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### Citation

Grootveld, E. J. M. (2018). Trumpets of Lepanto: Italian narrative poetry (1571-1650) on the war of Cyprus. *Journal Of Iberian And Latin-American Studies*, 24(1), 135-154.  
doi:10.1080/14701847.2018.1438075

Version: Accepted Manuscript

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Trumpets of Lepanto. Italian narrative poetry (1571-1650) on the war of Cyprus.

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This work was supported by the Research Foundation Flanders and the Academia Belgica and is based on the third chapter of my PhD-thesis *Autorità e auctoritas. Un approccio discorsivo al dinamismo politico-letterario dei poemi eroici italiani sulle guerre asburgiche in Europa (1530-1630)*, KU Leuven (Belgium), December 2017.

## Trumpets of Lepanto. Italian narrative poetry (1571-1650) on the war of Cyprus.

This paper aims to shed light on the corpus of Italian heroic narrative poems, written during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1571-1650), on the war of Cyprus and the battle of Lepanto. While arguing that the literary significance of the event in this corpus can only be caught through a diachronically, geographically and textually broadened vision, the article extracts amongst the discursive characteristics of this corpus four major issues that can guide our interpretation. Early Lepanto poems are inclined to adopt features (shortness, lyric forms) that blur their adherence to categories by which they are commonly described (I). Beyond prevalent and common themes concerning internal discord and demonization of the Ottomans, their content and (critical *versus* laudatory) rhetoric are strongly determined by the cultural and geographic community in which authors operated, which further contributes to the variety within the corpus (II). Poems written in circles close to Torquato Tasso show a remarkable proximity to his *Gerusalemme liberata* (III). An extension of the analysis to later Lepanto poems, where Lepanto functions as a Mediterranean event both in romanticized and moralising settings, shows the importance of Tasso's authority and its interaction with other sources (IV).

Keywords: Battle of Lepanto, Italian epic, cantari bellici, Torquato Tasso.

### Introduction

“F.N.: Io son Tasso, e però non è maraviglia ch’oppresso dal mio sonno naturale, non oda i piccioli strepiti: ma quel fu così grande che l’udirono quelli ancora i quali abitano oltre le colonne d’Ercole e oltre gli altari d’Alessandro ... L’armonia che fanno i corpi celesti, movendosi, non riempie i sensi altramente di quel ch’abbia fatto quella di tanti versi e di tante prose in tante lingue, con tanti stili e con tanta felicità de’ lodati e de’ lodatori, con tanta gloria de’ celebrati e de’ celebratori.” (Tasso 1998, 748-749)

Under the pseudonym of Forestiero Napolitano, Torquato Tasso mentions in his dialogue *Il Cataneo overo de gli idoli* the multitude of poets who predicted and glorified

the events of 1571. Alluding to the literal Italian meaning of his name, he specifies that the harmonious noise of all the verse and prose on the battle Lepanto was so loud that even he, a ‘badger’, woke up from his natural sleep. He also justifies, in the presence of his interlocutor Alessandro Vitelli, why he abstained from writing praises after the battle: he is afraid that predictions would have been like the waves of the sea and conserve their traces for very little time, while celebratory poems ‘disappear like feathers’ in the breeze of public favour and the grace of princes, which passes like flowers in springtime.

Twentieth-century studies, inspired by important essays by Carlo Dionisotti, have confirmed that Tasso’s intuition about the quantitative importance of poetical anticipations and celebrations of the victory of the Holy League was remarkably sharp. No other historical event that had taken place during the sixteenth century outside of the Italian peninsula found more resonance in Italian poetry than the battle of Lepanto (see Dionisotti 1971, 1999: 202). In her monograph on Italian poetry on Lepanto, Simona Mammana (2007) signalled no less than 233 titles of sonnets, madrigals, poems and hybrid poetical forms, printed between 1571 and 1573, composed in Italian, Latin and a variety of dialects. Many of their authors, most of whom were Venetian, produced encomiastic works, which were brought into circulation straight after the occurrence of the glorious event through booklets, anthologies, and *canzonieri*, making use of fast and relatively cheap editorial processes. They generally fixed the victory over the Turks in the collective memory as a turning point in history that marked the transition to a new era, dominated by Christianity. Poets usually insisted on the uniqueness of a League between Spain and Venice and the unifying role of Pope Pius V, praised the generals – mainly Sebastiano Venier, Marcantonio Colonna and Don John of Austria –, demonized the enemy or ridiculed the Ottoman sultan Selim. The dark side of the victory and the

horrible news from Cyprus did not go unnoticed either: poets mourned the numerous victims fallen in the war against the Turks and the cruel fate of the Captain-General of Famagusta, Marcantonio Bragadin, who had been skinned alive after the perfidious treachery of the Ottoman commander Lala Mustafa Pasha (see, e.g., Gibellini 2008, 2009).

The massive celebration of the victory had a rather short lifespan. As early as 1573, the myth of the crusade that flourished around Lepanto began to be replaced by expressions of political disappointment. Still, even if the plethora of lyrical voices faded as the glory of Lepanto lost its vigour, the memory of the event survived in a wide range of literary works. Narrative poems, and not only Italian ones, are among the privileged places in which Lepanto continued to be remembered and its heroes celebrated.

Elaborate poems were composed in several languages with the battle as their main subject (see, e.g., de Toro 1950 on Italian, Latin and Catalan poems; and Latin poems by 22 authors in Spence, Wright and Lemons 2014). This article will focus on narrative poems on the war of Cyprus in Italian, at least a dozen of which had been written from 1571 until the end of the first half of the seventeenth century.

Recent scholarship on Italian literary texts in the matter of Lepanto has its focus primarily on (Venetian) lyrical poetry and the poems written during the biennium immediately after the battle (Gibellini 2008, 2009; Mammana 2007; Casadei 2011).

When dealing with narrative poems, these investigations tend to concentrate on individual authors or geographic areas (Giroto 2012; Capuozzo 2007, 2012; Gigante 2003; Avellini 1999; Egidi 1995-1996, Mancini 1989), with the exception of an overview by Turchi (1971), who studied literary reflections of Lepanto in different periods, places and genres. Still, in contrast to the research on the Spanish corpus (Vilà 2001; Blanco 2010; Plagnard 2015), the body of Italian narrative poems on Lepanto has

barely been analysed from comparative and intertextual perspectives. Their aesthetic value is usually little appreciated: in the words of Marcello Turchi, “literature considered the battle basically as an external ‘occasion’ for poetry ...: it was purely inspired by the literary tradition, without being able to attain the novelty of a perspective which located the images of that battle in a real interior process” (Turchi 1971, 385). As a consequence, the interest of these poems as a set of comparable texts on the same subject that can reveal some important features of heroic poetry, or as a sample of literary practice and mannerist experimentation with literary forms, is also underestimated. Many questions on their formal features, as well as on their interaction with contemporary literary developments, are still open. If, for example, several Spanish and Portuguese poems can be called full-fledged “epics” for their length, high ambitions and references to poems from antiquity, the same cannot be said about the Italian works from the same period. In some cases, their definition as “epics” is problematic, especially when the traces of their popular origins are clearly visible or when they assume features of lyrical poetry.

