárbaro y pérfido a la clara,**  
por aquí escapan diez, por allí ciento,  
**sin osar más bolver atrás la cara;  
y quedoles tal miedo y escarmiento  
que nunca más juntaron algazara,**  
y así se retruxeron esparzidos  
en los traspuestos valles y escondidos.

(Canto XVIII, 100, p. 619)

As far as the actual final of the poem is concerned, i.e. the one depicting the outcome and consequences of the Battle of Lepanto, the poet passes to the celebration of the Catholic church concluding in the solemn praise of Philip's II «glory» after having described the total defeat of the

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<sup>625</sup> In Canto XIV, another 'Pagan' character, Aben Humeya, receives sudden divine revelation dying convinced of the existence of the divine providence. Yet, in this case, one may rather speak of a 'divine revelation' rather than of a complete conversion.

<sup>626</sup> «Después al reino de África passando / algunos, y otros dándose rendidos, / quedó aquella provincia descandando, / libre de los trabajos padecidos (...)», *Ibid.*, Canto XVIII, 101, p. 619.

Ottoman fleet<sup>627</sup> and the topical prayers of gratitude of the Christian army. Yet, the final episodes of *La Austriada* cannot be viewed as idyllic, the narrator's intonations being not the ones of serenity characteristic of the ending of Vincenzo Metello's *Marte*: with Juan Rufo, current victories are seen as crucial turning points, yet not as the definitive outcome<sup>628</sup> of the religious wars with the belligerent East. The figure of the enemy thus reappears in the final verses of the poem, the narrator alluding to the still impending Oriental threat:

Veo las amistades más perfectas  
vacilar y romper su estrecho ñudo,  
y escapar la cerviz los mahometas  
de entre los filos del cuchillo agudo;  
veo encarados pálidos cometas,  
apresurando de su efeto crudo  
la ejecución, que perdonar no sabe  
la sangre y casa donde el ceptro cabe.

(Canto XXIV, 110, p. 851)

The narrator's imagination appears thus to be disturbed by the prophetic visions of various future wars with the hostile Islamic civilisations<sup>629</sup>. Moreover, the poet foresees as well the 'northern' threat resulting in «civil wars» with the internal enemy incarnated by Protestantism. Thus, the preoccupations expressed by the narrator of *La Austriada* in Canto I, return in the final verses to conclude the circle of the poetic narration. The tonality of Rufo's final being similar to the

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<sup>627</sup> See Canto XXIV, especially 81-86, p. 848: «*Andavan por el roxo mar temblando / largas vandas de turcos nadadores, / los victoriosos remos abraçando / con lágrimas humildes y clamores; los braços como pueden levantando / davan dineros a los vencedores, / para comprar con esto el ser captivos (...)*». (*Ibid.*, 82, p. 848).

<sup>628</sup> Cf. the above-mentioned allusion in the prologue of *L'Austriade* by Pierre de Deimier referring to the part of the hostile fleet having survived, hence the obvious possibility of new combats before the Oriental war might be considered definitely ended.

<sup>629</sup> It is worth noting in this connection that in the final verses of *La Austriada*, the poet brings together in his prophecies various types of Christian enemies, all of them being perceived in the global perspective of the essential menace to the Catholic Europe: «*Veo su fuerça unir Saturno y Marte / contra el angosto reino lusitano, / y andar sobervio el áfrico estandarte / las quinas arrastrando del cristiano; / veo el septentrión por otra parte / inclinarse en favor del luterano, / y veo un bastardo, con intentos viles, / en su patria mover guerras civiles*». (*Ibid.*, Canto XXIV, 111, p. 852).