The temporal limit of 1573 also appears to be rather narrow for narrative poems. Not only were the largest works written after that date, but also their very nature underwent important changes in the following decade. For a modern reader, the earlier works on Lepanto document the direct transposition of current events in heroic poetry, written on the basis of eyewitness accounts, letters and *avvisi*, in the same climate as where the war had found place. These early works were treated as documents by the contemporaries themselves: they sometimes reprinted or collected texts on the war of Cyprus and conserved them together, ready to transmit the idea of Lepanto as an exceptional event to following generations (Favalier 2001, 220-221). When later Lepanto-poetry was written, the battle had already been canonized as a culminant epic

clash, and the poet's vision on it was filtered through historical distance and altering poetics. Changes in heroic poetry of this period are usually ascribed to the influence of Torquato Tasso, whose *Jerusalem delivered* (*Gerusalemme liberata* 1581) is often seen as a turning point. Nevertheless, the relation between Tasso's work and the poems on Lepanto written both before and after its publication have barely been examined: the hypothesis that Tasso's narration of the first crusade interacts with poems on Lepanto has not been addressed with close attention. A systematic examination of these issues would imply a detailed comparative study into the narrative poetry on Lepanto. In view of future research, this paper provides a retrospective general framework which integrates the insights of these earlier studies on the matter with some specific observations on narrative poetry.

### **Narrative poems on Lepanto: a broad approach**

Can this general exploration assume the suggestive idea that the demand for a great heroic poem reached its peak at the time of the battle at the Echinades Islands, as has been proposed for Spanish epic (Blanco 2010, 477-483)? Yes and no. In Italy, the consciousness of generic limits had been stimulated by the development of literary theories and imitation since the 1530s, which had brought forward several results of heroic narrative poetry (some of which on contemporary wars, Grootveld 2017) with high aspirations. Rather, what Lepanto generated was an encounter of different voices in public verse, of both popular and more intellectual calibre, stimulated by the developing taste of mannerist experimentation. This conjunction produced remarkably flexible boundaries between traditional genres, which complicates the ways in which they can be defined nowadays. This is especially true for the poems written within few years after the battle, which lack a process of long literary meditation and experimentation.

In her study on Lepanto-poetry written between 1571 and 1573, Mammana suggests a distinction between several categories of narrative poems in *ottava rima*. One group consists of compositions which she calls “epic poems” (Mammana 2007, 44): she lists Caffarino 1571; Baldini 1572; Bolognetti 1572; Zoppio 1572 and Costo 1573. The other group she identifies “refers to the modes of the tradition of *cantari*” (Mammana. 2007, 44-45): these are among others, the anonymous *Narratione della felice vittoria* and *La famosa e orrenda battaglia navale*; de Monelo 1572; Cieco da Murano 1571.<sup>1</sup> For this second group she refers to the tradition of *cantari bellici*, a form of romanced popular history obtained by a fusion of the account of contemporary historical events with modalities of the chivalric romance tradition in rhyme – mostly, but not always, in *ottava rima* (Beer 2007; Beer and Ivaldi 1986), and comparable with the Spanish *relaciones de sucesos*. These *cantari* were not or scarcely theorised, in contrast to epic. There was no consensus on the features and definition of epic poetry, but at least it was recognised in the Cinquecento as a literary genre in one way or another, which cannot be said with certainty of the *cantare*. Mammana does not explain how the *cantari* are different from the epic poems - nor what their ‘modes’ would be like -, but nevertheless presumes that there is a clear distinction.

True, the poems she classifies as *cantari* are remarkably short, compared to other poems of this period; but even the “epics” count only two (Zoppio, 153 stanzas in *ottava rima*), three (Bolognetti, 350 stanzas) or a maximum of only five cantos (Costo, 468 stanzas).<sup>2</sup> A lack of distinctive criteria can, however, appear to be problematic when taking into consideration poems like *Il Naval Conflitto di Christiani con Turchi* by Gaspare Caffarino, published in Naples in 1571. This composition is short, lacks a dedication and other introductory writings, and is not internally divided into cantos as most epic poems were.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, its historical account of the battle is barely enriched



with poetic inventions, showing a resemblance to the historical branch of the tradition of *cantari*; but it does not contain the typical indications of time and place which often characterized *cantari*, and its function seems to have been purely celebrative, praising John of Austria for all kinds of virtues. The coexistence of these characteristics in poems like the *Naval Conflitto* implies that classification should not be taken for granted. Even a division in more cantos can hardly justify an epic status, as holds true for the *Cinque Canti* by Baldini, which has a length of only 101 octaves, and for Carignano's *La Felice vittoria de la Santa lega* (ms., published in Foscarini 1987-1988) which counts 152 octaves.

If it may seem irrelevant to insist on such a question of nomenclatural, it is important to remember that by taking this distinction for granted, one would pass over the Italian socio-literary conditions in the years preceding the battle that brought about the hybrid character of these poems. Beer and Ivaldi (1986, 96) have pointed out that, after 1530 and especially in the age of Lepanto, an increasing alignment of the paraliterary *cantari* and heroic poems *d'autore* reduced the distinctions between these two categories. The accounts of contemporary wars were gradually assimilated into Christianised heroic poems, which flourished in this period and were written by nobles and intellectuals. Together with the development of new forms of news circulation, this assimilation often went hand in hand with a progressive loss of the initial informative function these *cantari* had at the time of the Italian wars. Now providing "post-fact commentary, dramatization and satire" (Salzberg and Rospocher 2012, 16) or pure celebrations of the battle, the war accounts made use of the kinds of poetic inventions and conventions developed in encomiastic heroic poetry, such as dedications and initial invocations. I would argue that this amalgamation of the popular *cantari*-tradition and new theorized epic was enhanced - as had happened a century earlier after the loss of

Negroponte (Meserve 2006: 485) - by the collective search for easily available and appropriate forms to express the extraordinary nature of the event, shared by various professional classes. Polygraphs like Anton Francesco Doni and Vittorio Baldini were essential mediators in this cultural mediation process, for they appropriated literary classics and more recent works and intermingled their characteristics with other traditions, like those of *avvisi*, *lamenti*, *relazioni*, reducing distinctions concerning genre (see Alazard 2010, 131-139).

What, then, brings about the differences between the poems? To determine their nature, one could look at the mutual set of values and contexts in which the authors operated, and the ways in which this is more or less expressed in the works: geographical situation, material aspects, network, intellectual education, linguistic choices and literary ambition.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, of the ‘cantarine’ poets, Catullo Cieco da Murano was presumably a traditional itinerant street singer, while other compositions were anonymous or editorial compilations, mostly printed *in octavo* in and around Venice.<sup>5</sup> With the exception of the *Cinque canti* by Baldini (who may also have been active as a printer in Venice and Ferrara), the ‘epics’, by contrast, were printed in Bologna and Naples, mostly *in quarto* (except for Caffarino 1571 and Costo 1573). Bolognetti, Zoppio and Costo were also members of local intellectual societies and showed a particular attention to the practice and poetics of (heroic) poetry. Bolognetti gained experience and high literary prestige for his longer heroic poem *Il Costante*, which is visible in the elevated style of his *Christiana vittoria maritime*. Costo had a good literary education as well and would publish, more than ten years after *Della rotta di Lepanto* and in the same year as his edition of the *Gerusalemme liberata* (1582), a second and revised version of *La rotta di Lepanto*. As for Zoppio, his editor Alessandro Benaccio evokes in his letter to the

readers the frame of reference of literary authorities used for the poem, stating quite optimistically that “it will be sufficient to the author to have been guided by Homer, Virgil, Lucan, Sannazaro, Vida and Ariosto” (Zoppio 1572, 27r.).