explicitly anxious intonations of Bolognetti's open ending<sup>630</sup>, yet reveals to be more encouraging compared to *La Christiana vittoria maritima*, the Cordovan poet harbouring deep hope in the enemy's ultimate defeat by the «famous Hercules» – the Catholic church that had been engaged in the age-long process of subduing the «monstrous» enemy: «*Y veo de la Iglesia el fundamento / sustentarse con sola una coluna, / una roca de fe que en firme asiento / está opuesta a las ondas de fortuna (...) / un Hércules famoso en largos siglos / por domador de monstrous y vestiglos*»<sup>631</sup>. In this perspective, various types of the enemy merge, as the author creates the fundamental allegorical dichotomy comprising, on the one hand, the image of the 'Other' absorbing all types of the enemy irrespectively of their specific historical traits, and the insuperable authority of the Catholic church, on the other hand. Thus, despite the hostile forces' persistent presence in the final prophecies of *La Austríada*, the «Pillars» of the Catholic «Hercules» will remain insuperable, all of the attempts of the «infernal» enemies, independently from the specific category they belong to, being *a priori* doomed to failure.

The narrator's prior anxieties, thus, transform themselves into a firm belief in the omnipotence of the Catholic church, as well as in its eventual overcoming obstacles to complete safety and unity of the whole Christian Europe perfectly capable of continuing to firmly resist its ancient adversary – the complex figure of the 'Other' incarnated either by the internal enemies, or by its external antagonists.

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<sup>630</sup>Thus, in the final verses of *La Austríada*, the valiant Don John promises the Holy League fleet's support to Cyprus, yet neither the Lepanto hero, nor the narrator of the poem make allusions as to the outcome of the future military combats. As a result, the poem's ending remains an explicitly open one, Bolognetti putting special emphasis upon warning the reader of the still actual Eastern danger : «*Et quivi commandò, che far ritorno / Dovesser tutti a casa i Duci suoi; / Dove in riposo havessero soggiorno / Tutto il verno vicin; ma tosto poi / Che il Sol scaldasse e l'uno, e l'altro corno / Del Tauro, per tornar ne i Regni Eoi / Con le sue genti armate ogni uno in schiera / Seguir devesse la Regal bandiera*» (F. Bolognetti, *La christiana vittoria maritima*, Libro III, p. 63).

<sup>631</sup> *La Austríada*, Canto XXIV, 112, p. 852.

## CONCLUSION

In the framework of the present thesis, we have undertaken the analysis of the epic poems belonging to the period between the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> - the second half of the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries. We have seen that the epoch in question revealed to be crucial for the genre of the epic poetry: thus, the authors of the analyzed texts, naturally adopted the already existing *topoi* and norms of the age-long epic tradition, recurring as well to the more 'recent' Italian authors, such as Ariosto and Tasso whose epics were quickly affirmed as essential *moules épiques* for their contemporaries and the future generation of the epic poets of the Seicento. These canonical models, however, could not but serve as point of departure, the very historical reality of the epoch in question challenging the epic genre to searching for new decisions. The most essential sign of change could be observed namely in a more immediate character of relationship between the actual historical events and contemporary history, epic poetry and contemporary history displaying now a close link that would have been impossible in the past. For the first time in the history of the genre, epic poetry found itself engaged with the *modern* historical events of crucial significance – the religious wars with the external and the internal 'enemies' menacing further integrity of the European civilisation. If, according to Sergio Zatti's definition of the epic genre, the primary aim of an epic consists in «fixing the origins of a given civilisation into the mythological form»<sup>632</sup>, the very concept of myth adopted in this formula, seems to vividly contrast the notion of the modern reality. Yet, it is worth noting that the very type of the historical events that had provoked such considerable literary response was not thus difficult to be inscribed into the context of the epic poetry. Religious wars with the Ottoman Empire, as well as the events of the Reconquista could be indeed seen as a modern historical incarnation of the notion of the Crusade rooted already in the Medieval epoch. Epic poems of the time dealt with the dilemma in question namely by inscribing the present of the 'contemporary' Crusade attempts into the heroic reality of the epic poem, entirely focusing on the historical aspect of the struggle between mutually hostile civilisations – the ones of the Eastern and Western worlds. Historical reality already possessing allegorical, as well as mythological connotations, was to be «fixed», as well as «elevated» to the level of the heroic literary reality – the challenge that has been accepted by the epic poem.