As for their social position, Zoppio and Bolognetti were nobles from Bologna, while Costo was a learned secretary working for the Neapolitan intellectual aristocracy. Their poems on Lepanto are dedicated to aristocrats who were all more or less closely connected to papal or Habsburg authorities. Zoppio offered his poem to the pope and included a dedication to Cardinal Rusticucci, who functioned as a mediator; Bolognetti’s work was dedicated to Cardinal Alessandro Sforza; Costo’s to John of Austria. As a comparison: Caffarino’s ‘hybrid’ *Naval conflitto* was printed in Naples on behalf of the same Andrea Bax who edited Costo’s *Rotta di Lepanto*, but, unlike Costo, Caffarino was probably not of eminent origins and left no other traces in literature. These data suggest that the perception of these poems as either cantarine or epic is, however subjective, to a great extent connected with the circumstances and social contexts of their creation and diffusion, which should be complementary to the analysis of stylistic aspects in the definition of their nature.

The poems mentioned until this point are all written in *ottava rima*. This constituted the most frequent metrical configuration of narrative heroic poetry, to the extent that narrative *poemetti* and poems in *ottava rima* are sometimes treated as being equivalent (e.g. Capuozzo 2012, 57). Yet, the *ottava rima* cannot be considered as their essential characteristic, as several poets on Lepanto practised formal experimentation to narrate the (new) heroic deeds and, as a consequence, narrative war poems also assumed other forms. One of the striking characteristics of the Italian poetical echoes of Lepanto singled out by Simona Mammana regards contaminations between lyrical poetry and traditionally narrative forms. Typical tendencies of Lepanto-poetry, she argues, were the

assimilation of Petrarchan features in narrative compositions in *ottava rima* and a simultaneous “*eroicizzazione*” (heroicization) of the lyrical genre.

Lyric has, however, always possessed a certain openness to subjects related to warfare themes, which had already been exploited in celebrations of Charles V and his generals, e.g. concerning the sieges of Tunis and Malta (Paolucci 1535-1536; Beccatello 1567; see also Roncaccia 2003-2004). This continuity has barely been taken into consideration by Mammana and therefore deserves to be underscored. It also allows to discern the remarkably great scale on which Lepanto poems combined epic motifs with metrical devices of the lyric tradition (especially sonnets), while bestowing particular emphasis on the narrative disposition of *canzoni* (Mammana 2007, 46, 96-98) and reducing the length. The most explicit example of this intersecting of the two genres can be found in the *Austria* (Carrafa 1572a, 1572b, 1573) an assemblage of compositions written by Ferrante Carrafa, marquis of San Lucido and count of Archi. In its first chapter, 43 sonnets (parts I and II) are disposed in a narrative structure to become “the constitutional instrument of an epical device” (Quondam 1975).<sup>6</sup> Carrafa himself declares that this formal experimentation resulted from a search for a “*nuovo stil*” which had to accommodate the extraordinary subject matter.<sup>7</sup> In his dedicatory letter to Philip II, Carrafa presents his poem as though it contained a new heroic code that fitted the extraordinary *gesta* it celebrated. That this code is far from being definitive is demonstrated by another section of the *Austria*, which repeats part of the account in *terza rima* (“L’istessa Vittoria avuta all’Echinadi scritta in terza rima”, Carrafa 1573: 89-91). Carrafa’s insistence on the use of lyrical forms for heroic contents reminds opinions expressed by other poets of his age, like Luca Contile (1556, 7-10), who argued that lyrical poetry could be as heroic as the *ottava* (see also Sacchi 2007, 1074). The events of Lepanto took place at the end of a period of intense Petrarchist

mannerism and enduring debates on heroic poetry, of which the *Austria* is an eloquent example. As Mammana (2007, 83-84) stated, the reviving myth of the crusade and the ideal of epic grandeur encouraged the transfusion of epic elements into all kinds of forms, regardless of its genre. A historical moment thus became a moment of poetic experiment, as the massive celebration of the victory stimulated authors to search for unusual effects with literary devices in which traditional poetic conventions functioned anew. The war of Cyprus functioned as an important catalyzing agent in the hybrid intersection of lyric and narrative poetry, contributing to a phenomenon that remained popular in encomiastic poetry of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century with regard to other recent events, such as the Dutch Revolt (see Vazzoler 1983; more in general, Beniscelli 2007), as well as in numerous *rime* and *canzoni eroiche*, such as those by Giovan Battista Marino and Gabriello Chiabrera. This process of negotiation between different literary modes and codes is particularly visible in texts produced within few years after the event. This formal instability of Cinquecento Lepanto-poetry may partly derive from the absence of a dominant epic archetype for naval battles in the Italian; in general, however, it reflects the formal instability typical of literary documents – chronicles, personal considerations, or other texts that combine reporting contemporary events with aesthetic purposes (Bloomfield and Zenetti 2012). These observations on the flexibility and pluriformity of narrative war poems recommend studying late Cinquecento narrative genres concerned with current events from a perspective that allows a sufficiently broad *vision d'ensemble* of their particular dynamics, without limitations regarding metrical forms or “epical” status.

### **Poetry and politics: *unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno*?**

When extended to Italy as a whole, this broadened approach should lead to a more profound understanding of the variety and political significance of poetical practices arising from the battle of Lepanto, as it allows us to compare the different form/content-relations at the light of the variety of social contexts within the Italian peninsula.<sup>8</sup> Questions involving the intrinsic political value of genres are difficult to tackle with regard to early Lepanto poems, precisely because of their hybridity or the lack of recognition of their literary status.

What is immediately remarkable, however, is the absence of important narrative Lepanto poems in the Republics of Venice and Genoa. This stands in stark contrast with the high amount of popular, lyrical, and oratorical voices on Lepanto that were heard in the *Serenissima*, whose culture is often considered incapable of expressing itself in epic forms, partly because of its republican spirit (Preto 1984, 328). In Genoa, home of captain Doria, this lack of celebrative poetic narrative is even more striking.