In the present work, we have set an objective of analyzing ways of the continuous evolution undergone by the genre of the epic poetry – a task that required our taking into consideration poetic texts belonging to different European epic traditions. As our analysis has shown, despite the

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<sup>632</sup> See S. Zatti, *Il modo epico*, 2000, p. 15.



differences displayed by the various approaches to the complex issue of modern religious wars, the poems display a range of affinities in common, most of which have been naturally conditioned by the common references to the already mentioned inherited epic traditions: on the one hand, the poetic legacy of the Ancient past, and the rapidly canonized Tassian and Ariostesque epic texts, on the other hand. All of the analyzed texts reveal a number of topical situations offered by the literary authorities in questions: episodes of one-to-one duels present in all of the given texts; the figure of *virgo bellatrix* found in either Girolamo Graziani's, or in Rufo's poems; divine and infernal interventions, as well as a number of other *topoi* and clichés undoubtedly prove the existence of a common literary background to be adopted by all of the European poets in question. Another fundamental aspect in common was the very nature of the historical events the poets felt themselves engaged with – the wars with the antagonistic civilisation prepared a perfectly valid reason for the European powers to stick to their unity, mounting joint resistance against the Oriental menace. Thus, it is not fortuitous that all of the poems taken into consideration contain fervent appeals to stop the internal discords due to the struggle with Protestantism tearing European unity apart: as historical reality of epoch would have it, the external menace could only be fought with common efforts of the European states. The most striking example of Europe being finally brought together, forgetting about various internal discords, is the one of the Battle of Lepanto. Italy and Spain joined their forces to put an end to the Ottoman aggression, the Holy League's fleet comprising as well a number of combatants of different European nationalities and thus, due to its unity, succeeding in winning the victory that had definitely marked the end of the Ottoman naval supremacy. As to the second historical theme taken up in the poems in question, the events of the ancient struggle between the Catholic Spain and the Moorish civilisation can as well be viewed through the prism of the European unity. Despite the local character of the Reconquista events, Graziani and especially Rufo demonstrate the global scale of the potential consequences of the religious conflict. In the epoch of the Counter-Reformation, the idea of the European unity was first and foremost understood as the religious unity, i.e. the unity of the Catholic Church. Spain being the most powerful Catholic power, the Moorish / *Morisco* conflict presented a constant threat to its religious integrity: as the narrator in Rufo's *Austriada* observes in one of the numerous digressions of the poem, Spain had remained 'immune' to the Protestant 'virus' having caused the «terrible» civil wars in other European states and could have been viewed as the example of the most perfect integrity of the Catholic faith, but for the Moorish issue<sup>633</sup>. Otherwise speaking, in the optic of the Counter-Reformation, Catholic Europe was namely perceived as a whole, each attempt of breaking the religious integrity of its states being, on the one hand, potentially contagious, and a literally

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<sup>633</sup> See J. Rufo, *La Austriada*, Canto I, pp. 110-112.

inadmissible intrusion of the intrinsically hostile 'Other'. The Moorish rebellions during and after the Reconquista process namely incarnated the menace to the Catholic Europe's integrity and could thus be seen as a similar, if not a greater issue to be faced with. In this context, it is not surprising that the Spanish conflict with the Moorish civilisation found literary response as well in Italy, Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata* adopting the theme of the Conquest of Granata in an epoch when the idea of modern 'Crusade' against the unfaithful reached its culmination.

Thus, the poems taken into consideration reveal to be permeated with the spirit of the Crusade, the Christian ideology serving as a basis for the poetic narration of all of the poetic texts in question. As our analysis has shown, these connotative values form a crucial ground enabling to analyze texts concerning the historical facts of the Oriental war along with the events of the Reconquista, all of the European epic poets concerned having based their poetic narration upon the allegorical scheme of the struggle between the divine good and the infernal evil. We have seen that such approach representing the historical events as the direct consequences of the ancient war between the divine and the infernal forces being in common for all of the above-analyzed poems, permits as well to aptly merge the *topoi* of the classical tradition with the new content – the one of the actual historical issues. The principle of antagonism indeed makes it possible for the narrative system to indissolubly associate the figure of the Islamic enemy with the infernal forces: thus, the Moorish king Baudele in *Il Conquisto di Granata* is constantly spurred by the demon Hidragorre; Selim II in *La christiana vittoria maritima* and *Il Marte* does not even consider attacking Italy but for the efforts of the demonic forces; Rufo's leaders of the *Morisco* rebellion are frequently referred to as «diabolic» figures, his Selim II being presented as an incarnation of the infernal presence, similarly to the Ottoman Sultan's image created by Deimier. The role of the marvellous element and thus the frequency of the direct divine or infernal interventions may vary from poem to poem, the general scheme laying the poetic narration's basis remains inalterable: all of the treated historical events in all of the analyzed European texts reveal the crucial principle of the allegorical struggle between the divine and the demonic forces, having found their manifestation in the religious wars with the 'Other'.