Moreover, a closer look to the most elaborate Italian Lepanto poem written in Venice in the first decade after the battle, Anton Francesco Doni's *La guerra di Cipro*, can give the impression that the author uses the versatile *ottava* at least as much to accuse and to exhort as to celebrate. Doni, a Florentine who had lived for decades in Monselice, near Padua, describes the constitution of the League and the battle of Lepanto only in the last cantos (five and six), while the preceding cantos are dedicated to the horrible war events on Cyprus.<sup>9</sup> Doni's praise of the Venetian generals (especially Astorre Baglioni, Malipiero, Loredan, Caterino) does not prevent him from inserting digressions on the inefficacy of the Venetians (III, 9-14) and the corruption of the rulers of his age (III, 29-45). In the third canto Doni, invoking Christ, warns his contemporaries that richness and force should not be at the expense of virtue. He subsequently evokes a scenario in which the princes are 'joined' by the Turks, enemy of

virtue and justice, for which he sees his world go from bad to worse. Notwithstanding the fact that the modality of this digression generally echoes Ariosto's ironical comments on contemporary society, Doni's verses might well be written after the separate peace of March 1573 between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, and thus document the critique of current Venetian politics. By dedicating his manuscript poem to Henry III of France in July 1574, Doni extends his plea to the king of France, whose predecessors were notorious allies of the Ottoman crown. In any case, the moralist invectives against tyranny and the vices of contemporary rulers – the Venetian senate included – demonstrate that the encomiastic potential of its form veils a satirical and resentful tone that seems more compatible with Lucan's accusation of individualistic war politics than with any imperialistic ideology of (Virgilian) epic.

More in general, Doni's case exemplifies how the provenance of the authors and the destination of the poems inevitably affect the content of the poems. As the war on Cyprus was principally a Venetian affair, the sieges of Nicosia and Famagusta are narrated more extensively in poems written in the *Serenissima*. Doni, Baldini and later Metello, narrate the events preceding the battle with more emphasis and indignation than Bolognetti and Costo do. The poems printed in Naples, on the contrary, articulate the centrality of Don John, from his departure from Barcelona to his exploits in the naval battle, and Neapolitan authors, more than their colleagues in Venice did, paid tribute to the Genovese captains. Costo, for example, barely mentions the Venetian officer Venier, but does elaborately furbish the much-discussed attitude of Andrea Doria during the expedition. In Costo's version, Doria is the keenest of all leaders to affront the Turks in a naval battle (III, 12-16), and, once they are in combat, his moving away from his position is represented as part of a strategy meant to mislead the Turks (IV, 99-109). Other sources testify that this strategy was particularly questioned: Venice

above all considered Doria's move a faint attempt to spare his precious fleet (Blanco 2010, 487-488). Costo's poem confirms a tendency that obliges us to look at the Lepantine poetry produced in Italy not simply as Italian poems, but to distinguish between their different origins: Italians outside Venice identified more easily with a Spanish than with a Venetian viewpoint, and this has important consequences for the content of the poems. Zoppio's editor even explains to his readers that the accounts of single moves in the naval battle were so different in *avvisi* from Venice than from those printed in Rome and from the eye witnesses, that the poet had to approach the *verosimile* truth by conjectures (Zoppio 1572, 27r).

The discordance and distance between different nations and captains is not only reflected in the prevalence of particular nations in the singular narrations. Rivalry and a lack of accordance between the nations and their leaders are also represented in the fictional scheme of Lepanto poems. Firstly, through invented characters, like a personified Discord or mythological furies disturbing the campaign (i.e. Costo 1573, IV, 18-20) in imitation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and its earlier models and of classical epic (for instance Costo 1573, III, 9-19); secondly, through references put in the mouth of Ottomans, who considered discord among Christians an opportunity to defeat them (for example Bolognetti I, 60: "The Hispanic, the Gaul and the molest Italian / would never want to obey to each other / so that they will all be defeated, killed and taken / because of the obvious discord between them"; Doni I, 11) and thirdly, through moral observations on the selfishness and division of European rulers (Doni III, 33, 1-4: "It is not a miracle if the filthy Turk / prepares himself to damage us, since if he abandoned / that exploit, Discord would arise ..."). As these poems precede the publication of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, the discord theme cannot automatically be ascribed to



an influence of Tasso, as Blanco (2010, 503-506) did with regard to Costo's later *Vittoria della Lega* (1582) and Juan Rufo's *Austriada* (1584).

Beyond their individual positions, all these authors refer to the discord between Christian forces involved in the League, which puts strong emphasis on their exhortations to stay united. They also share a clearly Christian viewpoint and a striking dualistic polarisation vis-à-vis the Turks. The Italian authors do give attention to the common suffering in war in the horrid descriptions of the battles, but rarely give voice to the Turks if not in order to make them appear cruel and tyrannical. The battle represents for most of them an ideological clash between good and bad, Heaven and Hell. This is also visible in texts produced in the Republic of Venice, whose important ties with the Ottoman Empire were nevertheless based on a pluri-decennial peace and important commercial exchanges. Venice's isolated politics of compromise and neutrality came under pressure in the years before Lepanto by a public opinion that grew more and more hostile towards the Ottomans. After the attacks on Cyprus, Venetians at least as much as other Italians considered the Turks cruel and treacherous in the war of Cyprus, after Selim broke the peace with Venice and Mustafa Pasha dreadfully violated the concluded pact with the Venetian officers at Famagosta (Gibellini 2008, 15-40; Latin examples of this motif can be found in the poems by Manini, Arcucci, and Canevari, all edited and translated in Spence, Wright and Lemons 2014). Doni dedicates particular attention to the disloyalty displayed by Mustaffa, "unique and steadfast heir of treachery", alternating monstrous epithets with indignant apostrophes ("Such a great general to the Emperor, / governor of armies and of states, / one who spreads his wings over provinces / with the authority of precious kings: / (horse worthy of fodder, swine worthy of acorns / shame of all unashamed) / you lacked

your faith and your promise, / thief worth of the rope, and damned liar?" (Doni 2001, IV, 22).

The Italian poems would thus confirm the singularity of a work like Juan Latino's *Austrias Carmen*, which Wright (2009) has read as subverting the explicit exaltation of Don John and his Christian fleet through compassion with the underdog. Provocative authors like Doni could open space for "debate and a plurality of perspectives" (Blanco 2010, 499) as far as these perspectives still came from inside the (Christian) system in which the authors lived; but these perspectives did not identify with the Ottoman side and represent, on the contrary, the Manichean (and in that sense culturally imperialistic) viewpoint of a Catholic community, however fragmented this community may have been.

In light of this "*discorde concordia*" of Italian voices on Lepanto and a shared kind of social energy based on a reviving performative crusader's spirit, a broader view on these poems should also serve to yield new insights into other aspects of cultural transaction and negotiation, particularly with regard to intertextual relations. Such a perspective particularly brings up the question to what extent the narrative poems written on the occasion of the battle of Lepanto can be associated with Tasso's *Gerusalemme*, the rising literary model in the second half of the century

### **Torquato Tasso. A Genius of his Times**

Although it may seem as if Torquato Tasso let the trumpets and lyres of Lepanto pass by without joining them enthusiastically, he has certainly heard them when he resumed the elaboration of his *Gerusalemme* upon his return to the Ferrarese court of Alfonso II d'Este in 1571-2. Started between 1559 and 1564 as *Il Gierusalemme* (Tasso 2013), a first version of the poem was finished in 1575 (then called *Gottifredo* or *Goffredo*) and published after various interventions of author and editors in 1581 with the title

*Gerusalemme Liberata* - even if the only version authorised by Tasso himself was the later *Gerusalemme Conquistata*, Rome, 1593. Scholars have frequently examined Tasso's treatment of his own period in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* and *Gerusalemme Conquistata*, noticing his endorsement of the Counter-reformation *Zeitgeist*, the terror of the Ottomans and the revival of a crusader's spirit. Tasso's wandering knights and war against the Infidel are nowadays read in an allegorical sense as concretisations of a field of internal and external tensions with regard to a hegemonic Catholic culture and interpreted in light of the contemporary religious conflicts (Zatti, 2006). The condemnation of Islam as a futile or sacrilegious religion, a strong articulation of the enemy's otherness and the desire to liberate the Holy Sepulchre are shared both by Tasso's *Gerusalemme* and by many *Türkendrucke* published around 1571 (Cerbo 2011; Gibellini 2008, 56-74).

Nevertheless, it has also been said that Lepanto is completely absent in the *Gerusalemme liberata*, for it contains no direct allusions to the battle (Preto 1997, 245), apart from the initial exhortation to Alfonso II to participate in a crusade against the Turks (XVII, 93-94). Critics rightly emphasized the qualitative distance between Tasso and the Italian poets of Lepanto and underscored how Tasso's aesthetics and poetic results reach far beyond contemporary politics and plain ideologies (e.g. Casadei 2001, 227-228). This, however, does not change the fact that several poems on Lepanto contain specific structural and textual elements that also typify aspects of the plot of the *Gerusalemme liberata*. A closer look at the poetic exaltations of Lepanto may even lead to the hypothesis that Tasso's interaction with these poems went beyond allusions and allegories, and does not exclude a more direct mediation between texts. This is the case for the works of Francesco Bolognetti and Danese Cataneo, two authors Tasso was certainly familiar with (Gigante 2007, 52-60).

Bolognetti and Cataneo evoked the historical battle in the form of quite linear narrations without romance amorous episodes. Cataneo's *Vittoria Navale* is itself visibly based on historical documentation, as its manuscript is accompanied by a "Note of some particularities pertaining to the work" (305r) containing a dozen of annotations that specify names, functions and vicissitudes of some of the captains who took part in the battle. At the same time, their narrations integrate miraculous or otherwise fictional elements that interfere with the historical allusions. This happened mainly by adapting common places of heroic poetry to a Lepanto-context, allegorising situations and enriching reported facts with imaginative details.

*La Christiana Vittoria Maritima* is one of the first Italian heroic poems in which a historically inspired plot is determined by a religious conflict between two opposite historical camps (Jossa 2002, 124-131). Bolognetti presents the formation of the League as an attempt by God to protect his realm against the increasing fomenting of heresy and idolatry by infernal forces (Bolognetti 1572, I, 4-5). Satan, in turn, tries to sabotage the mission of the League: like Tasso's Pluto, his role in the diegesis is to "retard, and perturb" the triumph of God's army (II, 34: "*l'antico avversario, ch'altro il giorno / mai non pensa, e la notte, che l'impresa / tardando, e perturbando ...*"; cf. Baldassarri 1977 and Larivaille 1990, 115-16 on the retarding function of Pluto in the *Gerusalemme*). Bolognetti reinforces this antagonism between God and Satan by introducing an infernal council, which, even if only in outline, preluded to the much more elaborate "*concilio orrendo*" of Satan in the fourth book of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*.<sup>10</sup> Tasso's episode, determined by a similar opposition of Heaven and Hell (*GL*, IV, 1-18), had perhaps been written but was not yet published it at that time. The archetype of this infernal council in Christian epic was Marco Girolamo Vida's *Christiad*, which had been imitated not only by Tasso and later by Milton, but also by

other poets who wrote on Lepanto. An example can be found in the short poem in 175 dactylic hexameters *Inferorum Concilium Halysque Desperatus* by the Cremonese doctor Giovanni Battista Oliva, published in Pietro Gherardi's anthology of 1572 (Oliva 1572 as edited in Spence, Wright and Lemons 2014, 52-63). This work shows Pluto in his underworld while judging the deceased Ali Pasha and ordering the gathered demons to spread discord among Christians. The councils in Bolognetti's and Tasso's poems have the same result: Satan's demons sowing troubles inside the Christian army.

At the beginning of the *Christiana Vittoria Maritima* (I.56-60), the League is already presented as internally divided, for example in the words addressed to Selim by Satan.<sup>11</sup> These internal problems include a mutiny of the Germans, led by the Tirolese count Alberico of Lodron. During night in Naples, Satan assumes the appearance of one of Alberico's fellows and sprinkles poison on the count. Alberico has a bad dream in which he sees himself lost in the Tyrrhenian, captured by the enemy and facing the unwillingness of the Spaniards to buy him off. When he wakes up, he furiously speaks to his companions. They would be insane if they followed the fleet: without guarantees of biscuit, pay or rewards, they only have empty promises made by the King's agents, who would certainly conduct them into illness and suffering on sea. He exhorts them to resist against the authorities of the League, which forced them to embark on the galleys. The revolt alerts John of Austria, but the situation is soon resolved through financial mediation and the intervention of an angel who descends among the Germans. This episode (I, 34-46) is based on real facts and serves to narrate the retardation of Doria's Genovese fleet (I, 47), evoking a historical situation that caused serious tensions during the unification of the Holy League in August 1571. The passage exemplifies how Bolognetti combines historical events with current *topoi* in heroic poetry, such as the poisoning of human beings by infernal forces, and places them in a Christian setting.

Although this way of fictionalising events is typical for heroic poetry of this kind, the representation of Alberico's call for resistance closely recalls Argillano's revolt in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (VIII, 57-85; see Quint 1993, 213-234). In the eighth canto of Tasso's poem, Alecto (the fury of discord) deceives the soldier Argillano in a dream and tells him to escape or even kill the army leader Goffredo. Argillano then exhorts his fellow soldiers to revolt against the leaders of the crusader's army, which he accuses, among other vices and crimes, of avarice (VIII, 68). His uproar is interrupted by the intervention of Goffredo himself, who is, as well, miraculously assisted by an angel.

In both poems the Christian army can only win with help from above, when disobedience and discord are crushed by Don John's wary leadership. In *La Christiana Vittoria Maritima* all this happens according to the providential design of a partisan God who allows a time of freedom to the infernal forces before restoring the earthly order, as is the case in Tasso's poem (Gregory 2006, 149-164).<sup>12</sup> Don John is elected as God's executive and is assisted by angels, appointed to protect his faction or to execute his plans.<sup>13</sup> In the end, the only obstacle keeping them from victory is the Ottoman general Ali who, with the heroic dignity of Tasso's solitary heroes Argante or Solimano, fights until he is killed by the merciless Michael (III, 62-73). Tasso will analogously bestow enough disturbing power upon infernal forces to place the Christians in critical condition, but "not so much that God's omnipotence ever comes in question" (Gregory 2006, 157). Even if its elaboration is by far inferior in quality and complexity, *La Christiana Vittoria Maritima* embraces the three levels of conflict and subordination that have been individuated by Sergio Zatti (2006, 139) in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*. The conflict involves not only a supernatural level (God/Satan) and a historical

opposition (Christians/non-Christians), but includes also a political strife in which a leader, appointed by providence, has to unify his ‘errant’ subordinates.