In our analysis we thus proceeded from analyzing each given text, dedicating the last chapter to the analysis of the above-mentioned essential theme – the representation of the figure of the enemy, i.e. the 'other' civilisation perceived not only as a threat to the European unity, but also as an intrinsically different and irrevocably hostile force that not for nothing appeared to be commonly associated with the demonic presence.

Our first chapter was intended to have a closer look at the general historical, as well as social and cultural background that had created premises favouring the appearance of the new

category of the epic poems we were interested in. We have considered the main reasons behind the interest epic poets showed towards the issue of the religious wars as well as have traced the literary prerequisites of the European poets' preoccupations with the actual threat of the Oriental aggression. In the part, dedicated to the notion of 'the Europe of the Courts', the significance of the Court as the crucial common European background traditionally influencing the epic poet's formation has been proved, special attention having been paid to the essential interdependent relationship between the European epic poet and his Maecenas.

In the second chapter, we have turned to the problem of selecting poetic corpus for the present work, having thus offered a brief panoramic review of the European epic texts of the period comprising the end of the Cinquecento - the beginning of the Seicento devoted namely to the modern religious conflicts we were initially interested in. During the selection process, we have turned to the most authoritative sources analyzing general literary background of the epic poetry of Italy, Spain and France, as well as providing detailed information upon the heroic poems treating contemporary religious issues. It is worth noting that already the preparatory stage of our research had proved the importance of the given problematic, since, as shown in the *Appendix*, the religious wars, notably the Battle of Lepanto, have indeed brought about literary response of the global European scale.

The next three chapters of the given research have been dedicated to the analysis of the three Italian poems of our corpus – Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima*, *Il Marte* by Vincenzo Metello and Girolamo Graziani's *Conquisto di Granata*. As our analysis has shown, all of the three authors in question, irrespectively of the historical nature of the event, based the narrative structure of their poems upon the allegorical antithesis between absolute good and absolute evil, i.e. the previously mentioned dichotomy of divine and infernal forces. This common basis apart, the analyzed texts revealed a number of differences, first of all the ones regarding the relationship between the marvellous and the historical dimensions that appeared to be different in each respective poem. Thus, the poetic narration of *La christiana vittoria maritima* proved to contain a particularly strong presence of the historical element, the poem abounding in geographical, topographical and chronological details referring to the course of the Battle of Lepanto, as well as to its historical antefacts. Names of the military commanders, as well as detailed descriptions of both fleets' manoeuvres and disposition contribute to achieve the impression of 'historicity' that is nonetheless tempered by the presence of the element of the marvellous. As we have seen, the marvellous with Bolognetti, in line with the omnipresent idea of the modern defensive 'Crusade' bears a strictly Christian character, the presence of Pagan elements having been reduced to mere decorative function. In this respect, Vincenzo Metello's *Marte* might have appeared as a poem

drastically different in its conception as well as ideological connotations – yet, as it has been shown in the fourth chapter, the two poems display radical difference only at the level of their form and structure. We have seen that unlike Bolognetti, the author of *Il Marte* structures his *poemetto* around the mythological conflict between Pagan deities provoking the historical facts of the Ottoman sieges in Cyprus, as well as the Battle of Lepanto. The poetic action continues to evolve at the two levels – the mythological and the allegorical ones, the dimension of myth frequently prevailing over the historical one. Yet, the importance of the mythological level is rather due to Metello's wilful fantasy, rather than denotes the absence of the same ideological Christian values as the ones explicitly celebrated in *La christiana vittoria maritima*. Thus, to prove the authentic ideological message of the poem, the poet inserts the third – allegorical – level by way of recurring to the brief explanations given as prefaces to each canto suggesting the 'right' way of interpreting the mythological events from the Christian perspective.