A similar analysis can be made for the Venetian artist and poet Danese Cataneo, who was one of Tasso’s first sources of inspiration during his early years in Venice between 1558 and 1561 (Gigante 2007, 52-60; Rossi 1995; Raimondi 1994, 154-158; Artico 2018). Cataneo’s most important poem, *Dell’amor di Marfisa*, which the author partly published in 1562 but already started in 1555, contains several specific references to contemporary conflicts. Among these is a serpent-like description of Mohammed in book IV (60; 62) and a prophecy of the war of Christianity against the Muslims in canto X. However, his references to the warfare of his own times are far more explicit in his poem on the battle of Lepanto, which remained unfinished at his death in 1572. The Vatican manuscript codex Chig. I.VI.238 contains some fragments of *La Vittoria Navale* in *ottava rima* (cc.285r-305r), reassembled in the seventeenth century by Danese’s grandson Nicolò (Chig. I.VI.238, c.284r). The fragments can give a certain indication of the way in which one of Tasso’s inspirers experimented with poetic elaborations of contemporary events. True, its apocalyptic image of the Turkish fleet - described as a polycephalic monster raised by Satan and pushed out of Hell by Mohammed to challenge the supremacy of God - brings the poem closer to other Lepanto-poetry than to the *Liberata* (cf. Lefèvre 2005, 113). Nevertheless, some elements suggest a remarkable proximity to the ideology and language of Tasso’s masterwork. Word combinations as “*tartarei chiostri*” (c.298v, similar however to the “*orribil chiostra*” of *Gerusalemme Liberata* IV, 9), the predestination of the captain to obtain an “*alta vittoria*” (285v; cf. Tasso I, 17, 3) with the assistance of God and Michael show a close proximity to the narrative expressivity of the *Gerusalemme*. God gives response to the exhortations of angels and saints to help his people before they are

crushed by the “*gran Mostro infernal*” (287r; see also *GL IX*, 1, 1). Such actantial roles, inspired by Ariosto’s *Furioso* and the Homeric tradition, were common in Lepanto poems and their recent predecessors, as they are equally present in Bolognetti (1572), Costo (1573) and Olivieri’s *La Alamanna* (1567) on the Schmalkaldic war. However, the discursive elements by which God reveals his plans to the “alato guerrier” Michael (c.289v; cf. *GL VIII*, 84) before dispatching him to Don John, are quite specific (“... him I chose as commander [*lui per duce elessi*”] already a long time ago, to bring the cruel dragon down and to oppress the impious Thracians; so that he would enlarge my Church, and not only be her firm defence”, c.287v). This message has an unequivocal resemblance to Tasso’s “*Io qui l’eleggo*” in the first canto of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* (12, 7), where God orders Gabriel to find Goffredo and inform him of his destiny as captain of the crusader’s army.

The works by Bolognetti and Cataneo demonstrate how poems on Lepanto embraced the idea of a divinely inspired crusade, a “*giusta impresa*” against the impious Orient (Bolognetti 1572, III, 7). Both authors had been friends of Bernardo Tasso and belonged to the sphere of influence of the young Torquato, at a time when Goffredo was a warrior among others in the *Gierusalemme* and Satan was not yet part of the plot (Solerti 1895, I, 80). Bolognetti and Cataneo died before Tasso accomplished the major revision of his poem in 1575-6, when he finished its first version and subjected it to review by several intellectuals of his time. On 15 April 1566 Tasso (1995, 36-37) communicated to his cousin Ercole that he had finished the first six cantos, but it is likely that he made thoroughgoing corrections thereafter (Russo 2014). How Tasso’s poem developed exactly between 1560 and 1575 is, however, scarcely documented. Until further research can establish whether and to what extent there has been interaction between the *Gerusalemme* and poems like those by Bolognetti or Cataneo,



the hypothesis that the Lepantine compositions anticipated in several aspects the major epic poem of the late sixteenth century remains to be proved. After all, the idea that “works of art, however intensely marked by the creative intelligence and private obsessions of individuals, are the products of collective negotiation and exchange” (Greenblatt 1988, vii) applies to Tasso as much as to other authors.

### **1581 and after. In Tasso’s shadow?**

The victory over the Turks soon became obsolete through the separate peace treaty between Venice and the Ottoman Empire of 1573 and by the quick recovery of the Turkish fleet, which returned to infest the Mediterranean a short time after the battle. But even after Lepanto had lost its status as the ideal occasion to celebrate Christian superiority, the battle continued to be used as a theme in laudatory poems (Costo 1582, Metelli 1585). Even after the treaty of Zsitvatorok of 1606 established a peace of several decades between the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires, the battle continued to capture the imagination of Italian poets and became, in the long term, a *topos* in heroic poetry. A second surge of poems on Lepanto - which were longer and more elaborate than those written immediately after the battle - coincided with the years preceding the war of Candia, in which tensions between several Christian authorities and the Ottoman Empire had been latent (Tronsarelli; Benamati; Peri): no less than three poems were (re)printed between 1642 and 1646. The central questions leading this last paragraph therefore concern the functioning of Lepanto in late sixteenth- and seventeenth Italian poetry. How did the significance of the battle in poetry change over time, and how would literary authorities be involved in this development?<sup>14</sup> A diachronic study of poems on Lepanto that goes beyond the biennium 1571-1573 would offer a deeper insight into the diversification of the narrative contexts that sheltered the memory of the battle.

Torquato Tasso's *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* and embryonic parts of the *Gerusalemme liberata* were already known in several literary circles around 1571, but his influence was manifested more directly from the 1580s onwards (Artico 2018; Artico and Zucchi 2017). An eloquent example of his growing importance is Costo's reshaping of his own *Rotta di Lepanto* (1573) into the *Vittoria della Lega* (1582; studied by Capuozzo 2012, Gigante 2001 and Egidi 1995-1996). The narrative model he looked at in his first version was primarily Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. The modifications in the second version reveal that a new *auctoritas* has joined Ariosto, exhibiting Costo's close attention to the innovative procedures of the *Gerusalemme*. This is not only evident from imitations of passages and descriptions, such as the opening stanzas, the infernal council or the modelling of Don John on Tasso's Rinaldo, but also from the echoing of literary motifs regarding syntax, rhyme, lexicon, figures and similitudes: a "Tasso effect" (Gigante 2001, 40) which illustrates how Tasso's masterpiece could immediately serve as a sort of repertoire of literary elements without, however, imposing itself as the only suitable literary model. We could even presume that the reason for Costo (who was also the editor of one of the most precious early editions of the *Liberata*) to re-edit his text was not anymore the battle of Lepanto itself, but Tasso's poem, which inspired immediate imitations.

Until late in the seventeenth century and beyond, Tasso remained a reference point for discourse related to narrative heroic poetry. This is also true for poems on Lepanto appearing several years or decades after the battle, when signs of disappointment about the course of the facts brought about a change of tone. In his second poem, Costo eliminated the final prediction of a new offensive against the Turks (1573, V, 100-102) and attached some *Stanze ... in varii soggetti, non piu date in luce* instead, as he was conscious about the anachronism of his heroic exaltation of an out-

dated heroic ideal (Egidi 1995-1996, 500-505). This appendix contains appeals to resume the battle, lamentations in octaves of the League's disintegration, Venice's betrayal and the failed actions at Navarino, Tunis and Goletta: a modulation from major to minor that reflected how the perception of the victory had changed.

Apart from Costo's *Vittoria della Lega*, among the poems published in the decades after the battle are *Il Marte* by Vincenzo Metello (1582), edited in Venice; *La rotta navale* by Giovan Domenico Peri (1642) printed in Siena, and the poems entitled *Vittoria navale* by Ottavio Tronsarelli (1633, new edition in 1643) and Guidubaldo Benamati (1622 (the first three cantos, contained in *Delle due trombe i primi fiati*), 1646 - the full poem). Over time, concrete facts are increasingly absorbed by plots of the poets' own imagination in these poems. Historical events moved more to the background in seventeenth century poems, which combined memories of both Tasso and of the League in broader plots, whether of mythological, moral, or romance inspiration.

This is an interesting development, as their choice of a recent subject and the subsequent tension between facts and fiction could be perceived as problematic in this period after Tasso. Torquato considered the narration of contemporary events as the main subject to be incompatible with the poetic inventions required by the epic genre (Tasso 1964, 10). Evident manifestations of Tasso's literary paternity in the Lepanto-corpus are therefore by definition marked, invoking questions concerning the dialectics between the relatively recent subject and the need for literary inventions. This is clearly reflected in the comments of several readers on a first version of the *Vittoria navale* by Benamati, who worked as a poet at the Farnesian court in Parma and wrote occasionally for the Della Rovere. Benamati included his correspondence on the poem with various academics in Italy as preamble in its final edition. Among these, the Accademici

Filarmonici from Verona reminded him of Tasso's precept by doubting "whether this war, since it is modern, allows without trouble the licence to invent [*licenza di fingere*] that is necessary to the Epic poet" (Benamati 1646, [16]). The members of the Florentine Accademia della Crusca rejected his work completely, asserting that "as far as the subject of your poem is concerned, we are convinced that you know very well that you are deviating from the precepts of the Art" ([13]).<sup>15</sup> With these words the Cruscan letter, dated October 23, 1623, still refers to the precepts established by Tasso.

This poetical censure did not prevent the poets, however, from explicitly paying tribute to Tasso. In canto XII of the same *Vittoria navale*, for example, Benamati places Torquato, "miracle of nature", at the top of his hierarchy of modern poets (XII, 94-95). These tributes can also consist, as in Costo's poem, of imitations on various narratological levels (*dispositio*, *inventio* and *elocutio*). For Costo's *Vittoria della Lega* (1583), the Tassian model guiding the make-over of Costo's poem was obviously the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, which remained the most popular version even after the publication of Tasso's *Conquistata* in 1593 (Arbizzoni 2005, 4). The Lepanto-corpus, however, demonstrates that imitations and allusions can also bear reminiscences of the *Conquistata*, as happens in Don John's ecstasy in the first canto of Benamati's *Vittoria Navale*, which typically recalls Goffredo's prophetic dream of the *Gerusalemme Conquistata* (Di Nepi 1978, 125-6). A ground for this connection can be found in the *Gerusalemme Conquistata* itself: one of the largest additions in Goffredo's dream is a long encomiastic prophecy announcing the defenders of the Catholic faith up to Tasso's own times, and also includes the presage of the battle of Lepanto (Tasso 1934, XX, 112-123).

The reworking of Tasso's *Liberata* partly responded to stronger moralising ambitions, including orthodox allegoric explanations and depuration of possibly

ambiguous or provocative episodes of the *Liberata*. In this line, a moralising tendency has clearly left its traces in the *Vittoria Navale* written by Ottavio Tronsarelli, who was at his time a prominent poet in Urban VIII's Counter-reformation Rome. With allusion to the structuring principles of Tasso's poems, he exposes in the *Allegoria del poema* that his work makes clear moral distinctions: the Christians, despite initial errors and discord among them, are notwithstanding virtuous, whereas Ali and Portaù represent "appetite" and "opinion", both highly rejectable. According to a current image in the early seventeenth century that underscored the decline and idleness of the Turkish army, the Ottoman captains thus simply incarnate vice (Formica 2012, 102).

In the moralistic poetical appendix *L'Honestà del Poema Heroico*, Tronsarelli's poem presents itself moreover as purified from the "impure habits, and the vice of carnality" (Tronsarelli 1646, 482, 533), or as a morally correct alternative for the sensual baroque poetry promoted by Giovan Battista Marino. Marino's mythological poem *Adone*, first published in 1623 and frequently reprinted all over Europe, was of explicit anti-bellicose nature and erotising tendency. It nevertheless constituted an important new reference point for authors like Tronsarelli, and had a considerable yet until recently often neglected influence on poems after Tasso, offering a new or alternative repertoire of themes, modalities and elocutions (Artico 2016, 206-297). This is visible in opposite poetical declarations (like Tronsarelli's reject of laze in his second octave, opposite to the "ozio sereno" in Marino's *Adone* I, 2), as well as in 'reactive' textual and narrative correspondences, such as a calque with morally corrective intentions in Tronsarelli's *Vittoria* of Marino's trivial fisherman's invective against society and courts and praise of the seaside life (Tronsarelli 1646, VIII.4-10; Marino 2013, IX.47-92). Tronsarelli's example illustrates how (Barberinian) poets often took

position with regard to Marino in the epic context after 1623 to underscore their declared moralizing intentions.

Poets thus updated the poems on Lepanto according to the current literary developments, but not without alluding to more classical common places of the literary canon. This reached, of course, far beyond the sixteenth century models of Tasso and Ariosto. The titles of Benamati's and Tronsarelli's works underscore that they were first and foremost concerned with a naval battle, which had taken place in one of the most evocative locations of the literary map, opening a range of transtextual and interdiscursive options. Several scholars (Blanco 2010, 491-7; Murrin 1994, 142-3, 180; Quint 1993, 49; Wright, Spence and Lemons 2014, xvii-xviii) have shown how the battle of Actium, by which Vergil celebrated the glory of the Augustinian empire, was referred to in poetry as a precursor of Lepanto. Other comparisons were also possible. Costo (1582, IV, 116, 5-6; see also IV, 14), rather than referring to Actium, claims that what happened at Lepanto was "not less worth to be put on paper / than the events that found place at Pharsalia", bearing Lucan's *De bello civili* in mind. Tronsarelli (1646, 522) bases his principle of describing the hero either "errant while traveling, or occupied in wars" on the examples of the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, and lets his soldiers wander along the islands of the Mediterranean before they beat their enemy. The Mediterranean setting of the narration inspired Tronsarelli to recall a large repertoire of Greek mythological references and to look back to the *Odyssey* in particular, which had been eclipsed by the *Iliad* for the narration of battles in the previous century (Baldassarri 1982, 9; 13). Tronsarelli's *Vittoria Navale* contains several allusions to the adventures of Odysseus, which were associated with audacious navigations in the Italian post-dantesque tradition (e.g. II, 6-7). Apart from evocations of the monsters and places Ulysses encountered, such as a pseudo-etymological explanation of how the

island of Ericusa is called after the sunken ship of the Greek hero (X, 1-6), his island Ithaca is recalled for its proximity to the place of the battle (e.g. II, 38 and 43; XI, 81-84). Also, the presence of classical gods seems almost natural, given the location of the war, and Cyprus in particular. In Vincenzo Metello's *Marte* (1582), the entire clash results from Proserpina's jealousy towards Venus. The central *canti* contain rather detailed descriptions of the sieges of Nicosia and Famagusta, but these are inserted in a framework celebrating the dedicatee, Bianca Cappello, and are part of a mythologically inspired plot that replaces the more conventional (and Tassian) Christian setting of the battle.