*Il Conquisto di Granata* by Girolamo Graziani displays similar ideology, despite its representing a conflict with a different enemy – the Moorish population of the Catholic Spain. The role of the element of the marvellous increases to a major extent, the poem being drastically different in this sense from Francesco Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima*. If in the first poem the marvellous element is manifested only through direct divine and infernal interventions, the second text is rich in all kinds of topical miracles, the figures of magicians, fatal weapons, dragons, etc. This marked tendency towards the marvellous is counterbalanced by the poet's giving special attention to the most significant hero of contemporary historical reality – Christopher Columbus. In the part dedicated to the role the illustrious navigator has to play in the context of the poem, we have demonstrated the primary significance of Columbus's figure: a hero who not only exerts direct influence upon the course of the poetic events, but also literally decides the outcome of the war with the Moors.

Another essential difference consists in the explicitly Baroque poetics of *Il Conquisto di Granata*. No other analyzed text, comprising the French and the Spanish poems, displays such abundant use of typical Baroque devices, such as exaggerated theatricality, changes of identity (thus, nearly all of Graziani's heroes dissimulate their authentic identities, opting for wearing a mask) accompanied by agnitions and sudden transformations. As we have seen in our analysis, *Il Conquisto di Granata* can justly be viewed as a unique epic poem merging the numerous *topoi* taken from Tassian and Ariostesque traditions, the dynamism and theatricality of the Baroque and finally the spirit of the Crusade – the nucleus of Graziani's poetic narration remaining a highly actual issue of the religious conflict with the hostile civilisation.

In the sixth chapter, our analysis proceeded with an insight into the French literary reaction to the culminating event of the Oriental war, provided namely by Pierre de Deimier in his *L'Austriade*. As the results of our analysis have shown, although the poem was brought to life by the same historical fact, the poet adopts a different approach to its literary representation. Thus, even if the author does not reject the idea of the war with the Ottoman Empire being a reflexion of the initial war between the celestial and the infernal forces, the very dimension of the marvellous and the allegorical appears to be transposed to the sphere of the poetic imagination. Compared to all of the three poems that to a various degree adopted the element of the marvellous, *L'Austriade* appears to reduce divine interventions to the minimum possible, whereas the demonic ones reveal to be absent in the poem at all, the infernal dimension being present only at the metaphorical level. Moreover, the crucial divine intervention taking place in the first canto is taking place with an important reservation, narrator anticipating the marvellous episode with the introductory «*Il me semble*» and thus alluding to the highly probable imaginative character of the scene.

The analysis of Deimier's epic has as well shown the increasing importance of the historical element, the poet being extremely meticulous in his description of the military combat and its historical prerequisites. Once again, the only episode featuring the direct divine support is the one of the Angel impeding the Ottoman warrior to kill the brave Sebastian Venier, the scene standing in contrast to the general explicitly realistic background. Significantly enough, all of the other duels and collective combats are fought without the poet's recurring to divine aid, fatal weapons, or other topical marvellous elements. As to the modern firearms, we have seen that the technically advanced weapons are given special attention in the poem, the narrator constantly underlining the changes in the modern *ars belli*. It is worth noting that Deimier's attitude to the latest achievements of the military technique, as well as to the devastating collective combats is definitely negative, the poet underlining the inhumanity, as well as total lack of the basic chivalric notions characterizing the new military techniques.