With time, the literary conception of the battle of Lepanto transformed from a crusade into an adventure, including love dramas and wandering heroes. The shift of focus from the moment of the final clash at the Echinades to the war of Cyprus in a broader, imaginary context indicates that the celebration of the League or the literary documentation of recent history were no longer the purposes of later poetry on Lepanto. For a long time Lepanto remained part of the encomiastic repertoire in view of the magnification of its heroes, but the sound and variety of poetic voices had become more important than the event itself. The length of poems and historical distance to the by now epicized events differentiate them from the celebrative poems of the Cinquecento, and it is perhaps only in these cases that one could speak of 'epics' in Tassian terms. The variable nature of Tasso's influence, the importance of alternative models as well as the existence in earlier poems on Lepanto of characteristics that are usually considered as denoting a Tassian influence, are nevertheless reasons to avoid a classification of these seventeenth century poems under the simple heading of "Tasso's epigones".

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> See also Rhodes. 1995-1996.

<sup>2</sup> The size of early Lepanto-poems marks a considerable reduction with regard to poems on the siege of Tunis of 1535 such as Sigismondo Paolucci's *Notte d'Aphrica* (Messina, Petruccio Spira, 1535-6: 8 cantos, 1034 stanzas) or Pompeo Bilintano's *Carlo Cesare V Affricano* (Naples, Matteo Canze, 1535: 10 cantos, 548 stanzas).

<sup>3</sup> The text I examined was a copy of the exemplar conserved in the National library of Naples, in which c.5 is missing. Presuming that this corresponds to 7 missing octaves, the poem would count about 76 octaves.

<sup>4</sup> A useful distinction is the one made by Guido Sacchi, between the '*poema popolare*', published immediately, and the '*poema scientifico*', elaborated in various stages and revised by fellow intellectuals. As the poems listed above appeared within less than two years after the battle, none appears really 'scientific': the significance of this distinction can only be established on the basis of later generations of poems. Sacchi, however, did not include 'poems of bellicose-encomiastic subject' in his analysis. Sacchi. 2006, 5; 52.

<sup>5</sup> At the end of the sixteenth century, street singers' production was more and more considered as 'low' public entertainment and stood at the bottom of the cultural hierarchy; see Salzberg and Rospoher. 2012: 21.

<sup>6</sup> Soon after the first edition (*Terzo libro de l'Austria*, Cacchi, Naples, 1572), in 1573 a reprint was published by the same editor (*L'Austria ... doue si contiene la vittoria della santa lega all'Hechinadi nell'anno 1571. Prieghi per la Unione. Gioie hauute per quella ...*).

<sup>7</sup> "Like with new and unheard exploits / you won, with new boldness, new art; / so with new style, with eagerness, / I come to write down all that victory; // to let the world know, and to make Mars see / that everyone wants to praise you, / oh great Austria, both in covert and open manner / in ways not yet heard nor seen. // This Lyrical style used to sing / of Love, and not to tell entire stories, / the battles, the armies, the wars. // But your famous, and unbeaten deeds / force every speech, because of their lofty glories, / to reveal their weapons, their daring, their honour." Carrafa 1573, 7v. The original spelling and punctuation marks have been modernized in the quotations, though they have been conserved in the titles.

<sup>8</sup> Since the Latin language competed in this period with the vernacular in poems on contemporary events written in Italy, this approach ideally also includes neo-Latin poetry. The approach could be further expanded by comparing the various corpora of Lepanto poetry in Habsburg Europe and in the Ottoman Empire by means of *histoire croisée*.



<sup>9</sup> Ms. 4 of the Biblioteca Universitaria in Padua contains Doni's first book, which was probably the only part of his poem he accomplished before his death in 1574.

<sup>10</sup> "Ma per troncar Sathan l'alta speranza, / ch'ogni fedel s'havea tra sé concetta, / consiglio fè ne l'Infernal sua stanza / tra quella iniqua, & sì malvagia setta ..." [But in order to break the proud hope / that each believer had conceived for himself, / he held a council in his infernal dwelling / amid that ungodly, and evillest sect] (Bolognetti 1572, I.49.1-4).

<sup>11</sup> "L'uno a l'altro ubidir mai non vorrebbe / tal che per le discordie lor palesi / sarian tutti sconfitti, e morti, e presi" [They would never obey to each other, so that their evident discord will bring them all to defeat, death and capture] (I.60.6-8).

<sup>12</sup> Bolognetti 1572, I.86: "Ma l'alto Iddio, che dal suo regno scorse / tanti enormi delitti, e in tante guise, / gli occhi di pietà colmo indietro torse / da loro, in cui le luci havea pria fise; / et quanto in Cipro allora avvenne, forse / per lor castigo il Re del Ciel permise" [But the glorious God, who from his realm noticed so many enormous and various crimes, turned his pitiful eyes away from those in which he had fixed his eyes; and what then happened in Cyprus, the King of Heaven permitted, perhaps to punish them]; II, 2. Cf. Tasso 2009, VII.114.5-8.

<sup>13</sup> Bolognetti 1572, I.5.20 (I.16.1-6: "Del seme illustre d'Austria un giovenetto ... / fin da principio in mente nostra eletto / fu Duce a l'alta impresa" [of the illustrious seed of Austria a young man ... was from the beginning in our mind elected as commander of the lofty enterprise]; in Tasso's octave in which Goffredo is elected the crusade is equally called an "alta impresa"; Tasso 2009, I.12); II.1-4; III.4. Examples of the angels' interventions are in Bolognetti 1572 I.22-32; III.56; III.65.

<sup>14</sup> Lepanto was mentioned in many long poems as a minor episode within a longer fictional plot on another subject (i.e. in Marino's *Adone* or Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*; see Gibellini 2008 46-47). The poems here discussed have been selected for bearing allusion to the battle in their title, thus suggesting it to be their main theme.

<sup>15</sup> Not discouraged by this authoritative judgment, Benamati defended his choice of the subject in a subsequent letter to the duke of Urbino, which unfortunately has been lost.

## References:

[1571], *Narratione della felice vittoria che ha conseguito l'armata Cristiana contra quella di Selim imperator de Turchi* [Venice].

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