The same condemning attitude towards modern firearms is displayed by Juan Rufo in his *Austriada*, the poet referring to cannons as to the «infernal» weapons. The analysis of the Spanish poem we have undertaken in the seventh chapter has displayed a tendency similar to the one observed in Pierre de Deimier's epic, i.e. the one of the diminished role of the divine interventions, the warriors fighting on their own being inspired by the divine spirit. The only attempt of Lucifer's intervention in the Lepanto part of the poem fails immediately, the demon lamenting his defeat, yet being not capable of daring to undertake other attempts. Two crucial observations should be made as far as the analysis of *La Austriada* is concerned: the first one regards its unique bipartite structure uniting the *Morisco* and the Ottoman conflicts on an equal ideological ground, the poem's formal

organization displaying in this way crucial ideological content in common with the previously considered poems. The second remark as to the unique character of the Spanish epic concerns its explicitly national character merging with the clearly perceived Counter-Reformation's context: numerous references to the Habsburg monarchs perceived as mediators of the providential will are interlaced with the crucial Counter-Reformation notions of justice, punishment and recompense.

The final chapter of the present work brought together the above-mentioned texts with the view of analyzing the figure of the 'Other'. As the results of our analysis have shown, the image of the enemy has a primary role to play in all of the epic texts taken into consideration. As has already been mentioned previously, the figure of the 'Other' is introduced in the poem as part and parcel of the primary dichotomy of the poetic narration – the one between the divine and the infernal forces. This dichotomy is further reflected at the historical level, the concept of 'otherness', as a rule, being incarnated by the respective Christian heroes and Islamic antiheroes «of sword» and «of sceptre»<sup>634</sup>. Despite the crucial allegorical aspect in common, we have seen that the poets frequently make use of the device of differentiation, showing various types of the same enemy generally viewed as the incarnation of the demonic presence. Thus, for instance, *Il Conquisto di Granata* comprises warriors whose prevailing traits are explicit 'Barbarity', ferocity and inclination to rage and violence (Almansor), as well as the warriors similar to the courageous and noble Osmino, or the wise and diplomatic Almiren. Almost all of Graziani's characters demonstrate complex psychological affects and are subject to the crucial changes of identity, the Moorish warriors being of no exception to the rule.

In Bolognetti's *Christiana vittoria maritima* and Metello's *Marte*, we have on the contrary observed much less complicated portraits of the Ottoman warriors. Similarly to their sultan, the Turks in these two poems are instigated by the infernal forces, the latter ones as if communicating the Ottomans the demonic traits of extreme fury and cruelty. Yet, it should be observed that Bolognetti does not hesitate to render justice to the bravery of the Ottoman military commanders – the device that is as well used by Juan Rufo and Pierre de Deimier in their respective poems. Thus, *L'Austriade* contains passages dedicated to the valiance of the hostile warriors, the author yet introducing the two Ottoman figures whose arrogance and presumption seem to know no limits.

Once again, the case of the Spanish *Austriada* reveals to be a particular case, the author having adopted different approaches to the two types of the 'Other'. Thus, the *Moriscos* are shown with an explicit reference to their extreme cowardice and perfidy, whereas the warriors of the Ottoman Empire, despite their intrinsic fury and inclination to violence, are mostly treated with

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<sup>634</sup> S. Zatti, *Il modo epico*, 2000, pp. 94-95.

respect – as is perfectly shown in the episode of Don John’s proving profound regret about not being able to show mercy towards such prominent warrior as the commander of the Ottoman fleet.

Our analysis has, moreover, shown that the epic genre, having undergone profound transformations, contrary to the widespread opinion, continued to evolve during the period in question, the very phenomenon of the new category of epic poems representing contemporary religious events being essential proof of the genre’s being far from the state of definitive decline. Major religious conflicts of the epoch, namely the Battle of Lepanto – the culminating moment of the Oriental war with the Ottoman Turks – and the events of the Reconquista process have been absorbed by the epic poetry in Italy, Spain and France. The poets did not yet reject the legacy of the tradition, but had already started to search for innovative elements that would reflect new historical reality. Thus, one may speak of the intrusion of the modern reality into the epic scene profoundly influencing the epic genre that still in a number of aspects remained faithful to the canonical tradition. The poems brought into consideration have namely demonstrated essential particularities of the ‘experimental’ poetic texts in question: a mix of the Counter-Reformation ideology and the spirit of the Crusade; the coexistence of the allegorical and the historical dimensions; the marvellous and the realistic approach to the historical events – all of these traits have constituted the physiognomy of the crucial innovative category in the framework of the epic genre.

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